

2020 AAPA Communications Awards

Entry Classification:
Special Events

Title:



Westport Marina Walking Tours



Port of Grays Harbor

On Washington's Pacific Coast

Summary

The Westport Marina, a facility of the Port of Grays Harbor, is the number one commercial seafood landing port in Washington State, and number eleven in the entire nation. On top of that, it is a bustling tourist and recreational fishing destination throughout several months of the year and home to Coast Guard Station Grays Harbor. Last year the Port successfully held its first year of Westport Marina Walking Tours to show the community, tenants, and visitors all the incredible things that happen at the Marina including its diverse user groups, its history, and the thousands of jobs its activity supports in rural Southwest Washington.

1. Challenge & Opportunity

The Westport Marina is a 550-slip commercial and recreational fishing hub on Washington's Coast and also the foundation of hundreds of independent small businesses. Tourism based hotels, restaurants, shops and charter offices coexist with crab, salmon, sardine and other commercial and tribal fishing companies. Processors and cold storage provide upland services that employ thousands. The Westport Marina is truly a diverse economic hub serving thousands each year but is also home to U.S. Coast Guard Station Grays Harbor and several U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Aids to Navigation.

While most folks in the Pacific Northwest have heard of Westport or maybe even visited, the majority, including Grays Harbor residents, have no idea of the significant role the Westport Marina plays. Most simply drive by or walk the Esplanade and see all of the boats and conclude that fishing takes place there. They don't know or appreciate that more than half of Washington State's commercial seafood, the seafood you order from restaurants or buy at the grocery store, comes from Westport. They aren't aware of the five upland seafood processors and the thousands of people they employ that it takes to get that seafood to markets all over the world. Almost no one knows of the important partnership we have with the Corps to maintain their critical infrastructure at the Marina that protects both the Grays Harbor Navigation Channel and the boat basin itself. Very few would be aware of the \$8 million investment in Marina District improvements that have been made over the last ten years.

Having three other successful tour programs throughout the Port's facilities, the passionate and dedicated Westport Marina staff thought, "What better way to tell our story than a hands-on, walking tour of the entire Westport Marina district?!". They put their heads together and came up with a comprehensive plan for a tour that involved the support and participation of a diverse group of Marina users and partners. The results exceeded the expectations of everyone involved, most importantly those of the tour participants.



Westport Marina

Washington's Premier Fishing Location

A FACILITY OF THE  PORT OF GRAYS HARBOR

Westport Marina District Map



2. Port of Grays Harbor Mission

The Port of Grays Harbor's mission is to best utilize our resources to facilitate, enhance and stimulate international trade, economic development and tourism for the betterment of the region.

We are a county-wide port district, one of seventy-five in Washington State, on the Southwest Coast of Washington State. The Port operates seven lines of business including the Westport Marina, the Satsop Business Park, Bowerman Airport, 4 deep-water marine terminals, pilotage services, industrial properties and several recreational facilities. Essentially, everything a port district can do in the State of Washington, the Port of Grays Harbor does.

The Westport Marina is the lone port facility that brings together and achieves all three focus areas of the Mission on a daily basis. The Westport Marina is the hub of commercial, tribal and recreational fishing and boater-based tourism on Washington's coast. The Marina's uplands support an industry of processors and cold storage facilities that employ hundreds full-time and thousands during peak season. The seafood landed and processed in Westport is shipped all over the World. In fact, processors in Westport reported exports to more than 60 countries in 2018.

The Westport Marina has been a facility of the Port since 1929, playing a vital role in commercial fishing, recreational fishing, and tourism for nearly 100 years. As you can tell, there is a lot of history to cover when it comes to the Westport Marina.



Tourists and Anglers line the banks of the boat basin on Derby Day back in 1954.



Once known as the "Salmon Capital of the World", Westport attracted fishing enthusiasts from around the globe, including Robert Kennedy and family in 1962.

3. Planning & Programming

Explaining the many diverse users, activities and public facilities the Westport Marina has to offer can be overwhelming. The Westport Marina, the number one seafood landing port in the State, and number eleven in the nation, is home to more than 350 commercial fishing families that are all annual moorage tenants, as well as several large seafood processors.

The goal, or desired result, of the Walking Tours was to have participants come away with a better understanding of the important role the Westport Marina plays in supporting small businesses, jobs and tourism in our region.

