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No. 101050-8

**IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON**

LISA LAVINGTON,
Respondent/Appellant

v.

JAMES T. HILLIER and WANDA L. HILLIER.
Petitioners/Appellees.

Appeal from the Court of Appeals, Division II of the
State of Washington
Court of Appeals Case No. 54541-1-II

PETITION FOR REVIEW

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Table of Contents

I. IDENTITY OF PETITIONERS	1
II. CITATION TO COURT OF APPEALS DECISION	1
III. ISSUES PRESENTED FOR REVIEW	1
IV. STATEMENT OF THE CASE.....	2
V. ARGUMENT FOR ACCEPTANCE OF REVIEW	5
A. The Opinion is contrary to Supreme Court precedent.....	7
B. The Opinion conflicts with published opinions of the Court of Appeals.....	12
C. The Opinion implicates substantial public interests.....	15
VI. CONCLUSION	17

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Cases

<i>Borland v. Sanders Lead Co.</i> , 369 So.2d 523, 529 (Ala. 1979)	8
<i>Bradley v. Am. Smelting & Refining Co.</i> , 104 Wn.2d 677, 709 P.2d 782 (1985).....	passim
<i>Burnet v. Spokane Ambulance</i> , 131 Wn.2d 484, 933 P.2d 1036 (1997)	5
<i>Crystal Lotus Enterprises Ltd. v. City of Shoreline</i> , 167 Wn. App. 501, 274 P.3d 1054 (2012).....	16, 17
<i>Davis v. Westphal</i> , 389 Mont. 251, 405 P.3d 73 (2017)	14
<i>Grundy v. Brack Family Trust</i> , 151 Wn. App. 557, 213 P.3d 619 (2009)	4, 15, 16
<i>Guay v. Washington Natural Gas Co.</i> , Wn.2d 473, 383 P.2d 296 (1963)	7
<i>Ofusia v. Smurr</i> , 198 Wn. App. 133, 392 P.3d 1148 (2017)....	17
<i>Wallace v. Lewis County</i> , 134 Wn. App. 1, 137 P.3d 101 (2006)	17

Rules

RAP 13.4 6

Other Authorities

RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 12A 21
RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 158 12
RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 163 12
RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 821D 13

I. IDENTITY OF PETITIONERS

Petitioners are James T. Hillier and Wanda L. Hillier, and the marital community thereof.

II. CITATION TO COURT OF APPEALS DECISION

The Court of Appeals decision is published at *Lavington v. James T. Hillier, et al.*, ____ Wn App ____, 510 P.3d 373 (2022). A true and correct copy of the majority opinion is provided as Appendix A, is referred to herein as “the Opinion,” and cited as “Op.” The dissenting opinion is included in Appendix A.

III. ISSUES PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

1) Whether a plaintiff must show actual and substantial damages to the subject real property in order to have a viable claim for trespass.

2) Whether involuntary dismissal of a trespass claim is appropriate when insufficient evidence supports a finding of actual and substantial physical damage to the real property.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Petitioners James T. Hillier and Wanda L. Hillier ask this Court to confirm longstanding Washington law as to the damages element required to prove a trespass claim. Petitioners believe that a trespass plaintiff must show “actual and substantial damage to property” as a necessary element to their claim, and that a plaintiff’s ability to collect any other damages is predicated upon plaintiff’s first showing “actual and substantial damages” to the subject real property.

This dispute arises from use of a driveway spanning neighboring properties in Mason County. Lisa Lavington filed suit alleging that Petitioners and their contractor, Ray Parsons, trespassed on Lavington’s property during a construction project on the Hillier property. Lavington and James Hillier are cousins, and at trial, Lavington testified that a “family accommodation” existed for use of the driveway for the benefit of the Hillier property. Prior to the commencement of the construction project, James Hillier asked Lavington to formally record an easement on

her property. Lavington declined. When the Hilliers began their project, they directed Parsons to use the driveway as needed.

Amidst the construction, Lavington witnessed a single instance of construction traffic traveling over the driveway when entering the Hillier property. She asked Parsons' foreman to discontinue use and he did. Lavington sued the Hilliers and Parsons for trespass.¹

Lavington claimed to have suffered three types of damages from the alleged trespass. First, she claimed property damage. However, the vast majority of the claimed property damage occurred on state-owned property within 30 feet of the centerline of SR 106. Consequently, the trial court granted the Hilliers' motion *in limine* to exclude evidence of trespass on land that Lavington did not own within the right-of-way. As a result,

¹ Lavington's operative complaint at the time of trial alleged other claims that are not at issue in this petition for review.

at trial, Lavington testified to a single broken tree branch as well as a grading and graveling of the driveway.

Second, Lavington claimed imputed rent for the use of the driveway. Parsons successfully moved to limit the measure of Lavington's damages to the lesser of restoration costs or the diminution in value.

Third, Lavington claimed emotional damages. Lavington ignored an order compelling production of records relevant to her emotional distress claims. Consequently, the trial court precluded Lavington from presenting evidence of emotional distress as a sanction.

At the close of Lavington's case in chief, all Defendants moved for involuntary dismissal under CR 41(b)(3). The Hilliers argued that under *Grundy v. Brack Family Trust*, 151 Wn. App. 557, 213 P.3d 619 (2009), Lavington had not proven a trespass claim because she had not proven "actual and substantial" damage to her property. The trial court agreed and involuntarily dismissed Lavington's trespass claim. Lavington appealed.

A divided Division II panel reversed the trial court's dismissal of Lavington's trespass claim against the Hilliers. Specifically, the majority held that the trial court erred in precluding Lavington's presentation of her emotional damages without findings required by *Burnet v. Spokane Ambulance*, 131 Wn.2d 484, 933 P.2d 1036 (1997), and that the error was not harmless. The majority further held that in addition to emotional damages and property damage, trespass plaintiffs are entitled to damages for loss of exclusive use of their property, notwithstanding any other type of damages, provided those damages are "actual and substantial." Op. at 17. The majority reversed and remanded in a published opinion, and in doing so, dramatically expanded the scope of viable trespass claims in Washington, contrary to the precedent of this Court, other appellate decisions, and public policy. RAP 13.4

V. ARGUMENT FOR ACCEPTANCE OF REVIEW

This Court should accept review of this case, as the Division II majority's holding that Lavington did not need to

prove actual and substantial damage to her real property to establish her trespass claim contradicts long-standing appellate precedent and is contrary to public policy interest in precluding unnecessary litigation.

First, The Opinion contradicts Supreme Court precedent requiring a trespass plaintiff prove actual and substantial damage to the *res*. *Bradley v. Am. Smelting & Refining Co.*, 104 Wn.2d 677, 709 P.2d 782 (1985). Second, the Opinion further contradicts published opinions of the Court of Appeals which have appropriately held, under *Bradley*, that the “actual and substantial damage” element of a trespass claim can only be satisfied by proof of damage to the subject real property. Last, notwithstanding the library of Washington authority, the Opinion implicates substantial issues of public interest requiring the intervention of this Court. The Opinion’s elimination of the requirement of damage to the *res* opens the door to unnecessary, frivolous, and even simply harassing trespass litigation among residential and commercial neighbors. This Court should not

rebuke its own endorsement of the axiom “[d]e minimis non curat lex.” *Guay v. Washington Natural Gas Co.*, Wn.2d 473, 478, 383 P.2d 296 (1963), but should rather confirm the property damage requirement for trespass claims and that the courts are not venues for petty squabble, but only actual, compensable damages.

