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U.S. State Department Visits with PNWA

The U.S. State Department paid a visit to the Pacific Northwest this past week, spending time with PNWA members and staff as part of an effort to better understand the Columbia River system and the communities and industries that depend on it.

Leading the visit was Jill Smail, the lead U.S. negotiator for the Columbia River Treaty, along with her boss, Kevin Skillin, and State Department attorney Jamie Briggs. On Monday, the State Department team toured the Port of Vancouver USA. (See below)

On Wednesday, PNWA Executive Director Neil Maunu joined Jill and Jamie for a trip to the coast. Taking advantage of a beautiful day, Neil showed them the mouth of the mighty Columbia from Cape Disappointment and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. But the real highlight came when the group headed out on the Columbia River Bar with the Columbia River Bar Pilots to pick up a pilot offshore.

Needless to say, the State Department team was impressed—and they won't soon forget the experience!

A huge thank you to Capt. Joe Sohlberg and the Columbia River Bar Pilots for being such incredible hosts and for giving our State Department guests a firsthand appreciation for the complexity, skill and importance of safely navigating the Columbia River Bar.

And there was one more bonus to the trip: the 5.5 hours spent in the car traveling to and from the coast provided plenty of time for some great conversation and an opportunity for PNWA to learn more about our State Department colleagues and the Columbia River Treaty process.

Visits like these are an important part of PNWA's work—bringing decision-makers and policymakers out of the conference room and onto the river, where they can see firsthand the people, infrastructure and operations that make the Columbia-Snake system so important to the Pacific Northwest.

State Department Tours Port of Vancouver

On September 14th, PNWA Staff, Lauren Reese from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division, and several representatives of the U.S. State Department toured the Port of Vancouver USA. Jill Smail, Columbia River Treaty lead negotiator, and her boss, Kevin Skillin, Director of the Office of Canadian Affairs were among the State Department representatives on the tour. During the tour, the group viewed a vessel being loaded with grain. They were very impressed by the potential for growth in the region and the collaborative effort to maintain the Columbia River System as a major export gateway. Representatives from the Port of Vancouver and PNWA reiterated the need for reliable and predictable water flows which the modernized Columbia River Treaty will ensure.

Many thanks to Casey Bowman and Erin Masterson at the Port of Vancouver USA for the informative and entertaining tour of the port.

PNWA visits the Oregon Coastal Ports

To finish out the month of August and to kick off September, Nicole Kach, Mary Wiley, and PNWA President Paula Miranda took a trip down the Oregon coast to visit some PNWA members. Nicole and Mary started their trip by visiting the Port of Toledo, where they learned about current grant opportunities and port activities.

After swinging by Port of Newport to pick up President Paula, the group headed down to visit with a prospective PNWA Member, the Port of Alsea, where they were able to learn a little bit more about the getting a tour of the Port's facilities. They finished out their first day on the road with a visit to the Port of Siuslaw, where the group was able to see the Port's RV Park and hear more about various ongoing projects.

The next day, the group got an early start by driving down to meet with the Port of Gold Beach, where the group was able to get a drive by tour of the airport, high docks, a view of the Rouge River and a tour of their cannery row on the waterfront. The group concluded their trip with a meeting with the Port of Umpqua, where the group learned about the current needs of the port and the development of commercial fishing in Winchester Bay. Overall, the trip was quite informative to learn about current priorities and projects with Oregon Coastal Ports.

A special thank you to the Ports of, Alsea, Bandon, Gold Beach, and Umpqua, Siuslaw, and Toledo for letting PNWA stop in. A special thank you to Paula Miranda, PNWA President and Executive Director for the Port of Newport for joining PNWA!

PNWA Meets with New Seattle District Commander

On September 10, PNWA staff and members gathered at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office Seattle to meet with the new leadership at the Seattle District of the Corps COL Eli Adams. PNWA staff provided a brief overview of the organization, our advocacy role, partnership and communication with the Corps, and highlighted some overarching issues. PNWA members from the Ports of Bellingham, Chehalis, Edmonds, Everett, Grays Harbor, Kingston, Olympia, Port Townsend, Willapa Harbor, and the Northwest Seaport Alliance shared projects and issues of concern to their organizations.

