

# Sense *of the* Symposium

March 25 – 28, 2013 • Tacoma, Washington

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# I Background and Overview

In March 2013, nearly 300 people from a wide range of fields gathered at the Third National Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium in Tacoma, Washington, to share ideas and information about working waterfronts. Coming from all coastal areas of the United States, participants represented the full spectrum of waterfront interests and shared a common concern for working waterfronts large and small. The 2013 symposium built upon ideas and suggestions gleaned from its two predecessors, held in 2007 and 2010.

The following report provides an overview of the symposium and the key issues and lessons learned. The Symposium Host Committee hope that participants and colleagues will use this document to guide further discussions about working waterfronts both in the United States and internationally. And we encourage you to share this information with others.

The first section of this document provides a brief history of the symposium and efforts to establish a network of individuals working on similar challenges throughout the United States. The second section briefly describes the 2013 symposium's participants, structure, and plenary sessions. The third section summarizes the key themes that emerged from the symposium and describes the challenges and opportunities related to each theme. The final section ties together the issues and opportunities and provides a series of recommendations for further research, outreach and education associated with working waterfronts.

## A. *The History of National Working Waterfront and Waterways Symposia*

Recognizing that communities could learn from each other's challenges and successes in addressing water access issues, Virginia Sea Grant, Boat U.S., and other partners hosted the inaugural symposium in Norfolk, Virginia, in May 2007. That first symposium focused on identifying challenges and the ways that communities and industries address them. Its success came partly from recognizing that waterfront challenges, though location-specific, are ubiquitous on all the nation's shores. Though different people have different notions of what "working waterfront" means, all can come together to share resources and solutions. The 2007 participants emphasized the need for continued dialogue and mutual support, and committed themselves to continuing these discussions.

Maine Sea Grant, the Maine Working Waterfront Coalition and other partners hosted the second symposium in Portland, Maine in September 2010. This symposium highlighted local and regional working waterfront access issues, while providing a forum for finding solutions at the national, regional, state and local levels. Participants also identified a need for a national entity to focus on working waterfronts. They agreed

that such an entity should define working waterfronts and waterways broadly and flexibly, to encompass recreation, tourism, commercial fishing, private industry, shipping and trade, and new and emerging uses.

Over the subsequent two-and-a-half years, the National Working Waterfront Network (NWWN) grew out of the conversations started in Portland. And the Network proposed holding the 2013 symposium on the West Coast with the goal of continuing the dialogue while offering new perspectives and fostering regional participation.

## B. *The National Working Waterfront Network*

The mission of NWWN is to increase the capacity of coastal communities and stakeholders to make informed decisions, balance diverse uses, ensure access, and plan for the future of working waterfronts and waterways. The National Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium is an important outreach mechanism for NWWN, and its founding steering committee members participated in planning the third symposium in Tacoma.

Recent working waterfront efforts, including the symposia, identified a need for a central clearinghouse where communities and organizations could find tools to address working waterfront challenges. The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) also recognized the need to document historical trends and economic

### *Founding Steering Committee*

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**Jeff Gabriel**, National Marine Manufacturers Association. At-Large

**Barbara Garrity-Blake**, Adjunct scientist, Duke University Marine Lab, At-Large

**Stephanie Showalter Otts**, National Sea Grant Law Center. Co-chair

**Natalie Springuel**, Maine Sea Grant. Co-chair

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**Kenneth Walker**, Office of Coastal Resource Management, NOAA

**Jack Wigginn**, Urban Harbors Institute

impacts of the conversion of working waterfronts to other uses, and the benefit of providing resources for preserving working waterfront as a key economic drivers. To further these objectives, NWWN, in a collaborative agreement with the EDA, developed the **Sustainable Working Waterfronts Toolkit**. The Toolkit was officially launched at the 2013

symposium and is housed at [www.WaterAccessUS.com](http://www.WaterAccessUS.com). See sample of toolkit below (figure 1).

The website also features a community center where people can ask questions, seek advice, inquire about initiatives or find models that can be replicated elsewhere. Symposium participants were encouraged to use the Toolkit and join the online conversation.

