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Understanding community perceptions on sea level rise adaptation

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Understanding Community Perceptions on Sea Level Rise Adaptation

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San Juan County Washington has over 400 miles of marine shoreline with diverse geology; an important role in local and regional food webs; and relatively intact coastal habitats & processes. As a result, it is a good place to test habitat friendly sea level rise adaptation strategies. Friends of the San Juans has adopted an interdisciplinary, multi-pronged approach, including new research, decision support tools, landowner, manager and community engagement, and on the ground project actions.



Waterfront Property Owner and Community Survey Results

To improve understanding of community perspectives on sea level rise and gauge public support for various adaptation strategies, Friends of the San Juans conducted multiple anonymous surveys with shoreline property owners and the broader San Juan County community in 2017.

The first survey was mailed to all private waterfront property owners with a copy of an updated shoreline stewardship guide, which included new information and graphics on the topics of sea level rise and adaptation strategies. The survey included a few basic questions about perceptions of waterfront property owners on the topic of sea level rise. Survey response rate was approximately 10% and 293 individual surveys were returned.



In addition to the direct mailing, four informational sea level rise workshops were held (on each ferry serviced island) with nearly 200 people attending. In addition to presentations on sea level rise science and policy, live results 'clicker' polling was conducted at the workshops. 174 workshop attendees participated in the interactive survey.

A selection of survey results are shared here. The first two and the very last questions include responses from both the waterfront property owner mailed survey and the interactive surveys conducted at workshops (467 responses). The remaining questions, on the more detailed topic of adaptation strategies were not asked in the mailed survey, as a result, responses represent data from the 174 workshop participants.

Overall survey results showed strong support for consideration of habitat considerations as well as long term solutions. Survey results often illustrate a disconnect between what the community desires and common management responses, highlighting the importance of working across groups (scientists, managers, property owners, the public) as well as the need to share public perception information, in addition to scientific data, with managers when working to develop and implement adaptation strategies.



