



*The WPPA Legislative Team was all smiles for Sine Die.*

## March Updates from WPPA

It's happening, it's really here! We are going to make it to the spring and summer of 2026! Clocks are springing forward, legislative sessions are ending, and Spring Meeting planning is well underway. This is a sure sign that the west side's wet weeks will give way to some spring flowers, and that we will soon be back out on the road. First the WPPA team might relax, take a few days off, sleep a bit. But you all know well enough there is no rest for the weary, so at the time of writing your WPPA staff is already far-flung to various corners: last week Eric and Carly both spoke on panels at different conferences in Seattle; your legislative team gathered for a session debrief hosted by the Port of Edmonds; and Tasha and Mandy took in some spring training baseball!

The enthusiasm to move to the post-legislative session phase of the year is very tangible at WPPA, after a tough year of policymaking at breakneck speed. We are all asked in these immediate days after to reflect on the session, and it can sometimes be hard to articulate how we fared. There were some serious wins: passage of a

bill helping a few ports with a niche but challenging pension issue; critical state funding partnership in dredging the Lower Columbia River Channel; and small but important fixes to Model Toxics Control Act grants language. But there remains a feeling that our message is not fully getting through—that the concept of *investing in economic development* is not a priority in Olympia at this particular moment. Take a moment to read our Legislative Spotlight below for some in-depth details on how we stand with Sine Die behind us.

Maybe that's why the WPPA team turned to the spring and summer seminar program with such energy! We are happy to already have a *nearly fully booked* Spring Meeting agenda, with great speakers to provide timber industry updates and to look at the state of nuclear energy—both in Washington and nationally—and to join us all in looking ahead at the implications of this summer's FIFA World Cup in Washington. We are making modest adjustments to format. Most notably: a shift to mid-week timing, with the conference running Tuesday through Thursday; and with our annual spring “training modules” on pause as we work with our friends at Maul, Foster & Alongi to align them with an updated Port Governance and Management Guide that we will begin to roll out this December. Skamania will play host to our spring gathering once again, and we are excited to host a second annual (semi-annual?) mini-golf tournament and to be hosted by the Port of Skamania for a kickoff barbecue at their beautiful riverfront offices.

There is another cause for excitement at this transitional time of year: **we are welcoming aboard a new team member, with the hiring of Martin Presley as our new Director of Transportation and Economic Development Policy.** ([Read Martin's official hiring press release here](#))

The decision to move forward with Martin, with his acceptance of our offer, is the end of a long process that began with our initial posting of the job in October. As we dove into the Annual Meeting, with session looming just beyond, we took a pause. And when we closed out the application window in January, we had some truly intriguing candidates who boasted a range of qualifications and backgrounds. Martin rose to the top during a three round interview process, meeting with a panel comprised of *not just* WPPA team members, but three staff from member ports as well. Many thanks to John Flanagan, Port of Seattle; Stacie de Mestre, Chelan Douglas Regional Port; and Cassie Losey, Port of Benton, for dedicating their time to being part of this process.



*Martin Presley, WPPA's new Director of Transportation and*

Martin joins WPPA with an impressive background in legislative policymaking and specific expertise in transportation policy. For more than five years, he was the Senate Republican Caucus's transportation policy lead, staffing Senator Curtis King as the Ranking Member of the Senate Transportation Committee. In that capacity he developed deep familiarity with the transportation budget and policy areas of direct relevance to ports and to his new role. He transitioned recently to the Leadership Council position, acting as the Senate Republican Caucus's top lawyer, managing amendment processes, briefing the caucus on bills that were coming to the floor, and acting as their all-around trouble-shooter and policy brain.

Not only does Martin's background line up perfectly with the job, but he also has a temperament and easygoing attitude that means he'll fit well with our small team and connect instantly with you, our members. And in addition to his policy background and interest in port issues, he's also the son of a port commissioner! Hailing originally from the great state of Ohio, Martin's father is on the Board of Directors for the Columbiana County Port Authority!

We are excited for you to all have the chance to meet Martin, who will be joining us officially on April 13<sup>th</sup>, and will soon be in your port district for a visit!

