



WASHINGTON PUBLIC PORTS ASSOCIATION

# THE MANIFEST

February 25, 2026



David Stern Photographer

*The beauty easily seen from South Whidbey Harbor includes mountains, clear waters, and an assortment of pleasure vessels, captured here by David Stern.*

*Photos courtesy of the Port of South Whidbey.*

## February Updates from WPPA

It's been nearly three weeks since Port Day 2026, and many of the issues we discussed with legislators in our meetings that week are still alive in the legislature. Budgets are now the focus, and many of you raised budget issues directly with your members. We were also lucky to have a strong turnout from many in budget leadership, from Chair Robinson and Ranking Member Gildon from the Senate Ways and Means Committee, to all four of the Transportation budget-writers: Chairs Fey and Lias, and Ranking Members King and Barkis. It was hectic and back-to-back, but it gave a good glimpse of what life is like in Olympia: opposing viewpoints, emphatically articulated, flying back and forth in small windowless rooms and echoing off of marble!



Port Day always relies on your decision to show up, so WPPA is reflecting with gratitude on the time sacrifice that many of you made to spend nearly two whole days with us here in Olympia. You rolled with the new venue—a great place for a party, if a little loud and crowded—and gave us good feedback on the new caterer! But maybe most significant: you got your legislators to join the festivities. The Ports and Maritime Reception at Uptown Grill once again had just about 25 legislators, countless more staff, and gave them a convivial atmosphere where they could socialize and relax, rather than feeling like they had to speak, perform, or otherwise be “on.” Thank you for helping us create that atmosphere and execute another successful port day!

Before we move on, don’t forget, **PORT DAY 2027, scheduled for Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>**, in the Columbia Room at the Capitol Building. We will most likely partner once again on the day-ahead reception with the Washington Maritime Federation, so pencil that in for Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2027, while you’re at it. Thank you!

The end of port day can only mean one thing: it’s time to start planning the Spring Meeting! And all the good conferences that get us out into Washington and into your living rooms, starting with our trip to Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, WA for the 2026 Spring Meeting, **this time starting on Tuesday, ending on Thursday.**

The events section below will give you more details on what is to come, including the continuation of our new and more-popular-than-even-we-expected educational initiative, the Port Academy Series. **The first installment of 2026 is set to take place at the Port of Olympia on Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>.**

We are also always on the lookout for more ways to get out and see ports around the state, so this is the first of a dozen annual reminders to tell us about exciting things happening in your port district. In mid-February we ventured to Elma for the Port of Grays Harbor’s business meeting lunch, and the following week we saw Commissioner Randy Sweet retire from the Port of Kalama. At each meeting we saw other ports represented, associate members who we love to hang out with, and new friends we didn’t know we had yet. So, this is another plug for the power of connection, and we want to come see your port!

Speaking of Kalama: seeing Commissioner Randy Sweet celebrated by a full house of his adoring constituents and longtime colleagues was a tonic for the soul. If you have a chance, take a look at our press release announcing his award: [Outstanding Service to the Port Industry](#). WPPA told the crowded room their perspective on all the great port commissioner qualities he embodies, from deep knowledge of the industry to civic pride and commitment, to working together with other commissioners and the staff to help the port succeed. If you haven’t already, send Randy a note of fond farewell, though we do expect he’ll show up at another WPPA event one of these days.

We are done here in Olympia with Legislative Session on March 12<sup>th</sup>, so by the time you next read this we might already be on your calendar. Keep reading below to hear all we’re up to in the Legislature and beyond.

Thank you for all you do!

## Port Spotlight: Port of South Whidbey on Revitalizing Historic Community Spaces, Access to the Water, and Building for New Opportunities



*The historic Whidbey Island Fairgrounds are located in the heart of downtown Langley and host numerous events.*

The South Whidbey Harbor in Langley sits right in the center of the village’s scenic downtown, at a small inlet off the Saratoga Passage in Puget Sound. Stand on the dock by the several pleasure vessels moored there and turn toward the water, where pods of grey whales frolic and feed in the nutrition-rich mud of the waters around Langley.

