

VAST Anywhere



Training Pamphlet



**Niagara
Coastal**

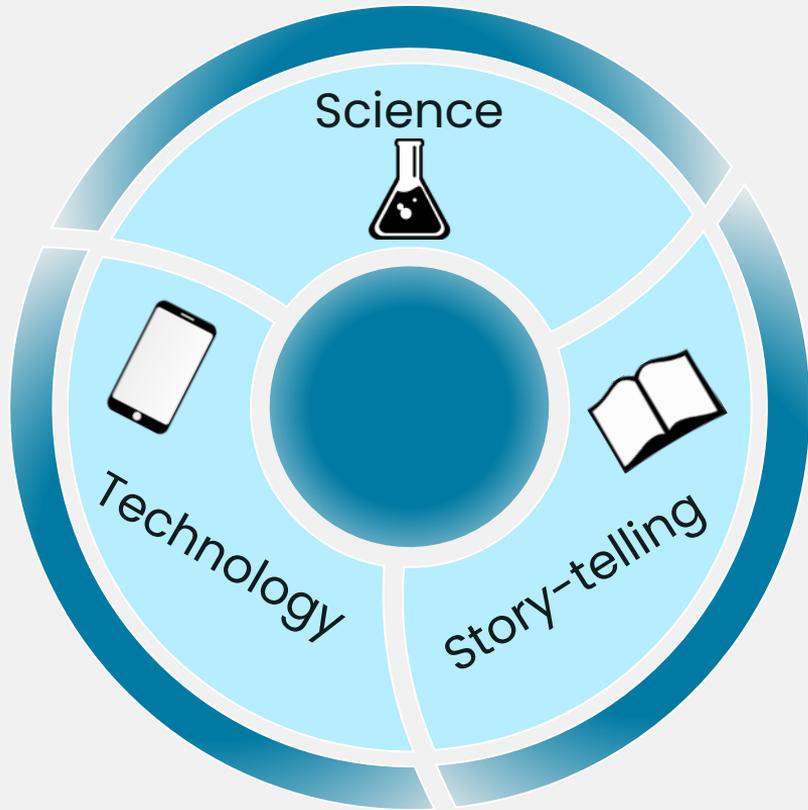


Visual Assessment Survey Tool (VAST)

Niagara Coastal's Visual Assessment Survey Tool (VAST) engages coastal citizens, youth and community groups in collecting data to fill knowledge gaps for the Lake Erie shoreline.

