



WASHINGTON PUBLIC PORTS ASSOCIATION

# THE MANIFEST

April 10, 2025



*Aerial photo of the Port of Illahee public dock and waterfront, courtesy of marinas.com.*

## April Updates at WPPA

This month's manifest comes to you from a WPPA World HQ that is as awash in frenetic activity and transition as the season around us. With driving rain giving way to glimmering sunshine, then back to dark clouds moments later, the dry heat and fresh air of Spokane in May can't come soon enough. That's right, even with the legislature approaching its final days, and much still hanging in the balance, we're hard at work developing a compelling agenda for the [2025 Spring Meeting](#) in Spokane, May 14-16<sup>th</sup> this year. Whether you're wondering about how drought conditions in Washington might impact our agriculture industry partners or hoping to hear the latest on the Attorney General's model rules for the Public Records Act, there is something for you on our agenda! From the Aviation Committee to the keynote, we are confident that once again our proposed topics will generate high interest and strong attendance. It's not too late to register at the Early Bird rate, so check out the Events Page on our new website to get yourself a ticket to the Lilac City!

And if you're over at <http://washingtonports.org> and have an extra second, take a spin through the "Resources" page or visit the newly updated Rec Boating Facilities Guide under the "Publications and Guides" section. We continue to add content, consistent with our aim to have the website not just *look nice* in its newly redesigned format, but also full of new and relevant content for our port members and partners alike. Brought to you by our friends at [Underground Creative](#)—the same developers who brought you the beautiful Port of Benton web presence—the WPPA site is a work

in progress, and that's where you come in! As you click and scroll, think of what additional resources might have a place on the "Resources" page, what changes you'd like to see to our "What Ports Do" section, or really any feedback that crosses your mind. And if this sounds familiar, that's because we made the same suggestion last month, and we will keep using this newsletter to plug the website because we're that excited about it!

One new item you'll find on the new website, is a reference to our recently introduced "[Port Academy Series](#)." With the first edition coming up this June at the Port of Kalama, we're excited to roll out a port-driven educational product that aims to give ports the chance to learn directly from their peers. Port of Kalama will run attendees through a full look at their operations, from their approach to port finance and real estate management, to their marine terminals and their Mountain Timber Market. Geared toward port staff who are interested in seeing how another port operates, it's open to all members until we hit our attendance cap. There are still a few seats available, so sign up now!

And if you miss the June kickoff in Kalama, we're happy to share that we are working with the Chelan-Douglas Regional Port Authority on an August installment. October will be our final Port Academy Series for 2025, and we are close to announcing the host port for that event. For any port that is *so interested* in this idea that they want to host and run their own Port Academy Series session: we're still looking for 2026 hosts, so contact [James Cockburn](#) to get on that list.

One final tease: tune in to the May Manifest for more information and sign-up details for our next Lunch and Learn event. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, Mandy Lill and our WPPA Communications Committee will host their third annual lunch and learn, where ports who have developed tax increment areas will discuss the community outreach and public communications approaches they employed and lessons learned in that process.

Enjoy more Manifest content below, including an in-depth look at our friends at the Port of Illahee- and we will look forward to seeing many of you in Spokane!

### Port Spotlight: The Port of Illahee's Efforts to Save and Revitalize Its Community



Looking out from the Port of Illahee public dock, courtesy of the Kitsap Sun.

Just across Puget Sound from the bustle of Seattle, and a short distance from the naval facilities in Bremerton, lies the Port of Illahee. The port isn't just a place where boats dock; it's a historic landmark deeply woven into the fabric of its community; a connection strengthened by decades of shared use. Now, the Port is focused on the future, determined to keep its cherished dock safe and accessible for generations to come.



Former Mayor of Seattle, Ole Hanson, who sold waterfront land in Illahee for vacation homes. Photo courtesy of historylink.com.

Before the dock was built, Illahee, nestled on the Kitsap Peninsula, was a quiet retreat. City dwellers from Seattle sought its peaceful shores to relax and reconnect with nature. Ole Hanson (pictured, left), who later became Seattle's mayor, even sold waterfront land for summer homes.

"The history of this place is what makes it special," says Jim Aho, one of the Port of Illahee Commissioners. "That past creates a strong bond and has the potential to make Illahee a true destination."