One more fun staffing announcement: **James Cockburn has a new title, and new responsibilities!** With Martin's arrival, James will be elevated to the position of "Director of Marinas and Public Policy," reflecting some new policy work, and more importantly acknowledging much of the work he has taken on since October 2025. James has been ably managing the public works and procurement issue area, including numerous convenings of our important Procurement Work Group, as well as convening our Aviation Committee. He continues to lead our legislative tracking and report-writing, plays a big role in event planning and education programming, and provides staff support in other key policy areas. You have all seen the time and effort that James has put into his work on your behalf, and we are happy to celebrate and reward that with this new role.

With Carly as the lead of our legislative team, and James and Martin rounding out our policy positions, we will have a *full staff of six* when Martin starts in April. We will bid farewell to Marian Dacca, who has been under contract with us since December to help execute our legislative work. Many thanks to Marian for always being available to step in and make sure our legislative advocacy stays sharp!

With that, enjoy our March Manifest, and we look forward to seeing you soon!

## Spotlight: CERB Grants fund port infrastructure projects all over Washington

On January 15, 2026, the Community Economic Revitalization Board approved funding for several exciting port projects under the newly created CERB Rural Ports Program. The funds will help six ports deliver much-needed infrastructure projects that will promote tourism and outdoor recreation, create jobs in maritime communities, and invest in rural areas around the state where even a small project can mean a great deal to the local economy.

The Legislature created the CERB Rural Ports program in the 2025-2027 biennial capital budget, adopted on April 27, 2025. Senator Mike Chapman, from the 24<sup>th</sup> Legislative District covering Jefferson, Clallam, and parts of Grays Harbor County, reached out to WPPA during that session to brainstorm targeted investments in rural Washington that could have a meaningful impact. He saw ports as a means of accomplishing the goal of rural economic development and worked to include this program in the final budget. This is the first group of projects to receive funding, and each provides a great example of the impact the program can have if it continues in future budgets.

Please continue reading to learn a bit about each project funded!

## Port of Columbia – Lyons Ferry marina pull-through RV project



*Lyons Ferry Marina. Photo courtesy of the Port of Columbia.*

The CERB Rural Ports program will be providing the Port of Columbia with \$250,000 to support the construction of 10 pull-through RV spaces at their marina property on the Snake River. The Lyons Ferry Marina is located in a remote part of Columbia County, with the closest town of Starbuck boasting a population of just 90 people. The project will support an estimated \$80,000 in additional revenue for the marina business annually, and a portion of these funds will be used to maintain the public infrastructure at the facility. The new pull-through spaces funded by this grant will feature patios adjacent to each spot and a new upland restroom, pairing with existing funding from a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant, and \$137,000 of the port’s own dollars. The project is estimated to be completed by June of 2027.

“It is sometimes quite difficult for small, rural communities to find the matching funds required for state and federal grants,” said Jennie Dickinson, Executive Director for the port. “This CERB funding was critical for our project's viability, enabling us to continue our public-private partnership at Lyons Ferry Marina under the KOA brand by constructing RV sites that meet modern travelers' needs and KOA requirements. The marina provides the region with a recreation hub, creates jobs for our rural county, and generates tax revenue for state and local governments, making this CERB funding a fantastic return on investment for the state.”

## Port of Friday Harbor – Shipyard Cove Haul Out Pier



*Shipyard Cove Marina. Photo courtesy of the Port of Friday Harbor.*

The Port of Friday Harbor was awarded \$750,000 to support the construction of a 75-ton haul-out pier to expand the capacity of the Port of Friday Harbor’s shipyard. The rebuilt pier will feature higher capacity and all-tide depth, helping the port to increase marine sector jobs and the overall economic output of the shipyard. This is the only haul out pier served boatyard on San Juan Island, and the project is consistent with the port’s focus on providing stable family wage jobs to balance the seasonal tourism economy. Expanding capacity at the shipyard will retain approximately twenty jobs and allow for the creation of a dozen or more new jobs, along with the recruitment of new shipyard industries. Additional funding for the project comes in the form of \$1 million from the Climate Commitment Act and \$2 million from the port.

“For a rural port like ours, CERB’s support is truly transformative. With a shipyard that has operated for more than a century, this new haul-out pier and 75-ton lift are critical to expanding our capacity and, most importantly, creating new family wage jobs in the maritime trades,” Deputy Director Kyle Gropp said.

