



SUMMARY REPORT

June 2026

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The symposium presented in this report was hosted in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

In Mi'kma'ki, the authors of this report are surrounded by thousands of kilometers of coastline. The Mi'kmaq people are the original caretakers of these lands and these shorelines. Before colonizers began to section off and privatize land, the coast was a place of free movement for the Mi'kmaq. For generations, and long before European colonization, the Mi'kmaq have understood that the coast is dynamic and always changing, and they have lived in a way that respects this.

We also recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years. African Nova Scotian communities have experienced environmental racism and been forced to live on the region's most inhospitable lands including the expulsion and disenfranchisement from coastal spaces.

We further recognize and acknowledge that our symposium speakers are coming to us from coastal spaces that have been, and continue to, suffer the effects of historical colonization as well as modern forms of exclusion from and participation over coastal spaces they call home. We recognize these historical and contemporary realities because they have played a central role in shaping current predominant legal frameworks and property regimes that inform the many issues of coastal access the researchers, practitioners and advocates at this symposium seek to address.

INTRODUCTION

Coastal access is the ability for people to travel to, and laterally along, the coastline from both the seaward and landward side (sometimes considered as perpendicular and parallel access). Access to coastal spaces - specifically a lack thereof - is a problem shared by coastal communities around the world that are impacted by the high desirability of coastal spaces, coastal development, tourism, dynamic coastal processes (i.e., erosion), and the impacts of climate change. Coastal access issues are often rooted in historical social injustices that are perpetuated today resulting in complex policy problems. Globally, less than 16% of the world's coastlines remain mostly unimpacted by humans. Therefore, understanding how humans share the coast is imperative to both social and ecological coastal sustainability and the maintenance of robust, high-quality, equitable coastal access.

On March 26th, 2026, the Coastal Access Working Group (CAWG), based in Nova Scotia, Canada, hosted the inaugural International Coastal Access Symposium (ICAS). This virtual symposium invited speakers from around the world to share stories, research, and policy insights and advances related to protecting, preserving, and enhancing public coastal access. Hosted in partnership with the Ecology Action Centre, Dalhousie University and East Coast Environmental Law, this free event aimed to enhance public discussions about coastal access and create an opportunity for participants to learn from each other and contribute to ongoing advancements in coastal access research and advocacy.

The symposium was structured around four sessions of live presentations, each with time for questions, discussions, and informal networking.

GOALS & VALUES OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The symposium was guided by a strong commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and knowledge sharing. Throughout the planning process, the CAWG prioritized making the symposium free and available to anyone interested in joining by removing financial barriers (beyond an internet connection) and encouraging participation from a wide range of communities.

Coastal access is a complex and multifaceted issue shaped by various legal, environmental, systemic, and historical factors. The symposium was designed to bring together diverse perspectives and to foster meaningful dialogue and mutual learning. Speakers and participants from different parts of the world generously contributed their ideas, compared experiences, identified common challenges, and explored new ideas for addressing coastal access issues in different contexts. This included sharing real examples of solutions such as new policies, community-led projects, legal approaches, and tools like maps or digital platforms that help people find and understand access points. In fostering both critical reflection and practical exchange, the symposium aimed to build a growing toolkit of resources and strategies that participants can carry forward.

Another key goal was to support ongoing work beyond the event itself. The symposium was intended not only as a one-day gathering, but as a starting point for continued collaboration, research, and advocacy. As a result, CAWG has designed and documented the symposium in a way that could serve as a 'blueprint' for others, and make all presentations and outputs of the event freely available long after the symposium ended.

SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS

This section of the report provides an overview of the symposium presentations, highlighting each speaker's talk and the discussions that followed. Organized by speaker, each summary covers the main points of the presentation and the key discussions that occurred. These summaries aim to capture both the content delivered and the interactive exchange of ideas that characterized each session.

For full speaker presentations and discussions, visit the [ICAS 2026 Presentation Playlist \(YouTube\)](#).

Mike Kofahl, LL.B

Atlantic Canada | *Staff Lawyer, East Coast Environmental Law*

Session 1-1



Mike Kofahl is a staff lawyer at East Coast Environmental Law whose work focuses on coastal and marine environmental law and policy. Mike's interest in coastal access stems from his legal research on coastal protection and management law, and his advocacy for stronger laws in Atlantic Canada for the coast. Mike has produced public legal education materials and reports about coastal access and delivered community workshops that explored how coastal access intersects with other areas of coastal governance.

Mike kicked off the symposium with a presentation exploring why public coastal access is an important part of coastal protection and management, and how environmental laws and policies in Atlantic Canada contribute to public coastal access. Drawing on his experience as an environmental lawyer, he explained that coastal access is not just a recreational or public rights issue, but a key component of broader environmental governance. He highlighted how, in many jurisdictions around the world, legal frameworks explicitly integrate public access into coastal protection strategies—through requirements for access points, preservation of movement along shorelines, and even protections for coastal views. These measures, he noted, are often tied to larger efforts to address challenges such as climate change, sea level rise, erosion, and storm surges.

Key Resources: Prince Edward Island Coastal Access Law & Policy — [Charlottetown Workshop Summary Report](#)

[East Coast Environmental Law Website](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "Is there a possible path to a less fragmented coastal governance approach in Nova Scotia, perhaps based on examples of what other jurisdictions are doing?"

Kofahl: "There are lots of great examples out there. The one I always refer to, because it's been around for so long, and it is quite detailed, is the California coastal act. There are also coastal protection and management regimes, whether it's a stand-alone law or a set of laws, sometimes it can be a statewide or countrywide policy that requires local governments to implement certain policy objectives or goals or set certain conditions around coastal protection, but also coastal access."

Audience Question: "How can coastal access laws and policies support community-led conservation - such as traditional fishing and marine mammal stranding response - without imposing undue risk on communities or intertidal ecosystems?"

Kofahl: "A lot of complicated things in there, but the issue of risk is an interesting one. When I think about risk from a legal perspective, I think about liability and liability to whom. In Nova Scotia, there's the anglers act but there's lots of informal agreements between private property owners and community members, or individual fishers, or just the public at large. I actually live on the Margaree River in Cape Breton, which has a famous salmon museum, and I've had people just cross my field, my yard, and go fish. What is my risk as a property owner then, if I'm just allowing people onto my property, or to cross my property? I'm not putting up any signs, what is my risk to me if they get injured, or if they destroy something, or they cause damage to the environment? I think it's just about having conversations such as "not everything has to be a policy or a law."

