

Point of View: Sauble Beach facing a number of challenges

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By Jim Merriam

You have to wonder what the future holds for Sauble Beach.

Troubling signs are everywhere.

For starters you have the controversies that have always existed between the south and north ends of the beach.

Most of the waterfront south of the main street is owned and controlled by Saugeen First Nation.

On the north end it is mostly in the hands of the municipality of South Bruce Peninsula.

However, even that split became more confusing recently with a locked gate going up in one area north of the main drag that apparently is controlled by landowners. The question of beach development also is being raised again with the appearance of this gate.

Then there was the early summer posting of the water as unsafe for swimming again this year.

The question of lake pollution always comes down to discussions about private septic systems that serve the cottages and businesses in the area.

We recognize that properly-installed septic systems can be efficient for the long-term disposal of human waste, particularly in rural areas.

But Sauble Beach is no longer a rural area, nor has it been for some time. Which brings up the question of the amount of waste going into these systems at the beach, particularly in the summer months.

The issue often seems to be discussed in terms of faulty systems. It would seem more likely that the sandy ground is oversaturated with waste from private systems, both faulty and efficient. Common sense would suggest that might be happening at the beach.

Those opposed to the installation of water and sewers for the beach are justifiably concerned about high costs.

However, without such improvements, questions about the future of the beach will be answered clearly. There might not be much of a future.

Sauble is arguably one of the top three beaches in the country. The pressure for additional development will continue to build as will the issue of the conservation of the land and species that are there.

It is possible to have a pro-development stance with a solid grounding in conservation.

However, that will not happen without a modern sewer and water system in place.

-Jim Merriam