

# Rising sea levels threatening historic lighthouses

By **WAYNE PARRY**  
*Associated Press*

**MAURICE RIVER TOWNSHIP, N.J.** — Rising seas and erosion are threatening lighthouses around the U.S. and the world. Volunteers and cash-strapped governments are doing what they can, but the level of concern, like the water, is rising.

New Jersey's East Point Lighthouse has been lighting up Delaware Bay for the better part of two centuries. But those same waters that the lighthouse helped illuminate might bring about its demise.

With even a moderate-term fix likely to cost \$3 million or more, New Jersey officials are considering what to do to save the lighthouse. Nancy Patterson, president of the Maurice River Historical Society, says something needs to be done now.

State and local governments routinely shore up the perimeter of the lighthouse property with 3,000-pound sand bags and hastily bulldozed earthen walls. During normal conditions, the bay is about 40 yards from the lighthouse; aerial photos from 1940 show at least four times as much beach between the lighthouse and the bay as there is now.

And during storms, the surf pounds against an earthen wall just 10 yards from the lighthouse's front steps.

"This lighthouse is in incredible danger; it's getting worse and worse and worse," Patterson said. "The water is right there, often within feet of the lighthouse."

She recently led a save-the-lighthouse rally to call attention to its plight and push the state Department of Environmental Protection to do something to save it before it falls into the bay.

It's a threat affecting lighthouses around the country and the world, including those in low-lying areas being inundated by water, as well as those on bluffs or cliffs being eroded by storms and rising sea levels.

"It's happening faster than



AP Photos/Wayne Parry  
**Volunteers hold a 'Save The Lighthouse' rally near the East Point Lighthouse in Maurice River Township, N.J.**

anybody had predicted," said Jeff Gales, executive director of the U.S. Lighthouse Society in Hansville, Washington.

While some of the lighthouses continue to be relied upon for navigation, others have been supplanted by more modern technology, and are treasured more for historical and tourism purposes.

Climate change hastened by manmade greenhouse gases is not only melting polar ice, adding to sea levels, but the warmer waters are expanding and some land formations sinking.

Globally, sea levels have been rising over the past century, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the rate has increased in recent decades. In New Jersey, seas have risen by 1.3 feet over the past 100 years, said Benjamin Horton, a Rutgers University professor and leading expert on climate change and sea level rise. That is a faster



**The East Point Lighthouse in Maurice River Township, N.J.**

pace than for the past 2,000 years combined, he said.

Horton and other Rutgers researchers project that by 2050, seas off New Jersey will rise by an additional 1.4 feet.

Tim Harrison is the editor of Lighthouse Digest, a Maine-based publication that maintains a "Doomsday List" of 53 lighthouses around the U.S. deemed to be in danger of

being lost due to storms, erosion or other causes.

"Lighthouses were built for one purpose: to save lives," he said. "Now it's our turn to step up save these lighthouses."

Rising seas have already forced the relocation of several lighthouses. In 1999, the National Park Service moved the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse in Buxton, North Car-

olina, 2,900 feet inland, at a cost of \$11.8 million. In 1993, the Southeast Lighthouse on Block Island, Rhode Island, was moved 300 feet inland.

In 2014 the Cape San Blas Lighthouse was moved from the edge of a storm-prone peninsula on Florida's Gulf Coast to a park in Port St. Joe. A year later, the Gay Head Lighthouse on Massachusetts' Martha's Vineyard was moved 129 feet back from an eroding cliff.

Others were not so lucky. The Galveston Jetty Lighthouse in Texas and the Sabine Bank Lighthouse in Louisiana were lost to storms or rising seas, and the Kauhola Point Lighthouse on Hawaii's Big Island was demolished after erosion nearby was deemed too severe to save it, Harrison said.

Lighthouses around the country considered to be in danger from rising seas include the Sand Island Lighthouse at the mouth of Mobile

Bay in Alabama, the Morris Island Lighthouse near Charleston, South Carolina, and the New Point Comfort Lighthouse in Virginia.

Around the world, encroaching seas are drawing nearer to the Orfordness Lighthouse in Suffolk, England; the Troubridge Island Lighthouse in South Australia; and the Kiipsaar Lighthouse in Estonia. In 2010, the Half Moon Caye Lighthouse in Belize was destroyed by a storm.