Whidbey Island is host to several port districts, and the communities of Langley, Freeland, and Clinton are served by the Port of South Whidbey. The port works to ensure that residents and visitors to the area have excellent facilities and opportunities to ensure that they can live, work, and recreate with ease on the island.

The Port of South Whidbey is a younger port, formed in 1961 as the “Langley Port District” to support the construction of what would go on to become South Whidbey Harbor. The tax base around Langley was too small to support development at the time, so the port soon expanded to serve all of South Whidbey in 1968. By the 1980s the port was renamed the Port of South Whidbey.

“In the beginning, the main purpose of the port was to help create economic prosperity on the island, starting with development at the harbor,” said Jim Pivarnik, Executive Director at the Port of South Whidbey. “There was a fishing pier and processing plant in the olden days. It was quite the place back in the 1920s and 30s, but the actual harbor worked its way into port ownership in the ‘60s and ‘70s.”

The port helped to complete the 36-slip marina at the harbor, with floating docks and a boat ramp to provide moorage to recreational and working boaters alike.

In the summer, Pivarnik said, “we host recreational boaters, with larger boats on the outside and smaller boats closer in. In the offseason the crabbers tend to take over. It’s nice that seasonally we can accommodate different kinds of boaters.”

In the 1980s, the harbor had issues with their breakwater. The tire breakwater that had protected the harbor previously sank, and the port had to step in to replace it with timber piles which are holding strong today.



*Another view of the marina at South Whidbey Harbor. Timber piles and a floating moorage can be seen to the left.*

It also presented the opportunity for the port to expand the marina to provide additional moorage on the outside of the timber breakwater. There is now a floating breakwater on the outside for transient moorage. The concrete floats for that breakwater were sourced from the Port of Bremerton.

“Jim Rothlin from the Port of Bremerton really got a kick out of seeing his old docks recycled,” Pivarnik said, when he was here to visit a few months back.

The focus, from there, turned to ensuring public access to the waters of Saratoga Passage, Useless Bay and the Salish Sea as a whole.

“We have five boat ramps that we either own, manage or co-own with the county. That’s a really important point, providing free access to the water,” Pivarnik said.

The port operates the Bush Point Boat Ramp, Possession Beach Waterfront Park, the Clinton Beach Park, Pier and Dock, the Dave Mackie Waterfront Park and Boat Launch, the Mutiny Bay Boat Launch, and the Freeland Park and Holmes Harbor Boat Ramp, providing abundant access to marine recreation. More recently, the port has renovated Bush Point and is in the process of renovating the Possession Beach Waterfront Park, using an RCO grant to pay for the full renovation.



*Bush Point Boat Ramp at sunset, captured by Chris Penland.*

In the past couple of years, the port has taken on ownership of a very different site: The Whidbey Island Fairgrounds, located right in downtown Langley.

“It got to a point where Island County was struggling to maintain the Fairgrounds which started the discussion about the port taking it over,” Pivarnik said. “The Port was happy to accept it because we view it as a potential economic driver.”

The fairgrounds have long played host to numerous events, including plays, music festivals, and the Whidbey Island Fair. First established in 1937, the Island County Fair Association has worked out of the fairgrounds and run the fair ever since.

The site is full of historic buildings that are just waiting to become stars,” Pivarnik said. The challenge, now, is how the port “can take these classic buildings and make them productive all year round. It’s excellent when the fair’s on, but we have to figure out what to do with the other fifty weeks. It’s a challenge, but one of the best challenges we have going right now.”

To do that, the port is hoping to greatly upgrade the current facilities. They’re hoping to run 3-phase power to the buildings at the fairgrounds to help support commercial kitchens, as well as providing additional upgrades that could support incubator businesses.



*The Whidbey Island Fair during its summer peak. Photo courtesy of Whidbey Provisions.*

Development at the fairgrounds site has the potential for transformative economic change for the area. Another future project being studied is a passenger ferry between Clinton and Everett.

“Next to the Clinton Beach Park there was an old a fishing pier that was destroyed in a storm, and the goal is to rebuild and redesign a float to service recreational and fishing boats as well as support a passenger only ferry to provide service between Everett and Clinton,” Pivarnik said.