A. The Opinion is contrary to Supreme Court precedent.

The Opinion contradicts or incorrectly interprets *Bradley v. Am. Smelting & Refining Co.*, 104 Wn.2d 677, 691, 709 P.2d 782 (1985), which holds that trespass plaintiffs must prove actual and substantial damage to the *res*.

In *Bradley*, the Court addressed four certified questions from a case wherein plaintiffs brought claims of intentional trespass and nuisance against a copper smelting business that caused particulate emissions to drift onto plaintiffs’ property. 104 Wn.2d at 679-80. The *Bradley* Court treated four certified questions. Ultimately, the Court “accepte[d] and approve[d]” the elements of trespass from an Alabama case, *Borland v. Sanders*

Lead Co., 369 So.2d 523, 529 (Ala. 1979). *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 691. Specifically, *Bradley* held that trespass liability required a plaintiff to prove all of:

- 1) an invasion affecting an interest in the exclusive possession of his property;
- 2) an intentional doing of the act which results in the invasion;
- 3) reasonable foreseeability that the act done could result in an invasion of plaintiff's possessory interest; and
- 4) substantial damages to the *res*.

Id. The acceptance and approval of the formulation of the fourth element is simply dispositive for this petition. Respectfully, the Opinion inaccurately states that *Bradley* “only referenced damage to property in the context of a continuing trespass.” Op. at 14. Instead, the ratification of the *Borland* elements came in the portion of the *Bradley* opinion holding that the deposit of microscopic particulates could trigger trespass liability. 104 Wn.2d at 691. The *Bradley* Court further confirmed that the *Borland* formulation disposed of the third certified question: “Does the cause of action for trespassory invasion require proof

of actual damages?” *Id.* at 691-92. The Court confirmed, without any qualification concerning *Borland*’s reference to the *res* or technical discussion of “damage” versus “damages,” that “[t]he elements that we have adopted for an action in trespass from *Borland* require that plaintiff has suffered actual and substantial damages.” 104 Wn.2d at 692.

Later, the *Bradley* Court confirmed the *property*-specific aspect of the fourth element: “Assuming that a defendant has caused actual and substantial damages *to a plaintiff’s property*, the trespass continues until the intruding substance is removed.” 104 Wn.2d at 693 (emphasis added). While this confirmation of the holding appears in the portion of the opinion discussing “the effect of the theory of continuing trespass and the discovery rule,” it is clearly not the only context in which the Court made the *Borland* formulation the law in Washington in light of the case’s adoption when answering the other certified questions. *Id.* at 692-93.

The Opinion’s reliance on the *Restatement (Second) of Torts* is misplaced in light of *Bradley*. The Opinion first relies on the *Bradley* Court’s discussion of the Restatement in its response to the first certified question regarding the *intent* element, reciting § 158 for the general statement of liability for trespass *before* turning to the comment entitled “*Causing entry of a thing.*” 104 Wn.2d at 681-82 (internal citations omitted; italics in original). Yet the Opinion incorrectly implies that this recitation of the *Restatement* in *Bradley* held as a matter of *Washington* law that “[o]ne is subject to liability to another for trespass, irrespective of whether he thereby causes harm to any legally protected interest of the other[.]” Op. at 12. *Bradley* clearly holds to the contrary, as discussed *supra*. Similarly, *Restatement* § 158 establishes a *two-part* test for trespass liability—an 1) intentional 2) invasion of the land of another—and provides alternative elements for how the invasion could be accomplished. *Restatement* § 163, of course, presumes the two-part test set out earlier in the same document when it states a

trespasser is subject to liability even without causing damage to the land. However, commentary to that section only confirms that the construction of the elements for trespass liability in the *Restatement* and Washington law are incompatible. *Compare* RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 163, cmt. *a* (AM. LAW. INST. 1965) (“The intention which is required to make the actor liable under the rule state in this Section is an intention to enter upon the particular piece of land in question, irrespective of whether the actor knows or should know that he is entitled to enter.” *with Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 691 (requiring “reasonable foreseeability that the act done could result in an invasion of plaintiff’s possessory interest). The *Bradley* Court’s adoption of the *four-part Borland* formulation dramatically undermines, if not eliminates, the persuasive value of the *Restatement* insofar as it is inconsistent with *Bradley* and *Borland*.

Neither does the Opinion’s properly rely on the *Bradley* Court’s cursory reference to comment *d* of § 821D of the *Restatement*, a section concerning nuisance. The Opinion

implies that *Bradley*'s citation to the comment supports the proposition that liability in trespass is established without damage to land, but that is likewise contradictory to the substantive holding of *Bradley*. The Opinion's citation to *Davis v. Westphal*, 389 Mont. 251, 405 P.3d 73 (2017), is likewise unavailing given that opinion's reliance on the *Restatement* and not *Borland* or a similar formulation of the elements of trespass. The Opinion improperly substituted the *Restatement* for the clear requirement of damages to property for liability to exist in trespass set forth in *Bradley*.

This Court should recognize that the Opinion's attempts to harmonize the *Restatement* with *Bradley* are improper, and affirm the core holding of *Bradley* that actual and substantial damages to the *res* are required for a viable trespass claim.

B. The Opinion conflicts with published opinions of the Court of Appeals.

Next, the Opinion conflicts with other published Court of Appeals decisions that follow *Bradley* for the proposition that a

trespass claim must include proof of damage to the subject real property.

In *Grundy v. Brack Family Trust*, 151 Wn. App. 557, 560, 213 P.3d 619 (2009), *review denied*, 168 Wn.2d 1007 (2010), the parties owned neighboring properties on Puget Sound. The defendants raised their bulkhead to be higher than Grundy's and as a result, water from Puget Sound was redirected off of the Bracks' bulkhead and onto Grundy's property. *Id* at 560-61. The salt water splashed on Grundy's property, causing yellowed and dead grass and "occasional debris." The court, considering only the claims of physical property damage, determined the plaintiff had not proven actual and substantial damages. *Id.* at 568. Division II reversed plaintiff's award. *Id.* at 560.