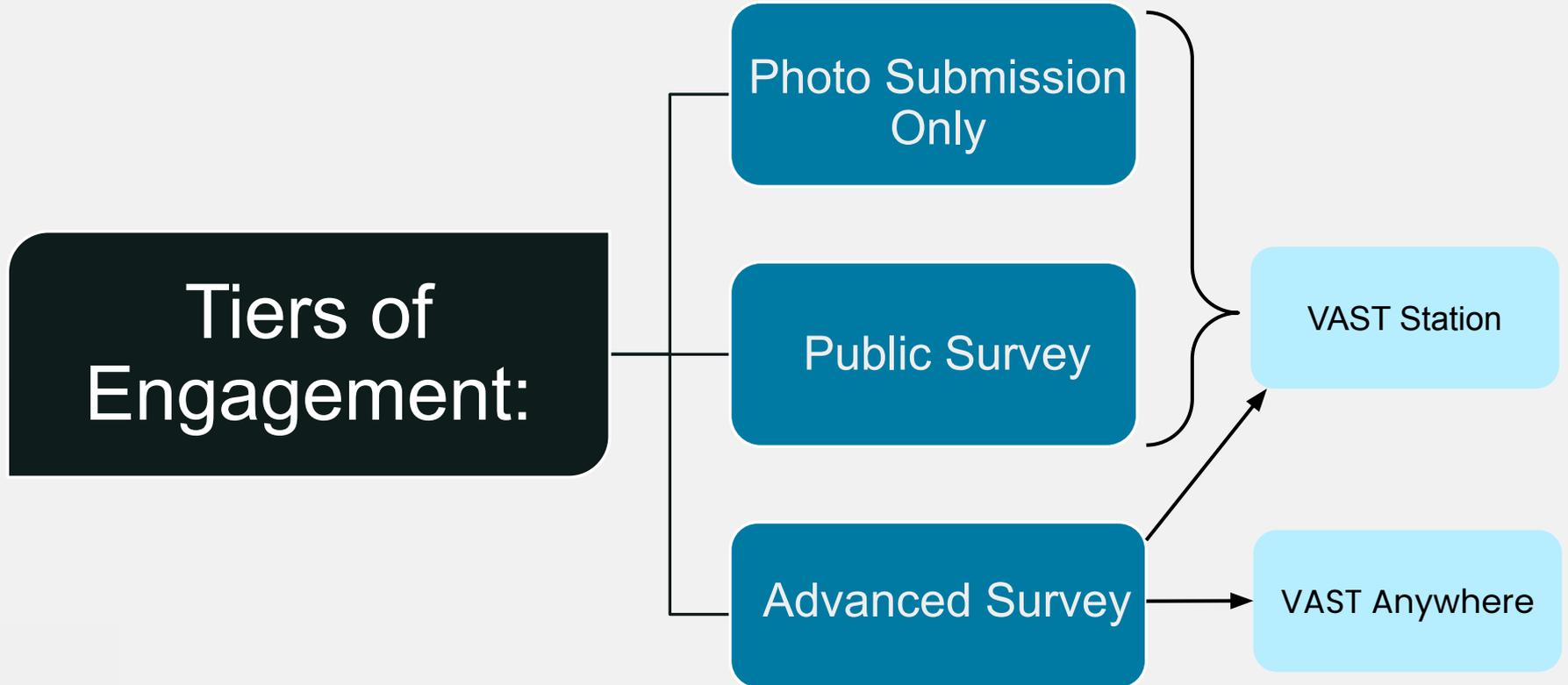


"Anytime, anywhere"



VAST

How to Get Involved with VAST?



Resources

Visual
Assessment
Survey Tool



Getting Started with VAST Anywhere

1

Choose Your Site

- Pick a site along any of the Great Lakes that you want to monitor

2

Establish Your Benchmark

- Options:
 - Record coordinates
 - Choose an obvious feature
 - Pace distances from a feature

3

Open the VAST Website

- Navigate to the Cladophora Survey tab

4

Answer the Survey Questions

- Open the **“For Office Use Only Tab”** check off that you are a **Trained Volunteer**
- This will give you a different set of questions

5

Take Images of the Shoreline

- Images East and West parallel to the shoreline and towards the Lake
- Take **ALL Images in Landscape AT EYE LEVEL**

6

Review Answers and Submit!

- Review the answers and follow the tips in the protocol.
- **Submit!**





Reeb's Bay June 10, 2021



Morgan's Point June 10, 2021



Step 1: Establish Your Benchmark

A Benchmark is important so that images are taken from the same location each week!

1. Choose your monitoring site
 - ▶ It can be any site on the Great Lakes!
2. Establish your benchmark. 3 Options:
 - a. Choose a suitable location and take GPS coordinates (Best Option)
 - b. Choose a stable feature as your benchmark (rocks, fence posts etc.)
 - c. Count paces from an obvious feature and record the direction