The Port of Illahee was established in 1922, a little over a decade after the Port District Act allowed for the creation of such entities and became the 14th port in Washington State. It was served by the growing Mosquito Fleet, a collection of private passenger ferries that crisscrossed Puget Sound before the establishment of the Washington State Ferries.

In those early days, the dock was Illahee's lifeline to the outside world. Tourism thrived, fueled by the regular trips of passenger boats like the *Vashonia* and *Chickaree*, which connected Illahee's dock to other similar spots around the Sound.

While cars replaced steamships as the main way to travel and transport goods in the 1930s, the Port kept the dock open for recreation. During World War II, the dock underwent an important upgrade to support Navy operations, including a "degaussing station" used to protect steel ships

from magnetic mines. Although the Navy's use ended after the war, the degaussing buoys in the channel remained until the 1970s.

That wartime upgrade was the last major improvement the dock has seen, yet it remains vital to the Illahee community, offering one of the few public access points to the water and providing a space for countless Kitsap County residents to enjoy boating, fishing, and scuba diving in Puget Sound. However, the years have taken their toll, and the dock now shows significant wear and tear that requires urgent attention.

The Port of Illahee currently faces four key challenges:

- **Deteriorated Dock Pilings:** The pilings holding up the dock are deteriorating, threatening its structural safety.
- **Hazardous Tire Reefs:** Old tire reefs placed near the dock are now breaking down and harming the environment.
- **Leaking Gas Tanks:** Underground gasoline tanks from an abandoned nearby store are leaking, requiring cleanup.
- **Securing Funds:** Addressing these critical issues demands significant financial investment.

To tackle the problem of the deteriorating pilings, the Port is launching a \$2 million construction project. This crucial work will replace pilings and allow the Port to improve parking and access, as well as add new floating docks, a walkway, and a small boat launch.

Another pressing environmental concern involves tire reefs located in front of the dock. In the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of bundled rubber tires were intentionally placed in Puget Sound (with guidance from the Washington State Department of Fisheries) as artificial reefs and breakwaters, with the hope of improving marine habitat. Unfortunately, these tires have broken down over time, releasing rubber, plastics, and metals that can harm sea life. Furthermore, a chemical found in tires, 6PPD, has been directly linked to the death of coho salmon. Studies by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from 2019 to 2022 have identified over 100 bundles of tires around the Illahee dock that need to be removed.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, the Washington Autonomous Vehicle Cluster (WAV-C) has partnered with the Port of Illahee to map the underwater tire reefs, a vital step in creating a comprehensive cleanup plan. This collaborative effort was recognized for its innovation and community impact, receiving the Washington Economic Development Association's (WEDA) Project of the Year award in 2023.



*Schematic of the proposed waterfront improvements, courtesy of the Port of Illahee.*

The Port of Illahee is not alone in addressing the issue of old tire reefs. The Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA) is actively advocating for more funding from the DNR to remove these hazards from Washington's state-owned waters. If you're interested in this ongoing legislative effort, keep an eye on WPPA's weekly legislative reports. You can find more information about [tire reef removal efforts](#) in Washington on the DNR's website.

In addition to the dock, the Port plans to clean up and renovate the nearby abandoned Illahee Foods Store. The store has been vacant since 2000 due to leaks from its underground gasoline storage tanks. The cleanup will involve removing the tanks and addressing any soil contamination, after which the property can be leased and put back into productive use. The Port has received a Pollution Liability Insurance Agency (PLIA) grant for this project and expects to complete the remediation this year.

Undertaking these significant projects requires substantial funding for small ports like the Port of Illahee. Primarily relying on a yearly property tax levy of less than \$100,000, securing the necessary funds can be a major challenge. The cost of fully repairing the dock alone could leave the Port with a \$1 million debt. To overcome this, the Port has launched a local fundraising campaign in partnership with the Kitsap Community Foundation (KCF). Anyone interested in supporting this effort can donate to the "Illahee Dock Assist & Recognition Fund" through the KCF website.

