

# Maritime program aims to open satellite skills center

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Port Townsend High School's Maritime Career and Technical Education program continues to expand, prompting the Port Townsend School District and the West Sound Technical Skills Center to propose a satellite skills center to house a Maritime Academy half-day program for the 2019-20 school year.

PTHS Maritime CTE instructor Kelley Watson believes a Port Townsend Maritime Academy satellite would increase students' access to "high-wage, high-demand" jobs in the sector through rigorous, hands-on, cross-credited education that would partner with local nonprofit organizations to create "a model program" for public school maritime training in Washington state.

The proposed model would devote 2 1/2 hours of daily instruction, for a total of 540 hours of annual instruction, to increase students' skills, knowledge and safety certifications, either to enter the "underway" maritime workforce, or to be strong maritime academy candidates.

Watson said the West Sound Technical Skills Center, located in Bremerton, moved to approve the satellite skills center this month after the Port Townsend School Board did so last November. That leaves the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to conduct a feasibility study.

"These would be dual-credit earning courses, between CTE and academic," Watson said. "It would be open to students from Port Townsend, Chimacum and Quilcene, getting them onto the water as often as possible, in addition to subjecting them to safety training simulations."

Besides affording students sea time on board a variety of vessels, the satellite skills center is intended to earn those students entry-level U.S. Coast Guard certifications and to increase their opportunities for internships through local maritime industries and educational nonprofits.

Watson is part of an advisory committee that also includes Jake Beattie, executive director of the Northwest Maritime Center of Port Townsend, whom Watson credited as a valued partner of the PTHS Maritime CTE program along with the Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building.

"A curriculum has been developed and submitted to Olympia, so we should know by this spring," Watson said.

Watson added maritime jobs account for 11 percent of direct jobs in Jefferson County, with 19 percent of the



Kelley Watson, instructor of Port Townsend High School's Maritime Career and Technical Education program, leads her students in a hands-on lesson in marine trades and boatbuilding. *Leader photo by Kirk Boxleitner*

jobs in the county generated as a result of the region's maritime cluster.

Although the state currently does not offer a single year-long underway maritime sector-focused skills center program at any school campus, the Port Townsend School District is in its fifth year of offering vessel operations classes through the PTHS CTE department.

This program has since expanded to include summer Adventures at Sea programs, a Workforce Development Grant-funded Schooner School program, and summer internships on board the schooners Martha and Adventuress.

"Our Maritime CTE program only began in 2014, but a number of its graduates have already entered additional maritime training and the maritime industry," Watson said.

Watson said a \$36,000 Carl Perkins Reserve Grant recently made it possible for the PTHS Maritime CTE program to acquire a fleet of six 10-foot inflatable vessels complete with outboard motors, which they plan to use for lessons this spring.

Watson said she felt galvanized to attend the Washington Maritime Blue rollout event with two of her students in Seattle on Jan. 8. That's where they

met Gov. Jay Inslee as he and the state's maritime advisory committee addressed the state's course toward a "blue economy" by 2050.

This winter and coming spring will be busy for Watson's students, who will start winter maintenance with the Northwest Maritime Center and Schooner Adventuress before the end of January.

"We're making stand-up paddleboards in marine trades and boatbuilding and doing first aid in vessel operations after we did vessel safety this fall," Watson said. "We'll be running an Alaska Marine Safety Education Association vessel safety training course for youth at the Northwest Maritime Center this spring."

Jenna Hiegel, a PTHS sophomore, is in her second year of Maritime CTE, currently studying vessel operations after interning on board the Martha.

Hiegel is considering enrolling in the California State University Maritime Academy, with a possible focus on oceanography or maritime transportation. She wants to stay sailing rather than go to the industrial side of the maritime sector.

"I'm just not a homebody," Hiegel said. "A desk job doesn't suit me at all."

Even though Hiegel had been on the water before, she had no idea of the breadth of the maritime industry, or its employment opportunities, prior to taking Watson's classes.

