



Port of Skagit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Port of Skagit Sponsorship Supports Inaugural Kneading Conference

Burlington – The Port of Skagit has approved a \$5,000 sponsorship to support Kneading Conference West, a three-day workshop designed to encourage grain cultivation and utilization in the Skagit Valley.

Kneading Conference West, scheduled for Sept. 15-17, will bring together Northwest grain farmers and millers, agricultural researchers, novice and professional bakers, wood-fired oven enthusiasts and eaters for talks and hands-on workshops. Participants will exchange traditions, cutting-edge research and practical skills, resulting in a strengthened community of grain producers, millers, artisan bakers, and consumers.

Dr. Stephen Jones, renowned wheat breeder stationed at the Northwest Washington Research and Extension Center in Mount Vernon, and Jeffrey Hamelman, master baker and author, will headline the roster of agricultural and baking experts. Workshops span topics from small-scale grain growing, milling, and artisan bread and pastry baking to wood-fired oven construction and a field trip to a bakery, grain

mill and local farms.

“Getting as much of the value from local crops as possible is a model that is gaining acceptance nationwide. Wheat and barley are important parts of that model that are often overlooked,” Jones said. “The port’s interest in this effort is unique and demonstrates the forward thinking required to strengthen our region’s farming communities.

“The Port of Skagit is well ahead of other port districts in terms of recognizing the importance of agriculture as a clean and vital industry. Working together with them on this and other projects will lead to a strengthening of our local farm and food systems.”

Jerry Kaufman, chairman of the port commission, agreed.

“Agriculture is an important element of the Skagit Valley economy,” Kaufman said. “As a port, we think it’s important for us to do what we can to help farming remain viable here long-term. This conference could unlock some big opportunities for local farmers.”

Kneading Conference West grows out of the very successful kneading conference held annually in Skowhegan, Maine, now in its fifth year. Hamelman and Jones are regular presenters at the eastern conference. Organizers anticipate people will come to the Skagit Valley from as far away as British Columbia and Los Angeles to attend the conference.

Details about the conference will be announced soon. For further information, go to www.kneadingconferencewest.com.

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About the Port of Skagit: Guided by the mission “Jobs for Our Community,” the Port of Skagit owns and operates three key facilities: the Skagit Regional Airport, the Bayview Business Park and the La Conner Marina. Combined, these three facilities are home to more 84 businesses that employ in excess of 1,000 people.