Category	Tools
Policy and Regulation	Building Code, Coastal Zone Management Program, Design Standards, Exaction, Historic Preservation, Litigation, Moratorium, No Net Loss Policy, Police Power, Public Trust Doctrine, Real Estate Disclosure, Special Purpose Political Subdivision, User Fee, Visual Access
Financing	Appropriation, Bond Financing, Dedicated Revenue, Economic Development Entity, Foundation, Grant, Loan, Loan Guarantee Subsidy, Tax Increment Financing, Trade Association
Planning	Action Planning, Business Recruitment Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Disaster Recovery Planning, Growth Management, Harbor Management Plans, Historic Resources Survey, Land Use Planning, Marine Spatial Planning, Six Hats Exercise, Smart Growth, Special Area Management Plan, SWOT Analysis, Waterfront Master Plan
Zoning	Contract Zoning, Form-based Code, Impact Fees, Incentive Zoning, Overlay Zoning, Private Zoning, Shoreland Zoning, Water-Dependent Use, Water-Dependent Use Zoning, Zoning, Zoning Ordinance
Taxation	Ad Valorem Tax, Current Use Taxation, Excise Tax, Income Tax, Property Tax, Real Estate Transfer Tax, Sales Tax, Special Assessment, Special Taxing Districts, Tax Abatement/Deferral, Tax Incentives
Community/Stakeholder Engagement	Branding, Coalition, Conflict Resolution, Focus Group, Initiative, Partnerships, Stakeholder Analysis, Technical Assistance, Visioning Exercise
Mapping, Inventory, Study	Build Out Analysis, Coastal Access Site Inventory, Community Assets, Mapping/Inventory, Economic Analysis/Assessment, Force Field Analysis, Legal Tools Inventory, Legislative Task Force, Marketing Study, Natural Resource Inventory, Needs Assessment Repository, Visual Preference Survey, Working Waterfront Inventory
Land Conservation, Transfer, Acquisition	Acquisition, Compensation, Conservation Easement, Conveyance, Covenant, Deed Restriction, Easement, Eminent Domain, Land Bank, Land Trust, Lease, Liability Waiver, Purchase of Development Rights, Right-of-Way, Transferable Development Rights, Transferable Slip Rights, Working Waterfront Conservancy
Private Agreements	Consideration, Contracting for Access, Installment Contract, Lease-Option Contract, Private Use Agreements, Use Permitting



Figure 1. Elements of the Working Waterfronts Toolkit

# II Symposium At-A-Glance

## A. Participation at the 2013 Symposium

The symposium's 288 participants came from 25 states and four countries. Half came from Washington State (50%). Another quarter came from three states, California (11%), Oregon (8%) and Maine (6%).

The chart (figure 2) below shows participants' wide range of professional affiliations. The majority came from the private sector, including the fishing industry, boat building and private consulting firms. State government and nonprofits represented the next largest groups of participants. See figure 3 below.

## B. Structure of Symposium

The day preceding the symposium was dedicated to field trips, followed by two full days of plenary and breakout sessions. Each of the 36 breakout sessions consisted of a panel speaking to one of seven themes. The final half day included a plenary session and a strategy session.

## C. Breakout Sessions

The full program can be found at [www.workingwaterfronts2013.org](http://www.workingwaterfronts2013.org). Presentations for most of the panels are available for viewing and download.

