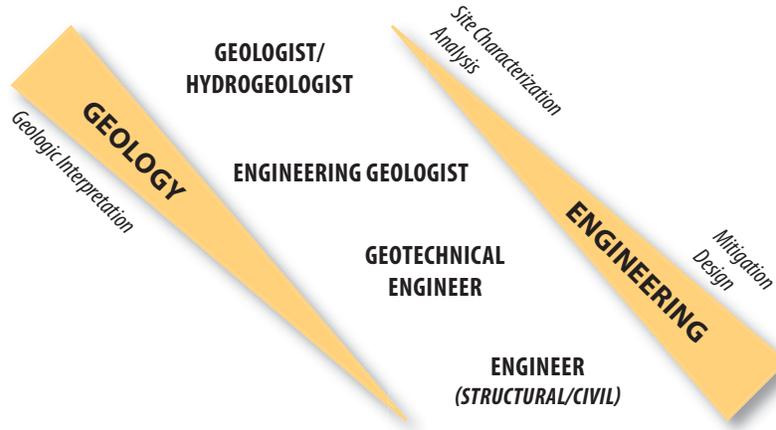


HIRING A CONSULTANT OR CONTRACTOR

KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER

- A contractor should not be selected based on a title. Titles can be ambiguous and may mean different things to different people.
- Ask specific questions about experience to determine if the consultant is qualified to address your issues.
- You may need to make several phone calls to find the right contractor. Decide from your conversations which will be the best fit to address your concerns. Meet them on site to scope the problem and get an estimate.
- You may also need to consult with several different specialists to address your site issues. It will depend on the nature and scope of the issues, and what you want to accomplish.
- Be prepared for your meeting. Bring past reports, a site drainage plan, well logs, or other relevant information.
- Consider what may have contributed to your issues of concern before the contractor visit - a prepared list of questions will illicit better answers from your consultation. If your site issue involves water, where do you see seeps or springs at different times of the year? If you had soil slumps or larger landslides recently or frequently, when did they occur and was anything unusual happening at the time (large rain storms, construction, tree removal, etc.)? Share your observations with the contractor as you search for the right person for the job.
- Be sure to hire a contractor with appropriate licensing and bonding. If you want more experienced and licensed staff, you may need to specify this in an agreement. Larger firms may send upper level employees to meet with you to scope your project. They may then send a less senior staff member, once you've contracted with them. Less experienced staff will work under a licensed geologist/engineering geologist/hydrogeologist/engineer, but may not be licensed themselves. To familiarize yourself with the basics of licensing for different professions, see: <http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/professionals.html>
- Talk to Mason County about permit requirements for any proposed work - don't assume a contractor will know or take care of this.

WHO DO YOU NEED?



GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL CONTRACTORS & CONSULTANTS

1. What experience do you have working specifically on the marine shoreline (or in other unique environments like river banks, steep slopes, or even in a particular area of the County like Hammersley Inlet, etc.)?
2. How do you prepare before coming on site? [You might ask if it would help to send photos.]
3. What criteria do you use to assess risks? How will you communicate those risks to me?
4. Are you willing to give me bad news? How would you share unfavorable findings?
5. Are you comfortable with the possibility of challenging another consultant who may have a different interpretation or opinion the potential risks?
6. I would like to walk the property with you, are you okay with that? [If you can, accompany them during their visit to provide site history and insight, you will end up with a better product.]
7. How soon can you make a site visit?
8. Do you charge for the initial site assessment visit, only for the report, or for both? What is the cost of each element?
9. How long does it take to receive a report after the site assessment?
10. Are you licensed and insured?
11. If I select your company, will I get YOU – or a staff person?
12. Do you provide design or engineering services as well as a site assessment, if needed?
13. Can I see references from clients with similar concerns?



SCENARIOS WHERE YOU MIGHT WANT TO ENGAGE A CONSULTANT

CONSIDERING A NEW MARINE WATERFRONT PROPERTY PURCHASE

1. What specific experience do you have assessing shoreline erosion, steep bluffs, and/or upland landslide and erosion hazards?
2. Will you clearly explain the long-term risks and strengths of the property, and how inherent site conditions relate to the residence, future building limitations, beach access, or other related aspects of property use?



LANDOWNER WITH BLUFF INSTABILITY/EROSION CONCERNS

1. What specific experience do you have with steep bluffs and assessing landslide and erosion hazards?
2. What experience do you have with the particular issue(s) on my property, as I've described them?
3. Will you produce a report that clearly outlines the risks *if I do nothing*?
4. Will your report include recommendations for what I can do to address my concerns, in addition to an assessment of what is going on?

NEARBY TIMBER HARVEST OR OTHER LAND-USE CHANGES (ESPECIALLY IMPACTING WATER AND DRAINAGE)

1. Are you listed on the Dept. of Natural Resources' active "Qualified Expert" list?
http://file.dnr.wa.gov/publications/fp_geo_experts.pdf
2. What experience do you have working in a forested environment (near coastal bluffs)?
3. What experience do you have addressing hydrologic changes resulting from forest harvest and associated forest practices activities (e.g. road building)?
4. Do you typically work for a forest practices (harvest) applicant? Have you ever worked for an adjacent landowner who might be affected by a harvest?
5. What sort of report will you produce?