Partners Make it Possible:

In order for our tour participants to truly and genuinely understand all these important things about Westport, it was critical we involve a strong and passionate group of our local stakeholders and partners. The following is a list of the partners that gave their time and support to make the Walking Tours an astounding success:

Westport Seafood – Seafood processing facility with a focus on Dungeness Crab, Albacore Tuna, and Live Bait. Owner, Michael Cornman, provided a verbal overview of the Albacore Tuna fishery as well as a visual demonstration of his boat the f/v Tani Rae gathering and offloading anchovies.

Ocean Gold Seafood – Seafood processing facility and one of the largest employers in the county. Al Carter, Safety Officer for Ocean Gold, gave a summary of the volume of seafood landed in Westport as well as the critical export markets around the globe. Additionally, Ocean Gold provided a gorgeous “touch and see” fresh seafood display for participants to enjoy.

WEfish - Local non-profit aimed at supporting and promoting the commercial seafood industry in Westport. Members shared the unique lifestyle experienced in commercial fishing families, as well as the cultural impacts on fishing communities.

Westport Charterboat Association - The Westport Charterboat Association represents the charter fleet based in Westport. Weighmaster Danny Bohay hung fish on the Charterboat Association Derby “hook” which has been weighing fish for more than six decades.

Washington Trollers Association - Organization representing the salmon trolling fleet on the coast of Washington. Greg Mueller, longtime President of WTA, touched on the sustainable fishing practices of Washington's salmon fishing fleet as well as the techniques used by fishermen.

Westport Maritime Museum - Decommissioned Coast Guard Station Grays Harbor and home to the Destruction Island Lens. John Shaw, Museum Director, provided large format historic photos of the Westport Marina along with a timeline of boat basin development. Additionally, the museum allowed tour participants to view the Lighthouse Lens.

Astoria Fisherpoet - A celebration of the commercial fishing industry in poetry, prose, and song. Jon Branshaw, local fisherpoet and former fisherman, graced the tour with a lively and candid performance of his poetry, a reflection of his time in the industry.

Objectives

The following objectives were thoughtfully developed to ensure our tour guests were coming away with the most important points about the Westport Marina.

Objective #1 – Westport is a Working Waterfront

While Westport is a beautiful oceanside community, it is also a hub for industrial activity. The daily activity in the boat basin is evidence of an authentic working waterfront engaged in commerce, manufacturing, and recreation.

Objective #2 – The Significance of the Commercial Seafood Industry

Westport holds a position of national significance in the seafood industry due to the volume of seafood landed. Such large quantities of fish require global markets for export. The fishermen, processors, and support businesses collectively employ thousands of individuals who put millions of pounds of seafood on consumer plates around the globe each year.

Objective #3 – Westport's Significant and Rich History

The Westport community has transformed from a tiny fishing village and Coast Guard station to a West Coast recreational hub and global player in the seafood industry. Abundant natural resources, visionary leadership, and critical infrastructure investment have driven the development of the Westport Marina boat basin to be the vibrant and authentic community that it is today. The Coast Guard and Corps remain important partners in providing the critical services and infrastructure investment that preserve and protect the marina today.

Objective #4 – Where People Come to Play: Recreational Fishing & Tourism

The Westport Marina sits on the heart of Washington's Pacific Coast. With access to the renowned Marine Area 2 recreational fisheries, vast stretches of sandy beachline, walking and biking trails, and a suite of port facilities in the marina district, the Westport Marina is a year-round center for activity.