"For a small port like ours, taking on a \$2 million construction project and a \$700,000 remediation project is a huge undertaking," explains Commissioner Aho. The Port has prepared a mailer to be sent to all residents within the Port District, providing information about the projects and how they can help. "We put a lot of effort into making sure that mailer is informative, and we hope it resonates with the community."

Small ports are a vital part of what makes WPPA strong, and they are a cornerstone of the port industry as a whole. The Port of Illahee's story highlights the deep connection between a community and its port. Now, the Port is calling on that community to help ensure the success of these crucial projects.

## Legislative Spotlight: 2025 Legislative Priorities & ISGP Updates

Washington ports have made strides toward environmental stewardship and decarbonization, particularly through state support and investments like the Port Electrification Grant Program (PEGP), and revenue through the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA). But recent proposals in the Senate's 2025–27 Budget raise concerns about sustaining that momentum and projects that rely on these two funding opportunities. From funding delays to proposed cuts for transformative projects, the budget decisions made this session will have real consequences for our climate goals and the environmental and economic development efforts underway in our communities.

The following summary outlines three key areas where the stakes are high: risks to state partnership in funding economic development, the future of the PEGP, and the broader impacts of the Senate's proposed sweep of MTCA funding.

### *Over \$150 million in Proposed Cuts to Critical Economic Development Programs:*

Economic Development is part of the DNA of many port districts across Washington, and the economic development landscape across Washington affords port districts with many partners, including local governments like cities and counties, and Associate Development Organizations (ADO). The state, primarily through programs at the Washington Department of Commerce, is also a strong partner. However, funding cuts totaling \$150 million per biennia at the Office of Economic Development and Competitiveness (OEDC) are poised to have a dramatic effect on the capacity of your port to rely on a strong state economic development partnership going forward.

First, for some good news, the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) has received its full funding request of \$75 million for the 2025-2027 biennium. Infrastructure loans and grants through CERB are currently not impacted by the broad cuts we are seeing across other budget priorities. Also, funding for ADOs, currently at \$5 million in the Senate budget proposal and just over \$4 million in the House budget proposal, remain well funded due in no small part to strong advocacy at the Washington Economic Development Association (WEDA). We will continue to watch these important tools as we head into the final weeks of the session.

Many other programs have not fared so well.

**The Governor's Strategic Reserve Fund (GSRF)** is a competitive funding tool used to incentivize job growth or retention through relocation assistance, permitting, planning or workforce development. This tool is funded with lottery receipts and therefore conforms with strict public funding prohibitions that restrict most other incentives which are common in other states. Currently, both the House and Senate budget proposals sweep up to \$17 million from GSRF during the 2025-2027 biennium, leaving no reserve in the program.

**Reductions in Small Business and Microenterprise funding:** Programs supporting small business development and resiliency affect ports working to create and grow jobs through entrepreneurship. Many of these programs provide technical assistance and are frontline resources. Many are also expected to see cuts of up to 50% of their current funding levels. One program slated to be eliminated is a Small Business Export Assistance program. This program provides technical assistance and access to state trade support for small businesses looking to grow internationally.

**The Regional Manufacturing Predevelopment Program**, created as part of the state's goal to double manufacturing, is currently slated to be eliminated by both the House and Senate Operating Budgets. Many ports used funding through this program to prepare sites for environmental permitting.

WPPA recognizes the challenging budget constraints facing legislators but seeks to support important programs that grow and retain jobs. WPPA supports retaining funding for programs that are working and will work with Commerce and OEDC leadership to improve the effectiveness of economic development resources broadly.

### *Senate Budget Proposal Threatens MTCA:*

In 1988, Washington voters approved a tax on hazardous substances to fund the cleanup of toxic sites across the state. This initiative, the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA), has since cleaned up over 7,500 contaminated sites, transforming them into parks, affordable housing, business spaces, and more. Despite that progress, about 300 to 350 new contaminated sites are reported every year, keeping demand for this cleanup funding high.

Unfortunately, the state Senate’s proposed 2025–2027 budget would take a significant step backward. It includes a **\$100 million total transfer from MTCA funds to the state’s general fund**—a move that would divert funds meant for pollution prevention and cleanup efforts and redirect it to be used for any purpose. This pattern of sweeping MTCA funds undermines its intended purpose and puts environmental and economic development projects at risk.