Kira Clingen

Session 1-2

Gulf of Maine, USA | PhD Candidate, University of Cambridge

Co-authors: Keoni Rodriguez¹, Mercy Adhiambo¹, Vanessa Cordova¹ & Rai Saad Khan¹; ¹Planet Reimagined



Kira Bre Clingen is a landscape architect whose work focuses on communicating climate change impacts and adaptation strategies, including the ways that sea level rise and storm surge will reshape coastal access. Born and raised on the Gulf of Maine in the United States, she is currently a PhD candidate in Architecture at the University of Cambridge and Research Affiliate at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design's Office for Urbanization.

Kira presented on a 2021 report authored by Planet Reimagined Fellows, of which she was a contributing author, examining how different countries manage coastal access and finding that current approaches are inadequate. Her presentation called for a new rights-based global framework for coastal access that treats the coast as a shared public resource and is flexible to adapt as coastlines continue to change. It concluded with a call to develop shared visual tools, including a global map of current coastal access policies, as a starting point toward establishing common knowledge and a shared framework for public coastal access.

Key Resources: Coastal Public Access Paper — [Ecological Challenges of the Coast Including Access, Development, Equity, Climate Change and Conservation.](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "What kind of role should professionals, like architects and engineers, play in permitting for the coast? Would a condition to have approval from a professional be helpful?"

Clingen: "I think oftentimes architects and engineers have technical expertise that is ahead of existing best practices, and so in some cases, yes! In other cases, design reviews and public review can limit and obstruct new design approaches, and often time constraints in both professions (billable hours, client constraints) can simply rebuild the status quo."

Audience Question: "You mentioned in the Mauritius case study that some land owners do build obstructions that impair coastal access and a proposed solution is the designated protection zone. What role does (increased) coastal law enforcement play in this solution to ensure the green zone is maintained?"

Clingen: "Private landowners may not allow anyone to go on their land, even if it is just to connect two disjointed parts of a path. And so to ensure the green zone is maintained is really an effort that I think has to include not only the adjacent landowners, but also a national authority, to ensure that efforts like that aren't just constructed, but they're actually maintained and stewarded."

Jesse Reiblich, PhD

Session 2-3

Rhode Island, USA | Assistant Professor, University of Rhode Island

Co-authors: Dr. Melva Treviño Peña¹ & Dr. Nathan Vinhateiro¹; University of Rhode Island¹



Dr. Jesse's research interests include coastal access and related topics, including the public trust doctrine and surf break protection. Most recently he worked on a research project studying the effectiveness of Rhode Island's shoreline access law and published a review of public access emerging issues and potential solutions. He also recently published a book chapter about how technology can protect access, and has a manuscript under review studying how social and environmental data can assess coastal access's vulnerability to sea level rise. Jesse approaches coastal access from the legal perspective and teams with interdisciplinary researchers to address these issues.

Jesse presented on a research project that analyzed the 2023 Rhode Island access law that enshrines the right of the public to ten feet above the high-water mark. The project studied whether the shoreline access law has successfully increased the ability of user groups to access the shore. Additionally, it assessed whether the defined demarcation of the shore is sufficient—i.e. is the line in the sand drawn in the right location or should it be further upland? He provided context on how the law was designed to clarify longstanding uncertainty around the boundary between public and private coastal rights, with the goal of reducing conflicts and improving access for activities like walking, fishing, and recreation.

His analysis focused on whether the legislation has meaningfully increased shoreline access for different user groups, drawing on early observations, stakeholder input, and usage patterns, while also identifying ongoing challenges such as limited public awareness and enforcement issues. Overall, Jesse highlighted that while the law marks important progress, its effectiveness will depend on how well it responds to both social dynamics and the evolving nature of coastal environments.

Key Resources: [After Rhode Island's Shoreline Access Law, What's Next? Westerly Sun.](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "Could you tell us more about some of the advocacy/community efforts to preserve access?"

Reiblich: "There's a facebook group that's very famous here in Rhode Island called Saving Rhode Island Coastal Access, and then there's a similar Instagram page that is very contentious. People are always posting plats, and have really contentious arguments and legal arguments over legal controversies and the access."

Audience Question: "What was the public discourse around the law at the time? Was there pushback? Was there advocacy efforts to get this over the finish line?"

Reiblich: "It was a very popular piece of legislation. It actually passed even the summer before when it didn't pass all the way. It was passed by one house unanimously. So it's very popular even within lawmakers, but it's a very, very important thing for Rhode Islanders. You have the few people who are lucky enough to own coastal access, or coastal properties, and then you have everyone else who wants to get to the ocean."

Audience Question: "Have there been cases where expanded shoreline access conflicted with protection of intertidal ecosystems, such as wrack zones, nesting areas, or nursery habitats, and how were those conflicts addressed?"

Reiblich: "There's more in the law that does talk about things like that. I know the most contentious thing was coastal squeeze, and built structures. So, if someone did put a seawall up, you don't have the right to go up on the seawall 10 feet above. As far as conflicting intertidal and habitat zones, I am unaware of any. I know there's all sorts of issues with piping plovers in certain places, and there's always going to be an issue with conflicting uses. But this is all subject to reasonableness and to other restrictions."

Ulsía Urrea Mariño, MSc

Session 2-4

Mexico, North America | Member of Nodes C24-BIKIMI and A60-Altamare, Red Iberoamericana de Gestión y Certificación de Playas (PROPLAYAS)



Ulsía is a Mexican Ph.D. candidate in the Coastal and Marine Systems Sciences program at the Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, in the USA. She is dedicated to studying the integrated management of coastal zones in Latin America, with a focus on the privatization of the Mexican coastal zone from administrative and factual perspectives. As a member of the Ibero-American Network for Beach Management and Certification (PROPLAYAS, Spanish acronym), she has collaborated in the project “Democratic Beaches.” She has also been interviewed by the press several times about her work-related beach access issues in Mexico.

Ulsía presented on Mexican coastal zone beach privatization and analyzed it from two perspectives. The first, called administrative privatization, is implemented through administrative acts that regulate the coastal zone, establishing categories of beneficiaries and permitted uses, according to a hierarchy based on national security, and economic and tax interests. The second, called per fact privatization, examines how everyday practices produce social phenomena such as segregation and the exclusion of people from public-use spaces, including beaches, through discriminatory practices based on skin color, place of residence (whether domestic or foreign), or type of employment (formal or informal). The presentation elaborated on both types of privatizations and their implications for access to and the provision of free transit on Mexican beaches.

