

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Slow and steady can win the tsunami race

Both desirable and dangerous, coastlines are a front-row seat for the splendors, rewards and hazards of the living, crashing ocean. A new analysis of tsunami risks published recently shouldn't cause sleepless nights, but should change future calculations about how to live and vacation along the Pacific's interface with the land.

"New Washington state tsunami maps show 'shocking' flooding," was the headline for the Northwest News Network's summary of a state agency's latest thoughts on how counties at the mouth of the Columbia River will be impacted someday by a near-shore tsunami. Those impacts will surely be felt farther inland, as people in Eastern Oregon will deal with the aftermath by supporting survivors and becoming a base for emergency response.

Based on a better understanding of how such tsunamis behave — partly thanks to lessons from Japan's deadly 2011 disaster — experts have for several years been ramping up estimates of wave heights and land slippage after a major Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. So although

"shocking" may be an exaggeration, the report certainly is sobering.

As an initial matter, it's important to note something the Northwest News Network's report did not: That the situation outlined in the new modeling is one that's only expected to happen about every 2,500 years. In such a worst-case scenario, from 20 to 60 feet of seawater will flood low-lying places along the Northwest coast. This flooding would result from a 9.0 quake and around 90 feet of pent-up slippage between two of earth's massive crustal plates, which intersect roughly 150 miles west of the mouth of the Columbia River.

Less dire — but still serious — coastal flooding happens somewhat more often than 2,500 years. Most research about past subduction zone quakes and tsunamis has found an average interval of 500 to 530 years in this area, but more often in the vicinity of Coos Bay and Northern California.

The most recent Oregon tsunami in January 1700 was close to a worst-case scenario, according to a 2003 study. The triggering earthquake is believed to have



AP Photo/Shizuo Kamabayashi
Police search for the remains of those who went missing in the March 11, 2011 tsunami on the coastline in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, northern Japan.

been 9.0 in strength — with a possible range between 8.7 and 9.2. It caused 62 feet in fault slippage and involved 684 miles of the Cascadia fault zone.

All this science is still relatively new. There are many uncertainties and variables. It is tempting to speculate that if the 1700 event was about as bad as it can get, perhaps coast-dwellers will be relatively lucky with the next one. And if estimated average intervals are close to accurate, we might still be a couple hundred years from the next event, of whatever size. Considering predicted sea-level rise, coastal communities may have gradually relocated to higher ground before the next tsunami.

We can't rely on optimistic thinking, however. The coastal communities of Washington and Oregon clearly should all be planning to move schools, hospitals and other critical infrastructure out of harm's way. Considering the life

expectancy of such physical assets, a reasonable target date to complete such relocations might be 2040 or so. New housing subdivisions should only be allowed at safe elevations. Future assets like downtown parking structures in beach towns should be built to survive powerful quakes and serve as vertical evacuation options for residents and visitors. Well-engineered pedestrian pathways should be constructed to provide rapid evacuation options away from the shoreline. Food, medical supplies, tents and other vital supplies should be pre-staged at safe elevations.

All of this takes money and political muscle. But slow and deliberate steps can achieve much. We should be profoundly grateful that scientists learned of this danger and are giving us actionable information to mitigate the risks. Studies like the one released last month give us a head start in winning the race to safety.

OTHER VIEWS

Choosing animals over people

BAYANGA, Central African Republic — The cutest primates on earth may be Inguka and Inganda, gorilla toddler twins who playfully tumble over each other here in the vast Dzanga Sangha rain forest, one of the best places to see gorillas, antelopes and elephants play.

The only risk: They are so heedless and unafraid of people that they may tumble almost into your lap — and then their 375-pound silverback dad may get upset. His name is Makumba and he expresses displeasure with a full-speed charge, hurtling toward you until he's only inches away.

This area where Central African Republic, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo come together is one of the wildest and most remote parts of the world, and the three countries have established bordering national parks. I also visited a forest glade filled with 160 elephants and a large herd of bongo antelopes, plus a few African buffalo. It was like a scene from a Disney movie, and I felt myself melting.

Yet when I turn sentimental at the majesty of wildlife, I sometimes feel uneasy. I wonder: Does honoring animal rights come at the expense of human rights?

One study found that research subjects were more upset by stories of a dog beaten by a baseball bat than of an adult similarly beaten. Other researchers found that if forced to choose, 40 percent of people would save their pet dog over a foreign tourist.

When the shooting of Cecil the Lion in Zimbabwe attracted far more outraged signatures on a petition than the shooting of 12-year-old Tamir Rice by a Cleveland police officer, writer Roxane Gay tweeted, "I'm personally going to start wearing a lion costume when I leave my house so if I get shot, people will care."

Years ago, I visited a rain forest camp where a couple dozen young Americans and Europeans were volunteering in difficult conditions to assist gorillas as part of a conservation program. It was impressively altruistic — but these idealists were oblivious to Pygmy villagers nearby dying of malaria for want of \$5 mosquito bed nets.

