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DATE OF ISSUE: February 27, 2019

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves new, updated Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)

New plan incorporates several changes in response to public comments

It has been more than four years in the making but there is now a new, updated Shoreline Management Plan for the Lake Huron shoreline within the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority's area. The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) Board of Directors approved an updated, amended Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) at the board meeting and annual meeting held on Thursday, February 21, 2019.

The approved plan provides a consistent, up-to-date guide for development and municipal land use planning along the shoreline, according to ABCA. The plan helps to protect existing development from potential impacts of new development and to ensure new development is not located in the most hazardous areas (where flooding, erosion, and dynamic beaches could pose the highest risk to life and property). The approved, updated plan provides newer information on shoreline recession rates, brings local policies and application of the Regulation more up-to-date with Province of Ontario policy, and keeps policies current in light of emerging land use trends. "The new plan includes up-to-date technical work to accurately reflect natural hazards along the shoreline, policies that reflect current land use trends and provincial policy, and new, clear, consistent, practical, local guidelines," said Geoffrey Cade, Water and Planning Manager. "The approval of an updated plan gives people certainty about what local policies are so property owners proposing development will know what the requirements are for permit applications."

The previous Shoreline Management Plan had been in effect since 2000 and ABCA began technical work, and consultation with municipalities and the public, starting in 2015. "It has taken a long time to complete the update process but we wanted to take the time necessary to collect the best information possible and to talk to shoreline residents and municipalities and to respond to public questions, concerns, and comments," said Cade. "We wanted a plan that is current and responsible in effectively protecting life, property, and the environment and we also wanted a plan that was local and practical and this new plan achieves that balance."

The new Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) reflects public input between 2015 and 2019. Shoreline residents and other interested persons provided written comments during the most recent period for written comments (November 28, 2018 to January 25, 2019). People had also provided comments on the draft development guidelines during a previous consultation period (August 11, 2018 to September 15, 2018). In response to public comments, staff recommended several amendments to the Draft Proposed Shoreline Management Plan (2018) prior to approval. The public also provided written comments in response to previous reports. The new plan incorporates several changes to the draft plan in response to public comments during the consultation and a summary of those changes is also to be posted online at abca.ca. The revised, approved Shoreline Management Plan (2019) is to be posted online at abca.ca by March 1, 2019, at abca.ca on the shoreline management plan page: <https://www.abca.ca/planning/shorelinemanagement>

The new, approved plan differs profoundly from the approach recommended by the 2015-2016 consulting team, according to ABCA. In 2016, the ABCA Board of Directors had rejected some key recommendations of a draft recommendation report from the 2015-2016 consulting consortium. The ABCA Board of Directors held a special meeting on November 3, 2016 where the board made clear it opposed "outright prohibition of all shoreline protection works" and rejected "the underlying principle of *managed retreat*" and rejected the development guidelines in that report. The Board at that time directed staff to re-engage the public in the update process. The conservation authority later contracted a different firm, W.F. Baird and Associates, to develop a new proposed plan for the Board's consideration. Conservation authority staff also worked with municipal staff to develop new proposed development guidelines. The new approved plan incorporates some technical work from the original consulting team but includes different development guidelines and different policies for proposed shoreline protection works.

If you have questions, please contact Geoffrey Cade at 519-235-2610 or toll-free 1-888-286-2610.

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