



March 21, 2024



The Hakata Queen at the Port of Grays Harbor

Photo courtesy: Port of Grays Harbor

March Updates at WPPA

March roared in like a lion at WPPA World Headquarters in Olympia, complete with a dusting of snow and ice and even some sun peeking out from behind dark clouds. More important, it brought with it the *end* of the 2024 Legislative Session, as the Legislature adjourned “Sine Die” on Thursday, March 7.

Finishing on time once again, the Legislature passed its three supplemental budgets and gavelled out for the final time, not to return until January 2025 following what promises to be an active election season this fall. WPPA staff breathed a sigh of relief at the adjournment and as you may have seen in our final [Legislative Session Recap](#) from last Monday, March 11, we are glad of some progress but conscious as always of the work that lies ahead. Please review that session recap, check out important upcoming interim work in our Legislative Spotlight Section below, and remember: it’s never too early to start bringing us ideas for the next Legislative Session.

With the 2024 session now behind us, you can expect to see more of your WPPA staff in your port districts. Our Executive Director headed straight over to Kitsap County this past week for visits with the Ports of Silverdale and Poulsbo and Mandy made her way to a few Southwest Washington ports in early March, a sure sign that we are headed your way and excited to meet with your ports. For those who don't instinctively think: "I'd love to have my trade association visit," take a moment to think if there are upcoming events at your port that would be good for us to attend. We love ribbon cuttings and roundtables, but also appreciate the quiet moments at regular commission meetings and coffees and tours with staff. The burden is not entirely on you to invite us, we will be in touch when we are in your area. But if there is something that springs to mind where we can be helpful, where we can lend a hand in spreading the good word of your work, please don't hesitate to invite us to your port!

Another upside to the end of the Legislative Session is the fast approach of our first big conference, the 2024 WPPA Spring Meeting, hosted this year at the Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, WA. We are happy to be back in Skamania County and can already point to some highlights on the agenda: we are honored to have the Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration, Steve Hairston, joining us to keynote one of our lunches; we're developing panels on two items that *keep* coming up in evaluation forms, "Energy Supply" and "Artificial Intelligence," and we'll have a strong Port Reports lineup once more, including our host district the Port of Skamania sharing some of their work with our group. There will be fun social events to pair with our educational offerings as always, so please stay tuned to our event page for more agenda details. And with registration officially *open* it's never too early to reserve your spot: <https://www.washingtonports.org/2024-spring-meeting>.

Finally, for those already thinking toward the Spring Meeting and all that comes with it, please remember two important upcoming deadlines:

- **Spring Awards:** We will once again take time at our Spring Meeting to honor ports with our Environmental Stewardship; Creative Partnership; Community Outreach; and Outstanding Job Creator Awards. Nominations for those awards are due on Thursday, March 28, by 4:00 p.m. so please be sure to submit them in time for due consideration by the WPPA staff in advance of the conference.
- **WPPA Educational Foundation Spring Scholarship:** You've by now seen emails from the WPPA team about the return of the Winter Scholarship for mid-career professionals seeking continuing education. That is NOT to be confused with the existing, and continuing, WPPA Spring Scholarship, awarded to secondary or high-school equivalent students seeking post-secondary education in port-related fields. More information can be found on our WPPA website, and the deadline for applications for the Spring Scholarship are due on Friday, March 29, by 4:00 p.m.

Lots of movement here at WPPA, and plenty of reasons to connect. Please call WPPA staff or email us anytime, we are here to serve. And we look forward to seeing you at your ports, in your communities, and at the Spring Meeting at Skamania Lodge if not sooner!

Gary Nelson retires after 24 years of service to the Port of Grays Harbor, Washington's port industry

After 24 years with the Port of Grays Harbor, working to create jobs, diversify land and facilities for employers, and connect across industries to strengthen the Washington state port industry, Executive Director Gary Nelson is retiring March 31, 2024.