Crystal Lotus Enterprises Ltd. v. City of Shoreline, 167 Wn. App. 501, 274 P.3d 1054 (2012), analyzed the issue of actual and substantial damages with a rubric similar to the *Grundy* court. In affirming the trial court's grant of summary judgment in favor of the defendants, Division I determined that the plaintiff

in that case had failed to meet the “actual and substantial damages” standard. Specifically, the court observed that plaintiff had “no expert testimony about diminution of property value, no government property tax assessments, [and] no photos or descriptions of physical deterioration.” 167 Wn. App. at 506. *See also* 167 Wn. App. at 506 (citing *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d 677) (trespass requires “actual and substantial harm to that person’s property”). In *Wallace v. Lewis County*, 134 Wn. App. 1, 15, 137 P.3d 101 (2006), Division II again cited *Bradley* for the same proposition. Similarly, in *Ofusia v. Smurr*, 198 Wn. App. 133, 150, 392 P.3d 1148 (2017), the court held that evidence of removal of a fence and destruction of arborvitae was sufficient to reverse an award of summary judgment and remand, but did not consider other categories of damage.

The Courts of Appeals have clearly taken this Court at its word in *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 691, that the “actual and substantial damage” required to prove a trespass concerns damage to real property.

C. The Opinion implicates substantial public interests.

The opinion implicates two substantial public interests. The first is the evisceration of an important threshold in trespass cases. The second is the effects of the Opinion's overwrought distinction between "damages" and "damage." Op. at 13-14.

The *Bradley* Court appreciated the prudence of a judicial threshold in trespass cases and explained the same while refuting the common law definition of trespass:

While at common law any trespass entitled a landowner to recover nominal or punitive damages for the invasion of his property, such a rule is not appropriate under the circumstances before us. No useful purpose would be served by sanctioning actions in trespass by every landowner within a hundred miles of a manufacturing plant. Manufacturers would be harassed and the litigious few would cause the escalation of costs to the detriment of society.

Bradley, 104 Wn.2d at 691-92. This same policy consideration is not exclusive to manufacturers. It takes no great imagination to envision myriad circumstances where neighbors use the

property of their neighbors without permission² and cause no damage; errant wiffle ball hitters, casual gardeners, and even responsible dog walkers should not be exposed to liability for emotional damages or damages “for loss of exclusive use.” The prospect of the Opinion’s enabling litigation concerning the usual, transitory, and trivial use of the property of another weighs in favor of granting this petition so that long-standing law can be affirmed. This Court should intervene to prevent innumerable trials concerning emotional and “loss of exclusive use” damages without any meaningful damage to land. While the bundle of sticks held by property owners includes the right to exclusive possession, that right should not be a sword capable of effecting monetary damages in trespass for the slightest incursion.

Second, the Opinion’s distinction between “damage” and “damages” poses an unacceptable risk of confusion among trial

² Or, as in the case at bar, where there was at worst confusion over the scope of a historical “family accommodation” to use the driveway.

courts. The Opinion holds that “damages” is a term of art for “compensation a person can recover in a lawsuit for an injury or a loss,” and “damage” to “some physical harm to a person or property.” Op. at 13. The Opinion concedes that in light of this presumption, “the cases are somewhat confusing,” Op. at 14, but this confusion is entirely of the Opinion’s own making. *Bradley* and its application by the Court of Appeals has been very clear that trespass plaintiffs must show “actual and substantial” damage to *property*. Prudence dictates that a precedential opinion not assign fixed definitions to words so commonly used in the practice of law in so many contexts.³ Given the multitude of applications of the word “damages” within law, this Court should reject the hyper-technical and needlessly expansive analysis in the Opinion and rely on the well-considered and clear language of *Bradley* for the disposition of this litigation. In light

³ For example, the *Restatement (Second) of Torts*, § 12A, indicates that “damages” “denote[s] a sum of money *awarded* to a person injured by the tort of another.” (emphasis added).

of *Bradley*'s requirement of damages to the *res* in order to be liable in trespass, the Opinion's distinction between "damage" and "damages" is simply unnecessary.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Opinion conflicts with the precedent of this Court and the Court of Appeals. The issues presented involve important matters relating to scope of viable trespass claims in Washington and the heretofore uncountenanced risk of a multiplicity of suits in trespass with *de minimis* property damage. The Court should accept review, reverse the Court of Appeals, and affirm the trial court's dismissal of the entirety of Lavington's trespass action in light of the absence of actual and substantial physical damage to her property.

The undersigned certifies that the above brief complies with RAP 18.17.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington, that on June 23, 2022, I caused the foregoing document to be filed with the Court and served on counsel listed below by way of the Washington State Appellate Court's Portal.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

May 24, 2022

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

DIVISION II

LISA LAVINGTON, a single woman,

Appellant,

v.

JAMES T. HILLIER and WANDA L.
HILLIER, husband and wife; and RAY
PARSONS CONSTRUCTION, LLC, a
Washington limited liability company and
general contractor, Washington Contractor
Registration No. RAYPAPC922D7,

Respondents.

No. 54541-1-II

PUBLISHED OPINION

MAXA, J. — Lisa Lavington appeals the trial court’s orders dismissing her unjust enrichment and intentional trespass claims against James and Wendy Hillier and Ray Parsons Construction, LLC (Parsons). Lavington’s claims arose from the Hilliers’ and their contractor Parsons’ use without permission of a driveway on her property to access a construction site on the Hilliers’ property.

We hold that the trial court did not err in (1) granting summary judgment in favor of the Hilliers and Parsons on Lavington’s unjust enrichment claim, (2) excluding evidence of trespass on a road right-of-way that was not a part of Lavington’s property, and (3) granting a directed verdict and dismissing the intentional trespass claim against Parsons under CR 41(b)(3).

However, we hold that the trial court erred in (1) excluding any evidence of emotional distress

damages as a discovery sanction without considering the *Burnet*¹ factors, (2) limiting Lavington's recoverable damages to the lesser of the cost of restoring any property damage and the diminution in value of the property, and (3) dismissing the intentional trespass claim against the Hilliers under CR 41(b)(3).

Accordingly, we affirm in part, reverse in part, and remand for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

FACTS

Background

The Hilliers owned property adjacent to Lavington's property. James Hillier² and Lavington are cousins, and their properties once were part of the same plat of land owned by James's and Lavington's grandfather. Historically, the Hilliers used a driveway on Lavington's property to access their property. However, the Hilliers also had a second access to their property on the other end of their lot.

In 2013 or 2014, the Hilliers were considering building a house on their property. James asked Lavington if she would grant him a formal easement of her driveway. Lavington denied the request.

In November 2014, the Hilliers began construction of a house on their property and hired Parsons as their general contractor. James told Parsons to use Lavington's driveway as needed for access in order to save money on construction costs. When Lavington discovered that Parsons was using her driveway, she spoke to the foreman of the construction crew and told him

¹ *Burnet v. Spokane Ambulance*, 131 Wn.2d 484, 933 P.2d 1036 (1997).

² For clarity, James and Wendy Hillier will be referred to jointly as the Hilliers, and they will be referred to by their first names when referred to individually. No disrespect is intended.

that they did not have permission to use her property. Parsons stopped using Lavington's driveway.

Lavington filed a complaint against the Hilliers and Parsons for intentional trespass and unjust enrichment, alleging that Parsons had damaged her property when using the driveway to access the Hilliers' construction site.³ She alleged that she had suffered damages, including emotional distress.