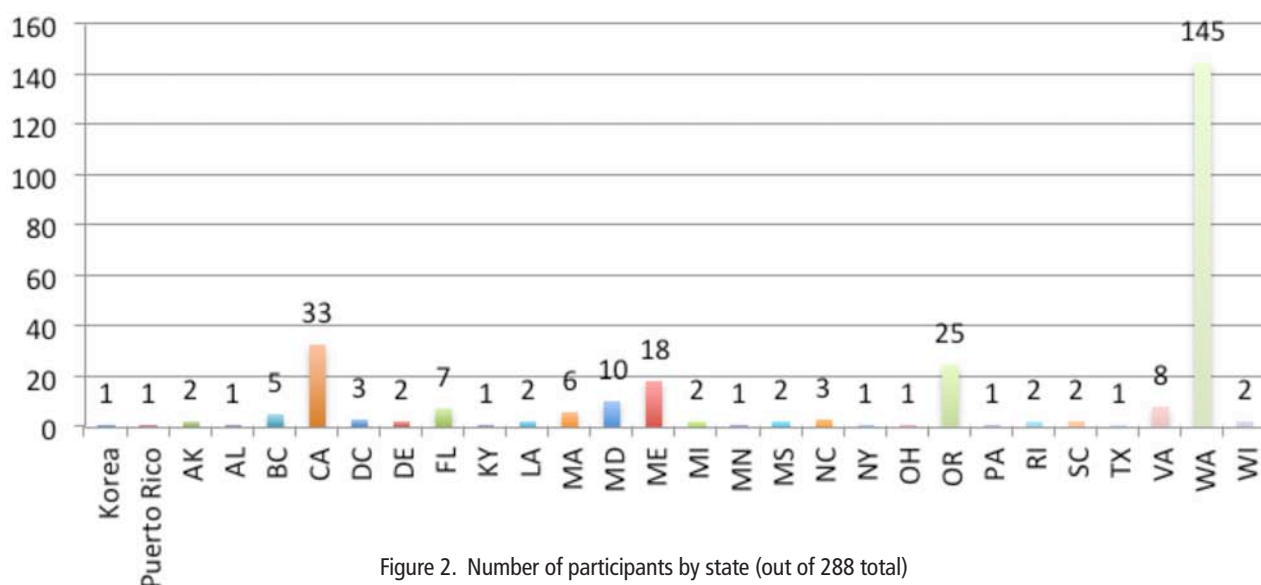


Figure 2. Number of participants by state (out of 288 total)

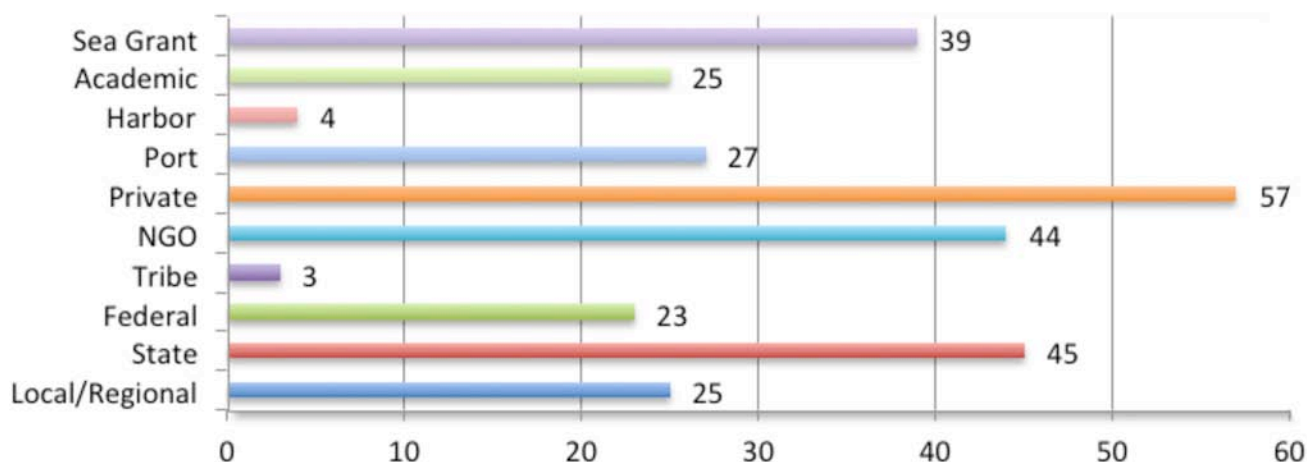


Figure 3. Participants' work affiliations

## D. Plenary Sessions

The plenary sessions brought a diversity of perspectives to the discussion on working waterfronts. For further descriptions of the plenary sessions and videos from each, visit [www.workingwaterfronts2013.org](http://www.workingwaterfronts2013.org).

### Tuesday, March 26

#### *“Are We Ready? Hazard Resilience and What it Means for Working Waterfronts”*

**Moderator:** Ron Sims, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

**Panel Members:** Bill Needelman, Planner, City of Portland, Maine; Eric Holdeman, Principle, Eric Holdeman & Associates; Steve Goldbeck, Chief Deputy Director, San Francisco Bay Conservation & Development Commission; Kevin Ranker, Washington State Senator

This session discussed how to foster vibrant working waterfronts that are also hazard-resilient and climate-ready.

