



## PORT REPORT - Newsletter from the Port of Friday Harbor

Summer 2025

### Around the Americas

In March, Spring Street Landing was visited on a shake-down cruise by the crew of *One Ocean*, a 48-foot sailboat, that departed Anacortes in early May on a 14-month voyage called *Around the Americas*. It will circumnavigate North and South America, focusing on scientific research, education, and community outreach to raise awareness about ocean health.



Building on Captain Mark Schrader's original 2009–2010 journey, the expedition will compare oceanic changes over the past 15 years.

One of the key projects involves documenting the health and dynamics of kelp forests along the coastlines of North and South America. Collaborators include the University of Victoria, UCLA, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and the University of Washington.

What gives this voyage local significance?

A prime partner is the Skagit Valley College Foundation, which is part of the college, whose lovely satellite campus building is at our airport. In addition, the College's Marine Maintenance Technology students outfitted the boat at their Anacortes facility. You can follow the journey at [oneislandoneocean.com](http://oneislandoneocean.com)

### Port's 75th Anniversary Birthday Bash

The Port prides itself on looking forward, but on Saturday, September 6, from noon to 4:00 pm, we will look back to celebrate our 75th Anniversary by throwing a party for the Island at our main marina. There will be great food, music, games, exhibits, electric boat demonstrations, craft booths, and a beer garden. (You had me at great food!) As the date gets closer, watch for articles and advertising and prepare for a historically good time!

### Music in the Park Celebrates 25 Years



Enjoy music every Saturday in July and August 2-4 PM, at the Port's Waterfront Park – Don't miss this year's lineup of bands on our website: [portfridayharbor.org/summer-weekends-music-in-the-park/](http://portfridayharbor.org/summer-weekends-music-in-the-park/)



## From Executive Director Todd Nicholson

### New Projects Taking Flight at Friday Harbor Regional Airport

Unlike most small airports, our airport is financially self-sustaining without tax or marina revenue support, something we've worked hard to achieve over the last six years.

#### Hanger Improvements

The demolition of the oldest and most dilapidated hangar at the airport, affectionately known as "Dodie's Hangar" for the late, great aviator, Dodie Gann, has made room for a new commercial hangar with two 73' X 81' units planned for completion this August.

This facility is intended to create well-paying aviation trades jobs by expanding the opportunity to have aircraft maintenance done in Friday Harbor. The hangar doors will accommodate use by our typical commercial planes.

#### New Fueling Farm / Electric Charging

Our existing airport fuel is provided from two 10,000-gallon underground tanks that are over 30 years old. This year, we'll complete an above-ground fuel farm which will include secondary containment, and construction of a new fueling apron.

The new facility will maintain general aviation fuel service and add a new capacity to fuel our based and visiting commercial service planes. Once the new fueling facility is in service, we will remove the old underground fuel tanks and begin the conversion of the old fueling apron to an electric plane charging station.

By the end of 2025, construction should be complete on four or more public access Level 2 vehicle chargers, located in the Pilot

Welcome Center parking lot off Mullis Street near Bakery San Juan. These will be in addition to the four DC Fast Chargers installed in the parking area adjacent to the marina office at 204 Front Street.

#### New Port Administration Building Planned

This fall, we anticipate breaking ground for a new port administration building in the southwest portion of the airport near the old Animal Protection Society building. This facility will add administrative offices and a new port commission conference room. Upon completion, it will free up desperately needed space at 204 Front Street for marina operations.



*Airport view of Griffin Bay*

### Succession Planning

Commissioner Barbara Marrett

In my 18 years as a Port Commissioner, the Port has had four executive directors. During these transitions, I've learned the importance of succession planning well in advance of leadership changes.

With this in mind, Port leadership invited Kyle Gropp, our former capital projects manager, to become our deputy director. Kyle's re-hiring gives the Port time to train him in public policy development, grant writing, lease development, staffing, communications, and so much more. Kyle has a history of excellence at the Port and will provide a smooth transition of experience from one generation of leaders to the next.

Our succession plan strengthens the Port's resilience, supports a stable workplace culture, and minimizes disruption. *Welcome back to the Port family Kyle!*



## An Interview with Deputy Director Kyle Gropp

*"I'm a whole lot of horsepower just looking for an opportunity."*

Kyle



Why did you return to work at the Port of Friday Harbor? I love the job. Of all the jobs I have worked over the years, this job has been the most fulfilling. I am very excited to be a part of the leadership team and Port's future.

What do you like best about working at the Port? Creating and maintaining the infrastructure available to the public and building the team that makes it all possible.

Most challenging? The State and Federal regulatory permitting processes.

What did you want to be when you grew up? I dreamed of being the boy from the book "My Side of the Mountain." A boy who lives in a huge hollowed-out tree, with a falcon and a weasel as companions, and learns to survive off the land. However, my teacher scolded me for that answer and insisted I choose a more conventional job. So, to get her off my back, I said I wanted to be a garbage man.

How did you get started in construction? I grew up in Pullman, Washington and started young in the construction industry, working through most of the trades. I became the Dispatch Supervisor at Pullman Transit and later spent 13 years in California, with my last position being the Transportation Systems Supervisor for Placer County.

After this, I decided to pursue a career closer to my home, my family, and return to the Pacific Northwest. Throughout my career, I have always kept a side job related to the trades.

Any hobbies you'd like to share? Boating, fishing, overlanding, rock hounding, wilderness adventure, beach volleyball, live music events, drumming, gardening, cooking, building, and renovating.

What accomplishment at the Port are you most proud of? The stone fireplace at the Jacksons Beach picnic shelter. We used granite boulders sourced from properties around the airport. We split and shaped them to fit around the concrete firebox. Every time I look at that project, I think of my great-uncle Bruce, who taught me to work with stone.

Final thoughts? What brings me the most joy is enhancing community engagement by creating spaces for the public to enjoy. Knowing that my young family will grow up in this amazing community and experience all that the Port of Friday Harbor has to offer.



Kyle's stone firepit in the Jackson Beach shelter

## Staff Accountant Sought

Work in a beautiful location with fun people for a great organization. The Port will be seeking a staff accountant soon. More information will be posted to the Port's website when we are ready to accept applications. Please wait to contact us until after the job listing is posted in August.



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## Business Spotlight: Friday Harbor Seafood



On the central dock of the main marina, Friday Harbor Seafood is getting a facelift and providing wonderful seafood. Besides the beautiful mural of *Salmon Woman*, owner Jay Julius has live crab, great-looking salmon, halibut, and huge scallops. You owe it to yourself to visit.



Commissioner Barbara Marrett, Director Todd Nicholson,  
Commissioners Gibb Black and Rich Goodhart

## Port Receives *Finnie* Award

Port actions “demonstrating exemplary stewardship” were acknowledged by the Stewardship Network of the San Juans during *The Great Island Clean-up*, April 26th. Fun Fact: The Port

was the first business to receive a “Finnie” back in 2008 when the awards program first launched. Other 2025 winners: Bruce Robinson (Individual), Katelynn Rezebek (Youth), and Shona Aiken (Lifetime Achievement).

## July at the Port



*July is when you can ooh and aah at fireworks without leaving your Port moored boat!*

## Creating New Partnerships

The San Juan Islands Museum of Art (SJIMA) generously partnered with the Port to display some artwork from the museum’s extensive Northwest Coast Native art collection in our airport lobby. These pieces, along with many other bold contemporary Indigenous works, are now part of SJIMA’s do-not-miss *Shapeshifters* exhibition, June 13 – September 15, Thursdays – Mondays 11-5, 540 Spring Street.

