

Guidelines for Evaluating Alternative Shoreline Stabilization Devices

The following points should be considered when evaluating individual engineering devices:

- Beware of success claims made for distant beaches, i.e. Europe, Australia, or Bermuda.
- Be wary of claims that a single device works on all beaches.
- Every manufacturer touts their device as the one that really works, as opposed to those of their competitors. Think about it.
- Note that before and after photo comparisons of installations are often complicated by changes in tide levels or lake levels.
- Don't believe everything you read. Many reports documenting success are made by the manufacturer or a consultant hired by the manufacturer.
- Don't be lulled by academic research used to support success. Again, look at who provided the funding for the research, the time length of the study and whether the device was subjected to high-energy events.
- Beware of elaborate and pleasant sounding names for devices; they are often misleading.
- Failure of a device is frequently explained away by "unusual" or "unexpected" storms. Such storms are one of the greatest threats to beach width, and devices should be designed to withstand them. Don't accept excuses.
- Wave tank experiments cited as documenting success are meaningless. Documentation should be in the form of the device protecting a beach and property for a significant length of time against the forces of nature.
- "Low-cost" shore protection is an oxymoron.
- In the Great Lakes these new "solutions" come and go with changing lake levels.
- If the device does succeed in holding sand on the beach, it will be at a cost to other beaches; typically the downdrift neighbors.

Is success of a device accomplished at the cost of loss of the beach?