Key Resources: [PROPLAYAS Network](#), [Linkedin](#), [Instagram](#) & [Facebook](#)

[Sources of information for the management of coastal territory in Mexico.](#)

[Privatization of the Mexican Coast, the Case of the Municipality of Solidaridad, Quintana Roo.](#)

[Fuentes de informacion para la gestion del territorio costero y su relacion con la coordinacion intergubernamental en Mexico.](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "I'm particularly interested in how foreign developers from elsewhere in North America are advertising private access on public beaches. Is there any enforcement in Mexico of that type of advertising? Do conflicts arise when people buy properties expecting private access and then find out it's public?"

Urrea Mariño: "Yes, there is local advocacy to first try to inform local people of what is happening. Because, as you mentioned, you cannot block or deny the advertisement outside, because that advertisement doesn't happen in Mexico, it happens in the U.S. and Canada. I'm not aware of any public enforcement to avoid or try to restrict that kind of fake advertising, to be honest. When they arrive in Mexico, it's more through social media and some newspaper news, rather than something that enact or enforcement of law."

Audience Question: "We have discussed with realtors in Nova Scotia that there's a public access point here, or that this property has been traditionally used for 100 years as access to the beach. But when you sell it, they are not including that information, and so the purchaser becomes the person who receives this problem, and the community is really angry at them. And I wonder, is there a way forward on this? And I wonder if there's a way to create an obligation for real estate agents to investigate and report in their advertising, like, the nature of public access related to the property that they are selling."

Urrea Mariño: "To be honest, I don't know. I don't think so, because some advocacy groups may say that but as far as I know from the academia, for the legislation, and also the advocacy groups, it's not happening. From the real estate point of view, I conducted this research more than 10 years ago, but I updated it, and it's a worsened situation. These real estate agents say, no, actually, we don't care about these local conditions, unless it's something that is threatening our business. If not, it's like, let it be."

Devon Taylor, PhD

Session 3-5

West Indies, Jamaica | President, Jamaica Beach Birthright Environmental Movement (JaBBEM)

Co-authors: Damion Coombs¹, Kevin Gallimore¹, Marven Dunn¹, Wilbourn Carr¹, Charlene Castle¹, Michael Downer¹, Paul Roberts¹, Amanda Arbouin¹, Camala Thomas¹, Winston Monroe¹ & Monique Christie¹;

¹Jamaica Beach Birthright Environmental Movement (JABBEM)



Dr. Devon Taylor is by training a biomedical scientist in the field of immunology from Steer Town, St. Ann, a Northern coastal town in Jamaica. He is a social, economic and environmental justice advocate with interest in community deconstruction, rising wealth inequality, land rights, and the exclusion of indigenous and vulnerable people from environmentally critical and economically valuable ecosystems, particularly beaches and rivers to create environmentally unsustainable infrastructure projects. Devon is an environmental defender and an advocate for the right of nature status for beach ecosystems, seas and rivers as an environmental tool to

protect nature. Devon is also a founding member of the environmental justice movement Jamaica Beach Birthright Environmental Movement (JaBBEM), which is an equal rights and environmental justice movement that seeks to undo and replace discriminatory beach access, land, and use of the sea policies that are targeted against the Jamaican people.

Devon's presentation was on plantation tourism and beach rights. He described that the Jamaican coastline is 494 miles long, but only about 2.8 miles of it are composed of beaches accessible to the Jamaican people. Under the colonial era Beach Control Act of 1956 (BCA-1956) Jamaicans have no inherent right to swim, bathe, fish, or to walk along the shoreline. Enacted six years before Jamaica's political independence, the BCA-1956 treats the coast as a site for extraction of nature, labor, and community life rather than as a shared national heritage. A big topic of conversation during the presentation was how this logic persists through accelerated privatization driven by resort development and tourism. Devon also discussed the work of JaBBEM, which is a movement unbounded by colonialism and confronts these systems of oppression by challenging the racial, economic, and land-based inequities that sustain modern plantation tourism. At its core, the organization aims to liberate the coastline as a place of levity for the Jamaican people and as a natural entity with inherent rights to exist.

Key Resources: [JaBBEM Network](#), [Instagram](#) & [Facebook](#)

Why can't Jamaicans access their own beaches? [YouTube Video](#) & [News Article](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "Can you talk about any strategies JABBEM has used that have been especially effective?"

Taylor: "The legal strategy of anchoring, disposition, or the attempt at disposition in the court. Whenever a developer comes in and identifies, or the government sells a piece of land, of course, or a private person to build a hotel where people were using these trucks and roadways, we immediately move in, and we file a case in the court and kind of hold it up until the court resolves the issue. And we have really been expanding on that since JABBEM came about 3 years ago."

Audience Question: "What have been the movements biggest challenges and biggest successes so far? Is there momentum?"

Taylor: "The biggest challenge is the government's refusal to protect people and the environment. The success is the mobilization of the communities and legal challenge for rights to the sea that stops complete displacement."

Audience Question: "I'm curious how your work is received in the community and in the communities around you, or whether there's resistance to what you are trying to do?"

Taylor: "We use a lot of local media, and we have a very good environmental defender and local station, [IRIE FM](#), who gives us airtime. We really try to go to as many talk shows that we can get on, and we engage with them. We are very engaged with the government as well. Everything that they put out, we counteract it with press releases, and just mobilize other NGOs. We have a cluster of NGOs called the advocates network in Jamaica, where many of the civil society will really converge, and we use those spaces in order to broaden the message across the island as well."

Andre Joseph-Witzig, BSc

Grenada, Caribbean | Technical Advisor, Grenada Land Actors Inc.

Session 3-6



Andre Joseph-Witzig is a Grenadian environmental specialist. His BSc is in Life Sciences and Marine Biology from the St. Georges University, and he has a Masters in Coastal Science and Policy from the University of California, Santa Cruz. His research has focused on coastal ecosystem services and monitoring beach erosion. He has contributed to climate change and coastal zone management policy and interventions in Grenada, together with international agencies and the Ministry of the Environment. He is also a member of a local NGO Grenada Land Actors, which is challenging destructive coastal mega-tourism developments which are taking place in the most sensitive parts of the country.

Andre's presentation explored recent and emerging coastal access issues on the island of Grenada in the Eastern Caribbean. Although there is a history of public opposition against the restriction of coastal access in Grenada's past, recent mega resort construction and unplanned large scale industrial developments are threatening community livelihoods, coastal access and the destruction of coastal resources. These issues are taking place in some of the most sensitive parts of the country including the island's only [Ramsar](#) protected wetland, and in and around the habitat of the Grenada Dove, one of the most endangered birds in the world.