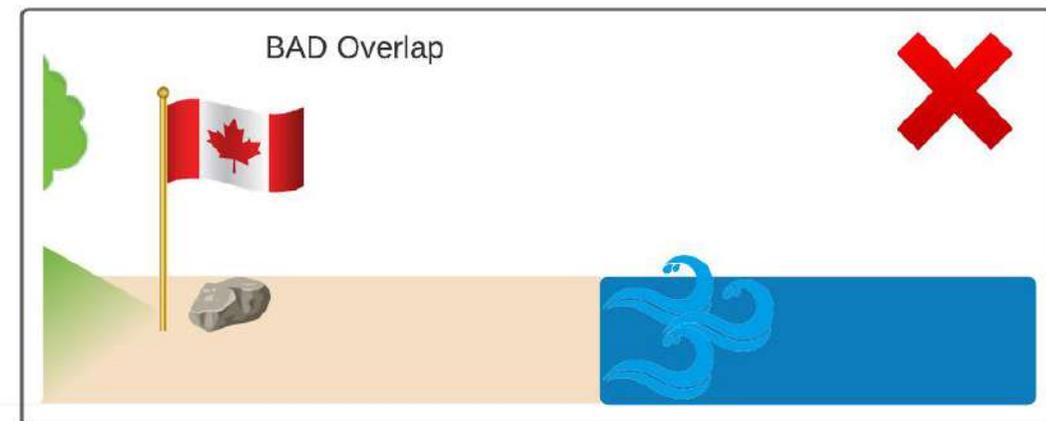
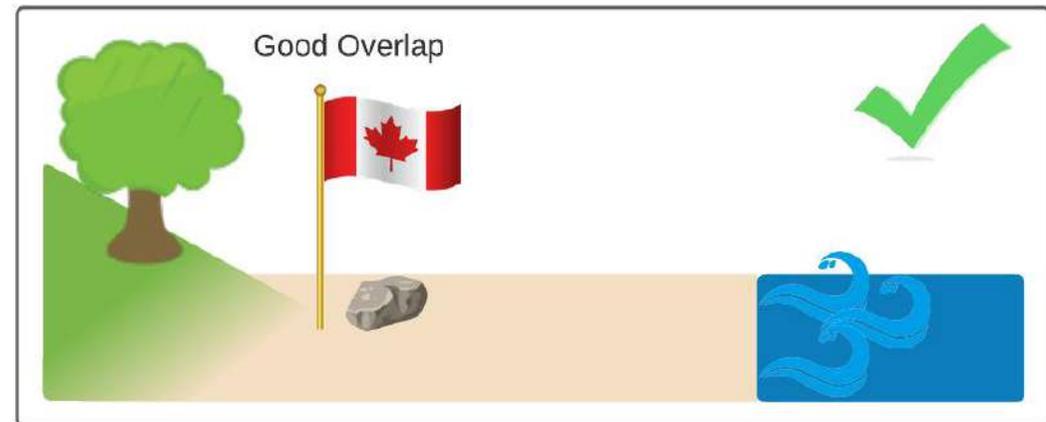
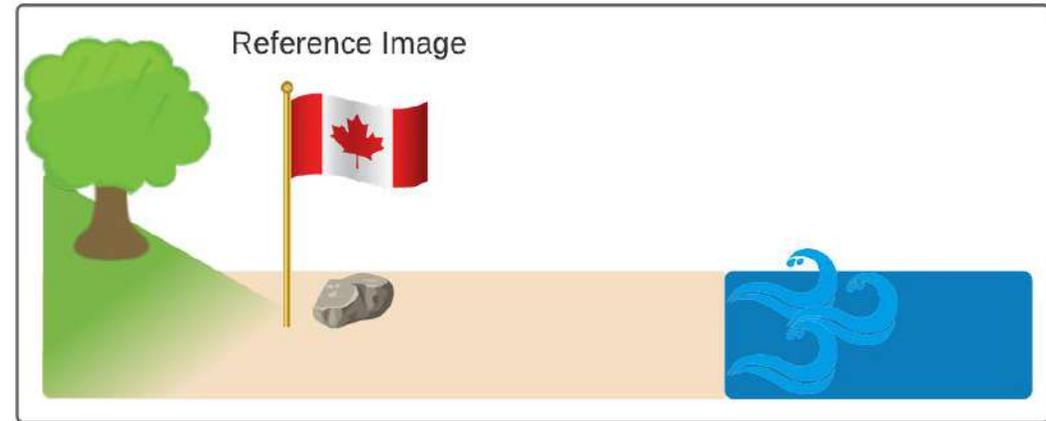


Send your proposed site and benchmark location to the Citizen Science Coordinator for **approval BEFORE** beginning the survey



Tips:

- Ensure images taken from your benchmark provide useful information
- Use trees, buildings or other stable features to line up your image field of view
- Keep a reference image available to compare your image.