"My parents are kayakers, and I grew up around the water, so I had a bit of a head start," Hiegel said. "But Kelley prepares us for real jobs in the field. I've gained resources, people to talk to, and hands-on experience through this course."

Hiegel was one of two students to accompany Watson to the Washington Maritime Blue event, and she hopes to see more sponsorship and internship opportunities emerge through local industry as a result.

Fellow PTHS sophomore Odin Smith also interned on board Martha and is enrolled in the Maritime CTE marine trades and boatbuilding course after completing vessel operations last year.

"Between the curriculum and the nice, expensive tools we have access to here, we're getting an education that would cost thousands of dollars on our own," Smith said.

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The sun begins to set at  
Point Hudson.  
Leader photo by Lily Haight

# Wintering: Port Townsend offers opportunities

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## On the job

Anderson and Argo have been in business for the past six years.

"2018 was our first year working on our boat, the Sunnyvale, as a salmon seine tender in Kodiak, Alaska, and owning the McClure Bay, which worked as a gut boat in Prince William Sound, Alaska," Argo said. "The McClure Bay was run by Capt. Justin Smith, a Port Townsend local."

Transitioning from fishing to working as a tender has given the pair more resources to invest and grow their business. It also reduces stress.

"The stress came from not having a set income, because it just depends on the fishing year," Argo said. "You can do really well some years, and some years are not good fishing years. Or the price changes every year, too, due to global markets. Tendering was a nice move because we have a set contract with a set amount of pay, a day rate."

And they don't need to purchase a fishing permit.

"When you're a fisherman, a permit ties up a lot of liquidity that isn't able to be used as collateral for a loan," Argo said. "It is like owning a commodity."

In 2017, a fishing permit cost the company about \$100,000, Argo said. Now that money is available for other purposes, such as installing a new engine and refrigeration system on the McClure Bay, which is being done currently.

"It is nice to keep our boats here," Argo said. "We have property here. I can ride my bike to come check on the boats. These are huge liabilities. So it is nice to check on lines when the weather is crappy. And we can work on our own boats here. Ozzie is a talented shipwright."

Being in Port Townsend in the off-season offers other opportunities.

"I lived in Chile for two years prior to moving to Port Townsend," Argo said. "There I wrote for a newspaper

and was an English teacher. I teach Spanish in Port Townsend, hoping to share the joy of meeting Spanish speakers and learning about Latino culture."

## Lending a helping hand

Although Whale Pen Island offers convenience for its customers, every now and then it becomes an actual lifeline.

"There was one boat — these are all seine fishing boats — one of them had an electrical fire" during the 2018 season, Argo said. "We were their support boat. We ended up towing them in, and their crew came on board, and I cooked them food and let them take a shower. That is part of our services. It is nice."

Because Anderson and Argo began as fishers, they are better able to meet the needs of those they serve, she said.

"There was a couple of times where we were broke down and it was nice to have a tender be there

to take care of us," she said. "I know that feeling. I think we do a better job because we know what it is like to be fishermen out there."

On more routine runs, the working boat pulls alongside a customer and deploys vacuum hoses to transfer the fresh-caught fish into onboard refrigerators for transport.

Despite common belief, fish don't smell bad, Argo said.

"The fish are kept between 33 and 34 degrees, so there is not a real big margin, and when they are kept at that temperature, they smell fresh," she said. "That is actually part of the quality control I do. I have a temperature gun that I shoot fish with when they come on board, and I also smell the fish. I look at their scales, their pupils, their gums. They were caught that day, and we keep them cold."

# Center: Programs expanding at school

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Watson thanked Arrow Lumber and Edensaw Woods for donations of tools and materials to help her students build four new work benches.

Smith sees the maritime sector as a haven for relatively high-paying jobs, with connections readily available right in

his hometown. After crewing the Martha and taking part in sailing races on board other vessels, he's drawn to the lifestyle as much as anything else.

"Sailing is so relaxing, and yet it's the most extreme thing I've ever done in my life," Smith said. "I want to make a life out of this and travel the world."



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