The port is currently in the permitting phase for replacement of the dock, and they’re in talks with the Port of Everett to start the funding drive to make that project a reality.

The Port of South Whidbey exemplifies the ethos that defines public ports as a whole—working to provide their community with economic opportunity and recreational access in equal measure. The parks, boat launches and facilities that dot the landscape of the southern side of Whidbey Island are essential to the people who live, visit and recreate there and the port only strives to make sure that tradition continues.

## Legislative Spotlight: Mid-Session Review

*Budget Focus Ahead as Session Enters Final Stretch!*

### **Carly Michiels**

As of late February, the 2026 legislative session is more than two-thirds complete. *Finally!* With key policy and fiscal cutoffs now behind us, the Legislature is shifting its focus to negotiating the operating, capital, and transportation budgets—where many of the most important funding adjustments for ports will be made.

Throughout this session, WPPA has been actively engaged on a broad range of issues affecting port districts across the state. We have worked closely with legislators and stakeholders to ensure port perspectives are included in discussions related to infrastructure investment, economic development tools, energy and electrification policy, environmental regulation, aviation, broadband, governance, and workforce matters.

Several priority bills have advanced, and we have also responded to proposals that could create operational, fiscal, or competitive impacts for ports, working to clarify legislative intent and mitigate unintended consequences where possible.

Advocacy efforts during Port Day and continued engagement with lawmakers have reinforced the essential role ports play in supporting Washington's economy, supply chain reliability, and local communities. Your participation on this day and throughout session has made a meaningful difference in ensuring legislators understand both the opportunities and challenges facing port districts.

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the WPPA Legislative Committee had a meeting to go over the Mid-Session Report put together by our government affairs team. This is a report on progress and advocacy efforts relating to the [2026 Legislative Priorities](#) established by the Board of Trustees at our Annual Meeting in November. It gives us a chance to check in with the committee on specific bills and developing budget dynamics. We had a great discussion on emerging issues and many that are sure to come back next year! The Mid-Session Report can be found on [our webpage here](#).

At this point in session, attention turns squarely to the budget phase. As this is the second year of the biennium, the Legislature will build on the budgets adopted last session and propose adjustments rather than a full rewrite. Final decisions and updates on capital investments, infrastructure programs, economic development funding, and clean energy grants will be determined in the coming weeks.

Adding to the budget dynamics is the updated [revenue forecast](#). Just as they were finalizing their proposals, state budget writers received improved revenue projections from the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council. The projections now show increased expected collections for the current biennium by \$827 million (1.1%), largely reflecting early proceeds from tax increases enacted last year. Total projected revenue for the 2025–27 biennium now stands at \$75.3 billion—\$438 million more than lawmakers assumed when adopting last year's budget.

House and Senate budget leaders have announced their schedules for hearing and voting on their respective budget proposals. All are expected to be voted out of committee by the end of the week, February 26. WPPA looks forward to participating in these discussions over the next few weeks and plans to include a summary of key budget proposals relevant to ports in our Saturday Weekly Legislative Report. Stay tuned!

## Knowing the Waters

In this month's issue of [Knowing the Waters](#), Tim Schermetzler of CSD Attorneys gives us a thorough why, what, and how for delegation of authorities from a port commission to an executive director or port manager. Read more [here](#) on our website.

## Grants and Resources for Ports

### Engage with WSDOT in 2026 Freight Systems Plan Development – online open house still open!

If you haven't yet, please consider engaging in the [WSDOT 2026 Freight System Plan \(FSP\) Online Open House](#) to help inform their 2026 FSP. Those of you who attended their session at our 2026 Trade and Transportation Committee meeting will have some familiarity with this tool, which includes a survey and an interactive map. This online open house is a chance to **ensure port facilities and the freight routes of our partners, tenants, and customers are accounted for** in this important transportation planning document.

Eric and the WPPA Trade and Transportation Committee convened a meeting in mid-January 2026 to discuss this exercise and develop coordinated messages to share with WSDOT.