Step 2: Complete the Cladophora Survey

1. Open Niagara Coastal's VAST Webpage on your phone
 - Navigate to the Cladophora Survey tab
2. Answer the survey questions
 - On the first page of the survey under the FOR TRAINED VOLUNTEERS ONLY Group, check off "Yes" to indicate that you are a trained volunteer.
 - Under Survey Type choose VAST Anywhere
 - Use one of the two options to record your location
3. Standing at your benchmark, take one image **AT EYE LEVEL** looking to your Left, right and Towards the shoreline
 - **Note:** Keep images Left and Right looking **parallel** to the shoreline
4. Review your answers and submit the survey!

Check out your submitted photos on the Explore tab of the VAST WebPage!



Tips:

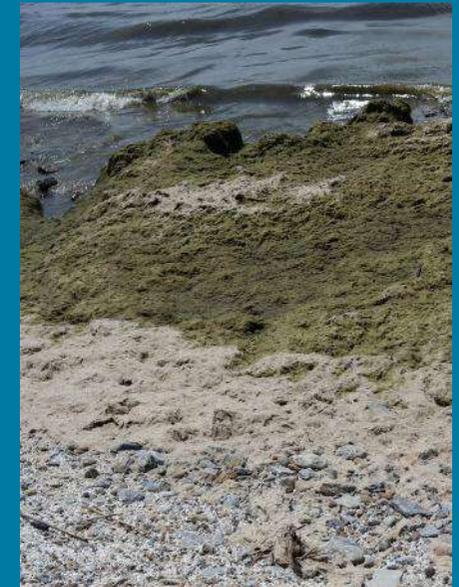
- Ensure you have checked off that you are a **trained volunteer** or you will NOT receive the full advanced survey questions.
- This survey **requires an internet connection**. If you do not have a reliable connection use the paper version of the survey and upload your answers later

Take Images in Landscape from EYE LEVEL



Fresh green Cladophora in the water

- Note the thread-like texture



Dried Cladophora deposited on shore

NOT Cladophora



Blue-green algae

Image Credit: © Olga Nohra CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. Retrieved from Ontario Nature.

Coontail (Hornwort)

Image Credit: Retrieved from Lake and Wetland Ecosystems Webpage.



Niagara Coastal's VAST Anywhere: Cladophora Survey

Page 1

Question	Answer	Notes
Help Niagara Coastal monitor your favourite shorelines!	Submit my Photos! Continue with Survey	Always answer "Continue With Survey"
FOR TRAINED VOLUNTEERS ONLY		
Are you a Trained Volunteer?	No Yes	Collapsed by default, open this and check "Yes". This question dictates which survey questions are given

Page 2

Question	Answer	Notes
Personal Information		
First Name		
Last Name		
Email Address		
Phone Number		
Is this the first VAST survey you have completed?	Yes No	Your answer to this question in the VAST Webpage will provide you with additional resources
Survey Information		
Type of Survey	VAST Station VAST Anywhere	Always answer "VAST Anywhere"
Beach Name		
Survey Location	Embedded Map	Use the embedded map in the VAST Webpage or enter Latitude/Longitude Coordinates of your benchmark below
Latitude		Latitude coordinates of your benchmark
Longitude		Longitude coordinates of your benchmark
Your Height		Enter your height in meters
Date/Time of Survey Start		Use the following Format: mm/dd/yy 12:00 AM