Gary joined the Port of Grays Harbor in April 2000. He brought with him a background of private sector management in the timber industry, including trade experience throughout the Pacific Rim. Gary's approach, which prioritizes cooperation and collaboration across industries, helped make the port and the entire Grays Harbor business community more efficient.

Gary oversaw a massive expansion of port facilities and capacity during his tenure. When he joined the Port of Grays Harbor, the port had 21 vessel calls each year and handled 85,000 metric tons of cargo with an operating budget of \$5.2 million. By the end of 2023, the Port of Grays Harbor had an operating budget of nearly \$40 million, with 100 projected vessel calls and the ability to handle 3 million tons of cargo each year. Gary's leadership has been transformational, attracting \$275 million in private investment in port assets and supporting the broad modernization and diversification of facilities, including the creation of Satsop Business Park and Friends Landing.

"I have always been taught to leave a place better than you found it, and I would like to think that is the case, both at the port and the community as a whole," said Gary. "I look forward to watching the port continue to grow in the coming years with several exciting projects on the horizon."

Gary has also brought his knowledge, experience, and strengths to bear for our statewide and national port industries. He served as Chairman of the American Association of Port Authorities from 2019 to 2020, chaired the WPPA's Legislative Committee, and served on the Executive Board of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association. A nationally recognized leader in the industry, his impact is felt across the region.

WPPA congratulates Gary Nelson and thanks him for his many years of service to our ports, our industry, and the communities of Grays Harbor and Washington state. His hard work and transformative leadership have made a lasting impression, not only on the Port of Grays Harbor, but on the state of Washington as a whole. As Gary heads into retirement, he can be confident that he leaves his port and ports around the state better than he found them.



Mandy (left) and Eric (right) with Gary (center) at his retirement party last weekend

Legislative Spotlight: Budget Provisos Lead to Interim Work

Alongside the budgets and policy bills, legislators include specific work instruction they believe will help inform future legislation or provide clarity when multiple perspectives make it difficult for the legislature to act. This work often comes in the form of a budget proviso. A budget proviso will instruct a state agency, university or other organization with expertise or standing to study an issue or topic, review existing law for effectiveness, or assess the impact of agency rulemaking. The 2024 legislative session was no different with proviso instruction on a number of issues important to port districts. Below are two examples WPPA will be participating in and/or paying attention to during this year's interim.

Incorporating Ports/Special Purpose Districts into GMA Planning

One proviso in the supplemental operating budget creates a task force aimed at incorporating port districts and other special purpose districts into planning functions found in the Growth Management Act (GMA). Previous work on GMA reform performed by the University of Washington's Ruckelshaus Center, known as "[A Roadmap to Washington's Future](#)," raised this issue but ultimately did not surface any recommendations for legislative consideration. The proviso that came forward from Rep. Davina Duerr (D-1st LD, Bothell) in the 2024 supplemental budget appears to be based on a recommendation from that report.

Port districts have conducted infrastructure planning since well before GMA was enacted; in fact, the Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements, which details port district responsibilities around planning, was itself enacted in 1911. Since GMA was adopted in 1990, counties and cities have been planning for infrastructure directly connected to or adjacent to port districts, but not always with the best results; think stadiums within blocks of marine terminals clogging important freight routes with traffic and people or a new housing development that is built adjacent to an airport runway.

WPPA will ask port members to participate in this task force, which will be led by the Washington Department of Commerce. The task force is slated to provide an interim progress report by June 30, 2025, and a final report with recommendations due December 1, 2025.

The Potential to Streamline and Expedite Delivery of Transportation Projects

The Municipal Research Services Center (MRSC) is tasked with convening a work group designed to evaluate best practices and make recommendations to expedite project delivery for transportation-related projects. Port districts have at least one seat identified for this work and WPPA will seek members interested in actively participating in this work group, which will leverage all of the agencies tasked with delivering transportation projects to make recommendations on how to speed up project delivery.

