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Immediate protection of Silverleaves shoreline a shared priority



Image: (Left to right) Simon Woodland – Manager Sustainable Environment, Bass Coast Shire Council; Jordan Crugnale MP – State Member for Bass; Mayor Cr Michael Whelan – Bass Coast Shire Council; Ken Hailey – Chair Cowes East Foreshore Preventive Action Group; Darrin McKenzie – Regional Director DEECA.

Bass Coast Shire Council and the Victorian Government are working together to identify measures to protect the shoreline of Silverleaves, Phillip Island from the impacts of coastal erosion.

Bass Coast Shire Mayor, Cr Michael Whelan met with Member for Bass, Jordan Crugnale, representatives of DEECA and Chair of Cowes East Foreshore Preventive Action Group (CEFPAG), Ken Hailey on the foreshore at Silverleaves late last week to see the situation first-hand, plus discuss immediate and long-term actions.

Coastlines are dynamic environments that are constantly changing as natural processes like waves, erosion and tidal currents shape and reshape landscapes.

Council, DEECA, the community and researchers have actively monitored the Silverleaves area for many years, which has been impacted recently by significant erosion.

Without further understanding of the scientific coastal processes at Silverleaves, poorly considered works could worsen the erosion and/or transfer the issue further down the beach.

Immediate works will include natural measures such as sand renourishment and the placement of woody debris along the exposed shoreline to break up wave energy.

To understand what is happening at the site and determine adaptation options for the mid to longer term management of erosion, a Coastal Processes Study is planned for later this year.

The report will determine all options for adapting to climate-change-induced sea level rise, plus increased storm activity over coming years and decades.

The Coastal Processes Study will assess risk, inundation, existing coastal protection infrastructure, coastal processes and provide options for current management in a local context, enabling communities to understand and implement adaptation planning for current and future coastal hazards.

Since 2014, more than \$140 million has been invested into Victoria's marine and coastal environments to build resilience in communities, manage coastal hazards and adapt to climate change.

Bass Coast Shire Mayor, Cr Whelan said:

"I want to reassure Silverleaves residents that Council is highly aware of the issues and subsequent fears they are facing as their foreshore changes. We promise to do all we can to prevent any further erosion and support our community through this period.

"Council have partnered with DEECA, the community and academics to document the changes at Silverleaves for many years. This has demonstrated the area is subject to a regular pattern of winter storms which increases erosion risk, while calmer conditions over summer tend to see beach levels build up or recover. On a longer cycle spanning decades, our studies show evidence of erosion activity increasing from time to time - notably in the 1960s and mid 2010s - with quiet periods in between.

“However, Council and DEECA acknowledge that current erosion is clearly impacting areas that have been stable for decades: established vegetation, such as coastal banksias, are losing their footing on the changing shoreline.”

Quotes attributable to Jordan Crugnale MP

“We met onsite, we will continue to work together, be proactive in addressing the immediate erosion concerns and the Coastal Processes Study will provide options for mid-longer-term management and adaptation pathways.

“I want to reassure the local community that we are taking this seriously, it will be informed by the science and experts and as previously mentioned the last thing we want is to exacerbate the erosion or transfer the issue further down the beach.”

Quotes attributable to Ken Hailey, (CEFPAG):

“CEFPAG are delighted with this commitment by DECCA and Bass Council to take immediate action to protect this invaluable stretch of pristine coastline.

“We applaud Jordan, Michael, Darrin and his DECCA staff for urgently meeting on site to fully appreciate the urgency of the situation.

“It is very encouraging that DECCA and Council are working together with the community to address this problem.

“The immediate short-term measure that was agreed to push coastal debris and sand up to the remaining dune system along the whole coastline, will hopefully enable us to get through the winter and spring, giving the joint task force time to make a full assessment of more permanent options.

“There may well be other short-term options that will need to be implemented.

“The full Coastal Processes Study that will be undertaken urgently will advise the community what more permanent abatement measures could be considered.

“Residents can be assured that CEFPAG has been invited to be an integral part of any action that is proposed, and we do understand the anxiety that this issue is causing.”

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For more information please contact Bass Coast Shire Council's Communications team:

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