Partial Summary Judgment on Unjust Enrichment Claim

The Hilliers and Parsons jointly moved for partial summary judgment dismissal of Lavington's unjust enrichment claim. They argued that Lavington had no evidence that she conferred a benefit on the Hilliers or Parsons or that the benefit came at Lavington's expense. In response, Lavington argued that the Hilliers and Parsons received a valuable benefit by using her driveway because they were able to avoid additional costs associated with using the other entrance to the Hilliers' lot.

During Lavington's deposition, she had acknowledged that she did not give anything to Hillier that benefited him. But she stated that the Hilliers received a benefit from using the driveway because they saved money on construction costs. Scott Babbit, Lavington's expert, submitted a declaration in which he estimated that the Hilliers would have had to spend an extra \$80,000 dollars had they not used Lavington's driveway for access.

³ Lavington also alleged claims for equitable estoppel, quiet title, and injunctive relief. The trial court dismissed the equitable estoppel and injunctive relief claims on directed verdict but found that Lavington was entitled to a decree quieting title. Lavington did not appeal the dismissal of the claims for equitable estoppel and injunctive relief.

The trial court granted the motion for partial summary judgment, dismissing Lavington's unjust enrichment claim with prejudice. The trial court stated that it could not find that Lavington actually gave anything to the Hilliers.

Lavington's Medical Records

The Hilliers requested production of Lavington's medical records, including mental health records, because she claimed emotional distress damages. Although Lavington originally provided an authorization to access her records, she withdrew the authorization because she chose to prove her damages without using her medical records. The trial court granted the Hilliers' motion to compel production of Lavington's medical records and ordered Lavington to execute a stipulation for the Hilliers and Parsons to obtain her mental health records.

Lavington did not allow the Hilliers and Parsons to obtain her medical records as the trial court ordered. Therefore, the Hilliers and Parsons filed motions in limine to exclude any evidence of her alleged emotional distress. The trial court granted Parsons' motion and precluded Lavington from claiming emotional distress damages. In reaching its decision, the trial court did not address the *Burnet* factors. Instead, the court merely ruled that it was precluding Lavington's emotional distress damages because Lavington did not produce her medical records as the court had ordered.

Evidence of Trespass on Road Right-of-Way

The Hilliers and Parsons jointly filed a motion in limine to exclude evidence of trespass on property that was not owned by Lavington. They argued that most, if not all, of the land on which they allegedly trespassed was within the right of way of the adjoining highway, not on Lavington's property. The Hilliers and Parsons produced a quit claim deed from February 10, 2014 that described Lavington's parcel as

All that portion of the following described tract of land in Government Lot four (4), Section thirty-five (35), Township twenty-two (22) North, Range three (3) West, W.M., *which lies Northerly of the Northerly right-of-way line of State Highway No. 106 (Navy Yard Highway).*

Clerk's Papers (CP) at 577 (emphasis added).

Dan Holman, a land surveyor, provided a declaration in support of the Hilliers' motion. He attached to his declaration the original deed from 1923, which described a right-of-way for state road known as the Navy Yard Highway (now known as State Route 106) that was 60-feet wide. However, starting in 1941, the deeds described what became of Lavington's property as laying "Northerly of the Northerly right-of-way line" of the Navy Yard Highway. *E.g.*, CP at 515. Based on his review of the deeds, Holman determined that Lavington's parcel was north of the northerly right-of-way line of SR 106.

In response, Lavington argued that the State had only an easement over the right-of-way and that she owned the underlying fee simple interest from the centerline of the highway.

The trial court granted the Hilliers' and Parsons' motion to exclude evidence of trespass on the road right-of-way because Lavington did not own that property.

Motion in Limine Regarding Trespass Damages

Parsons moved in limine to limit the measure of Lavington's damages to the lesser of the cost of restoring any damage to the property or the diminution in value the trespass caused. Similarly, the Hilliers moved in limine to exclude testimony from Lavington's expert, who was prepared to testify regarding his opinion of the rental value the Hilliers should have paid to use Lavington's driveway. The trial court granted the motion regarding the measure of damages, and excluded the expert's testimony because it did not relate to either restoration costs or diminution in value.

Bench Trial and Involuntary Dismissal

The parties proceeded to a bench trial on Lavington's intentional trespass claim. Lavington and James Hillier testified to the background facts stated above.

Lavington acknowledged that, before the construction, there was a family accommodation allowing the Hilliers to use the driveway to access their property. But she believed this did not extend to others. Lavington admitted that she only ever saw one construction truck use her driveway. She did not know how many trucks used her driveway or how big those trucks were.

Lavington stated that there was a change in grade of her driveway at the property line, the driveway was widened to accommodate construction vehicles, and crushed rock was spread on the driveway. She also stated that some trees were broken and that vine maples along her property line looked more sparse. However, almost all of the damage to trees Lavington identified occurred within the highway right-of-way. She could identify only one tree with a broken branch that was not in the right-of-way.

James testified that the Lavington and Hillier families were on good terms and that his family would use Lavington's driveway with no objection. James stated that he told Parsons that they could use the driveway as needed.

After Lavington presented her case in chief, the Hilliers and Parsons jointly moved for dismissal of Lavington's intentional trespass claim under CR 41(b)(3). The trial court granted the motion for dismissal regarding both parties and entered findings of fact and conclusions of law. The reason for the dismissal of the claim against the Hilliers was that Lavington did not prove that she suffered actual and substantial damages from the trespass. The reason for the dismissal of the claim against Parsons was that Parsons did not intentionally trespass on

Lavington's driveway because James directed Parsons to use the driveway based on the historical accommodation.

Lavington appeals the dismissal on summary judgment of her unjust enrichment claim, the exclusion of evidence of trespass on the road right of way, the exclusion of evidence of emotional distress damages as a discovery sanction, the exclusion of evidence regarding the rental value of the use of her driveway, and the dismissal of her intentional trespass claims.

ANALYSIS

A. UNJUST ENRICHMENT

Lavington argues that the trial court erred in dismissing her unjust enrichment claim against the Hilliers on summary judgment because she presented genuine issues of material fact on all elements of the claim. We disagree.

1. Standard of Review

We review summary judgment orders de novo. *Sartin v. Estate of McPike*, 15 Wn. App. 2d 163, 172, 475 P.3d 522 (2020), *review denied*, 196 Wn.2d 1046 (2021). We view all the evidence and apply reasonable inferences in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party. *Id.* Summary judgment is appropriate only when there are no genuine issues of material fact. *Id.* A genuine issue of material fact exists “when reasonable minds could disagree on the facts controlling the outcome of the litigation.” *Id.*

2. Requirement that Plaintiff Confer a Benefit

Unjust enrichment represents a type of implied contract between the plaintiff and the defendant. *Young v. Young*, 164 Wn.2d 477, 483-84, 191 P.3d 1258 (2008). The cause of action allows a plaintiff to recover for the value of a benefit the defendant retained even though there is

no formal contractual relationship, based on equity and fairness. *Id.* at 484. In such situations, the law dictates that a quasi-contract exists between the parties. *Id.*

The Supreme Court in *Young* recognized that the first element of unjust enrichment was that the plaintiff *confer* a benefit on the defendant. *Id.* The court then stated the first element more generally in reciting the three elements: “(1) the defendant *receives* a benefit, (2) the received benefit is at the plaintiff’s expense, and (3) the circumstances make it unjust for the defendant to retain the benefit without payment.” *Id.* at 484-85 (emphasis added).