So are we betraying our own species when we write checks to help gorillas (or puppies or wild horses)? Is it wrongheaded to fight for elephants and rhinos (or farm animals at home) while 5 million children still die each year before the age of 5?

It's a legitimate question that I've wondered about over the years. But I've come to believe that on the contrary, conserving rhinos or gorillas — or speaking up for tortured farm animals at home — is good for humans, too.

At the broadest level, it's a mistake to pit sympathy for animals against sympathy for humans. Compassion for other species can

also nurture compassion for fellow humans. Empathy isn't a zero-sum game.

Overseas conservation organizations have also gotten much better at giving local people a stake in the survival of animals. The World Wildlife Fund, which helps manage the Dzanga Sangha Protected Area, supports a health clinic and is starting an education initiative. The refuge hires 240 local people, from rangers to trackers, who locate the gorillas and get them habituated to people.

"These efforts are good for us," said Dieudonné Ngombo, one of the trackers. "We work and get a salary, and then our kids live better and we sleep well."

Martial Yvon Amoet of the Center for Human Rights of Bayanga, which is supported by the Dzanga Sangha Protected Area, says that the BaAka Pygmies appreciate the conservation efforts "because for BaAka, the end of the forest is the end of their culture and identity."

Luis Arranz, a Spanish wildlife biologist who runs World Wildlife Fund efforts in Central African Republic, adds that the conservation programs depend on the support of local people to watch out for poachers. There are still one or two elephants killed a month here, but the toll would be far higher without watchful eyes in the community.

Last year, 200 foreign ecotourists came here, up from zero in 2015. While other parts of Central African Republic are wracked by conflict, Dzanga Sangha is far from the fighting. Arranz hopes to get 700 visitors this year, but the potential is far greater.

Simply put, one of the most important resources some poor countries have is wildlife. Northern white rhinos are on the verge of extinction because of poaching to feed Chinese demand for rhino horn, with the last male in the world dying recently in Kenya. When the animals are gone, economic prospects for humans diminish as well.

So compassion for elephants or rhinos or gorillas is not soggy sentimentality, but a practical recognition of shared interests among two-legged and four-legged animals. Go ahead and embrace animal causes without a shred of guilt.

"What's good for the animals is also good for the Pygmies," Dieudonné Kembé, a Pygmy working in Dzanga Sangha, told me. Without conservation efforts, he said, "the animals would be gone, and we might be gone, too."

■
Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times since 2001, writes op-ed columns that appear twice a week. He won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.



YOUR VIEWS

Umatilla County elections department a helpful place

Did you know? The Umatilla County Office of Elections is located in the basement of the county courthouse and the folks there will be glad to help you complete a new or updated registration form.

You can also register to vote (new or changed registration) online by searching <http://www.co.umatilla.or.us/elections/index.html> and gets lots of useful information there, such as crucial dates, drop-off box locations, your rights, and more.

In the next few weeks you may find knowledgeable, helpful folks at schools, restaurants and outside stores who will help you complete a form and deliver it to the elections office.

If you are registered but did not receive a ballot in the most recent election, it may be because you changed addresses and did not notify the elections office.

John Gilson
Pendleton

Second Amendment calls for regulation

The heated aftermath of every mass shooting consistently reveals how American culture has become polarized by radical ideologies without a rational middle ground. Progressives will ardently push for new gun laws, which in effect incenses conservatives.

I merely propose we revere the Second Amendment as it was carefully crafted by our forefathers and strictly regulate all firearms as it is explicated stated in its opening clause. Thusly, to not regulate

firearms only cheapens and dilutes the validity of our great constitution.

Conservatives like to compare guns to cars, which require registration, licenses and insurance. Yet we continue to create new laws on driving safety as our society evolves with its range of technologies. It is now illegal to drive while texting or drive while on the phone because technology has since advanced.

Perhaps if we were to apply the same restrictions to guns that we do to cars, gun owners would exercise prudence with their firearms rather than treating them like toys for the mere joy or "fun" of shooting anything that moves.

Conservatives also like to propose arming teachers or posting armed guards at public schools, which is not cost effective coming from a party that defunds public education, widely disinclined to pay taxes or contribute to the welfare of the community. In my mind, more bullets from more guns means more crossfire, which means more chaos, which means more casualties. Why would conservatives opt for a police state armed to the teeth instead of simply banning military grade weaponry?

If they earnestly believe that every citizen has the "right to bear arms," am I allowed to attach missile launchers on the roof of my SUV with flame throwers blasting from its boot?

If we take the course of a police state, all citizens will eventually be disarmed as the end game and the feared government will be the only ones with guns. But if we pass new gun laws that require written tests with a reading exam, uneducated we can actually incentivize the uneducated to do their homework. And that would be a win-win without disarming anyone.

Chad Elliot DeFalco
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