Opportunity: Provide Feedback on Updates to the Port Electrification Grant Program

During the legislative session, the legislature reconfirmed support for the Port Electrification Grant Program and the \$26.5 million in funding for it. WSDOT is in final preparation for a call for projects and is seeking port district feedback on project eligibility and evaluation criteria for the program.

If you would like to provide feedback, **please consider attending WPPA's Port Electrification Working Group Zoom meeting on Thursday, March 21 at 12:00 p.m.** Contact [Chris](#) or [Carly](#) to get the calendar invitation. WSDOT has asked us to work with our members to collaborate and provide joint feedback on the new eligibility and evaluation criteria. WPPA will host the Working Group to facilitate members' discussion of the criteria and will collaborate with ports to share joint feedback with WSDOT. We encourage you to participate in this joint effort by attending the Working Group. For any questions in the meantime, please email [Eric](#), [Chris](#), or [Carly](#) to learn more about the program and how to provide input to WSDOT.

Knowing the Waters

In this month's column, WPPA's legal counsel, Frank Chmelik and Tim Schermetzler, step through the nuances of public notice requirements under the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). The article focuses on situations in which the majority of port commissioners are attending the same function, which could be construed as an official port "action" and therefore be subject to OPMA. Read more in this month's [Knowing the Waters](#).

Grant and Training Updates

SAO Article & Trainings on Prevailing Wage

The Office of the Washington State Auditor (SAO) published a recent [article highlighting state and federal wage rate requirements](#). Noting that issues tied to these requirements have increased in recent audits, they have also provided several training opportunities, linked at the bottom of the article.

USDOT Federal Highway Administration Online Training Modules

The US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Center for Local Aid Support (LAS) has developed a series of online training modules to support local government professionals in finding solutions for transportation related issues including grant requirements, work zone fundamentals, and safe transportation for pedestrians.

- Registration is required for regular access to the courses and generating certificates of completion, but all resources are provided free of cost and can be accessed at any time.
- Visit the catalog of training modules [here](#).
- If you are interested in a topic not yet covered, [email](#) the FHWA LAS team!

MRSC Resources for Ports

Several trainings beneficial to ports are available via the MRSC local government newsletter [here](#). Free trainings include public works fundamentals (held in [Wenatchee](#)), apprentice utilization requirements and prevailing wage reporting (held [virtually](#)), and changes to the small works statewide roster (held in [Spokane](#) and [Tacoma](#)).

EPA Grants Webinars

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) periodically hosts webinars focused on grants. Past webinars are recorded and posted, and there are a number of upcoming webinars in March. View the webinars [here on the EPA website](#) and [subscribe to their listserv](#) to receive updates.

EPA Offers Free Targeted Brownfields Assessments (TBA)

Communities in need can apply for support from EPA in conducting environmental assessments, cleanup planning, and visioning for brownfield properties. Learn more [here on the EPA website](#).

Ecology Memorandum on Identifying Vulnerable Populations and Overburdened Communities

The Washington Department of Ecology has published a memorandum on new Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) cleanup regulations, focused on determining whether populations threatened by a contaminated site are likely to include vulnerable populations or overburdened communities. Find more information [here on Ecology's website](#).

Commerce Clean Buildings Performance Standard Launches Energy Audit Program

The Washington State Department of Commerce Clean Buildings Performance Standard is launching a \$20 million Energy Audit Program for Publicly Owned Buildings, which will offer funds to pay for ASHRAE Level II energy audits. They are also building a statewide network of qualified energy professionals to perform these ASHRAE Level II audits. If interested, email the [Clean Buildings Incentive Program team](#). Funds will be issued on a first come, first serve basis, with a portion reserved for public buildings in overburdened communities.