Page 3: Cladophora Conditions

Question	Answer					Notes
Nearshore						
Amount of Cladophora in Water	None	Sparse	Moderate	Abundant	Excessive	Circle one.
Is the amount of Cladophora in the Nearshore uniform?	Significantly Lower	Lower	Representative	Higher	Significantly Higher	Compare the amount of Cladophora in the water across the beach area, with the amount around the VAST Station/ your benchmark. Circle one.
Colour of Cladophora in Water	Green	Greenish Brown	Brown	Black	Not Applicable	Circle one.
Condition of Cladophora in Water	Filamentous		Slimy	Not Applicable		Circle one.
Substrate	Sand	Gravel	Bedrock	Zebra/Quagga Mussels	Unknown	What is the dominant substrate in the water? Circle one.
Water Clarity	Clear		Cloudy	Opaque		Circle one.
Wet Beach						
Amount of Cladophora on Wet Beach	None	Sparse	Moderate	Abundant	Excessive	Circle one.
Is the amount of Cladophora on the Wet Beach uniform?	Significantly Lower	Lower	Representative	Higher	Significantly Higher	Compare the amount of Cladophora across the entire Wet Beach area, with the amount around the VAST Station / your benchmark. Circle one.
Colour of Cladophora on Wet Beach	Green	Greenish Brown	Brown	Black	Not Applicable	Circle one.
Condition of Cladophora on Wet Beach	Filamentous		Slimy	Not Applicable		Circle one.
Close-up Image - Wet Beach	Upload your image in the VAST Webpage					

Dry Beach						
Amount of Cladophora on Dry Beach	None	Sparse	Moderate	Abundant	Excessive	Circle one.
Is the amount of Cladophora on the Dry Beach uniform?	Significantly Lower	Lower	Representative	Higher	Significantly Higher	Compare the amount of Cladophora across the entire Dry Beach area, with the amount around the VAST Station / your benchmark. Circle one.
Colour of Cladophora on Dry Beach	Green	Greenish Brown	Brown	Black	Not Applicable	Circle one.
Condition of Cladophora on Dry Beach	Filamentous		Slimy	Not Applicable		Circle one.
Extent of Cladophora on Dry Beach	_____ m			Approximately how far in metres does the Cladophora extend above the water line?		

Page 4: Site Conditions

Question	Answer	Notes
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Weather Conditions		
Recent Weather Conditions	High Waves High Winds Significant Precipitation	In the last 24 hours has there been any of the following: Circle all that apply

Shoreline Conditions		
A Shoreline is defined for the purposes of this survey as: 'A stretch of coast with a uniform substrate across the stretch'		

Shoreline Length	_____ m	What is the approximate length of the shoreline in metres? Note: If there is a stretch of shoreline with >100m of uniform substrate, record 100m
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Shoreline Width	_____ m	What is the approximate width of the shoreline in metres?
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Algae Coverage	0% 10% 25% 50% 75% 90%	What is the approximate area of the shoreline covered by algae?
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Other Conditions	Blue-Green Algae Bloom Zebra/Quagga Mussels Litter Odor Recent Beach Grooming Other: _____	Circle all that apply Report any suspected blue-green algae to the Ministry of Environment Spills Action Centre at: 1-800-268-6060
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Shoreline Use		
Based on the amount of algae on the shoreline, would you use the beach for recreation?	Yes No	Circle one.
Based on the amount of algae in the water, would you swim in this area?	Yes No	Circle one.
Other Comments		Record any other reasons why you would or would not use the area for recreation here.

Page 5: Photo Submission

Question	Answer	Notes
East Image	Upload your image in the VAST Webpage	Take an image from your benchmark looking East parallel to the shoreline.
West Image	Upload your image in the VAST Webpage	Take an image from your benchmark looking West parallel to the shoreline.
Shoreline Image	Upload your image in the VAST Webpage	Take an image from your benchmark looking Towards the Lake .
Additional Images	Yes No	Circle one.
Other Images	Upload your image(s) in the VAST Webpage	
Image Descriptions		

SUBMIT



Thank you for your efforts in supporting a resilient shoreline!

Contact Us

Help us ensure a resilient Lake Erie shoreline.

For more information contact:

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Kiersten@niagaracoastal.ca

Find out more and volunteering information at www.niagaracoastal.ca



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