



Port of Grays Harbor

On Washington's Pacific Coast

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For Immediate Release

Port of Grays Harbor Executive Director Gary Nelson announces retirement

ABERDEEN, WASH. – After nearly 24 years of attracting private investment, expanding Port facilities, and increasing vessel calls, cargo volumes and jobs for Grays Harbor, Port of Grays Harbor Executive Director Gary Nelson has announced he will retire on March 31, 2024.

Mr. Nelson was hired as Executive Director in April 2000, when the Port had only 21 vessel calls handling 85,000 metric tons of cargo with an operating budget of just \$5.2 million. In contrast, the Port is projected to have 100 vessel calls and handle more than 3 million metric tons of cargo with an operating budget of nearly \$40 million by the end of 2023. During his tenure, the Port has seen more than \$275 million in private investment throughout its facilities. In addition, the Port has diversified to include operations at the Satsop Business Park and recreational facilities at Friends Landing. Mr. Nelson's leadership has secured millions of dollars from federal and state grant sources to modernize and make improvements to the Westport Marina, Marine Terminals and Bowerman Airport, positioning the Port to accommodate current and future economic growth.



Port of Grays Harbor Executive Director Gary Nelson announced his retirement after leading the Port since 2000.

A nationally recognized industry leader, Mr. Nelson served as Chairman of the American Association of Port Authorities from 2019 to 2020, Chaired the Washington Public Ports Association Legislative Committee and served on the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association

Executive Board. He also oversaw the critical completion of Deeper Draft, the deepening of the Grays Harbor Navigation Channel to its congressionally authorized depth.

“All good things must come to an end,” stated Port of Grays Harbor Executive Director Gary Nelson. “I have always been taught to leave a place better than you found it and I would like to think that is the case both at the Port and the community as a whole. I look forward to watching the Port continue to grow in the coming years with several exciting projects on the horizon.”

“The Port of Grays Harbor has achieved historic levels of growth and success thanks to Mr. Nelson’s vision and leadership,” shared Port of Grays Harbor Commission President Tom Quigg. “For the last 23 years, Gary has laid the foundation for the Port and its customers to continue to thrive for decades to come. Just as importantly, he has brought together and cultivated a talented staff that will ensure progress continues. Our heart-felt thanks to Mr. Nelson for his years of service, leadership, and dedication. We wish him and his family all the best in his well-deserved retirement.”

The Port Commission will be considering leadership succession options as laid out by Director of Finance & Administration Mike Folkers at the November Commission meeting. The Port Commission will review whether to recruit a new Executive Director using an outside firm, recruit a new Executive Director using Port staff or promote an Executive Director from within the Port’s existing leadership. The timing of the decision will depend upon which option the Commission chooses.

Founded in 1911, the Port of Grays Harbor is one of Washington State’s oldest port districts and Washington’s only deep-water port located directly on the Pacific Ocean. The Port of Grays Harbor operates 4 deep-water marine terminals, the Westport Marina, Bowerman Airport, Grays Harbor ship assist services, numerous public waterfront access facilities, in addition to industrial and business parks throughout the County. The addition of Satsop Business Park increased the Port’s properties to more than 1,000 acres of industrial properties and an additional 1,200 acres of sustainably managed forestland. Strategically located midway between Seattle and Portland and less than 1 ½ hours from open sea, the Port of Grays Harbor

provides businesses a diverse portfolio of facilities. More information on the Port of Grays Harbor's facilities and operations is available at portofgraysharbor.com or satsop.com.

Port of Grays Harbor Commissioners Tom Quigg and Phil Papac joined Executive Director Gary Nelson in celebrating Satsop Business Park General Manager Alissa Shay's completion of the Port Professional Manager program.