### Wednesday, March 27

#### *“Announcing a Sustainable Working Waterfront Toolkit, from Research to Implementation”*

**Moderator:** Nick Battista, Marine Programs Director, Island Institute

**Panel Members:** Jack Wiggin, Director, Urban Harbors Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston; Bob Swett, Coordinator, Florida Sea Grant Boating and Waterway Planning Program; Lisa Ayers Lawrence, Marine Education Program Leader, Virginia Sea Grant Marine Extension Program; Stephanie Showalter Otts, Director, National Sea Grant Law Center, and NWWN Co-Chair; Hugh Cowperthwaite, Fisheries Project Director, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.; Kristen Grant, Marine Extension Associate with Maine Sea Grant and University of Maine Cooperative Extension

The Sustainable Working Waterfront Toolkit was officially launched in Tacoma. The Working Waterfront Toolkit is available at [www.WaterAccessUS.com](http://www.WaterAccessUS.com).

### Thursday March 28

#### *“National Political Landscape: What Now?”*

**Panel Members:** Kyle Molten, Field Representative for Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (ME-01); Jeffrey Gabriel, Legislative Counsel for the National Marine Manufacturers Association

A divided government, financial problems and budget challenges are compounding the difficulty of gaining support for working waterfronts at the federal level.

#### *Panel: Challenges of Working Waterfronts Nationwide”*

**Moderator:** Dick Vortmann, National Sea Grant Advisory Board and former President, National Steel and Shipbuilding Company

**Panel Members:** Ryck Lydecker, BoatUS, representing recreational boating industry; Peter Philips, Philips Publishing, representing the maritime industrial and commercial fishing industry; Bill Dewey, Taylor Shellfish, representing the shellfish industry; Rob Snyder, Island Institute, representing small communities.

Panelists were drawn from diverse working waterfront sectors and asked to reflect on key trends affecting the sectors they represent.

# III. Key Themes from Symposium

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Throughout the conference, including the plenary sessions and keynote speeches, the 36 panels and discussions, the final morning strategy sessions, and all of the conversations in between, certain topics repeatedly rose to the surface. On the last morning of the symposium, attendees broke into small groups and discussed four topics: Legislation and Policy; Research Priorities; Education and Engagement; and Capacity Building. These strategy sessions helped summarize the previous days' discussions and identified priorities to address in the future. Here are the key themes that emerged from the symposium and strategy sessions:

- Define a shared identity.
- Address the integrated and intersecting nature of working waterfronts.
- Tell the story of the working waterfront.
- Address resilience and how to manage change.

Below we describe the challenges and opportunities related to each of the four themes. The opportunities include actions various communities are taking as well as suggestions from the symposium sessions.

## A. *Define a Shared Identity*

### 1. Current challenges

The character of working waterfronts varies dramatically, from the small fishing pier in a village in Maine to the sprawling industrial waterfront of Seattle. This diversity makes it difficult to articulate a common understanding of working waterfronts, build coalitions, and institute policies to protect and enhance waterfront access.

Throughout the symposium participants identified a need to solidify the definition of working waterfronts while keeping that definition broad enough to allow for flexibility at the state and local levels. Through the use of shared language, individual actions become more compelling and part of a large collective effort.

Participants also emphasized the importance of developing an inclusive identity for the network that serves the needs of its diverse members. For example, numerous conversations revolved around the need to find ways for small waterfront industrial sites, ports and harbors to share the same message with decision-makers as large ports and harbors. Not all

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"There are better opportunities at state and local levels, but at the local level, many people don't know how to talk about 'working waterfronts.' They need help with language, identifying costs and needs."

Jeff Gabriel, National Marine Manufacturers Association

issues will be the same, but these facilities share many challenges (such as the threat of conversion) regardless of scale, and the diverse groups engaging these issues should package them as broadly as possible.

