

New hope for stopping shoreline erosion emerges

Some success at a Pacific County trouble spot

By TOM BANSE
Northwest News Network

A stretch of shore aptly nicknamed "Washaway Beach" in Pacific County, Washington, has long suffered from the most extreme coastal erosion along the whole West Coast. Now, a relatively low-cost defense is raising hopes among property owners and nearby cranberry growers.

The rate of coastal erosion on the north side of the Willapa Bay entrance has averaged an astonishing 100 feet or more per year. Over decades, ocean waves have taken a cannery, a lighthouse, school, grange hall, post office and innumerable homes and vacation getaways.

But this last year much less land eroded.

"There are very few areas this winter that took more than about 20-30 feet of loss," coastal cranberry grower David Cottrell said.

He said a pretty mild storm season helped, as did an experimental placement of cobbles.



David Cottrell stands on an example of dynamic revetment protecting shoreline from further erosion at Washaway Beach.

"Small rocks that are actually meant to move, rather than static big rocks," Cottrell said. "These little ones will rattle around in the waves, take the energy out of the waves."

Cottrell said a combination of donated and drainage district funds paid for placement of the broken basalt rock as "soft armor" on several short stretches in advance of

the last two winters, in some cases intentionally mixed with driftwood.

"In the first storms, we lost 5-10 feet in those areas versus 140 feet alongside. That was

something that told us we were onto something," Cottrell said.

Cottrell and the Pacific Conservation District now hope to win a state grant to add what's technically known as "dynamic revetment" to about 1½ miles of vulnerable coastline. That, they think, will go a long way to retiring the nickname Washaway Beach and allow the community to be best known by its official name, North Cove.

Pacific Conservation District Manager Mike Nordin said an erosion control grant application seeking slightly more than \$600,000 is pending with the Washington State Conservation Commission.

"This bang for the buck is pretty impressive," Nordin said.

Cottrell compared the functionality of dynamic revetment to a runaway truck ramp on a mountain highway.

"If you've got a truck coming down a mountain at 100 mph, you can stop it with a rock wall, but it's going to be ugly and pieces are going to go flying all over the place," Cottrell said. "That's the way the waves hitting these vertical banks behave."

"But if you give it a gradual

slope run up and a lot of loose material to rattle around and absorb the energy, that truck will be slowed gradually," he continued. "If you're lucky you may be able to drag it down, fix your brakes and drive away."

"That's kind of what we hope these waves do," Cottrell added. "They come up gradually and they roll back gradually like you see on a long, flat beach. Rather than come up and have an ugly collision that just keeps driving the erosion."

A potential long-term fix recently won initial funding from the Washington Legislature. State Rep. Brian Blake secured \$650,000 for Pacific County to do technical and environmental analysis, engineering and permit preparation for erosion control structures. Those could include shoreline revetment, groin structures and beach nourishment.

A top goal of the state grant is to protect a particularly endangered stretch of Washington SR 105 and an underlying tide gate. The highway and gate serve as the main line of defense against saltwater encroachment into hundreds of acres of low-lying cranberry bogs, including more than 50 acres farmed by Cottrell.

Tax-free grocery initiative closer to state's November ballot

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Petitioners for an initiative to ban any future taxes on groceries submitted nearly 180,000 signatures by Wednesday to place the constitutional amendment on the Nov. 6 ballot.

If verified by the secretary of state's office, the number of signatures would exceed the 117,578 needed under statute.

Joe Gilliam, president of the Northwest Grocery Association, called Wednesday a "major milestone."

"Since statehood, Oregon has never taxed groceries, yet politicians in Oregon continue to push for a tax on grocery sales," Gilliam said. "This initiative will end these efforts and other future efforts by proactively prohibiting the taxing of groceries from farm-to-fork."



Guy Pham pushes a cart of groceries from Hong Phat grocery store on Southeast 82nd Avenue in Portland.

Initiative Petition 37 would prohibit local or state taxes on all food for consumption, except for alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. Personal hygiene products were excluded from

the measure, based on the results of the campaign's internal polling, said Dan Floyd, spokesman for the "Yes! Keep Our Groceries Tax Free!" campaign. "When we add in other

products — even restaurant foods — support started to waiver. Some of those products might be viewed as more of a luxury."

Katherine Dreissen, spokeswoman for Our Oregon, a labor-backed social justice political group, said the measure is an attempt by major retailers to prevent lawmakers from passing a gross receipts tax. Our Oregon campaigned for a gross receipts tax in 2016, which voters rejected, but lawmakers have since discussed passing a more moderate tax to help raise revenue for schools and social services.

The measure also would prevent a tax on sugary drinks, something being considered in Multnomah County.

Dreissen said the initiative isn't aimed at protecting consumers. "It's about padding the pockets of Walmart, Safeway and other big retailers that

have already spent more than \$2 million to qualify this measure," she said.

Most of the \$1.9 million the campaign has raised this year came from major national retailers, such as Kroger, the parent company of Fred Meyer; Costco and Albertsons, which merged with Safeway in 2018.

While the campaign for the initiative claims restaurant food could still be taxed, the Oregon Attorney General's

Office has indicated only restaurant taxes that already exist — such as those passed in Ashland and Yachats — would still be allowed under the initiative.

The initiative is similar to one the campaign helped to pass in St. Helens May 15 with 89 percent of the vote. That initiative amended the city charter to ban grocery taxes and started after the City Council started discussing a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages.

Amazon: Echo device sent conversation to family's contact

By GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE — An "unlikely" string of events prompted Amazon's Echo personal assistant device to record a Portland, Oregon, family's private conversation and then send the recording to an acquaintance in Seattle, the company said Thursday.

The woman told KIRO-TV that two weeks ago an employee of her husband contacted them to say he thought their device had been hacked. He told them he had received an audio file of them discussing hardwood floors, she said.

In a statement Thursday, Amazon confirmed the woman's private conversation had been inadvertently recorded and sent. The company said the device interpreted a word in the background conversation as "Alexa" — a command that makes it wake up — and then it interpreted the conversation as a "send message" request.

"At which point, Alexa said out loud 'To whom?'" the statement said. "At which point, the background conversation was interpreted as a name in the customers contact list."

"Alexa then asked out loud, '(contact name), right?' Alexa then interpreted background conversation as 'right.'"

The statement continued: "As unlikely as this string of events is, we are evaluating options to make this case even less likely."

The woman, who was identified only by her first name in the news report, said every

room in her family's home was wired with the Amazon devices to control her home's heat, lights and security system.

She said the family unplugged the devices and contacted Amazon after they learned the recording had been sent.

Ryan Calo, a law professor who co-directs the University of Washington's tech policy lab, agreed that the sort of glitch Amazon described is unlikely. But it may trouble customers nevertheless, he said.



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