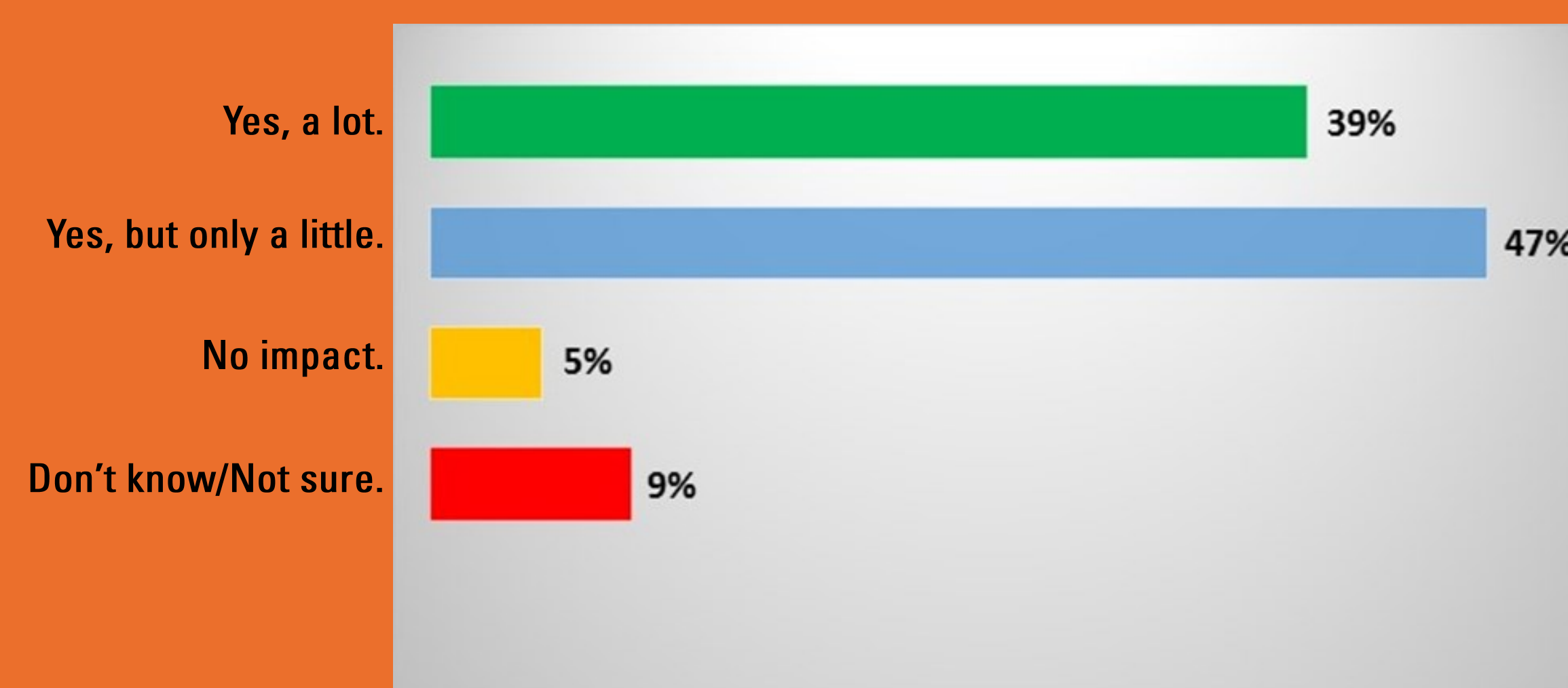
Additional Resources

Additional resources on the topic of sea level rise and habitat friendly adaptation in San Juan County including vulnerability mapping, forage fish habitat research, policy analyses and manager and landowner communication tools are available online through the Friends website at: www.sanjuans.org/sealevelrise.

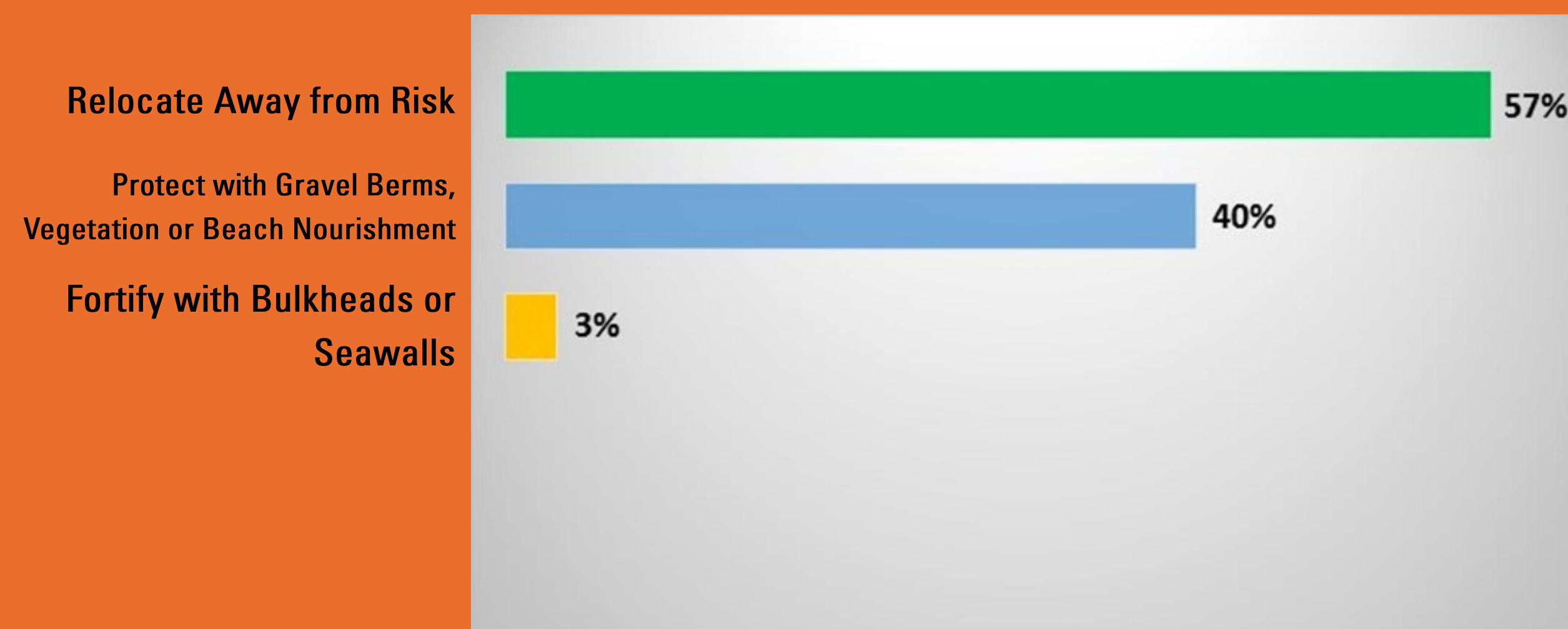
Friends also produced outreach videos about two recent restoration projects that address coastal process, habitat and resiliency—an armor removal sediment supply bluff restoration and house relocation and seawall removal—shared from the perspective of participating private landowners. Visit www.sanjuans.org to view the videos.



