



LOWER COLUMBIA REGION  
HARBOR SAFETY COMMITTEE

## Lower Columbia Region Harbor Safety Committee General Membership Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 14, 2026, | 1415-1545hrs  
Clean Rivers Cooperative & Virtual vis MS Teams

### **Officers:**

**Chair:** Larry Landgraver, *Port of Longview*

**Vice Chair:** Ross McDonald, *Sause Bros.*

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Carl Bertapelle, *Merchants Exchange*

**Association Account Specialist:** Brianna Derham, *Merchants Exchange*

1. Welcome
  - a. The meeting was called to order at 1416 hours by Larry Landgraver.
2. Safety Moment
  - a. Presented by Ben Robinson, Clean Rivers Cooperative.
3. Additions/Corrections to Agenda
  - a. No additions or corrections were offered.
4. Meeting Minutes from November 12, 2025
  - a. The minutes of November 12, 2025, General Membership Meeting were presented.
  - b. No amendments were offered.
5. Board of Directors Meeting Update
  - a. The board reviewed the minutes of the November 12, 2025, Board of Directors meeting. There was one correction noted. The board approved the corrected minutes of the November 12, 2025, Board of Directors meeting.
  - b. The financial reports for November and December 2025 were reviewed and approved.
  - c. The board unanimously approved the nomination of Richard Vincent to represent the Port of Portland as an active member of the Board of Directors.
  - d. The board approved an addendum to the service agreement between the Lower Columbia Region Harbor Safety Committee and the Exchange.
6. Standing Subcommittee Assignments & Discussions:



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- a. Membership Outreach Subcommittee (Carl Bertapelle)
  - i. Carl Bertapelle welcomed two new members to the committee: Diversified Marine Inc. and Global Diving and Salvage.
  
- b. Navigation Subcommittee (Capt. Steve Ackerman/Capt. Jeremy Nielsen)
  - i. Captain Ackerman and Captain Nielsen led the Navigation Subcommittee discussion on the following:
    1. Fishing Vessel Lighting & Channel Safety: Ongoing hazards were reported involving fishing vessels operating with bright deck lights that obscure running lights, making vessel aspect and movement difficult to determine. Many vessels are transiting in and out of the navigational channel without monitoring radio communications, creating significant safety concerns during peak crabbing activity and weather windows.
    2. River Conditions & Seasonal Outlook: Limited snowpack may result in lower river levels later in the year, potentially affecting navigation and dredging needs. Recent years have benefited from adequate water levels and consistent Corps dredging, but conditions this year may present challenges.
    3. Wind-Energy Project Cargoes: New wind-energy projects are expected to increase shipments of large components. The committee is monitoring these developments to ensure visibility, safety, and vessel-grid alignment standards are maintained.
    4. Air Gap Sensors: Washington State has withdrawn previously allocated funding for air gap sensors on the Astoria–Megler and Lewis and Clark Bridge, despite extensive industry advocacy. This decision conflicts with recent National Harbor Safety Committee recommendations related to infrastructure protection following national bridge incidents.
    5. Longview Channel Realignment: The Army Corps has completed dredging for the new alignment; however, the project remains



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delayed pending Coast Guard action. Meetings with District leadership are scheduled to determine the cause of the holdup.

6. Vancouver Lower Buoy One: The stern buoy was struck and damaged by a tugboat and is currently out of service. The buoy is an important staging location for deep-draft vessels, and its loss reduces available operational space. Repairs are planned.
  7. National Harbor Safety Committee Feedback: A recommendation was made for the committee to provide formal feedback outlining local efforts to protect critical infrastructure, as requested in recent national guidance.
- c. Harbor Safety Plan Subcommittee (Ross McDonald)
    - i. Ross reported that the committee's Dead Ship Tow Policy, which was rewritten and approved in 2023, does not match the version currently posted on the website. The discrepancy will be corrected to ensure the online policy reflects the approved language.
7. Regular Committee Reports & Agency Updates
    - a. Columbia River Bar Pilots Updates
      - i. No updates.
    - b. Columbia River Pilots Updates
      - i. A safety update was provided by Captain Nielsen regarding a recent fatal pilot-transfer incident in St. Andrews Bay, Florida, marking the fourth pilot death in the United States in the past four years. The committee was reminded of the inherent risks involved in pilot transfers and the importance of strict adherence to safety standards. With approximately 1,200 pilots nationwide, 60 of whom operate on the Columbia River, the incident underscores ongoing concerns about equipment reliability and compliance.
      - ii. International efforts through the IMO are underway to require mandatory replacement of pilot ladders three years after manufacture, due to widespread issues with deteriorated or non-compliant ladders. However, these requirements are not expected to take effect for another two years.



