

**News Release  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 19th, 2021**



**New Youbou Lakefront Property Owner Learns an Expensive Lesson**

**Lake Cowichan** - Every year shoreline properties on Cowichan Lake change hands bringing new residents to the Lake. Many of these new owners may not be aware that our foreshore areas are governed by a number of specific regulations which must be respected. Along with the beautiful views and privileged access to the Lake comes a responsibility to protect the shoreline area.

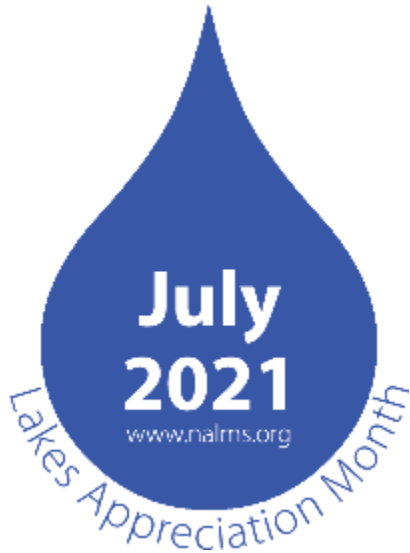
For example, a property in Youbou changed hands this past winter. The foreshore had been restored with a mix of local upland native plants and submergent species that thrive despite annual high water events. The restoration was doing well and had been included as part of an educational tour for local real estate agents in 2019 that demonstrated the importance of riparian areas and the responsibilities of shoreline property ownership.

But early this spring a number of neighbours in the area noticed equipment working on the beach clearing the shoreline of plants and adding sand to the beach right down to the water's edge, something not allowed under the Riparian Regulations. Authorities were notified through the Provincial R.A.P.P. line. The CVRD Bylaw enforcement office and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans investigated the situation. **The new homeowner ended up paying twice.** Once when they paid to clear the beach and add the sand and again when they were required to restore the shoreline vegetation under the supervision of a registered environmental consultant.

*“Shoreline habitat across BC is seriously threatened by recreation, residential development, and upland land use practices and Cowichan Lake is no different. Data clearly show that we are continuously losing this critical habitat as it experiences serious degradation due to cumulative impacts. It is important that everyone takes seriously the responsibility to protect our shared lake environment”,* said Ken Traynor, President of the Cowichan Lake & River Stewardship Society (CLRSS).

Even sitting in the shade of a sun umbrella offered little relief during this recent excessive heat wave (a too obvious symptom of Climate Change). But those fortunate enough to have a place at the water's edge to sit with their feet in the lake, in the shade of alder, willows, or dogwood that hang over the lake in a healthy riparian area, had it best.

*“So...maybe this summer folks will understand that leaving or restoring their riparian native vegetation helps us adapt to climate change - keeping us safer and more comfortable as we deal with its effects”,* said CLRSS President Ken Traynor. *“And please take note, July is officially Lake Appreciation Month in British Columbia. Show your Lake and its riparian zones some appreciation.”*



*Show your favourite lakes  
some extra appreciation  
this month!*

**The Province of British Columbia has [officially proclaimed](#) July as Lakes Appreciation Month!  
Click on the link for an official copy of the proclamation.**

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### **Background**

**The Cowichan Lake & River Stewardship Society** has been working for years to engage our community and change attitudes regarding the value of riparian areas. We are aiming to promote a cultural shift from cutting and clearing to protection and restoration of shoreline riparian areas. The aim is not to discourage recreation but to demonstrate how natural ecological functions and human activities can co-exist.

Lake shores, stream shores and wetlands form transitional ecological boundaries between aquatic and terrestrial habitats. These transitional areas are important for fish and wildlife species. They provide the benefits of ecologically diverse habitats which are important for reproduction, feeding, resting and protection from the elements and predators. Vegetated foreshores also help to protect water quality by filtering runoff that approaches lakes and streams reducing shoreline erosion that arises from heavy rainfall and wave action.

*Aquatic ecosystems are very vulnerable to climate change. Even small changes such as warming lake temperature can cause big impacts to the sensitive aquatic community. Not only*

*will extreme heat events become more common, but the frequency of intense rainfalls will increase, leading to more flooding and storm events that may increase erosion and runoff, affecting shoreline infrastructure. Now, more than ever, it is important that we take proactive steps to minimize the impacts to shoreline habitats. By maintaining a natural shoreline, you may mitigate some of the effects of climate change and support aquatic species that are already facing uncertainty with a changing climate.* - from Statement from BC Lake Stewardship Society July 2021 newsletter re Lake Appreciation Month

### **A few Facts**

- 92% of the Cowichan Lake shoreline (including forest land) is privately owned. Owners of ecologically important habitats are responsible to preserve publicly owned resources -- the fish and the water -- now and for future generations.
- 70% of the shoreline of Cowichan Lake is still in a relatively undisturbed state and needs protection. This land and vegetation adjacent to watercourses (the riparian zone) is essential for water quality, fish stocks and wildlife, as well as flood and erosion control.
- The shoreline of Cowichan Lake is a nursery for up to 300,000 wild coho salmon annually. It also contains self-sustaining populations of cutthroat, rainbow, dolly varden & kokanee.

### **What Can We Do?**

1. Leave our riparian areas intact. -- Prevention is easier and less costly than restoration.
2. Minimize the impact of lake access points. -- Use only one point of access, build fish-friendly docks and use gravel pathways.
3. Restore damaged riparian areas. -- Let natural re-vegetation take its course or re-establish native plants.
4. Respect riparian area regulations and avoid fines. -- Leave riparian areas intact for erosion control, water quality, habitat protection, coho production and flood prevention.

Check out our website at [clrss.ca](http://clrss.ca) for more ideas and information. Send us an email at [clrss.information@gmail.com](mailto:clrss.information@gmail.com) and we will be happy to get in touch. We can share access to useful resources, referrals to local shoreline residents who have restored their waterfronts and lessons learned from owners around the lake over the years.