

Topic

Pélxwikw/ Goose Spit Climate Resiliency Project

Purpose

To provide information and update project participants on the Pélxwikw/ Goose Spit Climate Resiliency Project, which recently received funding through the Disaster Resilience and Innovation Fund from the Provincial Department of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR).

Background

NOTE: The project uses the Ayajusem (Island Comox dialect of Ayajuthem) name for this place (with permission from K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Council).

The Comox Valley Regional District completed regulatory coastal flood mapping in 2021, which identified that Pélxwikw/ Goose Spit plays an important climate resilience role, sheltering adjacent residential areas such as electoral area B neighbourhoods and downtown Comox from flooding and waves.

This unique coastal landform is part of the Comox harbour and is multijurisdictional:

- K'ómoks First Nation has reserve lands (IR#3) and Treaty Lands on part of the spit. The entirety of Goose Spit is an important cultural location that has been stewarded since time immemorial by the K'ómoks people and is part of K'ómoks Treaty lands.
- Located in the CVRD's electoral area B, and houses a popular CVRD community park which is operated under a provincial license of occupation. The park was first leased to the CVRD in 1971 and includes part of the foreshore.
- Hawkins Road is owned by the BC Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) and houses utility infrastructure managed by the CVRD
- The HMCS Quadra Canadian Forces Base on the site is owned by the Department of National Defense and located on K'ómoks Treaty Lands.

Goose Spit houses rare intact salt marsh and sand dune ecosystems, provides forage fish habitat, provides food and habitat for migratory and resident waterfowl, and is home to rare species including the Provincially yellow-listed Yellow Sand-Verbena, and the red-listed Sand-Verbena Moth (one of eight occurrences in the world). The spit is federally designated as critical habitat for the Sand-Verbena Moth.

Climate Impacts

Storm surge, coastal flooding and sea-level rise impacts of climate change present serious risk to Goose Spit, and the valuable climate resilience function it plays in the area. Earlier this year, the CVRD and K'ómoks First Nation applied as co-applicants to the Disaster Resilience and Innovation Funding program (DRIF). The Pélxwikw/ Goose Spit Climate Resiliency Project is a risk assessment of the adaptive capacity of Goose Spit (Pélxwikw), focusing on data collection to improve knowledge of climate-related vulnerabilities and disaster risk reduction solutions.

The Comox Valley Regional District respectfully acknowledges the land on which it operates is on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

DRIF Project

In Summer 2025, the Province of BC announced a \$275,580 DRIF grant to the CVRD and K'ómoks First Nation to pursue disaster risk resilience and infrastructure protection at Goose Spit through preliminary planning activities including:

- A coastal processes analysis for the Goose Spit system, including geomorphological assessment and modelling of longshore sediment transport processes and wave climate to understand the role of Goose Spit in protecting critical infrastructure in surrounding areas;
- An ecological inventory and baseline monitoring project to understand the ecological assets present and at-risk from projected climate impacts;
- Archeological and cultural investigation to enhance understanding of the cultural heritage risks and opportunities and confirm location of culturally sensitive sites in need of enhanced protection.

The project benefits from strong multi-jurisdictional partnerships forged through Comox Valley Emergency Management staff and liaisons. CVEM worked closely with planning and parks staff to integrate Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) and Indigenous Engagement Requirement, prioritizing collaboration, cooperation and engagement. Findings will provide a background and baseline context for local governments and K'ómoks First Nation to make informed land use decisions for Pélxwikw/ Goose Spit, understand the role of this landform in regional climate resiliency and identify next steps for protection and adaptation. The Provincial funding includes resources to achieve these goals collaboratively with K'ómoks First Nation as co-applicants, including capacity funding (10%) to ensure this work can be achieved in tandem with other Nation priorities.

Key Messages

- Pélxwikw/ Goose Spit is a beloved community asset with distinct cultural heritage values that plays a vital role in protecting surrounding areas and infrastructure from flooding and storm impacts.
- Climate change impacts put this climate resilience function at risk, including impacts to the site itself and the surrounding areas of electoral area B and downtown Comox.
- The \$275,580 in DRIF funding will allow the CVRD and K'ómoks First Nation as co-applicants to complete studies and build a shared understanding of flood-related risks and vulnerabilities for this key coastal area, providing a baseline to develop risk reduction options.
- This project also aims to build vital partnerships between multiple CVRD departments, K'ómoks First Nation and other stakeholders, strengthening shared efforts to improve resilience to climate change-driven disasters.

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