



Local ports renew push for federal dredging

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Pacific County voices concerns to representatives

ILWACO — Port managers, local seafood processors and Pacific County residents aiming to keep local issues at the forefront of future policy and federal budget discussions met with congressional and senate staff at a round-table discussion at the Port of Ilwaco Aug. 24.

Staff from the offices of U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-WA, 3rd Dist., U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-OR, 1st Dist., and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., were present to answer questions and listen. They toured the area earlier that morning, getting a close-up look at the rehabilitation work ongoing at North Jetty in Cape Disappointment State Park and at dredge work at the entrance of the Baker Bay channel outside of the Port of Ilwaco's marina.

"We know there isn't a lot of funding for infrastructure, but the story out here is really important," said Kristin Meira, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, which has been an advocate for small ports in the region.

Now is the time to voice concerns to representatives, Meira told those gathered upstairs in the Port of Ilwaco's conference room.

Even as dredging of a crucial federally managed channel leading from the Columbia River into the Port of Ilwaco wraps up, Port Manager Guy Glenn, Jr., and other stakeholders are already fighting for more funding for future dredge work as well as channel improvements and studies.

For two years in a row, the port, in collaboration with the smaller Port of Chinook, have successfully landed funding for federal dredge work. Without a deep, open channel, other facets of the community will suffer, members of the audience said.

"One thing I want to press upon you people is we're not asking for anything new," said Pierre Marchand of Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company. The seafood processor's main plant is located at the Port of Ilwaco.

If the channel silts in, he added, "you can't pull the boats in and out. No boats. No employment."

Pacific County's communities are heavily dependent on seafood-related businesses and industries, whether people are shellfish growers, plant workers, commercial fishermen or seafood buyers and sellers, said Dale Beasley, president of the Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association.

Other ports in Pacific County, including the Port of Peninsula in Nahcotta, need regular dredging, said Port of Peninsula Manager Mary DeLong.

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Even though the port she oversees is small, approximately one quarter of the nation's oysters cross the dock there, she said.

"Our voice needs to be heard," she said.

The representatives' staff members thanked everyone for their input and the information they provided. They encouraged them to continue sending information their way.