

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** Operations Committee  
**Report From:** Heidi Jennen, Supervisor of Environmental Services  
**Meeting Date:** June 16, 2025  
**Report Code:** OP-25-024  
**Subject:** Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-25-024 respecting Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup, City Council directs staff to bring forward a by-law to authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the grant funding agreement with Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

### Highlights:

- The City has been a member of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative since 2021.
- Almost 2 km of Georgian Bay shoreline runs adjacent to City amenities.
- A shoreline clean-up will occur on September 28, 2025, in conjunction with World Rivers Day.

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Green City.

### Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the City's Climate Mitigation Plan objective to promote a culture of awareness and action through education and continuous improvement.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

None.

## **Background:**

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLC), of which the City of Owen Sound is a member, received a grant award from the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks for the Great Lakes Coastal Cleanup.

GLSLC is providing the grant funding to local municipalities to partner with a community organization to implement a beach cleanup in coordination with cities around the Great Lakes Basin on World Rivers Day, 2025 (September 28). The participating municipalities are Owen Sound, Cobourg, Collingwood and Chatham-Kent.

The goals of the initiative are to:

- Reduce plastics/pollution in the Great Lakes
- Foster cross-basin collaboration
- Lift up local organizations doing this work regularly and learn how best to support
- Build public and political awareness
- Meaningfully engage the public in hands-on water quality improvement action
- Contribute to data collection efforts
- Build support for future larger-scale events

A sampling of the metrics that will be used to identify success are:

- Number of bags/kilograms of garbage collected
- Number of pieces of plastic collected
- Number of volunteers engaged
- Number of people reached through communication about the event

## **Analysis:**

Upon receiving notification of this grant award, City staff reached out to a potential community organization that had the capacity to work with the City on this initiative. The Georgian Bay Folk Society (Summerfolk) was an ideal fit due to its volunteer management abilities, connection to the potential location and long-standing partnership with the City. Summerfolk has been

held at Kelso Beach at Nawash Park since 1976, with 2025 marking the 50th anniversary.

Tentatively, the sites selected for the clean-up are the shoreline of Kelso Beach at Nawash Park and the shoreline along the Bayshore Community Centre to the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Over the next three months, the Supervisor of Environmental Services will:

- Coordinate with the community partner organization – Georgian Bay Folk Society
- Make all clean-up-related purchases and arrange services and materials for the event
- Volunteer recruitment and management (in collaboration with community partner organizations)
- Help identify other local stakeholders to engage in clean-up activities/raise awareness

The clean-up day will be September 28, 2025. Upon completion of the event, City staff will submit the data for the metrics noted above to GLSLC.

### **Financial Implications:**

This project is funded by the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLC) with a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Conservation and Parks (MECP) through a Great Lakes Local Action Fund. The grant of approximately \$11,000 provides funding to cover City staff time as well as the costs of supplies for the event, including personal protective equipment, bags, waste disposal services, signage, and printing for the volunteer training. The grant also includes a component to be paid to the Georgian Bay Folk Society for volunteer management, including the training of volunteers. The total grant amount will depend on actual costs expended.

### **Communication Strategy:**

Following the provincial announcement of this initiative and the execution of the agreement, a website will be launched for volunteer recruitment and promotion of the event.

### **Consultation:**

Manager of Parks and Open Spaces

**Attachments:**

None.

**Recommended by:**

Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works and Engineering

Pam Coulter, Director of Community Services

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Heidi Jennen at [hjennen@owensound.ca](mailto:hjennen@owensound.ca) or ext. 3223.