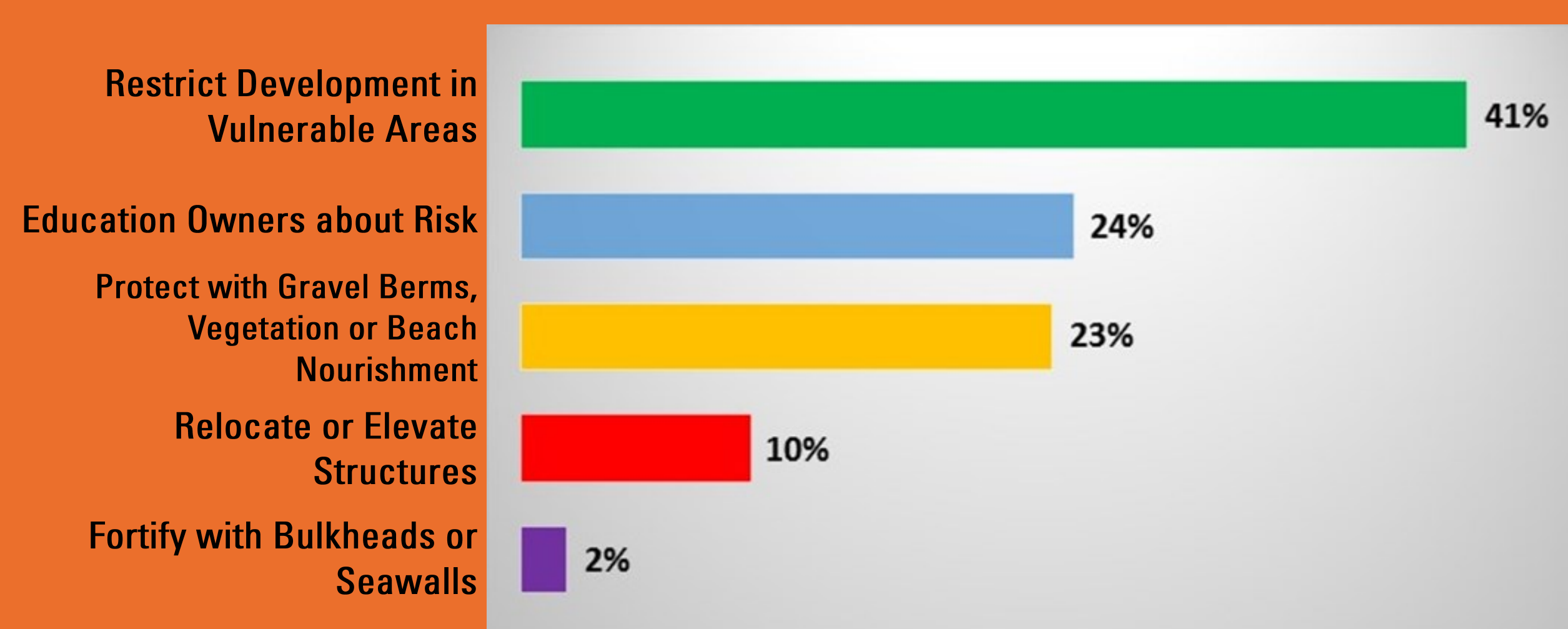
Do you think sea level rise will affect your community in the next 50 years?