We greatly appreciate the time they took to help tell PNWA's story to our new partner and Commander at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Seattle District. Several PNWA members were able to join PNWA staff for lunch following the meeting with COL Adams to debrief and to share information. It was a productive and enjoyable trip.

PNWA Members Meet New Walla Walla District Commander

On September 2, Neil Maunu and Nicole Kach traveled to Walla Walla to meet with Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Droesch, the new commander for the Walla Walla district. LTC Droesch assumed command of the Walla Walla district on July 15, 2026. As a courtesy for new commanders, PNWA likes to hold a 'PNWA 101,' where the commanders get to learn more about PNWA and have the opportunity to meet with PNWA members and industry partners that work closely with the Corps.

PNWA members joining Neil and Nicole include: American Cruise Lines, AgReserves,Inc. Northwest Grain Growers, Shaver Transportation, Tidewater, and the Ports of Benton, Clarkston, Lewiston, Pasco, Walla Walla and Whitman County. Members shared and overview of their organization, their relationship

with the Corps and Walla Walla district, and current areas that members are working on.

The meeting was a success. A special thank you to the Walla Walla District and PNWA members who helped make this event possible.

National Waterways Conference

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA) Executive Director Neil Maunu recently attended the National Waterways Conference (NWC) 2026 Annual Meeting in Moline, Illinois. Set in the heart of the Quad Cities along the Upper Mississippi River system, the three-day gathering provided an ideal backdrop to discuss critical infrastructure, regional economic priorities, freight movement, flood management, and ecosystem restoration.

Representing PNWA on the national stage, Neil participated as a featured panelist addressing current challenges facing the nation's water infrastructure. Beyond policy sessions, the meeting offered valuable opportunities to collaborate with federal partners, industry leaders, and regional allies—complete with a hands-on tour of local locks and dams along the river.

PNWA extends sincere thanks to NWC leaders Julie Ufner and Julie Minerva for hosting an exceptional event, as well as co-hosts Corn Belt Ports. Strong partnerships across national watersheds ensure our region's navigation and infrastructure needs remain front and center in D.C.

2026 PNWA Annual Convention

Learn More

Marine Highway Roundtable

The Pacific Northwest Waterways Association is pleased to invite you to attend the **2026 Marine Highway Roundtable**, October 12–13, 2026, in Vancouver, Washington.

The Marine Highway Advocacy Working Group is a collaborative effort among PNWA, the Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA), Columbia River and Puget Sound ports, and commercial maritime partners working to advance short-sea shipping and strengthen marine transportation throughout the Pacific Northwest.

This year's Roundtable will bring together leaders and partners from across the maritime industry for two days of discussion, collaboration, and networking focused on the opportunities and challenges facing marine transportation today and into the future.

We encourage PNWA members to join us for this important regional conversation and help continue efforts to strengthen and advance our marine highway system.

Please see the attached invitation for additional details and register here:
2026 Marine Highway Roundtable Registration

Questions may be directed to mh5@portofpa.com.

We hope to see you in Vancouver!

WSDOT to Share Findings from Lower Snake River Dams Transportation Study

For the past two years, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has been studying how freight transportation by barge, rail and truck could change if the four Lower Snake River dams were removed.

As WSDOT works toward completion of the final report in December 2026, the agency will host three public open houses in October to share findings from the study and provide an opportunity for public input.

Tuesday, October 6 | 5–7 p.m.
Whitman County Library
102 South Main Street, Colfax, WA

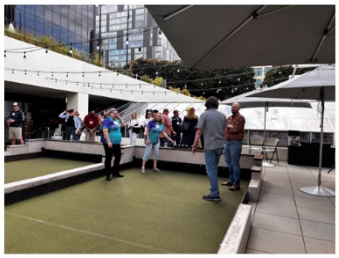
Wednesday, October 7 | 5–7 p.m.
Clarkston High School Library
401 Chestnut Street, Clarkston, WA

Thursday, October 8 | 5–7 p.m.
Mid-Columbia Libraries, Pasco Branch
1320 West Hopkins Street, Pasco, WA

PNWA staff plans to attend the October 8 open house in Pasco. IPNG members and other navigation and industry partners interested in the study are encouraged to attend, hear WSDOT's findings and participate in the public engagement process.

The $4 million study began in April 2023 and examines the highway, roadway and freight rail needs and impacts associated with potentially shifting freight currently transported by barge on the Lower Snake River to truck and rail.

