

## 2010 Dry Dock Clarification

The Department has been receiving emails and phone calls regarding the upcoming July dry dock. It appears that there is some confusion as to why the 2010 dry dock has been changed from the usual month of September.

On June 8, 2010 the Whatcom Chief began taking on water through a hole in the stern tube in the hull. The US Coast Guard was notified of the issue and they immediately ordered the Whatcom Chief to dry dock to repair the stern tube. While the Chief was docked in Bellingham harbor two important things happened. First, Whatcom County was able to make a temporary US Coast Guard approved repair to the stern tube. Second, it was determined that additional time would be needed to complete the design and fabrication of new stern tubes.

The US Coast Guard very graciously approved our temporary repair of the stern tube and gave Whatcom County 30 days to get the Whatcom Chief into dry dock to complete the permanent repair of the stern tube. The Department has since been informed by the design firm that it will take over 12 days to complete the permanent repairs to the stern tube. Whatcom County then contacted the US Coast Guard to see if we could also combine the most needed usual repairs that had been originally scheduled for the September dry dock. Again the US Coast Guard graciously agreed to allow us a little extra time to develop a new dry dock bid that combined the permanent stern tube repairs and the most important work needed to be completed from the routine September dry dock. By allowing Whatcom County to combine the emergency dry dock with the routine dry dock work, there will not be a need for an additional service outage in September for dry dock purposes.

The US Coast Guard has full authority to stop all operations of the Whatcom Chief until all stern tube repairs are completed. The Public Works Department has worked with the Coast Guard to develop a plan that incorporates continued emphasis on safety, continued operation of the Whatcom Chief, and provides an opportunity to seek competitive bids for the repair work.

The alternative would have been to cease all operations, work with the first ship yard available, and pay whatever the cost would be. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed and a plan was developed to complete all the repairs in the most cost-effective manner. I am very proud of the professional manner in which this entire event has been managed by the Public Works Department. That professionalism is demonstrated daily and is also reflected in the trust and cooperation that the Department received from the US Coast Guard.

The unscheduled dry dock is inconvenient for everyone – including the Public Works Department. The Public Works staff is committed to providing the same level of service at this dry dock that a normal dry dock would include, regardless of the time constraints. Requests for additional services, and associated costs, are being reviewed but will not likely be provided due to budget constraints

I hope this communication provides additional details regarding the current status of the Whatcom Chief and pending dry dock needs. Thank you to everyone for their cooperation and patience.

The Whatcom County Public Works Department would like to wish everyone a safe and enjoyable holiday weekend.

Frank Abart, Director.