1. NOFO: Industrial Site Readiness Grants. \$2 million available to support project-ready industrial sites across WA. The Industrial Site Readiness program is open to port districts. The one-time grants are designed to help accelerate business attraction efforts at the local level by funding various site readiness services to support large-scale industrial site development. First round of funding: Application Deadline: March 21. Second round of funding: Application Deadline: May 15. [Learn more](#)

Washington Public Works Board offers broadband funding – applications due March 22, 2024

The Washington State Public Works Board (PWB) is currently offering \$15.8 million in grants and low-interest loans for broadband construction projects. Projects in distressed counties are eligible for 30% grant and 70% loan funding until funds are exhausted. Eligible applicants include local governments; Tribes; nonprofit organizations; cooperative associations; multiparty entities comprised of public entity members; limited liability corporations organized to expand broadband access; and incorporated businesses or partnerships.

The pre-application deadline was **January 4, 2024**, with a 30-day objection period to follow, and final applications are due **March 22, 2024**. Learn more and apply [here](#). Past February workshops will be recorded and posted [here](#) on the Department of Commerce website.

RCO Washington Invasive Species Council offers Free Webinar – held April 3, 2024

With funding provided by USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, Plant Protection Quarantine, the Washington Invasive Species Council is hosting a **free webinar** for all ports of entry in Washington. This event will take place from **9 a.m. – 3 p.m.** on **Tuesday, April 3, 2024**. **Four pesticide recertification credits** from the Washington State Department of Agriculture will be awarded to those who attend the entirety of the free webinar.

The goal of this webinar is to describe federal and state agency roles, highlight the importance of invasive species prevention, and describe up-to-date priority invasive species, pathways, and reporting. Ultimately, this will be a training and refresher alike for all the important first detectors employed at ports of entry. We have an excellent lineup of professionals who are excited to describe their work and how you can help! [Register here](#).

Department of Commerce Community Decarbonization Grants – applications due April 5, 2024

Washington State Department of Commerce will award approximately \$67 million in grant funding to support planning, design and construction of clean energy projects that will improve health, resiliency and economic outcomes for communities that face inequitable risk from energy burden, pollution, and other environmental factors. Find more information on this and other upcoming clean energy grants this spring [here](#) on the Commerce website.

RCO Funding Requirement Changes – applications open February 1, due May 1, 2024

Funding requirements for Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants are changing for the 2024 application cycle, including the [Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account](#), [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) (LWCF), and [Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program](#).

Evaluation criteria will emphasize enhancing outdoor access and recreation in communities with fewer existing opportunities or financial resources. RCO has provided a [one-pager](#) and [memo](#) explaining these changes and will hold two webinars in February, listed below.

RCO - Land and Water Conservation Fund

\$14 million will be made available in funding to preserve and develop outdoor recreation resources including parks, trails, and wildlife habitat.

- Applications open February 14 and will be **due May 1, 2024**.
- A comprehensive plan is required to be eligible for this grant, due March 1, 2024.
- Grants will be offered up to \$2 million and require a 50% match.
- Watch the February [applicant webinar](#).
-

RCO – Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account

\$9.1 million will be made available in funding to acquire, improve, or protect aquatic lands for public purposes, including providing public waterfront access.

- Applications open February 14 and will be **due May 1, 2024**.
- Grants will be offered up to \$1 million and require a 50% match.
- Watch the February [applicant webinar](#).
-

RCO – Recreation Projects: Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program

\$45 million will be made available in funding to acquire and develop open space for parks, trails, water access, and other conservation and/or restoration projects.

- Applications open February 14 and will be **due May 1, 2024**.
- A comprehensive plan is required to be eligible for this grant, due March 1, 2024.
- Grants will be offered up to \$1 million depending on the project category.
- Communities in need may qualify for a [match reduction](#).
- Watch the February [applicant webinar](#).

MARAD Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) – applications due May 10, 2024

The Maritime Administration (MARAD) has announced that \$450,000,000 in grant funding under the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) will be made available in fiscal year 2024. Projects that improve the safety, efficiency, or reliability of the movement of goods are eligible for funding.

