

**Port retreat presented a realistic look at the environment of Puget Sound**

By Chris Keuss, Executive Director, the Port of Edmonds

The Port Commissioners and I just finished our annual retreat with the Port's senior staff. In years past we have sometimes stayed here in Edmonds and other times traveled to neighboring marinas. This year we went to the Port of Bremerton. The retreat was both informative and productive.

Most of the emphasis was on environmental matters. The highlight was a "State of the Sound" presentation from a representative of the Puget Sound Action Team, an environmental group charged with defining and implementing the environmental agenda for Puget Sound. The speaker addressed the major factors impacting local marine life. Most of them, unfortunately, were negative.

The briefing was more than a little sobering. Certain marine species are holding stable, but most are not. Of particular interest to us was the decline in the salmon population. Our speaker pointed to an increase in what he called aquatic nuisance species—both plant and animal—that threaten the abundance of our native species, including juvenile salmon.

In response to the seriousness of the situation, during the session just ended the State Legislature combined the [now former] Puget Sound Action Team with a number of other agencies with similar purposes. They created a new super agency to be called the Puget Sound Partnership. Until now, 12 counties, more than 100 cities, 17 tribes, numerous state and federal agencies, and literally hundreds of special purpose governmental units have been responsible for managing the quality of the environment. The new Puget Sound Partnership will bring them all together, hopefully making it easier to make positive environmental changes.

Here at the Port of Edmonds we will be watching the progress of the agency closely. Altering some regulations would have a significant impact on us. For example, how we operate our

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boat workyard. Even today, we are diligently working on ways to meet strict new standards from the Department of Ecology. At the retreat, our Deputy Director led a review of ways we might continue to be a leader in that area.

Retreats such as the one just completed give the Commissioners and senior staff here at the Port an opportunity to look at ways other marinas deal with situations common to us both. Sometimes we also benefit by learning about programs others are employing that we might want to look at.

Here is another item of interest from the retreat—the CEO of the Edmonds’ environmental engineering firm Landau Associates met with us to discuss something that fits perfectly within the Port’s commitment to serving youth: a possible internship where a college student would come here to work with both Landau and the Port on important environmental projects.

All in all, measured by information received and work accomplished, this year’s Port retreat was a very productive one. The Port, the environment and the citizenry will all ultimately benefit from the time invested.

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