Here, there is no question that the Hilliers received a benefit. However, *Young* and multiple Court of Appeals cases state that *a plaintiff must confer a benefit on the defendant* to satisfy the first element of unjust enrichment. *Young*, 164 Wn.2d at 484; *e.g.*, *Samra v. Singh*, 15 Wn. App. 2d 823, 837, 479 P.3d 713 (2020); *Bircumshaw v. Wash. State Health Care Auth.*, 194 Wn. App. 176, 205, 380 P.3d 524 (2016); *Austin v. Ettl*, 171 Wn. App. 82, 92, 286 P.3d 85 (2012). As the court stated in *Bircumshaw*, “Unjust enrichment is a basis for recovering the value of a *benefit conferred on another party* in the absence of a contractual relationship.” 194 Wn. App. at 205 (emphasis added).

Requiring that the plaintiff confer a benefit on the defendant to recover for unjust enrichment is consistent with the contractual basis of the theory discussed in *Young*. 164 Wn.2d at 483-84. The defendant must receive a benefit *from the plaintiff* for an implied contract to arise.

Lavington argues that the Hilliers received a benefit because they saved on construction costs by using her driveway. However, it is undisputed that Lavington did not confer any benefit on the Hilliers or on Parsons. They simply took the benefit. Therefore, as a matter of law Lavington could not satisfy the first element of unjust enrichment.

We hold that the trial court did not err in dismissing Lavington's unjust enrichment claim on summary judgment.

B. EXCLUSION OF EVIDENCE REGARDING TRESPASS WITHIN RIGHT-OF-WAY

Lavington argues that the trial court erred in determining that her property did not include the fee interest underlying the State's right-of-way and excluding evidence of trespass within the right-of-way. We disagree.

Lavington relies on the "highway presumption" to argue that she owned a fee interest to the centerline of the state highway adjacent to her property. The highway presumption states that "the conveyance of land bounded by or along a highway carries title to the center of the highway unless there is something in the deed or surrounding circumstances showing an intent to the contrary." *Roeder Co. v. Burlington N., Inc.*, 105 Wn.2d 567, 575, 716 P.2d 855 (1986)).

Whether fee interest extends to the center of the highway depends on the particular circumstances of each case. *Christian v. Purdy*, 60 Wn. App. 798, 801, 808 P.2d 164 (1991).

For example, if the provisions in the deed describe a property that extends up to but does not include the right of way, the highway presumption is rebutted. *Northlake Marine Works, Inc. v. City of Seattle*, 70 Wn. App. 491, 500, 857 P.2d 283 (1993).

Here, the legal description of Lavington's property states,

All that portion of the following described tract of land in Government Lot four (4), Section thirty five (35), Township twenty two (22) North, Range three (3) West, W.M., which lies Northerly of the Northerly right-of-way line of Primary State Highway No. 106 (Navy Yard Highway).

CP at 577. The plain language of this legal description does not include fee interest to the center of the highway because it identifies Lavington's property as north of the northern right-of-way line. This language shows an intent that is contrary to the presumption that her property extends

to the center of the highway. *See Roeder*, 105 Wn.2d at 575. Therefore, the highway presumption is rebutted under the facts of this case.

Lavington's deeds contain language that clearly set her property boundary as north of the northern right-of-way line of the state highway. Therefore, we hold that the trial court did not err when it determined that Lavington's property did not include the fee interest underlying the State's right-of-way and excluded evidence of any damage within the right-of-way.

C. PRECLUSION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS CLAIM

Lavington argues that the trial court erred in precluding her from claiming emotional distress damages as a sanction for her refusal to produce her medical records in discovery because the trial court did not consider the *Burnet* factors. The Hilliers do not dispute that the trial court erred, but they argue that the error was harmless because Lavington's failure to show actual and substantial physical damage to her property meant that she could not recover emotional distress damages. We hold that the trial court erred and that the error was not harmless because Lavington can recover emotional distress damages for intentional trespass even in the absence of physical damage to her property.

1. Legal Principles

Under CR 37(b)(2), the trial court has discretion to impose sanctions against a party who fails to comply with a discovery order. Available sanctions include preventing a noncomplying party from supporting a claim. CR 37(b)(2)(B). CR 37(d) also allows the trial court to impose the sanctions allowed under CR 37(b)(2) for the failure of a party to respond to interrogatories or requests for production. *Magaña v. Hyundai Motor Am.*, 167 Wn.2d 570, 584, 220 P.3d 191 (2009). The trial court generally should impose the least severe sanction that will adequately serve the purposes of sanctions, which are to compensate the harmed party, deter, punish, and

educate the wrongdoer, and ensure that the wrongdoer does not profit from the wrong. *Barton v. Dep't of Transp.*, 178 Wn.2d 193, 215, 308 P.3d 597 (2013).

Before a trial court can impose one of the “harsher remedies” for a discovery violation under CR 37(b), it must explicitly consider the *Burnet* factors: (1) whether the violation was willful or deliberate, (2) whether the violation substantially prejudiced the opposing party’s ability to prepare for trial, and (3) whether lesser sanctions probably would suffice. *Jones v. City of Seattle*, 179 Wn.2d 322, 338, 314 P.3d 380 (2013). The “harsher remedies” include those sanctions described in CR 37(b)(2). *Mayer v. Sto Indus., Inc.*, 156 Wn.2d 677, 688, 132 P.3d 115 (2006). The trial court must make express findings regarding the *Burnet* factors on the record. *Teter v. Deck*, 174 Wn.2d 207, 217, 274 P.3d 336 (2012).

2. Required Production of Mental Health Records

Initially, Lavington argues that the trial court erred in ordering her to allow the Hilliers and Parsons to obtain her medical records pursuant to discovery requests. We disagree.

CR 26 provides for broad discovery from the opposing party. *Magaña*, 167 Wn.2d at 584. Information is discoverable even if inadmissible at trial if it “appears reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence.” CR 26(b)(1).

Here, Lavington argues that she did not need to produce her medical records because she elected not to rely on medical evidence at trial to prove her emotional distress claim. But she ignores the fact that the Hilliers and Parsons could use her medical records to *defend* against her emotional distress claim. And her medical records clearly had the capacity to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence regardless of whether the records themselves were admissible.

We hold that the trial court did not err in ordering Lavington to allow the Hilliers and Parsons to obtain her medical records.

3. Failure to Consider *Burnet* Factors

The trial court stated that it was not allowing Lavington to claim emotional distress damages because she did not produce her medical records as ordered by the court. The trial court did not consider the *Burnet* factors on the record before precluding Lavington’s emotional distress claim, as the law clearly requires. Therefore, we hold that the trial court erred in precluding Lavington’s emotional distress claim as a discovery sanction.