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- iii. Members were urged to ensure that all gangways, ladders, and transfer equipment meet regulatory standards. Pilots noted they will increasingly refuse to board vessels that do not provide compliant and safe transfer arrangements. The committee emphasized the shared responsibility among regulators, ports, agents, and vessel operators to enforce these standards and prevent further incidents.
- c. MARAD – West Coast Update (Xochitl Castaneda-virtually)
- i. Xochitl Castaneda (MARAD) provided an update on federal grant programs. PIDP award announcements are expected in mid-February, though the timeline may shift. A placeholder PIDP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was issued in December; the full NOFO will be republished at a later date, after which applicants will have 120 days to submit applications. The application portal is not yet active.
  - ii. She also noted that the BUILD grant program will close at the end of February and encouraged interested applicants to contact her for assistance in strengthening submissions.
  - iii. Castaneda reminded members of the upcoming National Harbor Safety Committee meeting in Seattle in March, which will include a focus on the Columbia River. Larry from the Port of Longview will serve as one of the presenters.
  - iv. Further discussion ensued.
- d. US Army Corps of Engineers Update (Casey O'Donnell)
- i. No report.
- e. NOAA – Office of Coast Survey Update (Laura Pagano-virtually)
- i. John Dasler of David Evans and Associates, Inc. provided an update in the absence of Laura Pagano (NOAA). Survey work on the Columbia River is nearing completion, with some vessels still operating in the estuary. Several Dangers to Navigation (DTONs) have been identified and forwarded to NOAA for immediate chart updates; full survey data will take additional time to process into updated ENC's.
  - ii. The team will resurvey the recently dredged rock pile area to ensure it does not appear on new charts, and will also resurvey Terminal 6 following dredging to provide current depth information.



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- iii. Three submerged vehicles were located near Ross Island; as in previous surveys, Multnomah County Sheriff's Office will be notified for diver inspection.
  - iv. Coordination continues with bar and river pilots regarding bridge clearance information, including updated pick-rep data for the Astoria–Megler Bridge and upcoming outreach for additional bridges.
  - v. Survey crews will also return to several terminals where ships previously prevented laser-scan data collection. Ports—including Longview, Vancouver, and others—offered to coordinate vessel schedules to allow access for scanning.
- f. United States Coast Guard – Sector Columbia River Update (USCG Personnel)
- i. The Coast Guard provided an update on upcoming maritime cybersecurity regulations taking effect January 16. These requirements will apply to all U.S.-flag vessels, Outer Continental Shelf facilities, and MTSA-regulated facilities, with an emphasis on cybersecurity training for personnel with security responsibilities. Members were encouraged to contact the Coast Guard office for assistance in understanding or implementing the new requirements.
  - ii. The Coast Guard also highlighted the upcoming National Harbor Safety Committee meeting in Seattle at the end of March and noted recent NTSB reports related to the Dali and Francis Scott Key Bridge incidents, which were shared with all Harbor Safety Committees in the region.
  - iii. In response to concerns raised about commercial fishing vessel lighting and navigation hazards, the Coast Guard will relay this information to inspectors who regularly engage with fishing vessel operators.
8. New Business
- a. 2026 Regional Conference – Newport, OR – July 8, 2026
    - i. Carl Bertapelle provided an update on the Regional Conference that will be held at the Hatfield Science Center.
    - ii. The Regional Conference Task Force is scheduled to meet this month.
    - iii. Additional conference updates are expected to be distributed in April–May.
  - b. 2026 National Conference
    - i. Ross McDonald reported strong interest in the upcoming National Harbor Safety Conference. As of last week's registration, 94 general attendees



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and 114 Coast Guard personnel are registered. Organizers are tracking attendance by Harbor Safety Committee affiliation; the Lone Star HSC currently leads participation.

- ii. Ross noted that at least four representatives from the Lower Columbia Region HSC are already planning to attend, with additional registrations expected. Members were encouraged to include their HSC affiliation when registering to ensure accurate representation.
  - c. Carl Bertapelle reported that the Lower Columbia Region HSC received an email from a concerned citizen regarding light pollution from the Anchorage in Skamokawa. Captain Nielsen noted that he also received the message and responded to the individual.
  - d. Next meeting March 11, 2026 – Portland Spirit
    - i. Larry Landgraver updated that the next meeting will be on March 11, 2026, at the Portland Spirit.
    - ii. Directions and parking information will be shared in advance.
9. Presentation by Jim Merten, CIV USCG SEC COL RIVER (USA) – Salvage and Maritime Fire Fighting
- a. Jim Merten delivered a presentation on Salvage and Marine Firefighting, highlighting recent case examples including the Protector Alpha, the Golden Ray, and the Grande Costa d’Avorio. He also outlined the purpose and structure of the Salvage and Marine Firefighting Subcommittee, reviewed its initial work plan and key projects, and discussed ways the Harbor Safety Committee can support these efforts.
10. Good of the Order
- a. Jon Dasler reported that he has been in communication with Captain Greenway at NOAA regarding the release of previously delayed travel funds. Although the funding had initially been denied, it now appears to be moving forward, allowing NOAA to plan an in-person outreach visit with Columbia River stakeholders. Coordination for this visit will occur with PNWA and Kate. He expressed appreciation for the Harbor Safety Committee’s support in advancing this outreach effort during a period of funding uncertainty.



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11. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 1511 hours.