

Staff Report

Presented By: Adam Parsons, Manager, Facilities and Parks
Meeting Date: March 9, 2026
Subject: Waterfront Access Points Review and Work Plan
Attachment(s): 2022 Waterfront Access Point Review and Analysis

Recommendation

That Council receive the Waterfront Access Point Review and Work Plan report for information.

Report Summary

This report proposes targeted maintenance, signage, and delineation improvements to clearly identify and safely manage public beach access points across Saugeen Shores. It prioritizes low-cost, short-term upgrades at established, clear public locations while deferring work where ownership is uncertain. The approach improves access and safety while aligning with environmental stewardship objectives.

Background/Analysis

Current State of Beach Access Points

Saugeen Shores has 53 designated beach access points along its Lake Huron shoreline, ranging from formal entrances at major beaches to informal pathways at road ends. Many access points lack basic infrastructure and signage, for example, some have no identifying signs, and in several locations, vegetation has encroached on pathways, making access difficult and less visible. These conditions mean that while the public can reach the waterfront, it is often unclear where public access points are, and some paths are partially overgrown or appear private. The 2022 inventory study recommended improvements to address these issues, including installing clear signage, clearing overgrown brush, improving pathways for safety, and confirming legal ownership where rights-of-way are uncertain. Overall, the current network provides widespread shoreline access, but upgrades are needed to properly delineate each access to clearly identify them as public.

Phase 1 - Short-Term Action Plan for Established Accesses

To ensure all currently established beach accesses are provided with a consistent and recognizable standard, a number of accesses have been identified for short-term maintenance, signage, and delineation actions at select locations. These actions focus on adding or replacing

signs, installing property delineators (posts or markers to define pathways or parking areas), and clearing minor obstructions. All recommendations in Table 1 will be accomplished within the 2026 operating budget approved through the Business Plan.

Table 1: Recommended Short-Term Actions (below) lists the access points prioritized for immediate improvements, along with their location and the specific actions to be taken in the coming season:

Access Point ID	Location (Address)	Recommended Actions (Short Term)
#5	167 Saugeen Beach Road	Clear brush; install delineator posts; install access point sign.
#6	173–175 Saugeen Beach Road	Clear brush; install delineators; install access point sign
#16	524 Izzard Avenue	Relocate existing sign to a more visible spot; add delineators along path
#22	141 North Shore Road	Install two access signs (one at top of stairs, one at shoreline)
#25a	135 Miramichi Bay Road	Install shoreline access sign (to mark beach entry point)
#26	191 Miramichi Bay Road	Install shoreline access point sign (mark public entry on beach)
#28	57 Bay St. (Water Treatment Plant)	Install access point sign at road entrance
#29A	Front/Island St. (south of Long Dock)	Install sign at shoreline (to identify access from the water side)
#30	End of Peel Street	Replace access signage (post and sign) once stormwater construction is complete
#40	20 Metcalfe Street	Install shoreline access sign; install road-side access point sign
#43	198 Shore Road	Install shoreline access sign (to complement existing road sign)

Access Point ID	Location (Address)	Recommended Actions (Short Term)
#44	2 Oak Street	Install shoreline access sign (to guide beach users back to this exit)
#47	326–334 Blanchfield Drive	Clear encroaching vegetation; install access point sign; install shoreline sign; add delineator posts
#51	486 Eckford Ave (Copway Trail)	Install shoreline sign; inspect existing trailhead sign and replace if needed

These measures will clearly mark public access ways, improve visibility, and direct visitors along the intended paths. Ensuring signs are present at both roadside and beachside will identify the access points from all approaches, and delineator posts will help define parking or pathway edges without extensive construction. Minor vegetation clearing will reopen pathways that have become narrow or hidden. All of these actions are relatively low-cost and can be completed by municipal staff or contractors as part of regular maintenance activities. This focused effort addresses the most critical deficiencies at established access points in time for the upcoming season.

Phase 2 - Access Points requiring further investigation

There are seven waterfront access locations that will advance in a second Phase, as they require further investigation before the Town is in a position to advance work at these locations. For instance, surveyor involvement may be required to properly delineate these access points due to overgrowth and encroachments.

Table 2: Accesses Phase 2:

Access Point ID	Location (Address)
#7	187-189 Saugeen Beach Road
#8a	203–205 Saugeen Beach Road
#8b	229 Saugeen Beach Road

Access Point ID	Location (Address)
#10	290 Saugeen Beach Road
#11a	114–116 Shipley Avenue
#50	438–448 Eckford Avenue
#52	526–534 Eckford Avenue

In 2026, work will be undertaken to delineate the boundaries of these access points and resolve any conflicting interests. Once done, a plan will be implemented to improve these access points.

Alignment with Beach Maintenance Plan & Environmental Stewardship

All proposed actions have been developed to align with the Town’s [Beach Maintenance Plan](#) (2019) and its guiding principles of environmental stewardship. The approved Plan established a zoned approach to beach maintenance and explicitly discourages heavy mechanical grooming, focusing instead on preserving natural sand movement and dune ecosystems. The maintenance, signage, and delineation program supports these principles by using light-on-the-land solutions: posting signs and markers and doing minor vegetation trimming, rather than altering the beach or dunes. Clearing overgrown access trails will be done sensitively, removing only what is necessary to allow passage. No dune structures or major excavations are proposed, consistent with protecting native vegetation that anchors sand and sustains coastal habitat.

Furthermore, better delineation of access points enhances environmental protection. By clearly marking official paths, the Town can discourage trampling of fragile areas and keep foot traffic on designated routes. Routine tasks like garbage collection and inspections at these accesses will follow the existing beach maintenance schedule, which emphasizes regular upkeep while respecting natural processes. The program’s actions are low-impact and guided by environmental best practices, ensuring that improving public access goes hand-in-hand with preserving the shoreline’s natural integrity.

Conclusion

This maintenance, signage, and delineation initiative for beach access points will improve public accessibility and safety, including clear address location information for beach users requiring assistance from emergency services. By addressing known issues (like missing signs and overgrown paths) at locations currently established as public access and investigating sites

requiring further work, the Town is taking a balanced, measured approach. These efforts directly support the goals of the [Beach Maintenance Plan](#) to provide equitable access to the waterfront without compromising environmental health. Staff will monitor the results of these improvements through the 2026 season and will work to advance the remaining 7 access points, which a goal of having all Town waterfront access points improved by 2027. This phased program ensures Council's decisions are well-informed and that resources are invested where they have the most positive impact for the community and the shoreline.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 4: Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit
- Business Plan Alignment: Community Services Division Highlight

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

Cost associated with this program are contained within the existing budget.

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