4. Harmless Error

A trial court’s failure to properly consider the *Burnet* factors is subject to a harmless error analysis. *See Jones*, 179 Wn.2d at 356. Under the harmless error test in civil cases, an error is harmless when it does not materially affect the outcome of the trial. *Needham v. Dreyer*, 11 Wn. App. 2d 479, 497, 454 P.3d 136 (2019).

The Hilliers argue that the trial court’s error was harmless. They claim that Lavington could not recover emotional distress damages for their intentional trespass because she could not show actual and substantial physical damage to her property. We disagree.

a. Legal Principles – Trespass

A trespass is “ ‘any intentional invasion of the plaintiff’s interest in the exclusive possession of property.’ ” *Bradley v. Am. Smelting & Refining Co.*, 104 Wn.2d 677, 685, 709 P.2d 782 (1985) (quoting W. ROGERS, ENVIRONMENTAL LAW § 2.13 at 154-57 (1977)). “ ‘One is subject to liability to another for trespass, irrespective of whether he thereby causes harm to any legally protected interest of the other, if he intentionally (a) enters land in the possession of the other.’ ” *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 681 (quoting RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 158 (AM. LAW. INST. 1965)).

The Supreme Court in *Bradley* identified the elements of an intentional trespass claim. 104 Wn.2d at 692-93. The court stated that an intentional trespass occurs when the defendant's actions have "(1) invaded the plaintiff's interest in the exclusive possession of his property, (2) been committed intentionally, (3) been done with the knowledge and reasonable foreseeability that the act would disturb the plaintiffs' possession, and (4) caused actual and substantial damages." *Id.*

The court elaborated on the fourth element:

While at common law any trespass entitled a landowner to recover nominal or punitive damages for the invasion of his property, such a rule is not appropriate under the circumstances before us. . . . The elements that we have adopted for an action in trespass . . . require that a plaintiff has suffered actual and substantial damages. Since this is an element of the action, the plaintiff who cannot show that actual and substantial damages have been suffered should be subject to dismissal of his cause upon a motion for summary judgment.

Id. at 691-92.

The fourth element as stated in *Bradley* unequivocally required actual and substantial damages, plural. *Id.* at 691-93. The term "damages" refers to compensation a person can recover in a lawsuit for an injury or a loss. *Ellingson v. Spokane Mortg. Co.*, 19 Wn. App. 48, 57, 573 P.2d 389 (1978); *see also* BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY 488 (11th ed. 2019). In contrast, the term "damage" generally refers to some physical harm to a person or property. BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY 488.

However, when discussing a *continuing* trespass, the court in *Bradley* referred both to damage to property and to compensatory damages: "Assuming that a defendant has caused actual and substantial damage to a plaintiff's property, the trespass continues until the intruding substance is removed. If such is the case, and damages can be proved, as required, actions may be brought for uncompensated injury." *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 693. Later in the same

paragraph, the court stated that it had ruled that “actual and substantial damages are required.”
Id.

As in *Bradley*, after stating the damages element in the plural, this court in *Wallace v. Lewis County* stated that a claim for *continuing* intentional trespass required “actual and substantial harm to [a] person’s property.” 134 Wn. App. 1, 15, 137 P.3d 101 (2006); *see also Crystal Lotus Enterprises, Ltd. v. City of Shoreline*, 167 Wn. App. 501, 506, 274 P.3d 1054 (2012). This court in *Grundy v. Brack Family Trust* initially referred to the damages element in the plural, requiring actual and substantial damages. 151 Wn. App. 557, 567, 213 P.3d 619 (2009). But then the court dropped the “s” and stated that “a person must cause ‘actual and substantial damage[]’ to the property of another” to recover for trespass. *Id.* at 568 (alteration in original) (quoting *Wallace*, 134 Wn. App. at 15).

b. Liability Without Physical Damage

The cases are somewhat confusing. But we conclude based on *Bradley* and the *Restatement (Second) of Torts* that the fourth element of an intentional trespass claim is actual and substantial *damages*, not some physical damage to the plaintiff’s property.

The court in *Bradley* stated four times that actual and substantial *damages* was an element of trespass and only referenced damage to property in the context of a continuing trespass while again referring to damages. *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 692-93. Almost all the cases since *Bradley*, including *Wallace*, *Grundy* and *Crystal Lotus Enterprises*, have stated that the fourth element of trespass is actual and substantial *damages*. *See Ofuasia v. Smurr*, 198 Wn. App. 133, 149, 392 P.3d 1148 (2017); *Hurley v. Port Blakely Tree Farms L.P.*, 182 Wn. App. 753, 772, 332 P.3d 469 (2014).

In addition, as stated above, *Bradley* quoted § 158 of the *Restatement (Second) of Torts*, which states that liability exists for an intentional entry into land in the possession of another “irrespective of whether he thereby causes harm to any legally protected interest of the other.” *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 681. And the court later quoted from comment d to § 821D of the *Restatement*, which distinguishes between trespass and private nuisance: “*For an intentional trespass, there is liability without harm; for a private nuisance, there is no liability without significant harm. In trespass an intentional invasion of the plaintiff’s possession is of itself a tort, and liability follows.*” *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 689 (emphasis added).

Further, §163 of the *Restatement* states, “One who intentionally enters land in the possession of another is subject to liability to the possessor for a trespass, *although his presence on the land causes no harm to the land*, its possessor, or to any thing or person in whose security the possessor has a legally protected interest.” (Emphasis added.) A comment to § 163 states: “The wrong for which a remedy is given under the rule stated in this Section consists of an interference with the possessor’s interest in excluding others from the land. Consequently, *even a harmless entry or remaining, if intentional, is a trespass.*” RESTATEMENT § 163 cmt. d (emphasis added); *see also Davis v. Westphal*, 389 Mont. 251, 259, 405 P.3d 73 (2017) (stating that “[b]ecause the legal harm is the interference with another’s right to exclusive possession of property, an unauthorized tangible presence on the property of another constitutes a trespass regardless of whether the intrusion caused any other harm”).

Because trespass liability can exist without some physical damage to the property, there is no reason that emotional distress cannot constitute actual and substantial damages. And the general rule is that a plaintiff can recover damages for emotional distress resulting from an intentional tort like trespass. *See Birchler v. Castello Land Co.*, 133 Wn.2d 106, 115-16, 942

P.2d 968 (1997). If emotional distress damages are recoverable in a trespass action, they necessarily can constitute actual and substantial damages.

We conclude that if Lavington can sustain her burden of proof, emotional distress damages can constitute actual and substantial damages sufficient to support an intentional trespass claim. And this means that the trial court's error in precluding Lavington's emotional distress claim was not harmless.