MTCA funding comes almost entirely from the Hazardous Substance Tax (HST) revenue and is divided into three MTCA accounts: Operating, Capital, and Stormwater. These funds support projects through multiple state agencies, but ports especially rely on the Capital Account as it supports the Remedial Action Grant (RAG) Program. RAGs help local communities clean up heavily polluted sites. For every dollar invested through RAG, \$32 in business revenue is generated, making it not just an environmental win but one of the state’s most effective economic development tools.

The Senate’s \$100 million proposed sweep includes half of that, \$50 million, coming just from the MTCA Capital Account. This could halt or delay nearly 60 cleanup projects that are ready to go or already underway. Many of these projects have secured partial funding but will stall without continued support.

The Senate proposal also includes strict spending deadlines for RAG reappropriations (prior to 2020) that could **force unspent funds to lapse**, despite large cleanups typically taking years to complete due to complex factors often outside of project sponsors’ control. Flexibility in this program is critical for projects of this size to remain successful.

Once MTCA dollars are diverted to other uses, they are nearly impossible to reclaim. Doing so not only delays cleanups, but it also erodes trust in a voter-approved program designed to protect our environment, public health, and local economies.

At a time when Washington cleanup efforts are successfully turning underused, historically contaminated sites into productive, beneficial use in communities across the state, cutting MTCA funding would negatively impact this work. With a large coalition of stakeholder partners, we are asking the Legislature to avoid sweeping MTCA funds, so project sponsors can keep vital, planned and ongoing environmental cleanup work on track.

#### *Powering WA Ports – The Port Electrification Grant Program (PEGP):*

The Port Electrification Grant Program (PEGP), created by the Legislature in 2023 with \$26.5 million in Climate Commitment Act revenue, is driving change across Washington. In August 2024, WSDOT awarded grants to eleven port decarbonization projects across the state — poised to cut 140,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade.

These investments will support ports large and small in reducing emissions and moving toward clean energy goals with strong state partnership. But to keep the momentum going, continued support is essential.

After budget writers expressed concern about a perceived lack of progress on spending the funds that were appropriated by the legislature, WPPA worked with our members to provide information about the progress being made on project delivery and to reassure legislators that funds that were allocated are being spent. Many of these grant contracts are just getting approved by WSDOT now. And construction-ready projects like the Port of Friday Harbor’s \$7M effort are eager to begin now.

For the 2025-27 State Budget, **WPPA requested a reappropriation of at least \$26.5 million** to fully fund the eleven awarded projects, many of which are set to break ground this fall.

We also **encouraged additional funding to maintain the grant program** for new projects—as more ports are ready to scale up their decarbonization efforts.

The Senate’s 2025-27 transportation budget proposal includes \$27.5 million in new PEGP funding, but at the expense of cuts to major projects already underway. These proposed reductions are made to the Northwest Seaport Alliance (NWSA) Zero Emission Shore Power Demonstration Project and the Zero Emission Drayage Truck Demonstration Project. This move could compromise major climate and public health gains, derailing significant progress.

The NWSA shore power project alone is set to avoid 3.4 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and deliver \$360 million in combined climate and health benefits. The drayage truck project will cut over 5,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually in communities already overburdened by diesel pollution.

WPPA strongly supported the creation of the Port Electrification Grant Program in 2023 and worked with WSDOT to encourage ports to apply for funding. Now is not the time to scale these efforts back. These are exactly the types of projects that Climate Commitment Act revenue should be supporting. We will continue to advocate for the full reappropriation of funds for previously approved projects and emphasize that additional funding for the program will allow for additional projects. Let's stay on track and keep Washington's ports leading the way on decarbonization.

## Knowing the Waters

In light of recent actions by the federal government affecting grant programs, this month's [Knowing the Waters](#) gives a high-level overview of some of the relevant Executive Orders and offers strategies to help ports navigate the resulting uncertainty impacting federal funding. Read more in this month's column, authored by Tim Schermetzler of CSD Attorneys at Law.

## Grants and Resources for Ports

In this section we attempt to capture current funding and training opportunities relevant to the Washington ports industry. For a broader look at resources for ports, visit the new and growing [Resources](#) page on our new website.