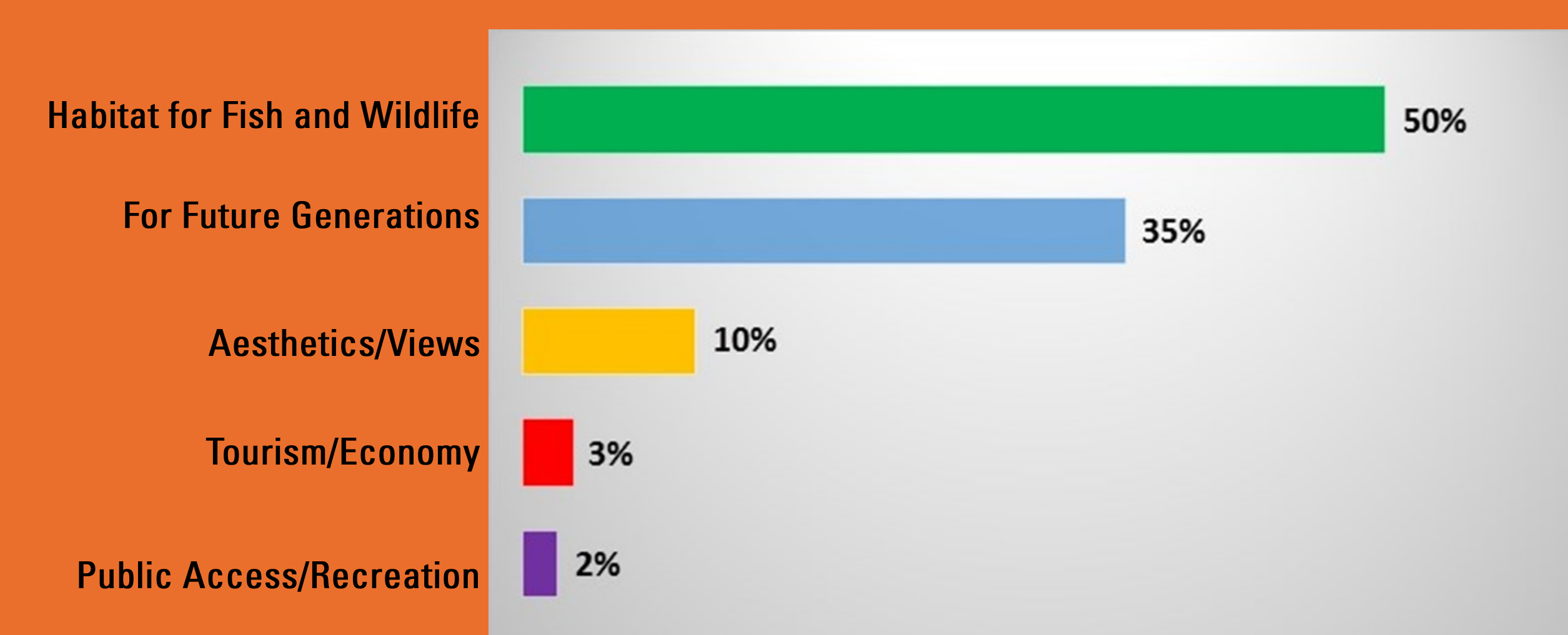
What approach to protecting public infrastructure from storms, flooding and erosion makes the most sense to you?



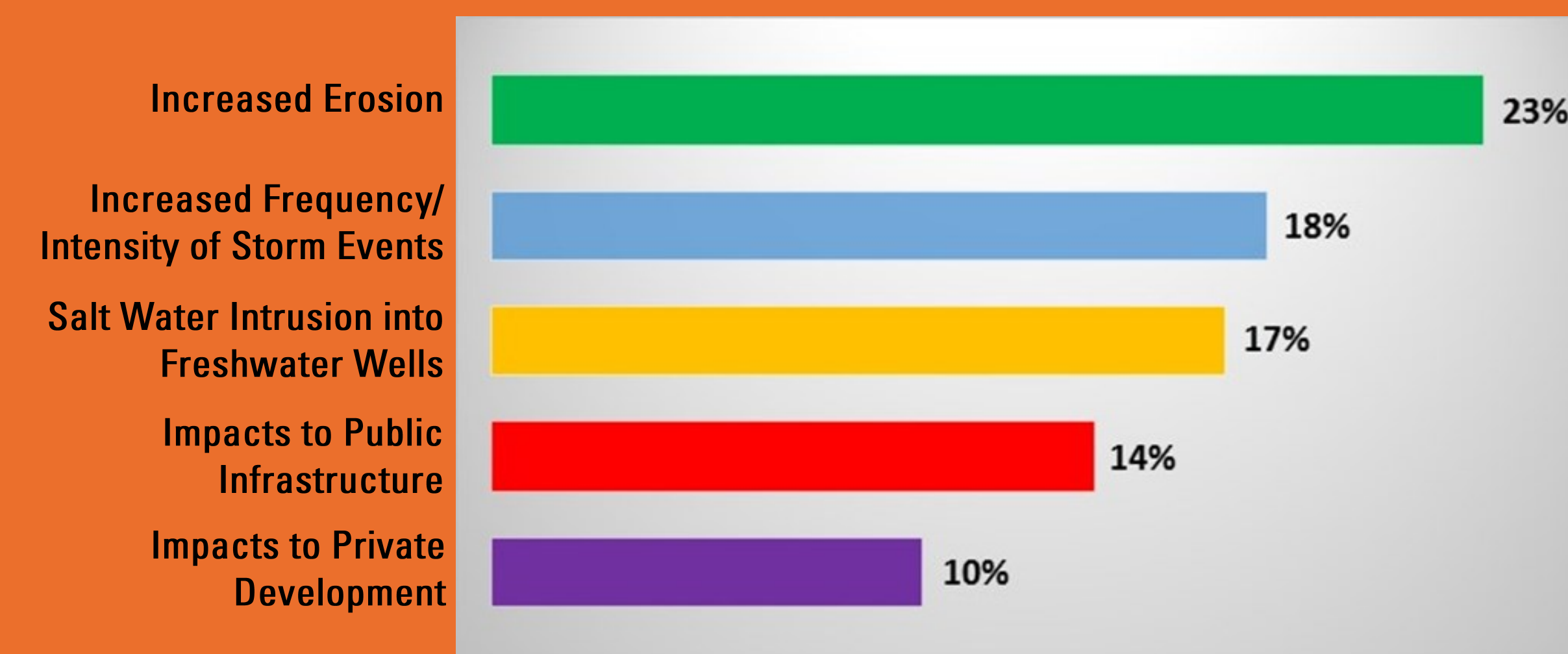
What approach to protecting private property from storms, flooding and erosion makes the most sense to you?



