Shore Friendly Mason | Mini-Grant Program

This formerly eroding shoreline was stabilized with anchored wood and the addition of beach gravel. *(MCD image)*

Soft Shoreline Stabilization Projects

Although shoreline erosion is a natural coastal process and a part of living on the Puget Sound waterfront, it becomes a concern when it puts your home at risk. Historically, hard armor solutions like concrete bulkheads and rock walls were thought to be the best response to any sign of shoreline erosion. We now know that hard armor can sometimes cause unintended impacts—to the beach in front of the armor, to adjacent properties, and to critical processes that support marine life. Where site conditions are appropriate, alternative forms of shoreline stabilization can offer a better (and less expensive) choice for the homeowner and the environment. Like hard armor, soft shoreline stabilization strategies slow the erosion process to protect a home, but, in addition, they better integrate with important shoreline processes and the needs of marine life. Soft shoreline stabilization methods are designed to work closely with specific site conditions and as a result, the finished projects often look like natural beaches rather than concrete walls. Techniques include methods such as adding beach gravel (also called "beach nourishment") to restore a natural slope to a severely-eroded beach; anchoring large wood in place on a beach to help absorb the energy of waves; using bioengineering practices with plants to stabilize eroding banks (and to eventually establish a natural buffer of roots to absorb wave energy), and re-sloping and planting eroding banks to improve stability.

This grant program focuses on encouraging the use of soft shore protection alternatives at appropriate sites on the marine shoreline of Mason County. These projects will usually involve site assessment, engineering, and design services that Mason Conservation District staff may be able to provide, depending on availability.

Above: examples of soft shoreline stabilization. In both locations, gravel was added to the beach and anchored pieces of large wood were used to stabilize the shoreline. *(Images by H. Shipman)*

Minimum Requirements for a mini-grant:

All soft shore stabilization projects require a site assessment to determine project feasibility. Most will involve some degree of engineering design and/or oversight. Mason Conservation District staff may aid with project design, inspection, and permitting as time allows. Soft shore stabilization projects will typically be combined with a waterfront native planting project unless site conditions are inappropriate. For details, see the "Waterfront Planting Project" overview sheet.

Project completion:

- If 2 months pass with no evidence of progress, MCD reserves the right to withdraw the grant award and offer it to a property owner who is ready to proceed.
- Because soft shoreline stabilization usually involves engineering, MCD staff will work closely with property owners throughout the process.
- Before and after pictures, original receipts for expenses, and a site review after completion are required for grant reimbursement.

Reimbursement: 50% of the project cost, up to an award maximum of $1500, will be reimbursed for projects completed as designed. Reimbursement typically takes 4 weeks after all paperwork is received.

Above: an example of soft shoreline stabilization at a home on Bainbridge Island. Logs and stumps were anchored to the shoreline and native plant species were planted to stabilize an eroding shoreline.

(Images: Kitsap County& Savage Plants and Landscapes)