## WSDOT Regional Mobility Grant Program – pre-applications due March 3, 2026

WSDOT is accepting pre-applications for the 2027-2029 [Regional Mobility Grant Program](#), which funds local efforts **to improve connectivity and reduce transportation delays** between counties and regional population centers. Projects can include vehicle and equipment purchases, capital construction, operating projects, and transportation demand management (TDM).

- Applicants are **required** to submit a pre-application to apply for a grant.
- The Regional Mobility Grant pre-application is available in the [Grants Management System](#) and **is due by 3 p.m., March 3, 2026.**

For additional information about the Regional Mobility Grant pre-application, review the [pre-application instructions](#) and visit the [program website](#).

## Project Funding through the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board – applications due March 6

The Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) has opened the 2026 application window for the Six-Year Strategic Investment Program, a freight mobility investment program established to guide funding decisions, spanning all modes, for the highest priority freight projects across Washington State. Updated every biennium, FMSIB is accepting applications for projects proposed for FY 27-29, FY 29-31, and FY 31-33.

- **Applications are due at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 6, 2026.**
- The [application](#) is available on the [FMSIB website](#), as well as an [FAQ page](#).
- Questions can be directed to Fred Wenhardt ([fred.wenhardt@fmsib.wa.gov](mailto:fred.wenhardt@fmsib.wa.gov)).

## Ecology Drought Response Grants – applications due April 3, 2026

Ecology's [Water Resources Drought Response Grants](#) will provide up to \$4.5M to drought-stricken communities in portions of Yakima, Kittitas, and Benton Counties to reduce drought-related hardships. Projects may include a broad range of activities to address drought-related problems for agriculture, livestock, public water supplies, fisheries, and wildlife.

- A match of 50 percent is required.
- **Applications are due April 3, 2026.**

## Ecology Oil Spill Restoration Grants – applications due April 29, 2026

Funds from oil spill penalties (the Coastal Protection Fund) can be applied for restoration and enhancement projects and natural resource studies through Ecology's [Oil Spill Restoration Funding](#). Projects may include remedial investigations, development of remedial action plans and reports, feasibility studies and remedy selection, engineering design and remedy construction, and operation, maintenance, and/or constructed remedy monitoring for up to one year.

- There is no match requirement.
- Awards typically range from \$10,000-\$50,000.
- **Applications are due April 29, 2026.**

## RCO Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – applications due April 30, 2026

\$54M has been made available for land protection and outdoor recreation in Washington by the [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program](#) through RCO. Grant funds can be used to **create or improve local parks, public trails, or access to the water** for nonmotorized boating and recreation. Up to \$500K-\$1M per applicant is available, depending on project type.

- A match of 50 percent is required unless the project serves an underserved population or community in need or is in a federal disaster area. At least 10 percent of the contribution to the total project must be in the form of local matching funds.
- Applicants' comprehensive plans must be submitted by March 2, 2026.
- **Applications are due April 30, 2026.**

## MARAD Small Shipyard Grant Program – applications due May 15, 2026

\$35M has been approved for the MARAD Small Shipyard Grant Program, which funds capital and workforce training projects for eligible shipyards across the country. The FY 2026 NOFO is not yet available but much of the same information, covering shipyard eligibility and types of projects, is included in the [FY 2025 NOFO](#).

- Join the [Small Shipyard Grant Coalition](#): if you have questions about future projects, need assistance from a grant writer, or need to find a contact at MARAD, reach out to us! Dues-paying Coalition members also have access to application tools.
- Reach out to [Xochitl Castaneda](#), Pacific Northwest and Alaska Gateway Director with questions about the Small Shipyard Grant Program.

## Ecology Oversight and Independent Remedial Action Grants – applications due March 17 and June 16, 2026, respectively

### *Oversight Remedial Action Grants and Loans (ORAG) – applications due March 17*

Local governments can apply for a grant or loan to help clean up hazardous waste sites supervised by the Department of Ecology or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under a legal order or decree through the [Oversight Remedial Action Grants and Loans](#) program. Read more in the [program guidelines](#) and **apply by March 17, 2026.**

### *Independent Remedial Action Grants (IRAG) – applications due June 16*

The solicitation for [Independent Remedial Action Grants](#) is open now. This program is administered by Ecology to provide **post-cleanup grants to local governments that independently clean up contamination** under the [Voluntary Cleanup Program](#). A [Focus Sheet](#) and [Guidance Document](#) on the IRAG program are available on the Ecology website.