Audience

Primary Audience:
Citizens of Grays Harbor County

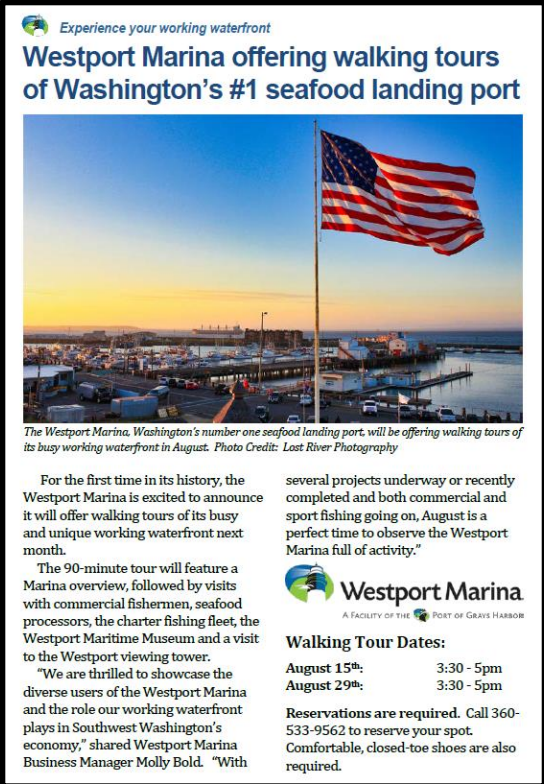
Secondary Audience:
Westport business owners
Fishermen
Visitors/Tourists

Advertising for the our first year of the Westport Walking Tours was kept to a minimum to ensure our limited staff and volunteer partners could deliver a quality, worth-while tour. The original announcement was made in our July 2019 newsletter and was picked up by our local newspaper and radio stations. While we initially offered just two dates, we ended up adding a third as the first two filled up in less than 5 days, and the third filling within just two days of its announcement.

By design, we opted to keep the tour groups to a maximum of 15 participants to make sure all participants could hear the various speakers and we could easily keep the group moving and on schedule.

A similar walking tour offered at the Satsop Business Park has grown to be so successful over the last few years they now offer dates 5 months out of the year with up to 30 people on each tour. We fully expect this level of participation for the Westport Walking Tours but want to ensure we are able to meet participant expectations while taking into consideration the obligations of our many local contributors and our limited staff's time.

A testament to our diverse and widespread newsletter distribution list, we had several out of town participants from all over the Northwest, as shown by the zipcodes entered in our post-tour survey. Additionally, we had several local citizens sign up with an interest in better understanding the activity at the Westport Marina.



Experience your working waterfront



Westport Marina offering walking tours of Washington's #1 seafood landing port

The Westport Marina, Washington's number one seafood landing port, will be offering walking tours of its busy working waterfront in August. Photo Credit: Lost River Photography

For the first time in its history, the Westport Marina is excited to announce it will offer walking tours of its busy and unique working waterfront next month.

The 90-minute tour will feature a Marina overview, followed by visits with commercial fishermen, seafood processors, the charter fishing fleet, the Westport Maritime Museum and a visit to the Westport viewing tower.

"We are thrilled to showcase the diverse users of the Westport Marina and the role our working waterfront plays in Southwest Washington's economy," shared Westport Marina Business Manager Molly Bold. "With several projects underway or recently completed and both commercial and sport fishing going on, August is a perfect time to observe the Westport Marina full of activity."

 **Westport Marina**
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Walking Tour Dates:

August 15 th :	3:30 - 5pm
August 29 th :	3:30 - 5pm

Reservations are required. Call 360-533-9562 to reserve your spot. Comfortable, closed-toe shoes are also required.

4. Actions

The 90-minute Westport Walking Tour included a robust agenda and carefully planned tactics to help achieve our various objectives. A summary of the tour and tactics is as follows:

Tour Start: Westport Marina Office

The Walking Tour begins at the Westport Marina's Main Office. Tour guests sign in and are briefed on basic safety info before the tour begins. Marina staff explain the role of the Westport Marina within the overall Port of Grays Harbor operations.



Tour guests begin at the Westport Marina Main Office, across the street from the Marina's docks, for an overview about the Port of Garys Harbor and the role the Westport Marina plays

Stop #1: Float 5 - Commercial Fishing: Feeding our Families, Feeding the World

Tour participants are given an overview of the significant commercial fisheries in Westport. Speakers from the Trollers Association and WEfish provide basic information on technique, economic value, cultural impact, and best practices related to the Dungeness Crab, Albacore Tuna, Salmon, and Pacific Whiting fisheries. While some speakers focused on seasonal business practices and techniques, others focus on the multigenerational lifestyle and family dynamics associated with fishing.



Commercial fishermen and family explain the various intricacies of the Albacore Tuna, Dungeness Crab, and Salmon trolling fisheries. Crab pots, buoys, and troll lines were used for demonstration. Members of WEfish share about the cultural impacts to commercial fishing families and communities.