## Port of Illahee – Illahee Store Renovation and Safety Improvements

As mentioned in our [April 2025 Spotlight](#), the Port of Illahee has been working toward renovating the Illahee Store, which has been vacant since 2000 and has environmental contamination issues due to underground gasoline storage tanks. The port is in line for funding from the Pollution Liability Insurance Agency to help resolve that cleanup need, and now they have access to an additional \$280,000 from the CERB Rural Ports Program, marking a major step in this community revitalization project. The Illahee Store will be renovated into a leasable commercial space, and the CERB grant will help to support the construction of a speed table crosswalk to allow pedestrians to safely cross the street between the store site and the public dock. The port will provide \$70,000 of its own funds as a match. For more on the project, read [here](#).

“CERB has been an amazing partner in helping to secure and administer this funding for the Rural Ports Program. Without their efforts, we would be unable to renovate this public asset that has been abandoned for nearly 25 years,” said Eric Hall, Port Commissioner.

## Port of Pend Oreille – Multiple Projects

The Port of Pend Oreille was awarded \$1 million by the Rural Ports Program to help accomplish several projects related to their rail excursion operations. These funds will help to restore five miles of out-of-service track between the Kalispel Tribe of Indians Casino property and Usk, located along the Pend Oreille River. Funds will also support the addition of siding at Wolfred Park and repairs to the Birdhouse Crossing on Highway 20 near Black Road.

The projects, a partnership between the Port and the Kalispel Tribe, will allow for passenger rail excursions for tourists, which will create jobs in both the rail and tourism industries and improve community safety. Per the port's CERB application, the project is expected to create between six and ten new jobs in railroad operations plus additional jobs in ticketing, marketing, hosting, and dining, diversifying employment beyond traditional sectors while generating visitor spending that supports local businesses and regional tourism growth. In addition to the CERB funds, the Port is contributing \$220,000 to the project. Read more about the funding [here](#).

"We are excited to have the opportunity to make physical investments in our community's future with these funds. CERBs Rural Ports Program has fast tracked our project in a way that wasn't possible without this funding, and made a huge impact in our frontier county," said Jessica Garza, Economic Development Director for the Port of Pend Oreille.

## Port of Port Townsend – Boat Haven Main Breakwater Rehabilitation



*Boat Haven Marina. Photo courtesy of the Port of Port Townsend.*

The Port of Port Townsend was awarded \$1 million from the Rural Ports Program to rehabilitate the deteriorated eastern 590 feet of the Main Breakwater, which shelters the iconic Boat Haven Marina and Industrial Park where thousands of craftsmen and skilled artisans work every day. Boat Haven is the largest publicly accessible boatyard in the northwest and is a world-class center for ship construction.

The breakwater is the basic physical infrastructure that is necessary for the Boat Haven community to function, and the basis for all of the economic activity it protects. Rehabilitating the breakwater will support the preservation of this unique economic driver for the town of Port Townsend, helping to support jobs for highly skilled shipbuilders and the town’s industrial maritime identity. In addition to the CERB grant, USDOT’s Maritime Administration is contributing \$800,000 and the port is contributing \$200,000.

“This new grant program administered by CERB is a powerful tool for small ports to maintain and create jobs in Washington State. These dollars will be used to protect the Boat Haven Marina and upland Port Townsend Boatyard which support more than 20% of the jobs in Jefferson County,” said Eron Berg, Executive Director at the Port of Port Townsend. “It is a mission critical project, and the funding could not have come at a better time.”

## Port of Whitman County – Oakesdale Mill Phase 1 Redevelopment



*The Oakesdale Mill. Photos courtesy of the Port of Whitman County.*

The Rural Ports Program will provide the Port of Whitman County with \$1 million to support redevelopment of the Oakesdale Mill, a historic flour mill that is the last of its kind in the county. A town of 400, Oakesdale has



limited gathering space or retail offerings. The community sees the Mill as a way of enhancing their town’s livability and long-term vitality through economic development. The building was purchased in 2024 with community donor support and brings community members together through the town’s annual Old Mill Days celebration, which began in the 1980s. The port plans to replace the roof, stabilize the exterior envelope of the building, and connect the site to utilities. In addition to the CERB funds, the port is providing \$125,000. The project is estimated to be completed in December of 2026.