### In case you missed it: PNWA & WPPA Joint Webinar on Stormwater Permitting

WPPA and the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) hosted a lunch-and-learn [webinar](#) two weeks ago to discuss new requirements for Washington State Department of Ecology's Industrial Stormwater General Permit (ISGP) for ports and port properties. You can find the recording [here](#) on our [Resource Documents](#) page, under "Environmental & Natural Resources."

### Commerce CETCA / other clean energy funding mechanisms – webinar April 28, 1-2 p.m.

The Washington Department of Commerce (Commerce) has introduced a new initiative to help local governments, including ports, take advantage of clean energy tax credits. They are hosting monthly office hours to learn more about the opportunity, the Clean Energy Tax Credit Assistance (CETCA) program, which can help ports access federal tax credits which can cover 30-70% of the cost of clean energy projects. Learn more at [Commerce's webpage](#).

The Washington Government Finance Officers Association and Lawyers for Good Government are also hosting a webinar on the program, as well as how to use other federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Direct Pay provisions to fund clean energy projects, on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Register to attend the webinar [here](#).

### Commerce Energy Audit incentive for Public Buildings – applications due April 30, 2025

Publicly owned Tier 1 buildings are encouraged to apply now for energy audits. \$14.5 million in funding is available, calculated at \$0.50 per square foot of floor area of the building, excluding parking areas. Rural applicants and buildings larger than 220,000 square feet may be eligible for more money. Applications are due on April 30. Learn more at [Commerce's website](#).

### MARAD Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) – applications due April 30, 2025

The US Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD) has opened applications for their Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP). The PIDP administers funding for projects that improve safety, efficiency or reliability for port and freight infrastructure. Money is set aside for small ports, but funding is available for ports in both urban and rural areas.

Emissions mitigation projects are further flagged as priority areas, including projects on port electrification master planning; replacing diesel-powered vehicles, craft, or equipment with electric alternatives; developing port or terminal microgrids, and many more.

Applications are due by April 30. Learn more on the [PIDP webpage](#).

## NOAA Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities – applications due May 12, 2025

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is providing a total of \$20 million for coastal habitat restoration projects and is accepting proposals between \$75,000 and \$2 million. Projects that focus on capacity-building, engagement and restoration for tribes, tribal entities and underserved communities will receive priority consideration.

Tribes, local governments, nonprofits and for-profit organizations are eligible to apply, however applicants must demonstrate their connection to or status as a tribe, tribal entity, or underserved community. Learn more at the [Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Tribes and Underserved Communities](#) page. Applications are due by May 12. **No match is required.**

## MARAD Small Shipyard Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity – applications due May 15, 2025

Ports with small shipyards (in a single location with less than 1,200 production employees) may be interested in the [MARAD Small Shipyard Grant Program](#), which will make up to \$8.75 million available. Eligible projects include capital improvement projects enhancing ship construction, repair, or reconfiguration work, as well as in-house maritime training and skills development programs.

The applicant must be the operating company of the shipyard facility. Cost-sharing of 25% is required, which cannot come from other federal sources or in-kind contributions. Read the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) here on the DOT website. Companies interested in applying are encouraged to reach out to [Xochitl Castañeda](#), MARAD Pacific Northwest and Alaska Gateway Director.

## USFWS Coastal System Conservation Grants – applications due May 30, 2025

A total of \$6 million will be made available to provide technical and financial assistance to applicants to restore and protect fish and wildlife habitats under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) [Coastal Program](#). Awards may be up to \$500,000, and eligible projects will be developed collaboratively with program staff. Applicants must contact a local program office before developing or applying. No match is required. Applications are due May 30, 2025. Washington has three USFWS Conservation Offices; find contact information for your [local office here](#).

## Ecology Independent Remedial Action Grants – applications due June 18, 2025

Ecology has opened applications for the Independent Remedial Action Grant program, which will provide between \$300,000 and \$400,000 to local governments who have:

1. Completed an independent cleanup through the Voluntary Cleanup Program, and
2. Received a determination of no further action from Ecology.

