

# Make a Difference

**By Anna Toledo**

Island County Shore Friendly Program & Marine Resources Committee

## ENJOY AND PROTECT YOUR SHORE-LINE PROPERTY THIS SUMMER

Summer is finally here! This means sunshine and BBQs and long, leisurely evenings on the beach. Living in an island community means we are integrally connected to our shorelines. If you live by the water, you know how special this connection is. Watching the tides come and go, soothing and methodical. Fishing, crabbing, and clamping to bring home a fresh seafood feast. Smiling while your grandkids squeal with glee as the waves lap at their toes. Taking in a one-of-a-kind sunset and the visits from seals and seabirds. Maybe you've even spotted a whale!

Living on the shoreline comes with unique joys, as well as a unique call to stewardship. It may also bring some potential apprehensions about erosion or flooding. As a shoreline homeowner, at the bridge between land and sea, you are invested in protecting and enjoying your property for years to come, as well as living in harmony with the beautiful landscape and ecosystem which attracted you to live here in the first place.

For several years, hard armoring techniques, such as wood or concrete bulkheads or seawalls, were installed to protect shoreline properties from erosion. You may have purchased or inherited your property with an existing bulkhead. Now, it is better understood that hard armoring can have negative impacts to the marine habitat, and may not be the best solution for protecting your property. Luckily, there are ways to protect your home while also supporting the natural shoreline habitat. Take a look at some of these "Shore Friendly" tips below.

### Leave your beach natural

Many properties are not in need of any type of structural elements along the shoreline to protect them from erosion. If your house is on a low energy beach or set back from the shore, you may be able to leave your beach natural. Not only will you be supporting habitat for fish and wildlife, you'll also be able to access your beach easily and enjoy the beautiful aesthetics of a natural shoreline. You can learn more about shoreline processes and factors that contribute to erosion at [shorefriendly.org/your-erosion-risk](http://shorefriendly.org/your-erosion-risk).

### Remove your bulkhead

Just as there are areas where you can leave your beach natural, there are also areas where existing bulkheads are not necessary. You might be able to remove part of your entire bulkhead. If some additional protection is needed, you can replace it with softer techniques, described below. Is your bulkhead starting to deteriorate? This is an ideal time to look at which options would be most effective for your property. Check out "Your Marine Waterfront," available at [wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01791](http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01791), for a handy guide about alternatives to hard armoring.

### Consider "softer" options

Soft shore protection is a process of utilizing natural materials such as gravel, sand, logs, or roots in such a way to protect a shoreline from erosion. Beaches with soft shore protection designs have a natural look to them, and include both the benefits of easier access for recreation, as well as providing important habitat for near-shore species. You can read more about soft shore protection solutions as well as the permitting process at the Island County Shore Friendly webpage: [www.islandcountywa.gov/Health/DNR/Shore-Friendly](http://islandcountywa.gov/Health/DNR/Shore-Friendly).

### Plant native vegetation

Whether you're right at the shore or you live at the top of a bluff, native plants provide a lot of benefit. Vegetation helps stabilize slopes and absorb rainwater that might otherwise cause surface erosion. Trees and shrubs provide shade and protective cover for the eggs of forage fish – small fish who are prey for salmon and other marine species. Did you know terrestrial insects are an important part of a juvenile salmon's diet? That's right, bugs that fall from plants hanging over the water are consumed by salmon below.

Planting native vegetation doesn't have to compromise your view either. There are pruning techniques that will help you maintain a view while protecting the integrity of the plant. Whidbey Island Conservation District ([www.whidbeycd.org](http://www.whidbeycd.org)) has great resources and recommendations for native vegetation planting and maintenance. To learn more about the role of native vegetation in slope stabilization, consider reading "Vegetation Management: A Guide for Bluff Property Owners," a publication created for bluff property owners in the Puget Sound which can be found at Washington Dept. of Ecology's website <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/9331.pdf>.

### Move your house up or back

As we are seeing an increase in the frequency and intensity of storms, more shoreline property owners are responding to these conditions by moving their houses. Raising a house vertically or moving it back from the shore doesn't have to be as daunting as it sounds. In fact, the permit required for raising your house can often be filed as a Shoreline Exemption – Limited Review, the fastest and lowest cost Island County shoreline permit. For more information about Island County permits, visit: [www.islandcountywa.gov/Planning/Pages/permits.aspx](http://www.islandcountywa.gov/Planning/Pages/permits.aspx).

### When building new, consider all these factors

Are you in the process of designing your dream home by the water? As you work with your architect or contractor, be sure to consider your home's setback from the shore, and how you can incorporate native vegetation into your landscape. With proper planning, you can have peace of mind during winter storms and still enjoy the beauty of your beach and natural marine habitat.

### How do I know what will work on my property?

Before following any of the above tips, your first step should be to get a professional site assessment for your shoreline property to understand which options are feasible. Several elements, including the localized wave action, drainage measures, and location of your house and septic drain field will all factor in to what solutions are best.

Now through September, Island County is partnering with the Northwest Straits Foundation which is providing free technical site visits with a coastal geologist to assess your shoreline property and provide recommendations for solutions to protect your property while also protecting the habitat it supports. To sign up for a free site visit, go to: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/SiteVisit2017-18](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SiteVisit2017-18)

To learn more about the Island County Shore Friendly program, visit our webpage at [www.islandcountywa.gov/Health/DNR/Shore-Friendly](http://islandcountywa.gov/Health/DNR/Shore-Friendly) or contact Anna Toledo at [a.toledo@co.island.wa.us](mailto:a.toledo@co.island.wa.us) or 360-678-2349.

A TIP FROM A  
FORMER SMOKER

I didn't think  
I smoked that  
much either.

Christine, age 55, Pennsylvania  
Diagnosed with cancer at age 44



Christine ate healthy foods. She exercised.

She felt healthy. So she didn't think  
the amount she smoked would hurt her. But,  
at 44, she was diagnosed with oral cancer.  
And it came back twice. Now she has no  
teeth and only half of her jaw.

You can quit smoking.  
For free help, call  
**1-800-QUIT-NOW.**



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention  
[CDC.gov/tips](http://CDC.gov/tips)

#CDCTips

Christine, age 39



# Tour de Whidbey

One Day • One Island • Choose Your Challenge!

**8.18.18**

[tourdewhidbey.org](http://tourdewhidbey.org)  
[active.com](http://active.com)

**NEW!**

PERIMETER OF WHIDBEY  
**POWER**  
 ENDURANCE ROUTE

10,000 feet  
 over 162 miles

are  
 you in?  
 Most  
 beautiful  
 ride in the  
 northwest

33, 50,  
 67, 100  
 mile routes

& family-friendly 10 mile



Thank you for reading! Please recycle the Whidbey Weekly when you are finished with it.