5. Summary

We hold that (1) the trial court did not err in ordering Lavington to produce her medical records, (2) the trial court did err in precluding Lavington's emotional distress damages without considering the *Burnet* factors on the record, and (3) that error was not harmless because emotional distress damages can constitute actual and substantial damages, thereby satisfying the fourth element of intentional trespass if proved. We emphasize that on remand if Lavington again defies the court order and refuses to produce her medical records, the trial court again can assess whether precluding Lavington's emotional distress claim would be an appropriate sanction – after considering the *Burnet* factors on the record.

D. DAMAGES RECOVERABLE FOR INTENTIONAL TRESPASS

Lavington argues that the trial court erred by limiting her recoverable damages to the lesser of the cost of restoring any property damage and the diminution in value of the property. We agree.

The rule that an injured person is entitled to recover the lesser of the cost of restoration or the diminution in value applies to physical damage to personal or real property. *See Thompson v. King Feed & Nutrition Serv., Inc.*, 153 Wn.2d 447, 454-59, 105 P.3d 378 (2005). However, no

case states that this is the *only* measure of damages allowed for an intentional trespass onto another's property. Physical damage to property is only one aspect of a trespass.

“ [T]he very essence of the nature of property is the right to its exclusive use. ”

Holmquist v. King County, 192 Wn. App. 551, 561, 368 P.3d 234 (2016) (quoting *Olwell v. Nye & Nissen Co.*, 26 Wn.2d 282, 286, 173 P.2d 652 (1946)). As a result, property owners are entitled to compensation for the loss of their right to exclusive use and possession of their property. *Holmquist*, 192 Wn. App. at 562. For example, trespass plaintiffs may be able to recover loss of use damages for a temporary invasion of their property. *Olympic Pipe Line Co. v. Thoeny*, 124 Wn. App. 381, 393-94, 101 P.3d 430 (2004). The court in *Holmquist* noted that “courts assess damages for even minimal interference with an owner's right of exclusive use and possession.” 192 Wn. App. at 562.

The one limitation, as noted above, is that the plaintiff must prove actual and substantial damages. *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 693. Therefore, nominal damages generally are not allowed for an intentional trespass claim. *Id.* at 691-92.

The specific issue in this case is Lavington's argument that she should have been allowed to present evidence of the fair rental value of the use of her driveway to prove damages for intentional trespass. She relies on *Holmquist*, where the court approved allowing trespass plaintiffs to quantify their damages using the rental value of the property at issue. 192 Wn. App. at 562-565. But in *Holmquist*, the trespass was akin to a long-term partial occupation of the property – the defendant's actions allowed the plaintiffs' private property to be used as a public beach. *Id.* at 554-55. That case does not support the proposition that rental value can be a proper measure of damages in all trespass cases, and specifically when a defendant drives across the plaintiff's property for a period of time.

We do not decide here whether rental value evidence is admissible under the facts of this case because the trial court excluded this evidence based on an erroneous assumption that Lavington's damages were limited to the lesser of restoration costs and diminution in value. On remand, the trial court will have to decide the issue of admissibility in light of our damages discussion above.

E. DISMISSAL OF INTENTIONAL TRESPASS CLAIM

Lavington argues that the trial court erred in dismissing the intentional trespass claims against the Hilliers and Parsons under CR 41(b)(3). We agree with regard to the Hilliers but disagree regarding Parsons.

1. Legal Principles

A trial court may grant a motion to dismiss at the close of the plaintiff's case under CR 41(b)(3). Dismissal is proper where the evidence or reasonable inferences therefrom supports a verdict for the plaintiff. *Commonwealth Real Estate Servs. v. Padilla*, 149 Wn. App. 757, 762, 205 P.3d 937 (2009). In reviewing a dismissal based on CR 41(b)(3), "we review de novo whether the plaintiff presented a prima facie case, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the plaintiff." *Rufin v. City of Seattle*, 199 Wn. App. 348, 357, 398 P.3d 1237 (2017).

2. Claim Against the Hilliers

The trial court dismissed the intentional trespass claims against the Hilliers because Lavington failed to present any evidence of actual and substantial damages. However, as discussed above, the trial court erroneously precluded Lavington from presenting evidence regarding her alleged emotional distress and any damages apart from physical injury to her

property. Therefore, until Lavington is allowed to present such evidence, it is unknown whether she will be able to show actual and substantial damages.

We hold that the trial court erred in dismissing the intentional trespass claim against the Hilliers under CR 41(b)(3).

3. Claim Against Parsons

The trial court dismissed the intentional trespass claims against Parsons on the grounds that Parsons did not intentionally trespass on Lavington's property because James Hillier directed Parsons to use Lavington's driveway.

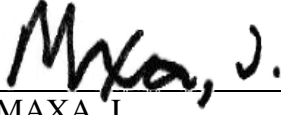
As noted above, one element of an intentional trespass is that the defendant knew with reasonable foreseeability that their intentional act will result in intrusion of the plaintiff's interest in exclusive possession. *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 692-93. In other words, the defendant must be "substantially certain that the trespass would result from his intentional actions." *Grundy*, 151 Wn. App. at 569.

There was no evidence presented at trial to show that Parsons knew that he was trespassing. Lavington presented testimony that James told Parsons to use the driveway as needed. Lavington also testified herself that, when she approached Parsons' foreman, he stated that he did not know he was not allowed to use the driveway. Further, Lavington testified that the construction traffic stopped immediately after she confronted Parsons' foreman. Because Parsons believed he had permission to use the driveway, he could not have been "substantially certain that the trespass would result from his intentional actions." *Grundy*, 151 Wn. App. at 569.

Therefore, we hold that that the trial court did not err in dismissing Lavington's intentional trespass claim against Parsons under CR 41(b)(3).

CONCLUSION

We affirm in part, reverse in part, and remand for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.



MAXA, J.

I concur:



WORSWICK, P.J.

LEE, J. — (Concurring in part/dissenting in part) I concur with the majority that the trial court did not err in (1) granting summary judgment in favor of James and Wendy Hilliers and Ray Parsons Construction, LLC (Parsons) on Lisa Lavington’s unjust enrichment, (2) excluding evidence of trespass on a road right-of-way that was not part of Lavington’s property, and (3) granting a directed verdict and dismissing the intentional trespass claim against Parsons under CR 41(b)(3). However, I respectfully disagree with the majority on the intentional trespass claim against the Hilliers. I would hold that the trial court did not err in dismissing the intentional trespass claim against the Hilliers under CR 41(b)(3) because Lavington failed to show actual and substantial damage to her property, and the actual basis upon which Lavington appeals fails. Further, because evidence of emotional distress damages does not establish liability for intentional trespass, the trial court’s exclusion of emotional distress damages as a discovery sanction without considering the *Burnet*⁴ factors was harmless error. Also, because Lavington’s intentional trespass claim fails, the issue relating to the trial court’s exclusion of Lavington’s evidence of the fair rental value of the land to show damages for intentional trespass is moot.