*For the 2025-27 biennium only:* because the recent EAGL system update caused a delay in opening the application solicitation, Ecology will consider up to an additional six months of costs incurred past the five years of the grant application, if it was submitted in EAGL within 30 days of the application solicitation opening date.

### *Area-wide Groundwater Investigation Grant survey*

Area-wide Groundwater Investigation Grants are not being offered for the 2027-29 biennial solicitation in 2026 due to limited funding and lack of demand in previous biennia. This grant type is currently under review for future offerings. If you are a local government please take the [survey](#) to provide feedback on the grant type.

## RCO Boating Infrastructure Grants – applications due July 15, 2026

RCO administers a US Fish and Wildlife Service funding stream for developing, renovating, and maintaining public boating facilities, boating information, and boater education in Washington: the [Boating Infrastructure Grant Program](#). Projects may include acquisition, development, maintenance, and/or renovation of facilities that serve recreational boats at least 26 feet in length providing day use or stays of up to 15 days. Up to \$288,046 is available for Tier 1 (state reviewed) project applications, and up to \$1.4M for Tier 2 (federally reviewed) projects.

- A match of 25 percent is required.
- Applicants contributing 26 percent or more will receive additional evaluation points.
- **Applications are due July 15, 2026.**

## RCO Planning for Recreation Access Grants – applications due in July 2026

The RCO [Planning for Recreation Access program](#) funds planning projects in communities lacking adequate access to outdoor recreation opportunities, including diverse, urban, and small rural communities across the state. Up to \$1.7M is set aside to fund activities such as planning, community engagement, and collaboration to define needs and priorities for projects that would lead to capital investment.

- No match is required.
- **The final due date will be in July 2026** and updated on the program webpage soon.

## Commerce Clean Energy Tax Credit Assistance Program – office hours

Commerce provides **technical assistance in accessing federal tax credits for clean energy projects**, including solar, battery storage, wind energy, geothermal systems, electric vehicles (EVs), and EV charging infrastructure through the [Clean Energy Tax Credit Assistance Program \(CETCAP\)](#). Updates and technical assistance are provided in office hours held on the second Wednesday and third Friday of each month. Register here for [second Wednesday](#) (next: March 11<sup>th</sup>, noon) or [third Friday](#) (next: March 20<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 a.m.) office hours.

## Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) – coming soon

\$450,000,000 has been made available in FY 2026 for the [MARAD PIDP grant program](#) for projects that improve the safety, efficiency, or reliability of the movement of goods into, out of, around, or within a port. The PIDP provides funding to ports in both urban and rural areas for planning and capital projects and includes a statutory set-aside for small ports. The FY 2026 NOFO will be released soon—stay tuned!

## Clean Buildings Performance Standards: Program Tier 1 Incentives Estimator

A [Tier 1 incentives estimator](#) is now available to assist building owners in planning their Clean Buildings Performance Standard compliance path. Learn more about the program [here](#).

## The Community Builders Collective: A Statewide Network for Project Leaders

Launching this fall, the Community Builders Collective (CBC) is a free, statewide peer network from CERB for the people behind community and economic development infrastructure projects in rural, tribal, and historically under-resourced communities.

CBC members get:

- **A statewide network of peers** facing similar challenges and opportunities
- **Practical resources and tools** to support project development
- **Live training and learning opportunities** focused on real-time needs
- **24/7 access to the community** (plus CERB staff when needed)

If you're navigating complex infrastructure projects with limited time and staff— the CBC is here to help you get it done, together. For more information sign up [here](#).

## Washington State Treasurer's LOCAL Program

The LOCAL program, offered through the Office of the Washington State Treasurer, **provides Washington municipalities with a cost-effective way to finance equipment and/or real estate projects**. Participants can take advantage of the current program rating of Moody's Aa1, low fees and expenses, technical assistance, and access to the tax-exempt bond market.