There are few easy answers, financially or scientifically. The East Point Lighthouse is already on the highest spit of land around, which is only a few inches above sea level, so moving it is not an option. Nor is constantly dumping and plowing more sand in front of it.

Patterson wants some sort of bulkhead or barrier erected between the bay and the lighthouse to blunt the force of the waves.

Larry Hajna, a spokesman for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, acknowledges the lighthouse has been "very vulnerable to storms due to erosion" for years. And he realizes the sandbags the state and local governments keep piling on the shoreline are a stop-gap measure at best.

But while affirming the state's interest in saving the lighthouse, he notes that moving or protecting it with rock-filled cages could cost several million dollars.

Because of the high cost of moving or protecting the lighthouses, volunteer preservation groups often partner with governments to maintain them; one has spent at least \$5 million on the Morris Island Lighthouse in South Carolina. And cash-strapped governments often can't spare funds to save lighthouses.

Patterson, the New Jersey lighthouse advocate, says a barrier needs to be built near the East Point Lighthouse immediately.

"This history matters," she said. "We need to do something — now — while there's still something to save."

# Freedom Foundation files suit against Oregon unions

By **AUBREY WIEBER**  
*Capital Bureau*

A conservative think tank is suing two Oregon labor unions, saying they are collecting union dues in violation of a U.S. Supreme Court decision last June.

The class-action lawsuit, Anderson et al. v. SEIU et al, was filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Portland.

In June, the Supreme ruled in Janus v. AFSCME that forcing all employees to pay dues and fees when they aren't union members under "fair share" provisions violated the First Amendment.

The decision was considered by some to be a strong blow to organized labor. But in Oregon, where unions have deep roots, the effect has been minimal. Some union leaders reported an increase in membership.

In the months since, thousands of workers in Oregon have asked to withdraw from the unions, according to Aaron Withe, Oregon director of

Freedom Foundation, which filed the case this week. About one-fourth was told they could withdraw from their unions, but would have to pay dues through an extended date set by the labor contract. According to the lawsuit, most have about another year to pay.

Freedom Foundation is contesting that extended assessment.

Withe said that since they signed the agreement without knowing about the Janus decision, those agreements aren't valid.

Freedom Foundation sued on behalf of 10 plaintiffs, but claimed in the filing there are there are hundreds more.

Plaintiffs who were assessed by Service Employees International Union Local 503 include Lorian Anderson, an employee of Western Oregon University; Rene Layton, an employee of the Wal-lawa County District Attorney's Office; Dennis Richey, an employee for Jackson County; and Melinda Wiltse, who works for Marion County.

Plaintiffs represented by American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 75 are Kerrin Fiscus, employed by the Oregon Board of Parole; Kenneth Hill, employed by the Oregon Military Department; Michael Miller, employed by the Oregon Department of Corrections; Bernard Perkins, who works for Lane County; Kathie Simmons, employed by the city of Portland and Kent Wiles, who works for North-West Senior and Disability Services.

The suit names the two unions, the employers and Katy Coba, the director of the Ore-

gon Department of Administrative Services, as defendants.

Both unions declined to comment, as did the Oregon Department of Administrative Services.

Withe said the Freedom Foundation found the plaintiffs by helping workers opt out of their unions, and offering legal services to those still told they had to pay dues.

Peter Starzynski, executive director of the Northwest Accountability Project, said filing the lawsuit the day before Thanksgiving when people are less likely to be at work was purposeful. The Northwest Accountability Project is

a pro-union organization aimed at shedding light on right-wing organizations.

"Their litigation tactics are as political as anything else they do," he said.

The accountability group has long dealt with the Freedom Foundation, Starzynski said.

"The Freedom Foundation is a political organization that is trying to destroy unions in the northwest on behalf of their out-of-state billionaire funders," Starzynski said. "Part of their strategy is to file friv-

olous lawsuits to try to waste unions' time and money."

But Withe said this isn't about destroying unions, it's about exposing union tactics.

"I think this is just a money-making scheme by the unions," he said.

While the class-action suit only has 10 members, Withe said the Freedom Foundation has helped 6,500 Oregonians opt out of their union.

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