A. INTENTIONAL TRESPASS

I agree with the majority that, in *Bradley*, the Supreme Court held that to establish intentional trespass, a plaintiff must show that the defendant’s actions have “(1) invaded the plaintiff’s interest in the exclusive possession of his property, (2) been committed intentionally, (3) been done with the knowledge and reasonable foreseeability that the act would disturb the plaintiffs’ possession, and (4) caused actual and substantial damages.” *Bradley v. American Smelting & Refining Co.*, 104 Wn.2d 677, 692-93, 709 P.2d 782 (1985). In establishing these

⁴ *Burnet v. Spokane Ambulance*, 131 Wn.2d 484, 933 P.2d 1036 (1997).

elements for intentional trespass, *Bradley* expressly accepted and approved of the elements set forth by *Borland*, which stated that:

“[A] plaintiff must show 1) an invasion affecting an interest in the exclusive possession of his property; 2) an intentional doing of the act which results in the invasion; 3) reasonable foreseeability that the act done could result in an invasion of plaintiff’s possessory interest; and 4) substantial damages to the *res*.”

Bradley, 104 Wn.2d at 691 (emphasis in original) (quoting *Borland v. Sanders Lead Co.*, 369 So.2d 523, 529 (Ala. 1979)).

The requirement that there be actual and substantial damages *to property* is the crux of my disagreement with the majority. The majority confuses damage or damages to the property of another that is necessary to prove liability with the recovery of damages once liability is established.

The majority posits that in determining liability for intentional trespass, a plaintiff can prove actual and substantial damages without any showing of physical harm to the property, and instead, can prove liability by showing any type of damage, including only emotional damages. To support its position, the majority relies on *Bradley’s* quote of the *Restatement (Second) of Torts* § 158 (1965). Majority Opinion at 13. However, *Bradley* used the quoted language in a discussion of the scope and meaning of the requisite intent needed to show intentional trespass, not in a discussion of actual and substantial damages. *Bradley*, 104 Wn.2d at 681-82.

The majority also relies on a comment to *Restatement (Second) of Torts* § 812D; a comment to *Restatement* § 163; and a Montana case to support its position. Majority Opinion at 15-16. *Bradley* cited to, without adopting, the sources relied on by the majority in the court’s discussion as to whether an intentional deposit of microscopic particulates onto a person’s property gives rise to a cause of action for intentional trespass as well as nuisance. I do not find the legal support relied on by the majority persuasive.

A careful reading of Washington case law shows that the actual and substantial damages element of intentional trespass requires a showing that there be actual and substantial damages *to the property*. To emphasize, *Bradley* specifically adopted the following elements of trespass set forth in *Borland* to recover in trespass:

“[A] plaintiff must show 1) an invasion affecting an interest in the exclusive possession of his property; 2) an intentional doing of the act which results in the invasion; 3) reasonable foreseeability that the act done could result in an invasion of plaintiff’s possessory interest; and 4) substantial damages to the *res*.”

Bradley, 104 Wn.2d at 691 (emphasis in original) (quoting *Borland*, 369 So.2d at 529). The requirement that there be “damages to the *res*” has not changed. *See also Crystal Lotus Enterprises Ltd. v. City of Shoreline*, 167 Wn. App. 501, 506, 274 P.3d 1054 (2012) (intentional trespass requires “actual and substantial harm to that person’s property.”); *Grundy v. Brack Family Trust*, 151 Wn. App. 557, 568, 213 P.3d 619 (2009) (An intentional trespass requires actual and substantial damage “to the property of another”), *review denied*, 168 Wn.2d 1007 (2010); *Wallace v. Lewis County*, 134 Wn. App. 1, 15, 137 P.3d 101 (2006) (intentional trespass requires “actual and substantial harm to that person’s property”).⁵

Here, we are not dealing with the intentional deposit upon property of microscopic particulates that are undetectable by the human senses as was the case in *Bradley*. And the only evidence of damage to the property that was not in the road right-of-way was one tree with a broken

⁵ Our Supreme Court has held that emotional distress damages can be recovered *upon a showing of liability* for an intentional tort, not as the basis to find liability. *See Cagle v. Burns and Roe, Inc.*, 106 Wn.2d 911, 916, 726 P.2d 434 (1986) (In response to a certified question from a federal court as to whether emotional distress damages can be recovered upon showing of liability for the intentional tort of wrongful termination in violation of public policy, the court stated that “[t]his court has liberally construed damages for emotional distress as being available merely upon proof of ‘an intentional tort’” (quoting *Cherberg v. People’s Nat’l Bank*, 88 Wn.2d 595, 602, 564 P.2d 1137 (1977))).

branch. This can hardly be characterized as actual and substantial damage to the property sufficient to sustain liability for an intentional trespass claim.

Also, Lavington acknowledges that, in the order relating to the Hilliers, the trial court found that in her case in chief, Lavington “did not prove that she had suffered actual and substantial damages.” Clerk’s Papers at 1008. Lavington admits that the evidence presented at trial supported a finding of no actual and substantial damage in the absence of any other reversible errors. Also, Lavington did not challenge this finding in the order relating to the Hilliers. Therefore, the trial court’s finding that Lavington did not suffer actual and substantial damages is a verity on appeal. *See Rush v. Blackburn*, 190 Wn. App. 945, 956, 361 P.3d 217 (2015) (“Unchallenged findings of fact are verities on appeal.”).

B. ACTUAL BASIS OF LAVINGTON’S APPEAL

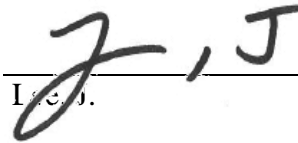
On appeal, Lavington only argues that the trial court erred by dismissing her intentional trespass claim against the Hilliers based on “family accommodation.” Br. of Appellant at 38. However, Lavington admits that the trial court made no findings or conclusions regarding “family accommodation” in its written findings of fact and conclusions of law relating to the Hilliers. Br. of Appellant at 38. Therefore, Lavington’s challenge to the trial court’s dismissal of the intentional trespass claim should fail because the actual basis of her appeal is unsupportable.

CONCLUSION

A cause of action for intentional trespass requires a plaintiff to show actual and substantial damages *to the property*. The evidence at trial did not show that Lavington suffered actual and substantial damage to her property. Also, Lavington admits, and does not challenge the trial court’s finding, that the evidence at trial did not support any finding that she suffered actual or substantial damages. Finally, Lavington’s challenge on appeal was based on the trial court’s

alleged dismissal based on “family accommodation,” which Lavington now admits there are no findings or conclusions relating to “family accommodation.” Therefore, I would hold that Lavington has failed to show that the trial court erred in dismissing her intentional trespass claim against the Hilliers.

Because evidence of emotional distress damages does not establish liability for intentional trespass, the trial court’s exclusion of emotional distress damages as a discovery sanction without considering the *Burnet* factors was harmless error. Also, because Lavington’s intentional trespass claim fails, the issue relating to the trial court’s exclusion of Lavington’s evidence of the fair rental value of the land to show damages for intentional trespass is moot. Accordingly, I would affirm the trial court’s order dismissing Lavington’s claims.



J, J

DAVIS ROTHWELL EARLE & XOCHIHUA

June 23, 2022 - 9:32 AM

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