What do you think are the top reasons to protect local shorelines?

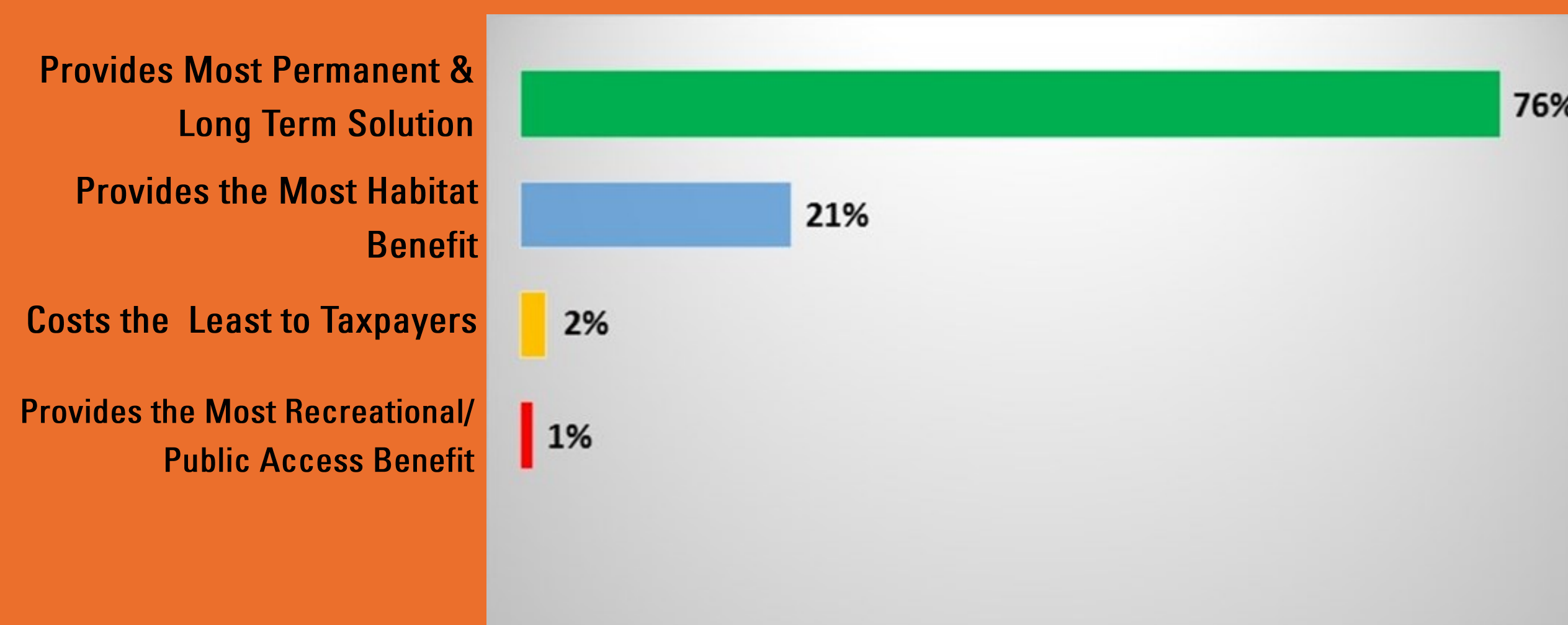


What are your top concerns related to sea level rise?