"We are grateful to CERB for the award," Executive Director Kara Riebold said. "With this grant, the Port can preserve a historical building of community pride and identity. The town of Oakesdale is heavily invested in this project. We are proud to work in partnership with the community to preserve Oakesdale's history and create an opportunity for economic growth."

## Legislative Spotlight - Final Legislative Actions Recap

To wrap up the 2026 legislative session, we've prepared two comprehensive reports for you to review, each designed to give you a clear understanding of the final legislative actions and what they mean for ports across Washington.

First, our [Final 2026 Budget Report](#) provides a breakdown of the three supplemental budgets—operating, capital, and transportation—including detailed charts highlighting changes most relevant to port districts and WPPA priorities. Notably, the final transportation budget included investment in freight mobility and maritime infrastructure, such as funding for Lower Columbia River channel maintenance and targeted studies on supply chain efficiency; the operating budget provided some funding for Commerce's work to address tariff impacts and did not sweep the derelict vessel cleanup account; and the capital budget funded a few port projects and included language to clarify concerns about possible rescissions of MTCA funds. More on that in the budget report!

Next, our [Final 2026 Legislative Priorities Report](#) offers a comprehensive update on bills connected to our 2026 priorities and tracks how they progressed through the legislative process. This includes key wins like protecting TIF as a project financing tool for ports, progress on energy and transmission policy, and successful advocacy on critical trade and competitiveness issues. It also highlights areas where challenges remain, particularly around energy availability, permitting timelines, and the need for sustained investment in programs like a supply chain grant program or funds for port electrification.

Please take a moment to review both reports, and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

We also want to sincerely thank all of you who engaged with us throughout the session. Your advocacy was essential in ensuring that the voice of Washington's ports was heard in Olympia. We look forward to continuing that work together and hope to see you soon.

## Knowing the Waters

In this month's issue of [Knowing the Waters](#), Tim Schermetzler of CSD Attorneys gets into how to conduct effective commission meetings, including a brief overview of Open Public Meeting Act (OPMA) best practices, when to schedule work session meetings, and recommendations for facilitating public comments during commission meetings.

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.

## 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 Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account – applications due April 30, 2026

Up to \$500K-\$1M per applicant is available from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) [Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account](#) to fund projects to **preserve and restore state shorelines and navigable water bodies**. Projects may also focus on improving or creating public access and/or increasing public awareness of aquatic lands and their role in aquatic ecosystems.

- A match of 50% is required.
- **Applications are due April 30, 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.

## Independent Remedial Action Grants – applications due June 16, 2026

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.

## Clean Buildings Performance Standards: Resources and Grants Available

The [Tier 1 Early Adopter Incentive Program](#) will provide up to \$16 million in incentives for approved applicants. Tier 1 applies to non-residential, hotel, motel, and dormitory buildings greater than 50,000 square feet. Demonstrated early compliance with the Clean Buildings Performance Standard can earn building owners a one-time base incentive payment of \$2/square foot, up to \$75 million. This incentive is to cover up to half the cost of energy-saving measures identified in an energy audit. A [Tier 1 incentives estimator](#) is now available to assist building owners in planning their Clean Buildings Performance Standard compliance path.

The [Tier 2 Early Adopter Incentive Program](#) will provide a base incentive of \$0.30/square foot to owners of buildings between 20,000-50,001 square feet who benchmark their building's energy use, identify an energy use intensity target, and develop and implement an energy management plan and operations and maintenance program. Additional incentives are available for multifamily building owners who are willing to sign an [anti-displacement agreement](#).

## 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 of each month. Register here for [second Wednesday](#) (next: April 8<sup>th</sup>, noon) office hours.

## MARAD 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!

## 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



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

The [WPPA 2026 Spring Meeting](#) registration is open! 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>**. The [agenda is all set](#), and event details are listed [on the FAQ page](#). Our hotel room block is almost sold out so be sure to make your reservations now! We have sent the sponsorship information out but if you missed it, let Mandy know and she will be happy to share that with you! If you have any questions, please contact [Mandy Lill](#).



### Lunch & Learn: Building Talent Pipelines - How Ports Partner with Local CTE Programs

[Registration is open](#) for our upcoming Lunch & Learn on partnerships between ports and local Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs! Hear from leaders in Tacoma, Vancouver, and Kalama as they share creative approaches to CTE, from maritime tech programs and skill center collaboration to student-run retail stores, internships, advisory boards, and hands on learning experiences. You'll leave with practical ideas you can bring to your own community. This event will be virtual via Zoom on April 28th at 12:noon. Information for this event is available [here on our website](#). If you have any questions, please contact [Mandy Lill](#).

