

Erosion forces bridge rebuild

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The Coburg Peninsula bridge will need better protection before next winter, says Colwood's chief engineer. A spit that blocked waves washed away last winter.

Dunc Malcolm/News staff

Colwood will be keeping a watchful eye on the Coburg Peninsula.

Heavy winter storms in January whipped sand off the banks, leaving a nearly four foot drop in elevation. That left the bridge exposed to stronger waves and debris and by mid-January holes appeared in the road.

"There is a strong desire to ensure mother nature doesn't have her way (with the infrastructure)," said Coun. Gordie Logan.

Council voted to approve work on the bridge, as well as efforts to protect the sewer lift station located under the public washrooms. While not in immediate danger, the low elevation of the lift station could cause trouble if stormy weather and high tides combined, explained city engineer Michael Baxter.

What form that protection will take has yet to be decided. Most likely it will involve some rip rap — large rocks — along the shore to deflect waves but that must be done carefully, he said. Finding some way to absorb the impact of the waves rather than deflect them elsewhere along the beach is important.

A coastal engineering firm will be consulted to do surveys of the peninsula. The intent is to establish a rate of erosion. The work is expected to cost upwards of \$175,000.

Work on the bridge will most likely happen in August, Baxter said, to give stakeholders enough time to review the best course of action.

The north end of the bridge needs to be rebuilt as the existing base is more than 50 years old. It was constructed with random fill, he explained. Logs and stumps were used to build the abutment up, leaving it prone to washouts when exposed.

Any work needs to be done before October to prepare for the stormy season, Baxter said.

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