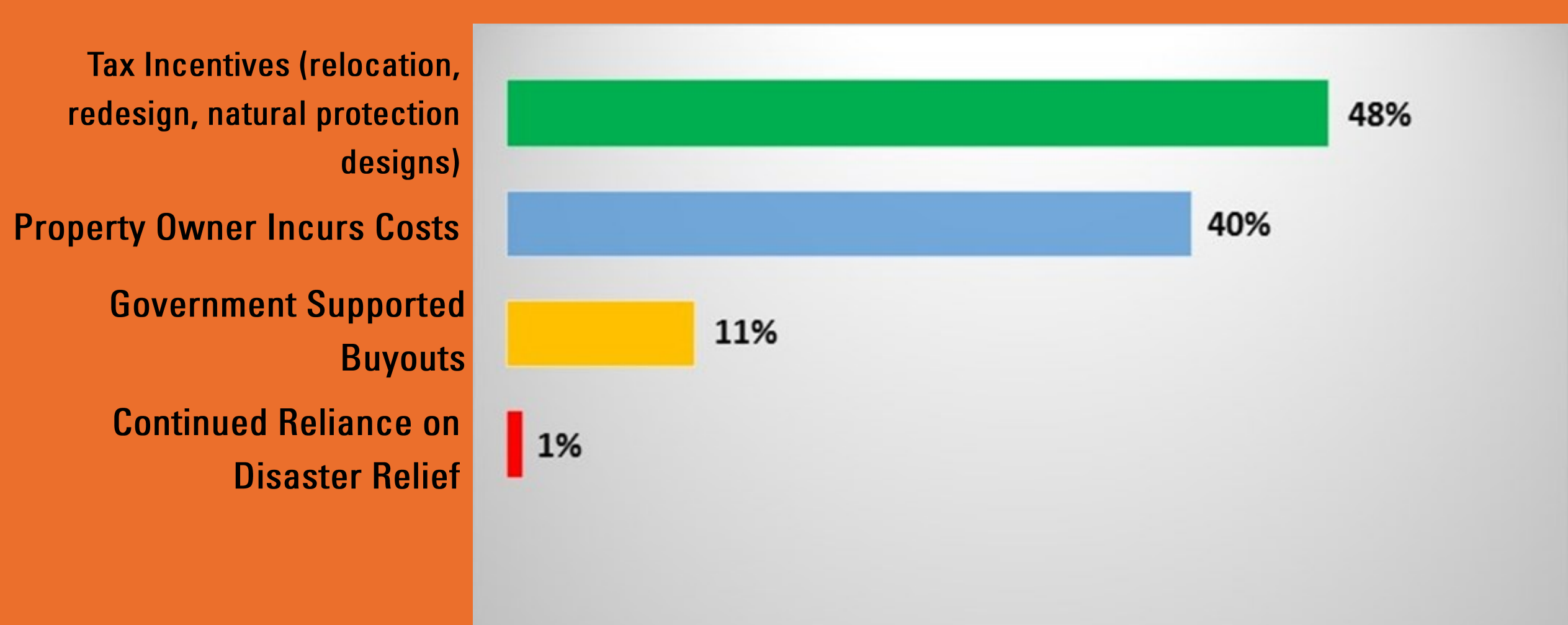


Note: Only top 5 replies listed.

What is the most important factor to consider when managing public infrastructure in the face of sea level rise?



Who should pay for the protection of private development from storms, flooding and erosion?



Partners and Funders

Thanks to the generous funders of our sea level rise adaptation work: North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, The Wheeler Family Foundation, The Burning Foundation, Mountaineers Foundation, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Friends of the San Juans Members.

Partners in Friends of the San Juans science, policy and community efforts on the topic of sea level rise include Coastal Geologic Services, Washington Sea Grant and Resource Media.

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