

Saving the Stokes Bay Lighthouse

Friday December 4th, 2009, 9:00 am EST, with a weather date of Saturday December 5th



In late summer, 2009 Ontario Parks (who owns the land surrounding the Stokes Bay Range Light, locally known as Irish Harbour) informed Bruce County staff that the Canadian Coast Guard had plans to replace the historic 1903 structure. Because of the County's deep commitments to protecting and preserving Bruce Coast marine history, it was obvious that the structure must be saved and relocated. A plan was hatched move the structure to the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre to be incorporated into the Bruce Coast Marine Gallery for people to touch and learn about the rich Bruce Coast marine history.

The Coast Guard was approached and asked if the structure could left or be removed from the site. They expressed complete cooperation but at the cost of the County to relocate it off site citing major liability concerns. The challenge relied in the location of the Range Light, being only accessible by water or air. To remove the structure would require the use of a 'heavy lift' helicopter capable of lifting the 8500 lbs building, safely to the staging area of the Black Creek Provincial Park parking lot for further transportation to the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre by transport float.

The closest helicopter of this type is a Sikorsky S61 owned by National Helicopters in Vaughan, Ontario but the unit was stationed in Ohio, USA. National Helicopters, the Canadian Coast Guard and Bruce County developed a game plan to lift the structure in two pieces (the lantern room and the main body) on Friday December 4th, 2009, 9:00 am EST, with a weather date of Saturday December 5th. Further work commitments for the helicopter in the United States limited the lift to these dates. The unit would stage out of the Warton airport and be fully supported by a ground crew from National Helicopters and Rigarus Construction (the tower contractor) to perform the lift.

The lift operation will be done in 4 segments, 2 for the actual lighthouse structure and 2 for the contractor's equipment. On the ground the structure will then be loaded onto a transport heavy equipment float operated by Paul Bridge Construction and trucked to Southampton for winter storage. The Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre will then immediately commence plans to have the lighthouse incorporated into the museum faculty.

The Stokes Bay Light is a classic Range Light style with similar structures found at Tobermory, Southampton, and Lions Head. Being built upon stilts has protected the structure from rotting and moisture, leaving it in remarkable condition. It is proposed to rebuild the bottom structure and remount the lighthouse on top for an overall height of 72 feet at the museum.

Bruce County has been a long time member, supporter and promoter of the Bruce Coast Lighthouse Tour www.brucecoastlighthouses.com and is committed to working with marine heritage organizations to protect the heritage assets along the coastline. The Lighthouse tour consists of 13 marine heritage sites, four of which are the infamous 150 year-old John Brown Imperial Towers. Lighthouse Tours have been identified as a 'core trip motivator' for Bruce County, meaning that segments of the tourism market will travel great distances for an authentic marine heritage experience. Visitors to Bruce Coast Lighthouses reside in all parts of North America and are thrilled with the accessibility and diversity of County Lighthouses. The Stokes Bay Range Light will add even more authenticity to Bruce County's rich marine history.

Partners in this project:



The County of Bruce www.explorethebruce.com



Canadian Coast Guard <http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/eng/CCG/Home>



Ontario Parks www.ontarioparks.com

Bruce Coast Lighthouse Partners www.brucecoastlighthouses.com



Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre www.brucemuseum.ca



National Helicopters www.nationalhelicopters.com



Rigarus Construction www.rigarus.com

Paul Bridge Construction



Nuclear Waste Management Organization www.nwmo.ca



Edwards Aviation <http://www.edwardfuels.on.ca/aviationfuelsandlubes.php>