



Crews with the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council have been looking at any changes property owners along Burt Lake may have made. PHOTOS BY KORTNY HAHN/CHEBOYGAN DAILY TRIBUNE

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Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council plans Burt Lake shoreline assessment

Kortny Hahn Cheboygan Daily Tribune | USA TODAY NETWORK

BURT LAKE — Over the last several weeks, crews from the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council have been paddling around Burt Lake to look at the condition of the shoreline and how things have changed.

The last shoreline assessment on the lake was completed in 2009. That assessment will be used to compare with the most recent findings, in order to see how things have improved or declined in areas around the lake.

“We always look at greenbelts. That would be the plants right at the shoreline,” said Caroline Keson, monitoring programs coordinator with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. “So we’re looking to see how much of someone’s frontage has native plants growing along it.”

Keson said the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council staff members will also be looking at how far back those plants are

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Shoreline

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growing from the shoreline. These native plants have deeper roots and are better at storing water and reducing nutrients running off into the lake than turf grass or sand.

Crews will also be looking for erosion along the shoreline, algae growing and other alterations homeowners may have made to their properties. These alterations include discharge pipes, installation of a seawall or large boulders being added to the shoreline.

"We also look for good examples of shorelines. We look for tributaries, we take note of what the substrate is in the water too," said Keson.

Seawalls and large boulders being installed along shorelines are not necessarily bad for the lakefront, but officials said they may cause some issues such as additional erosion or challenges for native plant and animal species which need that edge of the water habitat.

"So like a turtle can't climb up a seawall," said Keson. "So, seawalls, they are pretty much overkill for something like Burt Lake. Then, the type of rock, sometimes boulders are necessary, but it really depends on something called the fetch of a lake, so how much of a distance does the wind have to pick up over the lake."

Keson said if someone lives on a wider, more open portion of the lake, they may need larger boulders than someone who is on an inlet or a bay. She added there are better options available for people living along the shoreline.

The shoreline assessment is being funded by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy's Nonpoint Source Pollution Implementation program through a grant under Public Act 166 of 2020. These assessments are typically done every 10 years and there have been around 20 lakes in the area surveyed since 2000.

The Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council crews are surveying the lake by kayak, paddling around the shoreline of the lake. There are teams of two people, and as many as six team members working their way around the lake, taking photos and documenting what they are seeing.

The work started earlier this month, and Keson believes the assessment should be wrapping up this Friday.

Since the last survey of the lakeshore in 2009, the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, along with the Burt Lake Preservation Association, has been promoting education about the best ways to preserve shorelines. The groups are also promoting the best way to keep water quality high in the lake.

"This latest survey will allow us to compare, to see if things are getting worse since 2009, (or) are they get-



Green belts with natural vegetation are optimal to protect the shoreline and offer habitat for amphibians, such as frogs and turtles, that want to get out of the water at times.

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ting better," said Keson. "We can do that on a whole lake level. Then we can also compare Burt Lake to other lakes."

Keson has been all around Burt Lake and has seen a variety of changes. She said she is interested to see what the results of the survey will show.

Keson said a tool has also been developed in partnership with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and the State of Michigan called Michigan Shoreland Stewards Program. This is an online system for any homeowners on a lake to get information about what they should be doing on their properties, allows the owners to score their property, and gives suggestions on how to do the right things for the environment.

The lake preservation association and Tip of the Mitt also encourage people to improve their properties, because it is something where everyone can do something.

"Not everybody can have the perfect natural shoreline, but everyone can improve," said Keson.

When this assessment has been completed, the results will be sent to individual property owners so they can see their scores and make improvements if needed.

Keson said next year, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council will be providing a cost sharing grant program with homeowners along lake shores to help improvements be made. This is funded through the same grant as the assessment.

This cost sharing program will be available to properties not just on Burt Lake, but also on Douglas Lake, Pickerel Lake, Crooked Lake and other inland lakes around the region.

More information on the Michigan Shoreland Stewards Program can be found online at www.mishorelandstewards.org.

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