There was a focus on challenges to these developments by local community and NGOs, both in terms of legal action and protest. In many cases the Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) for these developments have been brought into question, as well as local planning frameworks which have prevented public consultation and involvement. There was also a mention of these issues being exacerbated by climate change – due to the destruction to some of these sites by Hurricane Beryl in 2024.

Key Resources: [Grenada Land Actors](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "For ESIA's of coastal development that do occur, is coastal access one of the factors that must be considered or is that a discretionary factor? What are the specific triggers for an ESIA of coastal development?"

Joseph-Witzig: "So in the case of the three developments, we reviewed the EIAs for each one. And in many cases, any reference to coastal access was very cursory. People started complaining about coastal access, or the fact that the development was approaching coastal access, and the planning development authority started coming out and saying, hey, you need to do something about coastal access in this area. But unfortunately, it is very cursory. It doesn't take into account what historical access might have been in these areas, and in some cases, we had allowed access, where, again, people have been using that area multiple times for livelihoods or things that are in the past. Those things are not well captured. We have a case where specifically the existing access was encroached upon and has been lost. And in the other two, there's actually a physical danger of losing access to the beach. So it's not a strong part of the EIA, and it's not mandated, I would say."

Audience Question: "I was wondering if you could maybe, speak a little bit to how your understanding of the rights in Grenada for coastal access has kind of evolved, like, how you've come to understand that?"

Joseph-Witzig: "I think we do have this notion, and it often gets repeated by politicians, for example, that the coast belongs to everyone, and no one can own the coast, and the access should be maintained. But again, the enforcement implementation is just not there. In the past, growing up here, I would take it for granted that you can go to any beach. It's only really when you start trying that you might actually see that it's not so easy to do that. In some cases, it might be a private landowner that owns the access and they might have put a fence up or something like that. Or in some cases, I've seen that with massive coastal developments or they have actually blocked access to an existing beach by completely building over the access, and now you have to go and ask permission to access that area."

Patricia Manuel, PhD

Session 4-7

Nova Scotia Canada | Retired Professor, Dalhousie University

Co-authors: Hannah Harrison¹ & Nicolas Winkler²; ¹Dalhousie University, ²Ecology Action Centre



Dr. Patricia Manuel is a retired Professor of Planning at Dalhousie University with post-retirement appointments in the School of Planning and the Marine Affairs Program. As a geographer and environmental planner, with expertise in wetlands, watersheds, coastal systems, and climate change adaptation, Patricia supports communities in their efforts to ensure environmentally responsible land use and development. While working in coastal places, Patricia has also studied coastal access, including working with students and colleagues to build an inventory of publicly owned access around Nova Scotia's coast. An inventory is a necessary tool for protecting access in a province where public coastal access cannot be taken for granted.

Patricia's presentation was on building an inventory of public coastal access in Nova Scotia. Coastal access is critical to the identity of coastal communities. In Nova Scotia, coastal land below the normal high tide line is Crown land and available for public use, but most of the land above the tide line is privately owned; only 14 percent is public land. Routes across public land are unevenly distributed around the province, so people often use undeveloped private land to reach the shore. These traditional routes are increasingly strained by development and conflict. Patricia went on to talk about building an inventory of coastal access points along Nova Scotia's coast, and how it is an essential tool for understanding coastal access and developing strategies to address diminishing access due to changing coastal land use and climate change impacts. She described the inventory and its application to identify access inequity, access at risk of climate change impacts, potential public-private land access conflicts, potential conflicts with nature conservation, and priority areas for increasing public access.

Key Resources: [Summary Report: Coastal Access Workshop on Building Strategies and Relationships for Connecting with the Shore](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "When the inventory is complete, are you planning to do any awareness communications or community advocacy to share your findings and use them to encourage change?"

Manuel: "We sure hope so. We haven't got a strategy for that yet, but we sure would like to work on one. Right now, it's this partnership between Ecology Action Centre and Dalhousie University and our students, and it's not even a formal partnership. It's just because we all have this love of coastal access, we're obsessed by it, in a way, and we came together around it."

Audience Question: "You had mentioned equity and factoring equity into some of the inventory, and I know equity has been a big theme through some of the presentations, today, and I'm just wondering what that looks like in the inventory project."

Manuel: "One of our students two years ago was looking at equity and she took the work that Rachyl [MacPhail] first did in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The province has actually mapped communities where there are boundaries around them on a map based on, sort of historic boundaries and the way that communities define their own boundaries. And these are places that exist, they may be a municipality all by themselves, in which case they'd be very tiny, but they largely exist within other municipalities, which then exist within these counties. And what she found was that there are quite a few of these communities that have a community boundary on the coast, but they don't have any [public] coastal access.

They don't have that perpendicular access to the shore that then allows them to move, if you're approaching it from the land, along the shoreline in the public realm. Another aspect of access equity was how you get to it [the coast], do you have to drive? Or can you take the bus? Or can you walk, or can you bike? [For] most of it you need a car to get there if you live outside of a coastal community that has a shoreline? There are a lot of people in Nova Scotia who live quite close to the shore, but we don't have our own private shoreline. We have to rely on other means to get there."

Linda Locklin

California, USA | Coastal Access Program Manager, California Coastal Commission

Session 4-8



Linda Locklin is the Coastal Access Program Manager for the California Coastal Commission. Their state agency regulates coastal development in order to protect the natural and cultural resources and one of their main missions is to protect and provide public access to and along the coast. Linda has been the manager of the program since 1990 and is responsible for the entire California coast, a length of 1200 miles. Linda works with other State agencies, local governments, NGOs and Tribes to protect and provide public access for locals and visitors alike.

Linda's presentation was on coastal access along the California Coast, as well as her work with the California Coastal Commission. The California Coastal Act of 1976 mandates that the California Coastal Commission protect, enhance and provide public access to and along the 1200-mile-long California coast. They achieve this through their regulatory program, which is ensuring that new development provides public access opportunities, as well through educational materials such as the California Coastal Access Guidebooks and YourCoast.org app. The goal is to provide equitable access for everyone as well as to plan for Sea Level Rise impacts to existing facilities such as the California Coastal Trail. Linda also shared a [short video](#) at the end of her presentation, illustrating high quality access infrastructure.

Key Resources: [State of California - Ca. Coastal Commission website](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "Is the requirement to provide access to the coast or is there a requirement to provide access along the coast as well?"