Stop #2: Westport Maritime Museum - Dredge Spoils and Safe Haven: A Boat Basin in the Making

Participants are given a brief history of the role of the United States Coast Guard in Westport as a driving force behind the development of the Westport Marina Boat Basin. John Shaw, Museum Director, shares large format historic photos of the area—showing the exact spot of the day’s presentation once underwater, underscoring the dramatic transformation of the region over the last 100 years. Additionally, participants are given a glimpse of the Destruction Island Lighthouse Lens, a first-order Fresnel Lens and invaluable treasure of the Coast Guard and Historical Society.

Participants are also treated to a short performance by long time fishermen and Astoria Fisherpoet, Jon Branshaw, further highlighting the cultural impacts and way of life associated with commercial fishing families



Astoria Fisherpoet Jon Branshaw puts on a theatrical show for Tour attendees on the lawn of the Westport Maritime Museum



Museum staff show Tour guests the iconic first-order Fresnel Lens from the Destruction Island Lighthouse



An example of the historic photos Museum staff displayed for the Westport Walking Tours.

Stop #3: Westport Marina Main Dock - Local Harvest = Global Export: The Role of Seafood Processing

Presenters explain the role of seafood processing, Westport’s high-volume fisheries, and the background behind what it takes to make Westport 11th in the nation for seafood landed. Mike Cornman, owner of Westport Seafood, stages his boat, the f/v Tani Rae, to demonstrate the transport of live bait to and from the many bait pens located next to Main Dock. Live bait is a unique and critical service for the commercial albacore tuna fleet. Each year, millions of pounds of albacore tuna cross the docks on their way to market, employing hundreds of people along the way.

Al Carter of Ocean Companies displays a robust sample of fresh regionally harvested fish. For many participants, this is the highlight of the tour. Al identifies Pacific Whiting (Hake) fish for guests, noting that his employer, Ocean Gold, processes 80-120 million pounds of the fish each year, making Westport the largest seafood landing port by volume in the region. At this point in the tour, guests understand the important role of available export markets and global demand, the driving force behind the huge harvest numbers seen in Westport.



Al Carter of Ocean Cold explains the local fish landed and processed in Westport. All of the fish were labeled for tour attendees to easily identify



Tour guests watch a fish being weighed in at the historic Charter Association Derby Booth. Each year the Charter Association puts up more than \$10,000 in prize money for anglers feeling lucky.

Stop #4: Charter Association Derby Booth on Esplanade - Recreational Fishing: a Century of Pursuit

The tour leads down the Esplanade to the historic Westport Charterboat Association Derby Booth for an overview of recreational and charter boat fishing. The Charter Booth has been operating for over 60 summers. Here, participants hear of the peak of Westport Charter fishing when over 300 charter boats operated out of Westport each summer in the 1960s. Although techniques have changed over time, the Marine Area 2 fishery remains an active and highly regarded fishery with ample fishing opportunity for anglers. While salmon put Westport on the map, albacore tuna, bottom fish, and halibut keep anglers busy from March until October.

Stop #5: Port of Grays Harbor Centennial Viewing Tower - Grays Harbor: Our Place in the Water

The tour concludes as participants climb the Port of Grays Harbor Centennial Tower for an exceptional visual explanation of the South Beach Jetty, North Beach Jetty, Grays Harbor Navigation Channel, and several other critical Aids to Navigation, which together highlight the important history and role of the Corps in Grays Harbor.

While the tour ends at the Centennial Viewing Tower, guests are encouraged to meander their way back to their vehicles at the Main Office, taking time to stop, shop, and eat at the many local businesses and restaurants that line Westhaven Drive.



Tour guests make their way up the Centennial Viewing Tower for a look at the Grays Harbor Navigation Channel and other Corps infrastructure.

A birds-eye view of the Esplanade and Marina District from the Westport Centennial Viewing Tower at the end of the tour.



Westport Business Manager Molly Bold educates tour participants at the top of the Tower to end the Walking Tour.