### 2. Opportunities

- Expand upon existing efforts to define working waterfronts. Groups already working on these issues, such as the National Working Waterfront Network, can look inward and start defining and articulating an identity.
- Consider scale and balancing issues of scale; create dialogue and support (e.g., small ports and large ports). Regional and local working waterfront initiatives can explore how to help entities of different sizes share the waterfront for the benefit of the whole community.
- Investigate the various definitions and common identity of working waterfronts. This is an area that would benefit from social science research that addresses the following topics:
  - o Analysis of working waterfront definitions used around the country.
  - o Analysis of areas of shared identity and shared vision of working waterfronts. The results can be used to start developing an overall identity.

## B. *Integrated and Intersecting Nature of Working Waterfronts*

### 1. Current challenges

Working waterfronts connect with many issues in coastal regions, though sometimes these connections go unrecognized. Throughout the conference, participants frequently discussed the need to integrate working waterfront issues with existing efforts on related coastal issues, while creating new partnerships that will help move working waterfront issues forward.

Participants discussed how to better integrate policy efforts among different sectors currently engaged in working waterfront issues, and how to involve those sectors that are not as involved or not so aware of their relationship to the waterfront. For example, the shellfish industry could join with the boat-building industry to address access issues. There are many groups addressing waterfront issues from different perspectives, such as government agencies and academic researchers. However, these efforts are not always well integrated. In order to effectively address issues facing working waterfronts, existing partnerships must be strengthened, and new partners must be engaged.

Participants identified the following areas where different working waterfront groups' concerns intersect:

- Concern about ensuring access to the waterfront is both a land-based and a water-based issue. On land, working waterfronts compete for prime real estate with residential uses. On the water, access may be impaired if channels are not dredged. Individuals and groups working to address land-based conflicts, such as conversion to non-water-dependent uses, should strive to better coordinate efforts with individuals and organizations working to address water-based conflicts, such as the lack of funds to dredge small harbors.
- Highways, railroads and access to markets are critical assets that affect working waterfronts, and should be considered in all discussions of those waterfronts. Trade associations and businesses that rely upon goods being transported might also be considered.
- Environmental and infrastructure needs often collide at the waterfront. Finding ways to balance them is important.
- Marine spatial planning and land use planning are often done in isolation from each other, even in places such as working waterfronts where land and water uses intersect. There are opportunities to improve these connections.

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“Fishermen can’t be the only ones saying they’re important. They need other community members to say that the fishermen are important to the community.”

Fisherman participant, 2013 Symposium

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Given all these differences, it is important to maintain flexibility and respect for each other’s goals and objectives. Working together, while at the same time recognizing the importance of differences in size, scale, use and location, is critical.

## 2. Opportunities

- Look to other industry sectors where multiple issues intersect to see how to address shared issues (e.g., agriculture, forestry).
- Identify opportunities to increase university research on topics associated with working waterfronts. Many academic fields research topics related to working waterfronts, but they do not necessarily define their work as related to working waterfronts, or consider the research questions that would most advance working waterfront needs. Relevant disciplines include public policy and public affairs, sociology, anthropology, economics, history, architecture, engineering, design, urban planning, law, marine ecology and oceanography. For example, specific legal research needs include:
  - o Parts of various existing laws, such as the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the Coastal Zone Management Act, already apply to working waterfronts. How can they be used or expanded to address the needs of working waterfronts?
  - o Elements of the working waterfront agenda can be incorporated into smaller federal bills addressing related issues, instead of one large bill.
  - o State-level efforts can review existing laws, how water-dependent uses are supported and defined, and how permitting could be consolidated.
- Find ways to link or connect with various disciplines that may not always be involved in working waterfront issues to share information. For example, participate in regional planning conferences to present on relevant issues associated with working waterfronts.
- Expand the people and sectors engaged in working waterfront issues to better reflect the integrative nature of working waterways and waterfronts. Starting with types of integration discussed above –marine spatial planning and land use planning, land access and water access, land-based and water-based transportation, marine environmental protection and upland infrastructure needs – find ways to connect those interests.
- Focus on small projects that will start to leverage larger efforts; change starts with small example projects. Symposium participants suggested the need to “start small with a pilot project and find and present success stories.” This is a three-fold need: 1) find opportunities to develop small pilot projects to create momentum, show success and build partnerships; 2) make sure the results of these small projects are made available to policy makers and waterfront advocates elsewhere; and 3) use them to create partnerships, leverage larger projects, etc.
- Look for innovative ways to expand partnerships, opportunities and problem-solving approaches for working waterfronts. Identify partnerships and involve the community early and often. Working waterfront issues span many different audiences and industry sectors, making partnerships very important. This happens only after various intersecting interests have been made aware of the issues and have learned to talk about them in the same way.
- Disseminate existing information and tools to others around the country. The Sustainable Working Waterfronts Toolkit is an example of how the network is trying to address this need.



