



# STATE OF WASHINGTON BOARD OF PILOTAGE COMMISSIONERS

**BPC Mission:** to ensure against the loss of lives, loss of or damage to property and vessels, and to protect the marine environment by maintaining efficient and competent pilotage service on our State's inland waters.

## THE BPC PILOTAGE QUARTERLY

SPRING 2026

### Announcements

#### Exam Updates

The exam process began on April 13 with the Knowledge Test (written) and will continue with Simulator Evaluations the week of April 27.

The BPC would like to thank the pilots who have been working hard behind the scenes alongside the BPC's consultants on exam development.

*We couldn't do this important work without you!*

#### Licensures

Congratulations to newly licensed pilots Captain Lucas Shuler in the PS District and Captain Ryan Campbell in the GH District!!

Captain Lucas Shuler (right) with his son and Chair Tonn.

Captain Ryan Campbell (right) with his son and Chair Tonn.

### Conference Recap

The BPC looks forward to sponsoring and attending various conferences throughout the year.

#### Women on the Water, February 7-10

Greats Lakes Maritime Academy were the proud presenters of the 2026 Women on the Water conference, held at MITAGS in Maryland. BPC Chair Sheri Tonn and Executive Director Jaimie Bever were in attendance for this valuable conference, which brings together maritime academy cadets from all over the country.



Cadets from various maritime academies and Vice Admiral and former USMMA Superintendent Joanna Nunan.

#### Women in Maritime Leadership, March 13-14

Washington state pilotage was well-represented at Cal Poly Maritime Academy's Women in Maritime Leadership Conference. BPC's Marine Environment representative, Dr. Eleanor Kirtley, attended the conference and spoke on the *Future of our Seas: A New Horizon* panel where she was able to share insights into the "evolving future of the world's oceans, from climate challenges and ecosystem preservation to advances in maritime technology", per the conference brochure. Former BPC Pilot representative and Puget Sound pilot Captain Sandy Bendixen spoke about her experience as a woman in a masculine dominated industry on the panel *Beyond the Stereotype: Redefining Femininity in a Digital Maritime Era*. In addition, she and Captain Pat Ninburg, provided valuable one on one time with cadets. Thank you all for attending!



From left: Captain Sandy Bendixen, Eleanor Kirtley, Jolene Hamel, and Captain Pat Ninburg at the WIML conference.

## Puget Sound



### Retirements:

There were no retirements in the first quarter of 2026

### License Upgrades to Unlimited:

Severin Knutsen  
*Congratulations, Commissioner Knutsen!*



### Training Program:

Currently training are Captains Britton, Boullion, Woodworth, Bolton, Butterfield, Aherns, Anderson, and Rogers. Captains Adams, Omdal, and Sullivan will begin training on June 1, 2026.



Pilot Trainee Jason Woodworth (left) and Supervising pilot Chris Rounds (right) at the Intalco dock in Ferndale, WA. Courtesy of Puget Sound Pilots.

## Grays Harbor



### Training Program:

There are currently no trainees in Grays Harbor.

# Tug Escort Rule Effects Assessment

With the [tug escort rulemaking](#) in the rearview mirror, the BPC and Ecology are now getting ready for the next legislative milestone, which is to, by [October 1, 2028](#), and at least every 10 years thereafter, determine whether [updates to the 2025 tug escort](#) rules are necessary. That assessment must include: analysis of the effects of the rule on vessel traffic patterns and oil spill risk in the Salish Sea, analysis of whether experience or forecasted changes to vessel traffic patterns or oil spill risk necessitate an update to the rule, modeling from Ecology's risk model, consultation with the USCG and potentially affected federally recognized Tribes, and may include vessel traffic data, vessel accident and incident data.

At the February meeting of the BPC, the Ecology rule assessment team presented on this work. That presentation can be found on the BPC website [here](#).

Phase & Proposed Timeline	Milestones
<b>Phase 1 – Scoping</b> (Through Summer 2026)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Design approved</li> <li>• Scope of Work approved (ECY and BPC)</li> <li>• Model updates ongoing, exploratory research underway</li> <li>• Communications Plan complete</li> <li>• Formal consultation initiated with Tribes, USCG</li> <li>• Initial Tribal Government and stakeholder workshops, meetings with BPC and others as requested</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2 – Technical Work &amp; Write Up</b> (Summer 2026 – Fall 2027)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule effects assessment and associated model technical updates complete</li> <li>• Written materials defined and underway</li> <li>• Communications strategy ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3 – Decision Support</b> (Summer 2027 – May 2028)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate rule effects assessment results</li> <li>• Facilitated process with BPC on decision to pursue rulemaking</li> <li>• May 1, 2028: Target decision date</li> </ul>

*If you have any questions, please contact BPC Executive Director Jaimie Bever at [jaimie.bever@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:jaimie.bever@wsdot.wa.gov) or ECY Point of Contact Brittany Flittner at [Brittany.flittner@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:Brittany.flittner@ecy.wa.gov)*

# Another Record-Breaking Cruise Season

The Board welcomed Stephanie Jones Stebbins, Port of Seattle Maritime Division Managing Director, to the March 19 Regular Public Meeting. She provided an update regarding the upcoming 2026 cruise season, which will be another record breaker with 330 calls expected. Among the expected vessels are two new Europe-based cruise customers – MSC Cruises and Virgin Voyages. Find the presentation slides [here](#).



Star Princess

- Second vessel in the Sphere-class; sister to Sun Princess
- Launched: October 2025
- Capacity: 4,300 double occupancy guests, 1547 crew
- Shore power-equipped

In addition to the new customers, the Port will welcome, the *STAR PRINCESS*, Seattle's first liquified natural gas (LNG) cruise ship. Seaspan Energy bunkering vessels will provide the refueling service and will be piloted by Puget Sound Pilots, who are currently training for the service.

# Legislative Wrap-up

The 2026 Regular Session of the Washington State Legislature adjourned sine die on March 12. The BPC is happy to share that HB 2436 concerning requirements of oil tankers operation in restricted waters was signed into law on March 5. Find out more about this bill [here](#).

