



Press Release:

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*For Immediate Release*

## Coastal Innovation Zone Dedication Provides a “Taste” of How Research, Development and Business Incubation Strengthens the Economy

*State legislators, business leaders and community members joined the Port of Grays Harbor for the dedication of the Coastal Innovation Zone, a research, development and business incubator facility. The first tenant, Wishkah River Distillery, opened their craft distillery for tours and provided the first tastings of their product.*

**Aberdeen, WA**— The strength of partnering was evident Tuesday, October 19, 2011, when the Port of Grays Harbor was joined by local business leaders and state officials to dedicate the first project of the Grays Harbor Innovation Partnership, the Coastal Innovation Zone – a research, development and business incubator. The remodeled office space and adjoining warehouse area is designed to foster innovation -- whether it is development, testing and commercializing new product concepts or providing support and resources for new businesses.

“Encouraging entrepreneurs to pursue their business and product development goals to create new jobs and economic activity is one of the strategies the Port of Grays Harbor is implementing to strengthen our regional economy,” reported Stan Pinnick, Port of Grays Harbor Commissioner. “The Coastal Innovation Zone is the cornerstone of our entrepreneurial development efforts and a unique economic development tool for our region.”

A highlight of the dedication ceremony was the opening of the Coastal Innovation Zone’s first business incubator tenant, Wishkah River Distillery. Owner Sue Watts explained how the facility’s unique focus on fostering start-up businesses allowed her to enter into a flexible lease agreement for her space, giving her time to focus her efforts and capital on purchasing her equipment, product development and testing. She now has her first product available for sale and is entering the stage of hiring employees and opening her doors. Ms. Watts provided tours of the distillery and tastings of her first products.

Founded on collaboration, the Coastal Innovation Zone takes a Washington State Department of Commerce program, the Innovation Partnership Zones, and customizes it to the needs of the community. In Grays Harbor, the Port’s approach has been to partner with private companies first to set the direction for the innovation projects. The creation and direction of the Grays Harbor

Innovation Partnership Zone resulted from a discussion between Paneltech Products, Inc. and Imperium Grays Harbor on the need for shared laboratory space where companies could pursue new product development, and by the nature of being in the same facility, collaborate on uses for industrial waste streams. A laboratory space located on the second floor of the Coastal Innovation Zone is available for lease for companies needing short-term and long-term laboratory facilities.

With grants from the WA Department of Commerce Innovation Partnership Zone program and the US Small Business Administration the Port was able to renovate a former distribution facility to provide laboratory, office and warehouse space for emerging products and businesses. Basically the Coastal Innovation Zone is designed to be a flexible facility to meet the changing needs of the tenants, with an expectation that as companies prove their products and grow their business, they will be able to launch into other facilities around the region. MSGS Architects designed the facility, while local contractor Roglin's, Inc. completed the construction.

Public partners of the Grays Harbor Innovation Partnership Zone include the Port of Grays Harbor, Satsop Business Park, Grays Harbor College, the Regional Education and Training Center at Satsop and the Grays Harbor Economic Development Council.

The Grays Harbor Innovation Partnership Zone is one of 13 designated innovation zones in Washington State. A program of the Washington State Department of Commerce, the Innovation Partnership Zones (IPZ) are unique geographic areas that partner research, workforce training and private sector participation to promote collaboration in a research based effort to develop new technologies, marketable products, emerging companies and jobs. Washington legislators toured the Port and attended the dedication ceremony to witness first-hand the state economic development programs that are making a positive impact on job creation in the Grays Harbor community. Attending were Chair of the Senate Economic Development Trade & Innovation Committee Senator Jim Kastama, along with committee members Senators Maralyn Chase, Brian Hatfield, and Dereck Kilmer. From the State House of Representatives Community Development & Housing Committee were Chair Representative Phyllis Kenney, and fellow committee members, Representatives Norma Smith, Fred Finn, Ed Orcutt, Cindy Ryu, and Sharon Santos. Coastal Caucus members Representative Kevin Van De Wege and Steve Tharinger also joined the tour and dedication.

Founded in 1911, the Port of Grays Harbor is one of Washington State's oldest port districts. With a mission to foster economic development and international trade in the region, the Port of Grays Harbor operates 4 deepwater marine terminals, the Westport Marina, Bowerman Airport and hundreds of acres of marine industrial property. Each day more than 600 people report to work at the companies located within the Port of Grays Harbor's properties. More information and photographs are available at [portofgraysharbor.com](http://portofgraysharbor.com).