Timeline:

Given staff and our partner's limited time and resources, especially during the busy summer season, it was imperative we plan early and well. The breakdown of tasks by month is as follows:

<u>April/May:</u>	Evaluate interest in participating from community presenters and partners
<u>June:</u>	Identify and organize key objectives to be communicated; Begin advertising for the tours
<u>July:</u>	Refine agenda, confirm participation from presenters, confirm partnerships with local businesses, begin advertising to community
<u>August/September:</u>	Host Walking Tours; Distribute surveys to participants post-tour; Seek feedback from presenters and partners

5. Outcomes & Evaluation

As a first time effort for the Westport Marina Walking Tours, we knew feedback from our participants, presenters and partners was important. With such a generous amount of time and resources given by our presenters and partners, we followed up quickly seeking feedback from presenters as their input and ideas are critical to ensuring their longterm commitment to the tours.

Examples of feedback from our Tour presenters included:

"If you wanted to take it to the next level maybe a walk down a float to show what a troll boat looks like, what a crab boat looks like."

"Have any child put on a life vest at the life vest station that way they are safe and you are educating at the same time"

"Molly, the tours generated interest and had educational value to the commercial fishing industry and community."

For our Tour attendees we developed an online survey we sent via email the day after the tour. Overall, we had an outstanding response rate around 80% and received not only a lot of compliments, but some great ideas to improve the tours from the attendee's perspective.

Though a first time effort, it is safe to say the Westport Marina Walking Tours were a hit with those who attended. As one participant said *"it was a perfectly paced tour with fascinating information and great speakers along the way. The whole thing, in*

its entirety, was very well done!" If our objective was to educate participants on the diverse nature of the marina, we were successful. *"It makes you see Westport in a totally different light"*, said another Tour guest.

Some of the suggestions we received we received from participants included:

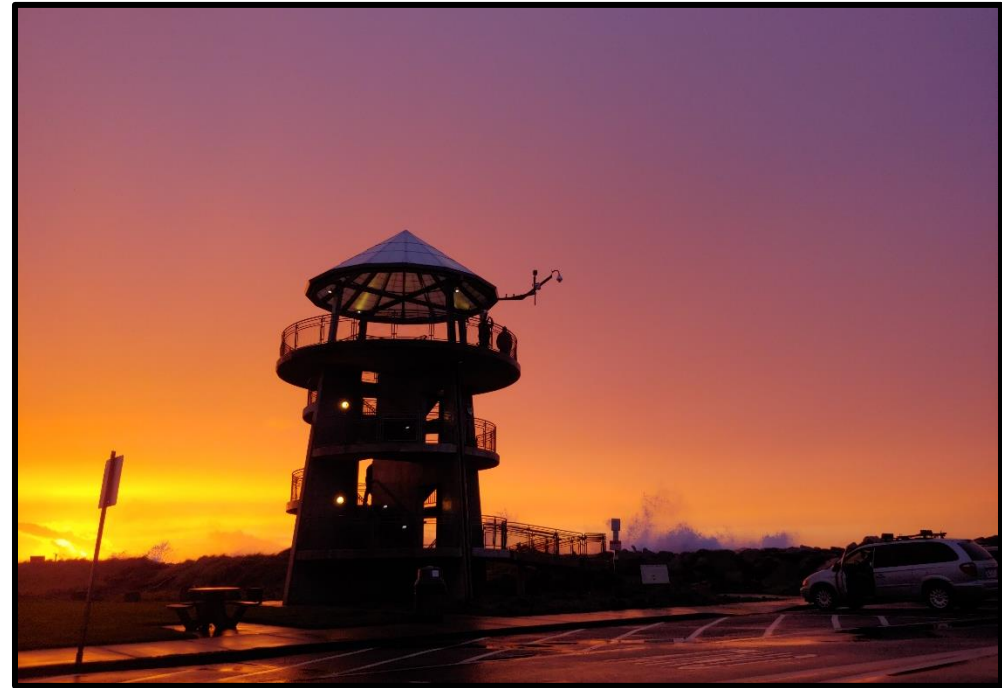
"Would be nice to see some of the canning operations."

"Make them a regular tourists event"

We, of course, plan to do our best to incorporate the feedback given from participants and speakers into our planning process for our next round of tours that could be held later this year, should COVID allow.

Conclusion

The eager feedback we received from everyone involved in the inaugural Westport Walking Tours demonstrates their success and the investment the whole Westport community made to make them possible. We very much appreciate all of our partners and attendees taking the time to make the tours possible and we look forward to expanding and improving them for years to come.



The Westport Centennial Viewing Tower at sunset



Westport Marina

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