

Breakwater part of international coastal erosion study

Posted on April 9, 2014 Dana MacPhail



During a dramatic storm surge in 2010, the breakwater in Little Anse was completely swamped, with destroyed the main wharf in the community and flooded the main road in the village.

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OTTAWA- An international research project that includes parts of Richmond County has released another report on its way to a complete study on the consequences of coastal erosion.

Dan Lane, a professor at the University of Ottawa's Telfer School of Management, leads the Canadian arm of "C-Change: Managing Adaptation to Environmental Change: Canada and the Caribbean." Locally, Lane has been working with the Municipality of Richmond County, Development Isle Madame Association and Universite Sainte-Anne in the five-year project, which sees each researcher

handle communications with one of the chosen communities. Lane, whose wife is originally from Arichat, is the champion for the Richmond County branch of the project.

Lane's team recently released the report of the community workshop on the failure of the Little Anse breakwater document.

"The existing breakwater structure was constructed between 1946 and 1948 with an initial 10 tonnes of concrete blocks. At a later unknown date, concrete blocks were reinforced with a poured-in-place slab and covered entirely with armour stones,"the report reads, citing a 2010 Baird & Associates report.

At a session in Little Anse in May, 2013, the report notes, the community expressed a clear desire to fight. Presented with four options for the community to adapt to severe coastal storms – protect, accommodate, retreat, and do nothing – the community recommended the most aggressive tactic.

"The preferred adaptation action of the workshop participants is to "accommodate" defined by the strategy of building a new exit road for Little Anse that would allow residents an escape route in the event of main road closure and being cut off as a consequence – an event that is becoming more frequent with storms flooding out the road and making it impassable at the crossing of the Barachois Lake," the report reads.

Participants rejected the possible strategies of retreat and of maintaining the status quo in "the urgent situation of Little Anse," the report notes.

The study partners also cite assisting the community in lobbying efforts as part of its mission.

An emergency planning table top exercise on the Little Anse case study is currently being scheduled with the help of the Nova Scotia Red Cross and would include the C-Change partners at the Université Sainte-Anne, the municipality and the Development Isle Madame for early next month.

Residents of Little Anse found themselves isolated during an early 2010 storm that washed out the only roadway in and out of the community, and left it scattered with debris.

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