## 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)



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

## As Arthur Sees It

### *Notes from the Executive Director and his dog*

In the ffitch-Davies house, the end of the Legislative Session usually means one main thing: my routine of early-morning walks around Olympia with Arthur gives way to his preferred routine, when Arthur and Brooke take daily morning walks to the coffee shop near our house in Seattle. Sure, Arthur likes walking (and sometimes jogging) through the foggy Olympia mornings. But at his local coffee shop he has friends, treats, and a whole community of other dogs who he sort of looks at and doesn't always growl at.

For me, it means that I can turn my focus to some of the less-directly-legislative items on my to-do list. And even as we transition back with a fully staffed legislative team, and I get to slowly step away from the transportation policy portfolio I've been helping steward the past several months, there are still some items that I am working on that are due some attention with Sine Die in the rearview.

The **Maritime Industrial Base Coalition** is now fully underway, with thirteen ports signed on as steering committee members, and our kickoff meeting coming up on March 30<sup>th</sup>. We have hired Charlie Costanzo, principal at Blakely Rock Strategies, to lead the Coalition, and he has already connected with many ports and is doing outreach to our shipbuilding and industry partners. I wrote about the process to kick off the MIBC in my last column, so won't belabor it here. But suffice to say, this convening is already paying dividends! Earlier this month, staff from a few ports were in Senator Cantwell's DC office and were asked by the Senator's staff for some quick feedback on policies and funding that could support our maritime manufacturing industry. Charlie was able to draw on some of his early conversations to provide feedback through the Port of Seattle to respond to the Senator's inquiry.

And the topic of shipbuilding continues to gain momentum nationally, with [Lesley Stahl from 60 minutes recently reporting](#) that our shipbuilding industry is "in shambles," with China building more than 1,000 container ships a year and the US building no more than three on average.

WPPA will continue to engage on this important topic, led by Charlie and our MIBC, and we will hear Charlie speaking about his work alongside the Pacific Northwest Defense Coalition (PNDC) at our Spring Meeting. PNDC has been convening similar conversations, and we are working alongside to ensure we are coordinating and not duplicating efforts.

Meanwhile, another global economic trend that WPPA is engaged with is promoting WA's international trade-based economy! With our WA Trade Strategy still in nascent form, we are promoting it through various channels and joining emerging conversations where we can.

This year, when we testified in support of a proposal to require the Department of Commerce to undertake a statewide economic development strategy, it was suggested that our **WA Trade Strategy** should be integrated in that somehow. With \$300,000 in the final supplemental operating budget reserved for Commerce to complete

that strategy work, WPPA will work with the state agency to figure out what from our priorities documents we can see included in that final strategy.

Further, advocacy from WA groups for the continuation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is underway in advance of the “Joint Review” coming up on July 1, 2026. WPPA joined a roundtable meeting hosted by the Lieutenant Governor earlier this year, featuring representatives from the Mexican and Canadian governments discussing the importance of trade between our three countries. We are also joining many of those who attended the roundtable, organized by the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, in signing a letter to the U.S. Trade Representative urging continuation of the USMCA.

Even with Olympia legislative session in full swing, I was able to sneak up to Seattle earlier this month to attend the annual Trade Summit hosted by our partners from the Washington Council on International Trade (WCIT). This daylong event featured several members of Washington’s congressional delegation from both sides of the aisle, [talking about how best to approach trade advocacy in the current landscape](#).

As you’ll note if you follow either of the links above, there is a through-line between both conversations: ongoing military operations and upheaval in the Middle East. Speakers at the Trade Summit mentioned this repeatedly, not just due to its impact on global energy prices, but also because all conversations with DC policymakers must now be viewed through the lens of a world at war. And for Washington ports and every aspect of our civil society, changes to our economy because of changes to international trade, military deployment, and many other factors, results in uncertainty.

This will be a big summer for WA ports and our role as economic development leaders—our state needs steady leadership and a consistent focus on growing the economy, and that’s an area where I am proud to say our members shine.

**Washington Public Ports Association**  
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