Locklin: "It's both. It's to and along. And again, it's site-specific, depending upon all the various factors, but we do have a very robust system of lateral easements parallel to the shore, and they become very important in places in Los Angeles County and Malibu, which is where I've spent most of my work time over the last 25 years. What we have been hearing from many people today about the conflict between the private-public line on the dry sand beach, is the legal ambulatory mean high tide line, but when you're standing on the sand, where is that line? We are able to require, when a beachfront property owner wants to develop their property, or more likely a redevelopment. It is required that they give a public access easement from the edge of their house, or the edge of their deck. The seaward extent of their property, out to the ambulatory mean high tide line, meaning the entire sand, whether it's wet or dry, seaweed or not. We have those maps that specifically show where all those dry sand beaches are in the Malibu area, because we have had extensive issues in the past."

Audience Question: "How do you kind of build that culture of expecting access so that you do have people advocating and willing to push back on change?"

Locklin: "I would say the leadership comes at the state level, and as I was saying, that the coastal commission has authority over local governments, and so we don't have to rely on local community groups or a few people raising their hands. Instead, the state of California, through the coastal commission, we have the legal power to go after a private landowner who's not following the law. And we have enforcement powers, we have fine authority, and we have a pretty robust, legal history of ensuring that landowners follow the law. Not that we win every time, but it's very clear to property owners that there's a law, and they have to follow it. Sometimes we have to spend a lot of time in court, and sometimes we don't. The public has come to trust us and to believe that they have a role to play, and that they come to our public hearings."

Shane Orchard, PhD

Session 4-9

Aotearoa, New Zealand | Senior Research Fellow, University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha

Co-authors: Jesse Reiblich¹ & Maurício D. dos Santos²

¹Department of Marine Affairs, University of Rhode Island, Kingstown, Rhode Island, USA, ²Brazilian National Postdoctoral Program, Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie, São Paulo, Brazil



Dr. Shane Orchard is a spatial ecologist and conservation scientist based in Aotearoa New Zealand. He works as an independent consultant in biogeography and socioecology. He is the current Oceania Regional Chair for the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM), and a Senior Research Fellow and active researcher at the University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha. Shane's work focuses on developing strategies to build resilience and enhance the recovery of coastal, river and floodplain ecosystems. His main research interests are the impacts of hydrological hazards such as sea-level rise, flood and erosion regimes and their interactions with climate change.

Shane's presentation reviewed emerging issues for public coastal access in an era of climate change. He mentioned how public access to coastal environments is an often overlooked yet critical dimension of natural resource management. He also mentioned that while coastal margins are naturally dynamic and often sensitive environments that reflect interactions between land and water, climate change is accelerating the rate of change in hydrometeorological regimes and landscape evolution processes. Many of these interact with the accessibility of coastal environments for contemporary and traditional resource uses and practices; and yet there have been very few studies on these interactions. The presentation showed examples from a global review that provides an initial step towards understanding and characterising current and emerging issues affecting public coastal access. This research identified six key clusters of contemporary challenges: 1) Cumulative effects of coastal development; 2) Integrating public access with natural hazard management; 3) Coastal squeeze caused by rising sea levels; 4) Managing negative impacts of 'improved' access; 5) Recognizing customary and existing use values; and 6) Ensuring equity in public access.

Key Resources: [Public Coastal Access: Emerging Issues and Potential Solutions](#)

Discussion Highlights:

Audience Question: "My understanding is that the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement includes a policy that is intended to facilitate public access. How well has that policy been integrated into local decisions?"

Orchard: "Excellent question. So yes, we do have a good, national policy setting under the coastal policy statement. Unfortunately, as with quite a few other aspects of that coastal policy statement, its high level, and at the implementation end, it's devolved out to the regions of the country, so they all do it differently, and the idea of how well it's been implemented is really hard to gauge, because there's literally no monitoring of the change in access. People like myself are very interested in trying to fill that gap to understand how well we're doing. So, I was really interested in the inventory work. I think, setting a baseline that we can measure the landscape changes is going to be increasingly important."

Audience Question: "I was very interested in the theme from your paper around the 'when you create more access, you actually might create more problems'. So I wonder if you could speak a bit more about that theme, or if maybe you have any examples that come to mind."

Orchard: "It's a really interesting theme, I personally believe it's something we should all pay more attention to. In some respects, I think the idea of more access or protecting access against development is a little westernised in its view. It's very important in a lot of Western cultures where we've got erosion of access to beaches, but looking across the rest of the world, I've seen a lot of issues around opening up of areas due to development, and essentially it's increasing the access to that area. And you could say those forms of managing that access are in place often, so there is not a regulatory structure that can really handle or has looked at the potential downsides of opening up an area to a lot of people visiting when it hasn't been before. So, just from that point of view, if we look at this from a global perspective, we know that sensitive environments could be vulnerable. Existing uses and livelihoods and traditional uses could be vulnerable to all forms of user conflicts that are facilitated or precipitated by changes in access. Access is really quite a fundamental consideration for natural resource management, and that's sort of where my main starting point for this interest comes from."

SYMPOSIUM ATTENDANCE SUMMARY

The symposium featured a diverse, international group of speakers, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of coastal access issues. The speakers represented a range of roles and expertise, such as academic researchers/professors, legal experts, government practitioners, non-profit leaders, and community advocates. Similarly, the participants were a broad mix of researchers, students, members of government, community advocates, and professionals (figure 1).

Participant data, taken from Zoom Meeting statistics, indicates a high level of engagement throughout the day. A total of 96 unique participants logged into the symposium throughout the day, contributing to a total of 14,011 participant minutes or 233.5 participant hours. Participation was consistent throughout the day, with approximately 45 participants in attendance at any given time. On average, participants stayed logged in for 2.4 hours, suggesting that many participants stayed for multiple presentations.

Login data shows that most attendees stayed long enough to engage with one presentation. Together, these patterns suggest that the symposium successfully maintained participant interest and engagement during the whole day, and that speaker presentations spoke to issues of pressing interest to a broad range of audiences.