- Applications are open now and will be **due May 10, 2024**.
- Grants may be offered up to \$112,500,000.
- Apply [here](#) on Grants.gov.

Commerce Industrial Site Readiness grant program – applications due May 15, 2024

\$2 million in funding will be made available through Commerce’s [Industrial Site Readiness grant program](#) to help accelerate business attraction at the local level by funding site readiness services to support large-scale industrial site development. Awards may fund engineering studies, permitting, and site due diligence activities such as SEPA. Individual awards will range from \$200,000 to \$500,000.

- First-round applications were due March 21, 2024. Applications submitted by **May 15, 2024**, will be reviewed for a second round of funding.

EPA Clean Ports Program Grants – applications due May 28, 2024

Applications are now open for two exciting [Clean Ports Program](#) funding opportunities: The [Zero-Emission Technology Deployment Competition](#) (approximately 2.8 billion) and the [Climate and Air Quality Planning Competition](#) (approximately \$150 million). For both competitions, the EPA requests an informal notice of Intent to Apply by March 28, 2024 be sent to cleanports@epa.gov.

- [Apply here](#) for a Zero-Emission Technology Deployment grant – due May 28, 2024
- [Apply here](#) for a Climate and Air Quality Planning grant – due May 28, 2024

Puget Sound Estuary Program Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead RFP – opens March 15, 2024

The [Strategic Initiative Lead \(SIL\)](#), led by Ecology, Commerce, and the Washington University Stormwater Center, provides grants to advance Puget Sound Recovery by investing in programmatic and local actions that accelerate recovery and protect and restore habitat, water quality and harvestable shellfish beds. A request for proposals on Innovative BMP Installations in Toxic Hotspots and Transportation Areas will open March 15, 2024, to award up to \$1.5 million in total and up to \$500,000 per proposal. Read more in this [blog](#) on the Puget Sound Estuary Program website.

Highlighted WPPA Awards/Scholarships

WPPA Educational Scholarship – application due March 29, 2024

It’s not too late to apply for the [WPPA Spring Scholarship](#)! Complete application packets must be sent electronically or received in the WPPA office **no later than 4:00 p.m. Friday, March 29, 2024**. Full instructions are located on the application, which can be found [here](#) on our website. Please email [Mandy Lill](#) with any questions.

WPPA Spring Meeting Awards Nominations – due March 28, 2024

Don’t forget to recognize exceptional work by our port members by nominating them for a Spring Meeting Award. Our website provides further information on nominating or applying for an award [here](#). Please email [Mandy Lill](#) with your nominations **no later than 4 p.m., Thursday, March 28, 2024**.

Highlighted Events

[Register Now!](#) Spring Meeting, held May 15-17 at Skamania Lodge, Stevenson



Skamania Lodge Riverview Pavilion

Photo courtesy: Skamania Lodge

[Registration](#) is now open for the [2024 WPPA Spring Meeting](#), and we hope you'll join us in Stevenson this May! Check out our draft agenda [here](#) and make your reservations early at Skamania Lodge by calling 844-432-4748, choosing option #1, and specifying our group code: 1YQ5GD, or online using this link: [WPPA 2024 Spring Meeting – Room Reservations](#). Read more in our [event FAQs](#) and contact [Mandy Lill](#) if you have further questions or would like to ask about [sponsorships](#)! Please **register by Monday, May 6.**

Mini Golf Tournament at Skamania Lodge and Port of Skamania Open House on May 14

If you plan to arrive on Tuesday, May 14, please join us for a free mini golf tournament, held 2:30-3:30 p.m. at Skamania Lodge, and/or attend the Port of Skamania's Open House from 4:00-5:30 p.m. Enjoy some friendly competition and light appetizers to kick off the Spring Meeting festivities! **Please [register for mini golf](#) or let [Mandy know if you're planning to join in](#)**—we'll need a headcount but there is no fee to play.