## C. *Tell the Story of the Working Waterfront*

### 1. Current challenges

Stories about people and places make issues personal and relevant. Symposium participants expressed a need to improve the ability to tell stories about working waterways and waterfronts. However, the multifaceted nature of working waterfronts and resulting difficulty of defining a shared identity complicate attempts to tell coherent and comprehensive stories.

A central challenge for working waterfronts is a lack of public awareness of their value to communities. For example, industrial waterfronts are often hidden from view, so citizens and community leaders do not understand the changes unfolding there. Stories of the people who make their living on those waterfronts can make an enormous difference in support.

Symposium participants also noted tensions around the future of working waterfronts, between preserving the working waterfront heritage and developing new uses. Exploring a waterfront community's heritage can help that community define the future it would like to see for its waterfront.

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"People don't have a cultural connection, they can't 'see' the [maritime] activity the way they can farms, for example. And this lack of understanding often gets in the way of support for our working waterfronts."

Peter Phillips, Philips  
Publishing Group,  
March 28 Plenary Session

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Finally, the physical geography of waterfronts as thresholds between land and water requires multiple perspectives. Parallel stories about longshoremen and fishermen, for example, can help put a human face on waterfront industries.

### 2. Opportunities

- Use National Working Waterfront Network website to catalogue stories. The National Working Waterfront Network has compiled a series of working waterfront case studies ([www.wateraccessus.com/cslist.cfm](http://www.wateraccessus.com/cslist.cfm)). More stories could be added to this site and shared across platforms. For example, recent NWWN research on economic impacts of waterfronts could also be translated for different audiences. The existing case studies can be packaged in new ways, to reach diverse audiences, such as videos.
- Make stories personal and human, local, understandable and useful.
- Combine multiple ways of telling the story of working waterfronts, to create a sense of shared identity while reaching multiple audiences (e.g., legislators, the local public, seasonal visitors). For example, advocates in Seattle found both cultural and economic arguments for preserving the city's Fishermen's Terminal, from the tradition of net making to upscale seafood restaurants. Similarly, there may be social and economic consequences to rebuilding fish stocks and the commercial-fishing waterfronts associated with them. For historic waterfronts, multiple perspectives would include stories not only about the past but about the social, economic and cultural legacy it has bequeathed us, informing our vision of the future.
- Use differing mechanisms and creative approaches to reach diverse audiences, such as tours of the working waterfront, YouTube videos, classroom education modules, museums, art exhibits, installations, performances, social marketing and regional meetings.
- Research:
  - o Identify opportunities for research within diverse fields such as geography, planning and ecology.
  - o Conduct public opinion polling and social science research on knowledge and values associated with working waterfronts. The results will identify audiences and inform message development.
  - o Develop economic data on all working waterfronts and associated interest groups.
  - o Expand research into applied academic fields such as architecture, engineering, design and law.
  - o Continue to inventory and evaluate exemplary policies, pilot projects, legislation, etc.

## D. Resilience and Dealing with Change

### 1. Current challenges

Physical and social changes are affecting working waterfronts and waterways, sometimes in unprecedented ways. Climate change-related factors such as sea-level rise and storm surges directly affect waterfront infrastructure and security. The changing climate also has indirect effects, including shifts in fish populations and altered shipping routes caused by arctic ice melt.

Gentrification meanwhile looms over many waterfronts and waterfront industries are undergoing their own transitions. Some will age, decline, and even disappear, while new industries (both known and unknown today) will emerge. These changes are creating a very different waterfront job market, demanding different training to serve new industries.

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“Does it take a catastrophe to instigate people to change? The panel overwhelmingly responded, ‘YES.’ Crisis creates community.”

