

Port plays host to biggest Wooden Boat Festival to date

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Every September, one of the Port's largest tenants, the Wooden Boat Foundation (WBF), stages a world-renowned gathering of wooden boats and aficionados on Port property at Point Hudson. This year's 32nd Wooden Boat Festival (www.woodenboat.org) was the biggest ever!

Festival Director Kaci Cronkhite has produced the Festival for the WBF for the past seven years. *The Conversation (TC)* asked Cronkhite (**KC**) her views on the role the Port plays in making the Festival happen.



Point Hudson was filled with record numbers of boats and people at the 32nd annual Wooden Boat Festival, Sept. 5-7, 2008.

TC: How does the Point Hudson venue contribute to the Festival's success?

KC: As a point, the geography of Point Hudson serves as a destination from land or sea—perfect for a festival. The venue is second only to the exceptional people who attend as the reason why this Festival stands out as one of the top three [wooden boat gatherings] in the world.

TC: How are the Port staff and commissioners involved in staging the Festival at Point Hudson?

KC: For the past seven festivals and now starting on an eighth, I work with the commissioners on the big picture, then with Executive Director Larry Crockett, Deputy Director Jim Pivarnik, Maintenance Supervisor Larry Aase, Point Hudson Facility Supervisor Chris Wenger and all Point Hudson staff to coordinate our communications with the public and to be sure everyone is prepared for the Festival. At Point Hudson, the marina, RV sites, grounds and businesses all adjust to accommodate the huge numbers of people. The event also impacts Boat Haven Marina, so I work with Boat Haven Moorage

Supervisor Tami Ruby, Administrative Assistant Sue Nelson and other staff to answer questions ranging from pre- and post-Festival transitions to clean-up.

TC: Who are the key Festival staff who interact with the Port?

KC: We keep it very streamlined. Up until the week of the Festival, I'm the only direct staff contact. DeeAnn Nelson (who handles RVs, exhibitors and the bulk of our phone inquiries), plus our volunteer Grounds Captain, Harbor Master and Parking Captains work with Chris, Larry, Tami and Yard Supervisor Doug Lockhart at Boat Haven on last-minute details. Once the Festival setup starts Thursday noon, we only get Port staff involved if there's an emergency or a task that requires a serious change to facilities.



Festival Harbor Master Matt Barnett directs vessels to their slips in Point Hudson Marina.

TC: What money exchanges hands?

KC: The WBF pays the Port for lease of the marina and grounds from Thursday noon to Monday noon of Festival week. This year the Port discounted the rate normally charged by \$6,000 to be presented as a major sponsor and to support a 30% increase in our advertising, which this year featured the Point Hudson Marina “destination” as part of the Festival’s branding. This is an event that fuels our local economy and is our biggest marketing effort for Port facilities, WBF and the programs at the Northwest Maritime Center.

TC: What are the biggest logistical challenges?

KC: Boats and people are all present in exponentially higher numbers than Point Hudson handles at any other time of year. Trash, trip hazards, loads on docks and toilets, and black-outs from overloaded cell phone transmissions are all part of the logistic fun of the Festival.

TC: How is the Festival relationship a win-win for both the WBF and the Port?

KC: People from across the country look to us and the Port for suggestions on how to cooperate on such an enormous task. Without a Port, the WBF would be lost in the virtual

world, floating around without a home. Without the WBF, the Port would lose a rare and valuable distinction as a Port that succeeds in concert with its community.

TC: How do the Port and the WBF collaborate outside of the Festival?

KC: The Port is truly our “home port,” all year round. As one of the oldest and largest upland and moorage tenants of the Port, we collaborate all year long on everything from buildings we lease to maintenance, mowing, public inquiries for each other, help in windy weather, cooperative marketing, haul-outs, upland boat storage, dock repairs, and grant proposals. The Port’s year-round efforts help support the WBF’s mission to celebrate, support, promote and preserve maritime culture and in turn, helps us support youth programs, sailing programs, regattas, and more at the Northwest Maritime Center.

TC: What can the Port do to help future Festivals be more successful?

KC: Keep the historic buildings and keep making steady progress to improve the facilities, the grounds, and their stewardship of the natural setting. There have been steady improvements to the walkways and the safety and visual appearances of the marina and buildings. Nothing happens quickly and there are many financial needs the Port has to juggle, but we appreciate what they’ve done and the openness of commissioners and staff this year. Our Port is a rare example in the world these days and the best thing they can do is to continue, and keep working with all of us, to make it better.



Brilliant weekend weather contributed to the success of this year’s Festival.

TC: To what do you attribute the success of this year’s Festival?

KC: Sun. Fun. Great boats and great people. The quality of experience continues to attract a better and better crowd with a manageable increase in numbers each year. But in the end, records are broken by blessings from the weather goddess.

Interview conducted by *The Conversation* Editor, Shelly Randall
Photos by Jan Davis