Merchants Exchange Open House



PNWA staff enjoyed attending MEXtoberfest on September 15 at the Merchants Exchange office. It was a great opportunity to connect with PNWA members and maritime industry partners, enjoy delicious food and drinks, and cheer on teams competing in the annual bocce tournament.

Congratulations to Tidewater Transportation and Terminals, this year's Merchants Exchange Bocce Tournament champions, including PNWA Board member and IPNG Co-Chair Jennifer Riddle.

The event also raised funds for the Merchants Exchange Scholarship Fund, which supports students pursuing and advancing careers in the maritime industry. Raffle ticket proceeds and donations from individuals and organizations help invest directly in the next generation of maritime professionals.

Thank you to the Merchants Exchange for hosting another wonderful event and bringing the maritime community together for a great cause.

Support the Merchants Exchange Scholarship Fund: www.pdxmex.com/scholarship/

MCC Harbor Splash

PNWA staff enjoyed attending the Maritime Commerce Club's Harbor Splash on September 10 aboard the Willamette Star.

It was a great evening to reconnect with PNWA members and maritime industry partners while enjoying dinner, clear skies, and beautiful views along the Willamette River. The evening also included raffle prizes, and PNWA was lucky enough to take home a prize basket.

Thank you to the Maritime Commerce Club for hosting another enjoyable Harbor Splash and bringing the maritime community together.

Wapato Valley Mitigation and Conservation Bank

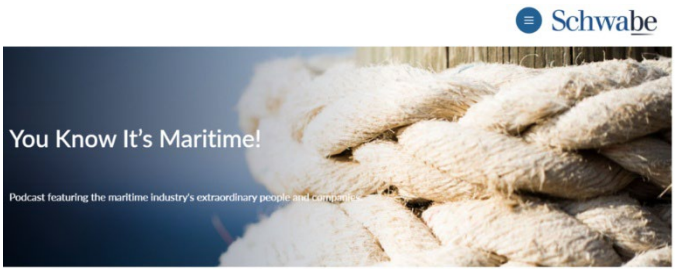
The Wapato Valley Mitigation and Conservation Bank received final agency approval on August 25, 2026, from the Washington Department of Ecology, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and National Marine Fisheries Service.

Located near the confluence of the Lewis and Columbia rivers northwest of Ridgefield, the project will restore and enhance wetlands, riparian areas, salmon rearing and refuge habitat, and other wildlife habitat.

The bank is expected to generate 94.48 wetland and aquatic resource credits, along with fish habitat credits, which will be released for sale as established performance standards are met.

Learn more on the Wapato Valley Mitigation and Conservation Bank webpage.

You Know It's Maritime! Podcast



PNWA is pleased to see two of our members, Schwabe and the Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA), come together for the latest episode of the You Know It's Maritime podcast.

In this episode, Eric ffitch, Executive Director of WPPA, discusses how Washington's 75 public ports support the state's economy, connect communities to global markets, contribute to national trade policy, and play important roles in environmental cleanup and shipbuilding.

You Know It's Maritime highlights the people and organizations that make the maritime industry such an important part of the global economy. The podcast is open to all and offers an opportunity to learn more about the people, companies, and issues shaping the industry.

New episode available now.

Welcome New Members

Kinder Morgan is one of North America's largest energy infrastructure companies, operating pipelines and terminals across the continent. In the Pacific Northwest, its Portland terminal operations provide deep-water and rail access for the movement of agricultural products, minerals, and other dry bulk commodities.

We're pleased to welcome Kinder Morgan to PNWA! LEARN MORE: Kinder Morgan

The Association of Pacific Ports connects ports throughout the Pacific, providing opportunities to build relationships, share best practices and innovations, and support professional development. Through collaboration and peer-to-peer networking, APP helps its members strengthen efficient, sustainable, and economically viable port operations and supply chains.

We are pleased to welcome APP to PNWA! LEARN MORE: Pacific Ports

Blakely Rock Strategies is a marine business consultancy providing maritime-focused expertise in government affairs, regulatory compliance, risk management, and business development. Drawing on deep industry experience, the firm helps marine businesses navigate complex challenges, identify opportunities, and build strategies for long-term success.

Welcome to PNWA! Learn More: Blakely Rock Strategies