Funding can cover remediation actions, engineering design, operations and the development of remedial action plans and reports. Applications are due by 5 p.m. on June 18. [Read more at Ecology's website.](#)

## DOE Community Energy Innovation Prize – applications due June 20, 2025

The US Department of Energy (DOE) is providing \$8.42 million in cash prizes and in-kind support in the second edition of their Community Energy Innovation Prize. Organizations dedicated to advancing clean energy, manufacturing, and transportation technologies in historically underrepresented communities are encouraged to apply. Awards will range from \$75,000 to \$100,000 across three tracks:

- **Clean Energy Ecosystem Track** (\$3.22 million): Renewable energy projects, energy efficiency initiatives, and grassroots innovation to accelerate community-centric clean energy programs.
- **Manufacturing Ecosystem Track** (\$2.6 million): Partnering with local industry and academic solutions to innovate in clean energy manufacturing, workforce development, and supply chain resilience.
- **Vehicles Ecosystem Track** (\$2.6 million): Enhancing community access to electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, alternative fuels, and other clean transportation solutions.

Applications are due by 2:00 p.m. on June 20.

## Ecology Flood Control Assistance Account – applications due June 30, 2025

The Washington State Department of Ecology is providing \$1.5 million to communities to develop comprehensive floodplain management plans and put actions and projects in place to mitigate local flood hazards. Eligible applicants include local governments and special purpose districts, with a ceiling of \$500,000 in awards per county. Eligible projects include writing or updating a comprehensive flood hazard management plan; feasibility, mapping, and technical studies; permitting, outreach and public communications; matching federal funding; and emergency flood response and recovery. To learn more, visit the [Flood Control Assistance Account program](#) page.

- A 25% match for planning projects and a 20% match for emergency flood response projects is required.
- Prospective applicants must fill out a Notice of Intent to Apply form prior to applying.
- Applications are due by June 30, 2025.

## RCO Boating Infrastructure Grant Program – applications due July 17, 2025

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office is accepting applications for their Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, which will provide a total of \$2.2 million for the development and renovation of boating facilities that target recreational boats 26 feet long and larger.

Ports, local agencies, tribes, nonprofits and private marinas are all encouraged to apply. The money can cover guest dock renovation, installing utilities on moorage docks, moorage dock and float construction, and boater education. [Learn more at RCO's website.](#)

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

The Environmental Protection Agency opened their Thriving Community Grantmakers Program on January 15 and are 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 different 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.

## Washington Climate Partnership Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

The Washington Climate Partnership is requesting public input on a new Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) from now through April. They are hosting a series of virtual meetings, which will cover each sector of the state economy. The final version of the CCAP will describe specific actions Washington can take in each sector to meet their climate goals. All meetings are open to the public. Learn more on the [WCP website.](#)

## Highlighted Events

WPPA Spring Meeting: May 14-16, Historic Davenport Lodge in Spokane

[Registration](#) is now open for the [2025 Spring Meeting](#) and you can find all the details [here](#) on our new website!

This year we are featuring two training modules: Finance & Taxation and Communications & Outreach. These modules are an [additional registration](#) fee so don't forget to sign up! Make your room reservations now by calling 509.455.8888 or you can book them [online here](#). Read more in our [event FAQ's](#), check out our amazing [sponsors](#), and contact [Mandy Lill](#) if you have any questions or would like sponsorship information.



Inaugural Port Academy Series: June 4 at the Port of Kalama – registration nearly full!

Attention port staff, registration is open for our first-ever Port Academy Series event! 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 June 4<sup>th</sup> and is hosted by the Port of Kalama. Registration is limited to 25 attendees so sign up now! 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.



Save the Dates: 2025 WPPA Event Calendar

- Finance and Administration Seminar: June 25-27 at the Marcus Whitman Hotel, Walla Walla
  - \* *Registration opening for the Finance Seminar Next week!*
- Directors Seminar: July 9-11 at the Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort, Leavenworth
- Commissioners Seminar: July 21-23 at the Semiahmoo Resort, Blaine
- Environmental Seminar: September 25-26 at the Alderbrook Lodge, Union
- Small Ports Seminar: October 23-24 at Campbell's Resort, Chelan
- New Commissioners Seminar: November 18 - 19 at the Marriott Tacoma Downtown
- Annual Meeting: November 19 - 21 at the Marriott Tacoma Downtown



Arthur politely requests a snack suitable for a dog.