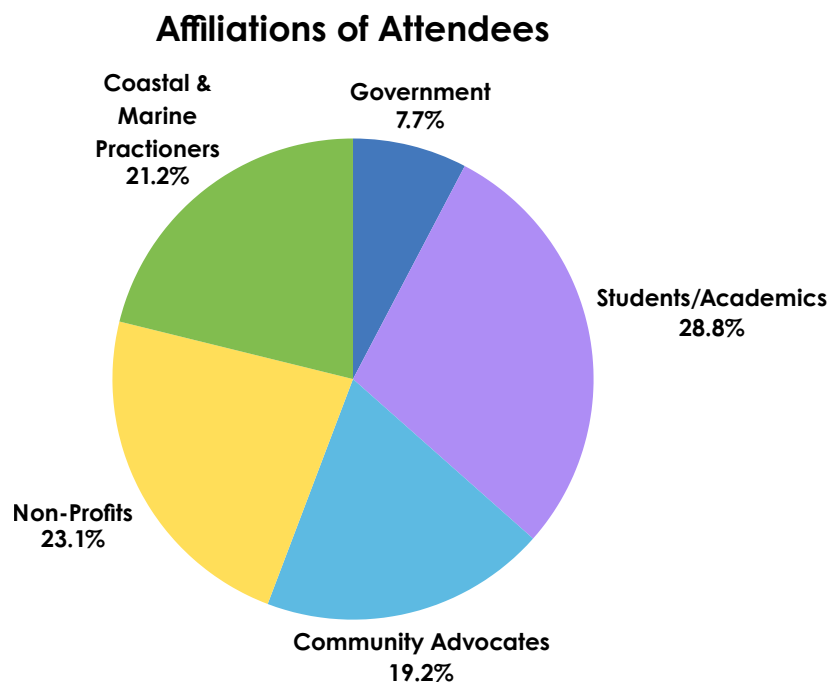


Figure 1. Distribution of attendee affiliations (self reported via ICAS registration page).

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“I came away with a deeper appreciation for how coastal access connects science, community stewardship, law, and climate change. I especially enjoyed hearing real-world examples of community-led conservation and advocacy from different regions. The symposium also sparked my interest in learning more about marine and environmental law, and I’d love to explore short-term or academic courses through institutions like Dalhousie to build on my conservation background.”

“Excellent symposium! Particularly appreciated discussions related to how very localized issues share so many similarities in a global context.”

“I loved seeing the differences and similarities between coastal access challenges and successes in different countries! Being able to learn from other regions and experts to better manage our local coastlines is such a privilege. Thank you to all the amazing speakers!”

“It was important to hear about the commonalities and therefore lessons we can learn from across the globe about what can be done to improve access. I really enjoyed the breadth of locations of speakers around the globe!”

“One theme that struck me was the need to involve communities, and the power that communities have when they are empowered.”

SYMPOSIUM OUTPUTS

The symposium was designed to achieve three key outcomes that would guide both discussion and future action on coastal access.

First, the event was recorded, and video recordings of each talk were produced with the consent of speakers. These recordings were captured throughout the day of the symposium and were made available on the EAC's website after the event concluded, to create a long term, accessible record of the presentations and discussions. These videos are available on the EAC's website.

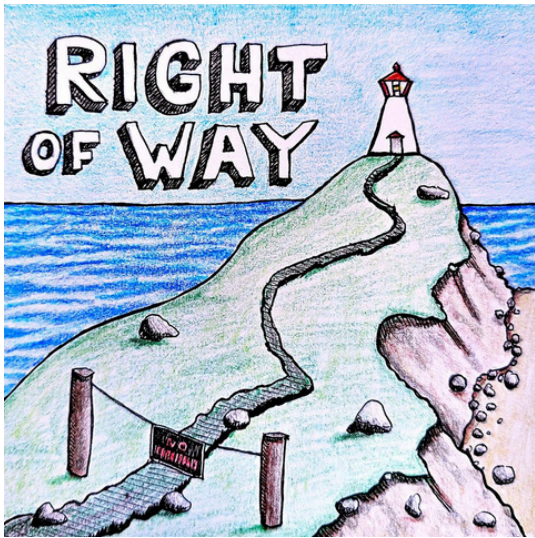
Second, a peer-reviewed manuscript was initiated with the aim of outlining a research and activism agenda on coastal access. This paper was developed by the symposium co-convenors, who invited all registrants to participate in a short survey identifying their top three to five pressing questions or challenges related to coastal access. The survey results were consolidated into a set of key priorities and emerging directions for future work in this area. Participants who contributed to the survey were invited to be recognized as co-authors on the manuscript in the spirit of fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach to shaping the field moving forward. The data collection for this output concluded on April 15, 2026 with the publication anticipated to be available sometime in 2027. To read the manuscript, please email Hannah Harrison at hannah.harrison@dal.ca or access through hannahharrison.ca.

Finally, participants were invited to contribute to a crowdsourced list of coastal access resources that supported their work. An initial version of this resource list was started in advance of the symposium, and attendees were encouraged to expand it by submitting relevant tools, publications, or organizations throughout the day. The final, compiled resource list can be found at the end of this has been added to this report, and will be distributed to all registrants in a free digital format, and is made publicly available on the EAC and Coastal Access Project websites, helping to extend the reach and impact of the symposium.

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

The following resource list was developed collaboratively as part of the symposium, drawing on contributions from speakers and participants with diverse experiences in coastal access work. The list includes a range of tools, publications, organizations, and practical resources. This curated and crowdsourced collection reflects the knowledge and priorities of the symposium and is intended to serve as a living resource. Readers are encouraged to explore these materials and consider how they may inform and strengthen their own work related to coastal access.

ADVOCACY & OUTREACH



Podcast: [Right of Way](#)

In Nova Scotia, we have a right to be on the coastline below the high-water mark, but no protected right to get there. But should we? Right of Way is a podcast that explores the issue of coastal access in Nova Scotia (and Canada more broadly) through the stories of property owners, communities, scientists, policy makers, environmental activists, surfers, hikers, and more. It is recorded, produced, and hosted by Nicolas Winkler and Hannah Harrison. It can be heard for free on most streaming platforms, or through the [Coastal Access Project](#).



Map: [CEMDA Community Map](#)

This is a community map of La Ventana and El Sargento that identifies public beach access points, natural landscapes, and historically/culturally significant sites.

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

ADVOCACY & OUTREACH



Policy Paper: [Shoreline Adaptation Land Trusts: A Concept for Rising Sea Level](#)

A proposal for "Shoreline Adaptation Land Trusts" (SALTs) which allow property owners to remain in their homes until they pass, and then pass their land into a protected land trust that removes structures.



[YouTube Video & News Article: Why can't Jamaicans access their own beaches?](#)

This video and Guardian news article explains that most Jamaicans cannot actually access their own coastline, with only a very small portion of beaches freely available to the public. It shows how colonial laws, private resort development, and gated beachfront properties have combined to restrict access



YouTube Video: Musical Advocacy Videos

[Colonial Bondage music video](#) by Keznamdi and [Beach Access Message video](#). These videos illustrate how music can be used for advocacy by raising awareness, telling emotional stories, and mobilizing audiences.