Save the Dates for 2024 Events

Further event details for 2024 are coming soon. Registration typically opens about 8 weeks in advance. In the meantime, mark your calendars for these upcoming meetings and events!

- Finance and Administration Seminar, held June 26-28 at AC Hotel by Marriott, Vancouver, Washington
- Directors Seminar, held July 11-12 at McMenamins Kalama Harbor Lodge, Kalama
- Commissioners Seminar, held July 22-24 at Courtyard by Marriott – Richland Columbia Point
- Environmental Seminar, held September 19-20 at Marcus Whitman Hotel, Walla Walla
- Small Ports Seminar, held October 24-25 at Campbell's Resort, Lake Chelan
- Annual Meeting, held December 11-13 at Hyatt Regency Hotel, Bellevue

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As Arthur Sees It

Notes from the Executive Director and his dog

In late February, I was invited to sit on a panel at the Washington Economic Development Association's "Adapt and Evolve" Winter Conference here in Olympia. Our panel was focused on partnerships, as I joined the Association of Washington Business, the Association of Washington Cities, the Washington State Association of Counties, and Workforce Central on the stage – all strong partners to WEDA in their statewide economic development efforts.

Our group was asked to outline our legislative priorities, approach to partnership, and how partners can help you get your legislative goals accomplished. I was happy to trumpet our WPPA approach to partnership as "there can never be too much!" and that sentiment was echoed by my fellow panelists. With the exception of Workforce Central – call them a *future* WPPA partner – I was happy to report that our current 2024 legislative work included advocacy on issues where each organization on the stage was actively supporting our work or we were supporting theirs. As important, those groups are also entities with whom we've *disagreed* on previous priorities, staking out different positions on one issue while working together on another.

During question time, an audience member asked the panel "how do you approach these conversations when you disagree with someone you're used to partnering with?" and I jumped on that question quickly with what I thought was a simple and straightforward answer: *with empathy!* And with the understanding that we can't always agree on every issue, but that doesn't diminish the value of our partnership. I reflected on my travel to members around the state, and my eagerness to learn *how* perspectives differ in Whitman County compared to King County, from Clark to Whatcom. I said then, and I believe firmly, that our power comes as much from our ability to disagree as from agreement.

I like to think there was much nodding in the room, though we were also the last panel before lunch so attendees may have just been trying to hurry things along. Other panelists shared similar reflections on the importance of treating others with respect, civility, and an understanding that we *should all feel differently*, that there is as much strength in diverging perspectives as in consensus.

This discussion hung in my mind as I returned to the office, and I was struck later that day by a piece I saw flash across my computer screen: an old colleague, Sean O'Brien, [speaking on TVW](#) about his work with the [Tri-Cities Civility Caucus](#), where he convenes conversations intended to bring civility back to our political discourse. This was highlighted by TVW in light of what is expected to be a fractious political season both here in Washington and across the country, where civility will likely be in short supply, while maybe more important in this election than ever before.

Sean's work in the Tri-Cities comes alongside a similar convening in Snohomish County, where two Democratic and Republican County Councilmembers – Jared Mead and Nate Nehring – have formed the "[Building Bridges](#)" coalition. That effort is currently focused on youth and the school system, and comes from a conversation that the two councilmembers from different parties had after they watched the January 6, 2021 events unfold in D.C. They wrote an [opinion piece](#) in the Herald that I remember reading and have built on that piece with community conversations and convenings, that now culminate in this Building Bridges group.

I have great pride in WPPA as an organization where different perspectives are welcomed, where we have friends with different ideologies, and where we come together to do the simple work of promoting economic opportunity in our communities. This is behavior I think we all hope to see modeled in our elected representatives, whether it's in Olympia or in Washington, D.C., or in local city and county councils. My optimism tells me that if we can do it, so can others. But it will take work, patience, and empathy.



Eric and Arthur at Greenbank Farm on Whidbey Island, one of Port of Coupeville's properties