## As Arthur Sees It

### *Notes from the Executive Director and His Dog*

If I told you someone was a dockworker, you'd think of them unloading wind blades at the Port of Longview or putting logs on a barge in Port Angeles. If you heard that your friend worked as a longshoreman, you'd probably know enough to know that they were involved somehow in the container cargo operations at The Northwest Seaport Alliance's north and south harbors. But if I said that I wanted to pursue a career in *stevedoring*, you'd probably pause. Right? I mean, our marine terminal operating ports definitely are familiar with the term—but of our 75 ports, only eleven operate marine terminals, and I am not sure how much this 18<sup>th</sup> century word really resonates.

Well, what may have been simply an enjoyable etymological exercise a few weeks ago became a very real political problem this month, when the Washington State Senate unveiled a package of tax proposals that seeks to lift the dark cloud of budget uncertainty that still hangs over the Washington State Capitol. Among them was a bill that was presented as [“repealing ineffective and obsolete tax preferences,”](#) and that included the proposed elimination of a preferential business and occupation tax

rate on stevedoring services. For the number-crunchers out there, that means that the tax rate for stevedoring would *increase by a factor of five!* Or a five hundred percent spike, depending on your flair for the dramatic.

Back to that word, *stevedoring*. If you were a legislator, you might think: “what is stevedoring and why does it enjoy a preferential tax treatment?” Just the arcane nature of the word alone might convince you that it could reasonably be seen as “obsolete” as the bill description suggests. Well in state law, stevedoring is defined as “all activities of a labor, service, or transportation nature whereby cargo may be loaded or unloaded to or from vessels or barges, passing over, onto, or under a wharf, pier, or similar structure...” and goes on to specify that “wharfage, handling, loading, unloading, moving of cargo to a convenient place of delivery” are all included. Or to put a finer point on it: most of what our ports do!

For anyone following the daily news of the global economy (Wall Street Journal: [“China Has Readied a Trade-War Arsenal That Takes Aim at US Companies”](#)), you might wonder how a five-fold increase in the cost of moving cargo might interact with existing pressures on ports and our partners from changes to the international tariff regime (The Spokesman-Review: [“Trouble brewing: Tariffs hit Spokane coffee roasters already facing higher prices”](#)). And your concern with those dynamics might be heightened by an additional tax change under consideration: the repeal of an exemption from the public utility tax rate for the cost of transporting goods across Washington and out our ports.

Making the movement of goods more expensive will make our ports less competitive. Increased costs for transportation will hit producers, who already pay high prices to get their goods through our export gateway. And it will hit consumers—all of us!—who are already paying more for everyday goods than they did three, five, and seven years ago.

This is the message that WPPA is carrying to the Capitol this month, along with a broad coalition led by the vocal advocacy of The Northwest Seaport Alliance. From our labor partners to our potato and apple lobbyist friends, we have a unified voice in the trade and export community: *don't raise revenue by harming our global competitiveness*. In our view, this will create a downward spiral, challenging the ongoing growth and prosperity of one of the most reliable elements of Washington's economy.

Why would a state that famously prides itself on being “the most trade-driven state in the country” make it more expensive to get goods onto vessels? Why would a state whose agricultural exporters haven’t recovered from trade upheavals in 2017 and 2018—with exports to China dropping by 44 percent since 2018, for example—double down on a struggling sector, and tell them the tax on their shipping costs was increasing? Why would a state where trade accounts for one in four jobs, and where our labor partners earn strong middle-class wages, jeopardize those jobs for a short-term budget solution?

We continue to ask these questions and have been encouraged that many of the lawmakers we speak with seem to understand this *economy-wide concern*. We have presented a unified voice and brought together a strong coalition, and whatever the outcome one clear lesson has been learned: we can always do more to educate our policymakers about the work ports do—whether it involves stevedoring or not!—and how it impacts our shared constituents.

Stevedoring may be a word with 18<sup>th</sup> century origins (I know, because I googled it; *estibar*, in Spanish, means “to stow cargo,” making a cargo loader an *estibador*). But its impacts to our economy—and the value of our dockworkers, longshoremen, and farmers—are a matter of urgent importance today.

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