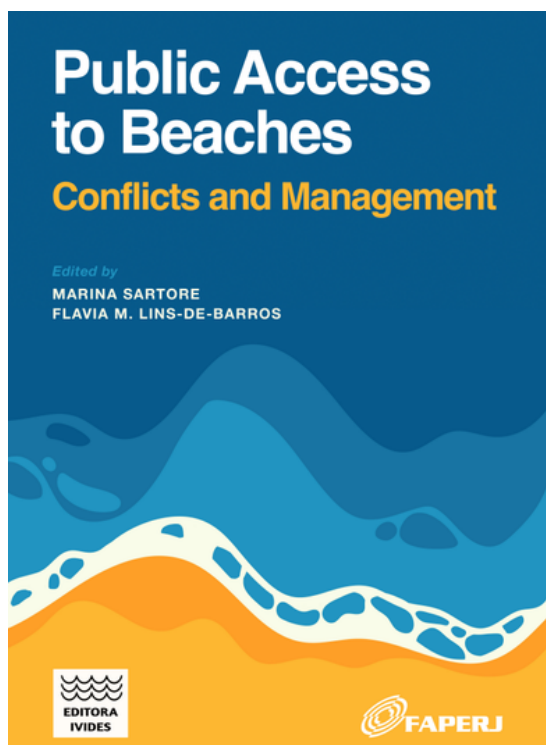
COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

ADVOCACY & OUTREACH



Petition: [Protect Beach Access for all Jamaicans & Keep Bob Marley Beach Public](#)

One of the symposium speakers, Dr. Devon Taylor, has a petition that calls on the government of Jamaica to reform legislation and guarantee public, equitable access for all citizens.

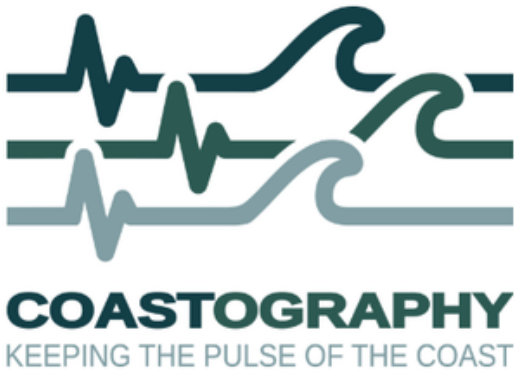


Book: [Public Access to Beaches - Conflicts and Managements](#)

This ebook brings together contributions that tackle the challenges of managing public access to beaches, focusing on conflicts, management experiences, as well as conceptual and operational tools. The chapters, which synthesize debates presented at the II Beach Access Network (BAN) Workshop held in Brazil in 2025, offer an analytical framework to address the growing pressures surrounding beach environments, particularly those arising from environmental protection imperatives, social and environmental justice claims, and competing economic interests.
doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19058568

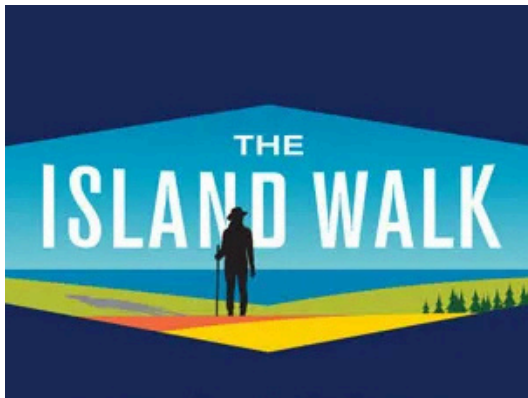
COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

WEBSITES



[The Coastography Lab](#)

As part of the Environmental Science & Resource Management program at California State University Channel Islands, the Coastography Lab seeks to increase our understanding of how coastal communities can better steward their coastal resources, the lab also focuses on coastal access and surfing resources.



[The PEI Island Walk](#)

The Island Walk in Prince Edward Island is a walking or cycling route that loops around PEI. The total distance of the walk is currently 707 kms and it takes 32 days to complete if you walk 20-25 kms per day. The route takes you along the ocean, most of the Confederation trail, red dirt roads, beaches, and side roads. You will get a mix of inland and coastal sections that allow you to see both the Island at North Cape and East Point.



[Shoreline Defender App](#)

In Walton County, USA, beachgoers have often faced uncertainty about where public rights end and where private property begins. To help with this confusion, Shoreline Defender was built. It is an app that gives residents, visitors, and property owners a clear distinction between private property and open access. The app integrates Google Maps, precise shoreline overlays, and tide markers for accurate, location-specific insights for safe beach access.

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

WEBSITES



[University of Maine Resources List](#)

The page is a comprehensive directory of organizations and resources that support the protection, management, and expansion of coastal access in Maine.



[The Surfrider Foundation](#)

The Surfrider Foundation focuses on protecting the public's right to reach and use coastlines and works through advocacy, legal action, and partnerships with decision makers. They have a network of volunteers that serve as the first response to local threats in coastal communities across the US.



[East Coast Environmental Law](#)

East Coast Environmental law is a non-profit environmental law organization that works across Atlantic Canada to support public-interest environmental protection. Their main focus is providing legal advocacy, public education, and policy support to help communities understand and address environmental issues such as coastal protection, pollution, and climate justice.



[State of California - Ca. Coastal Commission](#)

The California Coastal Commission is an independent, quasi-judicial state agency. They are committed to protecting and enhancing California's coast and ocean for present and future generations. It does so through careful planning and regulation of environmentally-sustainable development, rigorous use of science, strong public participation, education, and effective intergovernmental coordination.

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

WEBSITES



[Save Dartmouth Cove Campaign](#)

The Save Dartmouth Cove campaign is a community-led initiative that opposes a proposed project in Dartmouth Cove, Nova Scotia, that would fill part of the harbour with construction rock and waste materials. It highlights concerns about environmental damage, increased truck traffic, and the long-term loss of a valued natural and recreational space. The campaign calls for stronger protection and bylaw changes to keep the cove public and undeveloped.

