

Portland Harbor Industries; Empowering our Future

By Tanya Hartnett



Looking out at the Willamette River, you see large scale operations that are served by ship, rail and truck. What may look like a solitary enterprise, is actually part of an economic ecosystem of industries largely dependent upon the water for their operation but also upon one another for product, supplies or the next step in the supply chain.

These businesses were established in the Portland Harbor as early as the late 1800s and some are still family owned and operated. Today these businesses have evolved to build some of the most unique infrastructure in the United States, including bike bridges, street cars, electric trucks, large and small vessels, barges and complex projects that support energy generation. This is also the home to the largest recycling of metal products in North America.

Harbor businesses have been leaders in reducing environmental impact, both through regulation and by proactively creating environmental programs. They have received recognition such as ISO 14000-1 and Green Marine certification for efforts to achieve zero waste, product sustainability, use of high efficiency energy sources to minimize power consumption and storm and process water management. They are leaders among their peer industries in implementing new processes to meet their own high environmental objectives and will play a major role in the future of clean, renewable energy and fuel in our region.

But what you may not know is that each of those harbor businesses relies upon many of the small businesses in our community and the region for their success. A recent review of the five largest harbor businesses shows that their operations are directly dependent upon over 250 smaller companies with 500 employees or less throughout the Metro area. The thousands working in harbor businesses and their suppliers bring approximately \$1.8 billion in personal income to our community.

Many of our harbor businesses are members of the Working Waterfront Coalition and have invested in our local communities. In St. Johns alone, Radius Recycling yearly supports improved lighting and holiday events, both JR Simplot and Ashgrove contributed to lighting and electrical updates in the district; and Vigor recently supported the Cathedral Park dock grand opening. The resources provided by these businesses allows for district improvements, providing better safety and livability to the community.

The City of Portland is engaged in an Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) a little-known state-wide planning requirement updated periodically, that identifies how much land is needed to maintain the critical jobs in this sector. Portland's economic future depends on a thriving middle class and the equitable jobs that support it in industries like those on the harbor. Businesses have been active participants in the EOA process, helping to address key environmental challenges while ensuring these jobs remain available for thousands of people from our region. We know the importance of both of these goals, as evidenced by our track record of reducing our environmental and climate impact more than any other sector.

The Portland harbor brings a lot to the table, an abundance of well-paying jobs, environmental leadership in industries critical for Portland's economic future and an unwavering connection to the small businesses and communities along the Willamette. The Working Waterfront Coalition is proud to be a part of Portland and works hard each day to represent our city well.