



SPECIAL FEATURES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

BEACHES AND BEACH RIDGES



Photo credit: J. Obst

BEACHES AND BEACH RIDGES

What are beaches and beach ridges?

Beaches are expanses of sand, gravel or stones located above the water level along the shoreline of a water body. They are dynamic landforms, changing with deposition and erosion, variation in the energy of waves, stability of the surface and changes in water level. Beach ridges are old, inland beaches marking former high water.

Beaches and beach ridges can be important travel corridors, as they provide a unique habitat for species that may be sensitive to the drier surrounding areas. Species dependent on beaches and associated dune habitats include some tiger beetles and shorebirds, including sandpipers and terns.

BEACHES AND BEACH RIDGES

Beaches and beach ridges in the NWT

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), many species of globally rare and may-be-at-risk vascular plants use the sandy habitats. Examples of globally rare vascular plants that use the sandy habitats are the hairy braya (*Braya pilosa*), Drummond bluebell (*Mertensia drummondii*), floccose tansy (*Tanacetum bipinnatum*) and beach pea (*Lathyrus japonicas*).

Beaches, beach ridges and the unique ecosystems associated with them are sensitive to various forms of human disturbances. This includes trampling, motorized vehicle use, urban development and disruption of sand supply.

How can we protect beaches and beach ridges?

Practice “**Leave No Trace**” principles on beaches

To minimize impacts on beaches and beach ridges and associated conservation features, developers are asked to observe the following recommended best practices:

- If you are conducting land use activities, make sure you obtain current information and survey for beaches and beach ridges in your area of interest.
- Identify any impacts of your proposed activities, and determine appropriate mitigation measures to minimize impacts on beaches and beach ridges.
- Monitor and adapt your land use activities and mitigation efforts to make sure there are minimal impacts on beaches and beach ridges, including activities occurring elsewhere in the water body that could impact sand erosion and deposition, and therefore sand supply.
- Conduct a general biophysical survey, including a rare plant survey and fish habitat use assessment, for any land use activities occurring on beaches, beach ridges or associated features.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the Conservation Network Planning **webpage** for other information sheets, reports and most recent maps.

Email Conservation Network Planning at conservationplanning@gov.nt.ca