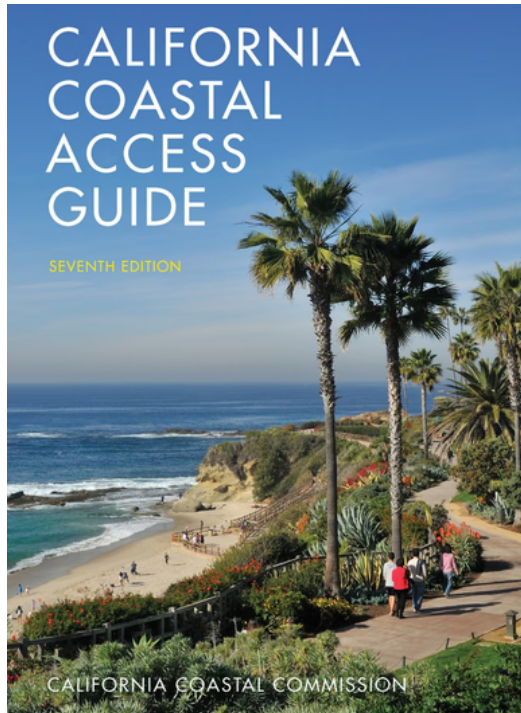


[Grenada Land Actors](#)

The Grenada Land Actors are an independent network of professionals, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Private Land Users, and Activists. Recognizing the crucial role that land plays for poverty alleviation, human wellbeing, and dignity, their goal is to monitor land governance in Grenada and to ensure that citizens' rights and interests are at the centre of land governance.

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

GUIDES



[The California Coastal Access Guide](#)

The 7th edition of the California Coastal Access Guide is considered to be an essential travel handbook for both new and regular visitors exploring California's 1,271 mile shoreline. It has up to date maps and information, and is a great guide for both beach goers, hikers, campers, swimmers, divers, surfers, and boaters. There are details on where to go, how to get there, and what facilities and environment to expect.



[The Carbon Beach Public Shoreline Access Guide](#)

The Carbon Beach Public Shoreline Access guide outlines how the public can legally access a highly privatized stretch of exclusive coastline in Malibu, California. It is a lateral access easement map in Southern California. It maps specific access points, explains parking options and directions, and clarifies that while adjacent properties are private, the beach area seaward of the ambulatory high tide line is public under California law, many of the properties have recorded public access easements along the dry sand. The document emphasizes both public rights to coastal access and the need to respect private property.

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

REPORTS

[Office for Urbanization Report](#)

This report shows different "scenarios" for the coast, which are an example of how designers can help promote public coastal access and use our skills in visualization and facilitation to "open up" future options. This report on scenarios for a barrier beach in coastal Massachusetts shows six design options, ranging from rebuilding a seawall to retreating and reconstructing the dune landscape. These scenarios are presented in public workshops to start a discussion in the community about the scenario that will work best for their future.

[Summary Report: The People's Beach Project: Sustaining Equitable Public Access in California](#)

The People's Beach Project was developed as part of the Beach Sustainability Assessment – Comprehensive Analysis for Management Project (BSA-CAMP). It highlights key themes such as public access points, areas of restricted shoreline access, and how coastal development affects the ability of communities to reach and use the coast.

[Prince Edward Island Coastal Access Law & Policy — Charlottetown Workshop Summary Report](#)

This report outlines discussions from a stakeholder workshop focused on improving public access to PEI's coastline while balancing private land rights and environmental protection. It emphasizes collaboration between government, landowners, and community groups to develop more consistent and equitable coastal access policies across the province.

[Fuentes de informacion para la gestion del territorio costero y su relacion con la coordinacion intergubernamental en Mexico.](#)

This report examines how different types of information sources (scientific, institutional, and governmental data) are used to support coastal territory management in Mexico. It highlights that coastal governance in Mexico involves many overlapping institutions across federal, state, and municipal levels, which makes coordination complex and often fragmented.

[Coastal Access Workshop on Building Strategies and Relationships for Connecting with the Shore](#)

This summary document reports on a workshop held at Coastal Zone Canada (2025) about coastal access challenges, opportunities, legal considerations, and current movements in advocacy.

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

RESEARCH PAPERS

[Managing Beach Access and Vehicle Impacts Following Reconfiguration of the Landscape by a Natural Hazard Event](#)

This is a paper on the impacts of New Zealand's 7.8 Mw Kaikōura earthquake in late 2016 which had an unexpected anthropogenic effect involving increased motorised vehicle access to beaches. The authors show how these effects were generated by landscape reconfiguration associated with coastal uplift and widening of high-tide beaches, and present analyses of the distribution of natural environment values in relation to vehicle movements and impacts. They discuss options for user groups to voluntarily reduce their impacts, the importance of interactions at the recreation-conservation nexus, and need for timely impact assessments across the social-ecological spectrum after major physical environment changes. doi:10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2022.106101

[Coastal Public Access Paper — Ecological Challenges of the Coast Including Access, Development, Equity, Climate Change and Conservation.](#)

This paper by Planet Reimagined argues that coastal access is a rapidly growing global justice and climate issue, especially as sea level rise, privatization, and development increasingly restrict public shorelines. It calls for a global, rights-based framework for coastal access that treats coastlines as a shared public good, improves mapping and transparency of coastal ownership, protects Indigenous and subsistence uses, and helps governments adapt access policies in response to climate change and sea level rise.

[Sources of information for the management of coastal territory in Mexico.](#)

This paper identifies the sources of information in México for the management of the coastal territory, and with it, explains the intergovernmental coordination, established between the federal, state and municipal levels. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58304-4_36

[Privatization of the Mexican Coast, the Case of the Municipality of Solidaridad, Quintana Roo.](#)

This paper is on the study of the privatization of the Mexican coast taking as an example the Municipality of Solidaridad in the state of Quintana Roo. The study focuses on two types of privatizing; the first is the paradigm of the new public administration (or New Public Management). doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58304-4_35

COASTAL ACCESS RESOURCES

[Public Coastal Access: Emerging Issues and Potential Solutions](#)

This global review addresses the often-overlooked topic of public access to coastal environments and resources by exploring the nature of contemporary and emerging access issues. It argues that a better understanding of access issues will help to navigate these current and future challenges as an essential yet underappreciated dimension of coastal management. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2025.106759>

ARTICLES

[Protecting Coasts Without Cooking the Planet](#)

This is an article by the Salata Institute For Climate and Sustainability at Harvard University. It argues that coastal resilience projects can, and should, be designed to address climate adaptation without significantly increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

[After Rhode Island's Shoreline Access Law, What's Next?](#)

This Westerly Sun article explains what has happened after Rhode Island passed its 2023 shoreline access law and why the issue is still not fully settled.

[What's the Caribbean Without its Beaches? But the People are Losing Access to Them](#)

The Guardian article argues that many Caribbean nations are increasingly allowing private developers—often foreign investors—to control beachfront land, which is restricting public access to beaches that have traditionally been shared spaces. The author highlights that this model of development can harm local communities, displace cultural practices, and damage fragile coastal ecosystems, particularly in small island states already vulnerable to climate change.



Ecology Action Centre

East Coast Environmental Law

Coastal Access Project

2705 Fern Lane, Halifax, N.S., B3K 4L3