

Nearshore Monitoring

A Protocol for Assessing Lake Environments



What is the nearshore?

The nearshore is a dynamic area that stretches from the beach through the shallow water.

The nearshore is a transition zone between land and water, and is easily influenced by offshore waters and by on-shore land and water uses. Any water draining from rivers, streams and groundwater meets the lake in the nearshore zone.

Why is the nearshore important?

The nearshore is an area where people and nature intersect regularly. For this reason, it is important to protect the nearshore and the ecological, economic and social benefits it provides on a daily basis. These benefits include fishing, swimming and other recreational activities; commercial activities like tourism, power generation, shipping ports and fisheries; and perhaps most important, serving as a source of drinking water. The nearshore is also home to a wide variety of plants, fish and animals.

What is the Nearshore Monitoring Protocol?

There is a growing recognition of the environmental and socio-economic importance of the nearshore. We need to monitor the nearshore environment to ensure the health and integrity of this important ecosystem.

While monitoring has been taking place across the province for years, there has not been a standard approach to how monitoring data is collected. As a result, there has not been a way to compare over time and between jurisdictions.

In response, Conservation Ontario developed the Nearshore Monitoring Protocol. The protocol is a

decision-making framework that guides users through selecting what variables to monitor, and then how to collect data using standard methods.

The protocol is part of an adaptive monitoring program that guides users through the planning, design, implementation and reporting stages (see over).

What's monitored in the protocol?

What's monitored depends on the area and the issues of concern. Issues range from land use to erosion to invasive species to climate change. For each issue, the protocol suggests variables to monitor, which may include fish and other aquatic life, aquatic plants, water quality, and shoreline changes.

For each variable, users can select from a "toolbox" of best monitoring methods, choosing those that work with their lake environment and the resources available.

What does this mean for our lakes?

Data from monitoring will help government leaders, researchers and others better understand lake processes and the health of the nearshore environment, informing policies and decisions on land use, public health (water quality), and risk management, among others.

Where can I get more information?

The Nearshore Monitoring Protocol is available from Conservation Ontario at www.conservationontario.ca.



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