Check out the [LOCAL Program guide](#) and visit the [Program FAQs](#) for more information.

## Climate Resources at Washington Climate Action

The [Washington Climate Action](#) website is a first-stop shop for funding or other resources related to climate and natural resources, including grant writing support and contracting information.

## Commerce Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) – applications accepted on rolling basis

The [Brownfields RLF](#) provides **low interest loans to entities undertaking cleanup of contaminated properties** to support redevelopment, promote public health and safety, improve environmental quality, and create jobs at and around brownfield sites. Average loan amounts are approximately \$500,000 and up to 50% of the loan may be forgiven for public entities. Loan terms are typically 5 years or less, and the interest rate is negotiated based on project need. A 1% loan fee is required.

## Commerce Small Business Credit Initiative – accepted on a rolling basis

Through the Washington State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), the Washington State Department of Commerce is collaborating with Heritage Bank to offer the Owner-Occupied Commercial Real Estate Loan Program. The program **allows Heritage to make loans to businesses that own the buildings in which they operate, and who wish to purchase new buildings or expand current operations**. This means port tenants who are contemplating expansion but need capital could have access to low-interest loans to support their downpayment.

Heritage Bank administers the program. You can find more information [on their website](#). The bank has also worked with Commerce to [publish an informative one-pager](#).

## DOE Energy Ready Charging Smart Program – free technical assistance

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) [Energy Ready Charging Smart Program](#) offers free technical assistance to help local governments adopt procedures and practices that facilitate the growth of electric vehicles (EVs).

## DOE E2C Program Expert Match – free technical assistance

The DOE's [Energy to Communities \(E2C\): Expert Match](#) program offers free, short-term technical assistance to address near-term energy challenges in local communities.

## 179D Energy Tax Credit – expiring soon

Act now to take advantage of the [179D deduction](#) before it expires. Recent federal legislation discontinues several energy tax credits including the 179D deduction, but there is still time to take advantage of the program before it ends. **To qualify, construction must begin by June 30, 2026, meet energy efficiency standards, and building owners must obtain proper documentation and certification**, including an energy study and allocation forms.

## EPA Thriving Community Grant Makers – accepted on a rolling basis

The Environmental Protection Agency opened their Thriving Community Grantmakers Program in January 2025 and is accepting applications on a rolling basis. The Grantmakers partner with community-based organizations from across a region to select partnerships and distribute funding. Funding is awarded in four categories: assessment projects, planning projects, development projects, and non-competitive fixed amounts. [Read more about how to apply here](#). A [recorded webinar](#) on the program is available through the Center for Creative Land Recycling.

## The Federal Funds Grant Writing Assistance Program

The [Federal Funds Grant Writing Assistance Program](#) is designed for tribes, community-based organizations, local government agencies, and other entities to help prepare and submit federal grant applications. This resource is available now and can include services such as grant application planning, writing, and review and guidance for managing federal awards.

## Federal Clean Energy Tax Assistance Program – free and available now

Administered through Commerce, the [Federal Clean Energy Tax Credit Assistance Program](#) offers tax incentives to eligible entities (including ports) through the Inflation Reduction Act. Free resources, including personalized support from clean energy tax attorneys, are available [here](#).

## Highlighted Events



### Port Academy Series: April 10, Port of Olympia

Attention port staff, the Port Academy Series has returned and registration is open! We are offering you an opportunity to learn from one another through hands-on, port led forums. This event is taking place 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. on April 10<sup>th</sup> and is hosted by the Port of Olympia. There are only 20 spots, and we are almost sold out so sign up now (or if sold out, get on our waiting list). You can find more information, and the registration link [here on our website](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to [James Cockburn](#) at WPPA.



### Lunch & Learn: Exploring how ports connect with Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs in local schools

Save the date! The Communications Committee is rounding up speakers for the upcoming Lunch & Learn and we hope you can attend! This event will be virtual via Zoom on April 28th at 12:noon. Registration will be open soon, information will be available [here on our website](#). If you have any questions, please contact [Mandy Lill](#).