Ron Simms, President of Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Team, March 26 Plenary Session

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### 2. Opportunities

- Many maritime industry sectors need workers, but these workers need new skills. More effort needs to go into developing training programs to address the new types of jobs on the waterfront. This may require more public-private partnerships, such as those that have been explored between community colleges and maritime industries in Washington State.
- Research is needed into the impacts of change, the resilience of waterfront infrastructure, and science-based design of new infrastructure.
- Use available resources to design for sea level rise in waterfront planning. Many organizations have the expertise and tools to assist at in planning at the local and state levels.
- Participate in local marine spatial planning efforts. Ensure that these efforts reflect changes in industry and other uses and the needs of working waterfronts.
- Let science inform design. Waterfront industries and development can benefit from better integration of science and design from the early stages of project planning.

# IV. Looking to the Future

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This section synthesizes the opportunities identified at the symposium highlighted in Section III above with recommendations from the Sustainable Working Waterfronts Toolkit, the project federally funded by the EDA and described in Section I. The resulting synthesis provides a blueprint for action. The Toolkit recommends, and this report affirms, three overarching findings:

1. Working waterfronts are economically and culturally important.
2. Working waterfronts are changing, as are the threats they face.
3. Working waterfronts are difficult to define and measure, and thus to protect.

These three categories of recommendations capture all four of the themes identified in the previous section and build upon and clarify those opportunities identified during the 2013 National Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium.

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## 1. Working waterfronts are economically and culturally important.

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### Recommendations

- Maintain the nation's inventory of working waterfronts to meet the current and emerging needs of waterfront uses.
- Recognize the importance of working waterfronts at the highest levels of government in policies and guidance documents, and in federal actions that affect working waterfronts.
- Identify and explore the cultural aspects of working waterfronts and their role in coastal communities.
- Identify tools used in other place-based industries that could serve as models for federal and state support for working waterfront preservation at the local level.
- Facilitate the sharing of information, ideas and best practices about working waterfront preservation.

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## 2. Working waterfronts are changing, as are the threats they face.

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### Recommendations

- Recognize the inability of local communities to address large-scale drivers of change, and focus federal efforts on minimizing impacts on working waterfronts.
- Incentivize the return of non-working waterfront land, particularly historic working waterfront infrastructure, to working uses.
- Develop a body of literature that analyzes the best government policies to protect current uses and the effectiveness of current programs, such as current use taxation, and identify best practices for implementation.
- Identify strategies for revitalizing or protecting working waterfronts that are no longer in use but have potential future uses.
- Continue researching drivers of change on the nation's working waterfronts, especially small-scale waterfronts.
- Develop a better understanding of the impacts of environmental forces, such as storms and climate change, on working waterfront infrastructure.
- Facilitate a national conversation about the shifting nature of the changes affecting working waterfronts and the best ways to address them.

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## 3. Working waterfronts are difficult to define and measure, and thus to protect.

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### Recommendations

- Develop a consensus definition of working waterfronts to guide federal, state and local decision-making, policy and programs.
- Establish working waterfronts as a national priority and develop a mechanism to ensure coordination between federal agencies.
- Encourage use of underutilized financing mechanisms and/or develop new mechanisms to finance investment in existing working-waterfront infrastructure.
- Identify key socioeconomic metrics for small-scale working waterfronts and develop systems to compile and track data on them.

- Encourage the broadening of existing funding sources, both public and private, and other support programs to include working waterfronts.
- Encourage the publication of academic articles on working waterfront topics by identifying research needs, approaching potential authors, and sponsoring article-generating panels at conferences and workshops.

## Final Thoughts

Participants from the 2013 National Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium are encouraged to become engaged – at any level – in these issues. Just as the 2010 Symposium provided the impetus for action that resulted in the creation of the National Working Waterfront Network and Toolkit, this report presents ample opportunities for carrying forward the dialogue and taking action to preserve, promote and protect our working waterfronts.

Please take recommendations from this document and go forward in partnership with others to pursue these ideas. Stay connected through the National Working Waterfronts Network website. The Symposium Steering Committee looks forward to seeing everyone at the next National Working Waterfronts Symposium.

We are grateful to the sponsors of the 2013 National Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium and look forward to future collaboration.

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