### Spring Meeting: May 19-21, Skamania Lodge, Stevenson

The WPPA 2026 Spring Meeting is right around the corner! We are returning to the beautiful Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, and this year, our event will run from Tuesday through Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>. Be on the lookout for an email announcement with registration details the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>. I will also be sending sponsorship information to our associate members soon! If you have any questions, please contact [Mandy Lill](#) for more information.

## WPPA 2026 Conference Calendar

- **Finance & Administration Seminar:** June 24-26, Hotel Indigo, Everett
- **Directors Seminar:** July 8-10, Courtyard by Marriott, Pullman
- **Commissioners Seminar:** July 20-22, Hilton Garden Inn, Wenatchee
- **Environmental Seminar:** September 24-25, Renaissance Hotel, Seattle
- **Small Ports: Oct. 22-23,** Campbell's Resort, Chelan
- **Winter Meeting: Dec 9-11,** Hilton Vancouver  
(formerly known as the Annual Meeting)

**Washington Public Ports Association**  
360.943.0760 | [www.washingtonports.org](http://www.washingtonports.org)



*The grind never stops for Arthur at WPPA HQ.*

## As Arthur Sees It

*Notes from the Executive Director and his dog*

Last July, Governor Ferguson’s administration announced the election of a more than \$700M bid from Florida-based Eastern Shipbuilding to build three new ferries to join the green and white WSF fleet currently traversing our waters. This was a hit to the collective WA maritime ego, since we’ve always built our ferries here. Vigor and the vessels they built, which were then repaired by Dakota Creek, Nichols Brothers, and other Washington shipyards, were the source of great local pride. [We are a maritime economy](#), not just in Puget Sound but around our state where manufacturers have relied on a wide network of suppliers to keep our shipyards competitive. But now, we see a big public contract go to Florida, and our maritime community pauses, puzzles, rants, and rages. What are we doing?! Surely, we should be able to compete, right? And if not, why not?! What explains our sudden loss of capacity? Are the factors that led to [Foss shutting its operations](#) on the ship canal the same as those that caused the [Governor to select Eastern over Nichols](#)?

And even if we know the reasons, what can we do reverse this trend? What can ports in Washington, charged by the Legislature with facilitating commerce in our state, do to help respond to this developing crisis?

Those questions are made more urgent by rumblings, and in some case actual press releases, from the US Government that signal the intention of the Trump Administration to make [sizeable investments in the competitiveness and primacy of our shipbuilding industry domestically](#). If there is going to be a federal focus and a funding infusion, can this get our WA shipyards and the workers who rely on them for good-paying jobs back on track? And if we don’t act now, do we risk missing a major moment that could propel Washington back to prior eras of maritime prosperity?

If that seems like a lot of question marks, that’s because there are a lot of questions! And since the Ferguson decision in July, WPPA was approached by a number of WA ports and partners who asked whether we had any intention, interest, and bandwidth to help convene and lead a conversation that seeks answers. For that reason, on January 26<sup>th</sup>, our WPPA Executive Committee voted to form the **Maritime Industrial Base Coalition (MIBC)**, thus kicking off an exciting phase of exploration that will try to drill down on answers to some of the above.

We are currently enrolling Steering Committee members, primarily comprised of ports who have shipyard tenants. Those ports will together manage a consultant contract, with WPPA acting in a staff capacity, to pursue a scope of work that begins with a “landscape analysis” asking many of the questions articulated above. Our consultant will interview industry leaders, including as many WA shipyards as we can get in to see, about their challenges. We will interview their suppliers about the ripple effects of losing out on big contracts. And we will interview community partners, including local and state elected officials, about what can be done to promote more in-state vessel construction, maintenance, and repair.

This will not be an easy task, or even one with a clear outcome. It’s possible that the answer to all these questions might be, “it’s too late!” Or that the obstacles are too many, and too massive. We may report back to you all at the end of the first two phases of the MIBC work, early next year, to say, “hey, we tried.” But at least we will have tried! And we will not be doing this alone, as we already are hearing from others who want to participate and show us what they’ve already done to begin exploring these questions.

We are excited to see MIBC take this on, and for anyone who reads this and thinks, “hey, I want to be part of that,” come on down!