

Hello again! This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, September 14, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

With this weekend's Wooden Boat Festival's record success wrapped up, you'd never know over 30,000 people and 300 boats had just been through the Point Hudson Marina if you were to look at it today. That's because Monday was spent ushering all the lovely wooden wonders out of the marina so that work could begin on replacing the south jetty. On Tuesday, Orion Marine Contractors, the firm hired by the Port of Port Townsend for the job, showed up with their barge and crane. And by Wednesday, work had begun.

Last year's north jetty replacement was a literal smashing success with the breakwater ripped apart and replaced early enough that boats were able to return to the marina in February, almost a full month in advance of the planned date of March 1.

The south jetty, however, is a bit larger. I spoke with Port Engineer Matt Klontz who gave me the full breakdown with 6,800 tons of rock estimated for replacement on the south jetty versus the 4,700 tons of rock replaced inside the north. The south jetty's tallest pile is also 5 feet taller than the north's and the structure is 10 feet longer. In addition to all that, the south breakwater includes the timber walkway on top, a feature not present on the north jetty, which must also be replaced.

Despite these differences, the window of time for both projects is the same due to regulations protecting marine life which require in-water work to be completed by January 15. To facilitate all the extra work in the window, Klontz said contractors have already fabricated the new timber walkway at their facility across the water. The new walkway has been built in sections which can then be assembled on site using the crane on the barge.

Klontz said he is "pretty confident" the project will be completed on time because, "the contractors learned a lot last year that could pay dividends."

At Port Townsend's other marina, a new brick and mortar business has moved into Boat Haven. Horus Horizon Marine is a fine finishing and carpentry business owned by Lou Geraghty who studied both traditional boat building and marine systems at the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding. Lou has years of experience with the finer things like hand painted detail work on the vessel "Pacifica" and started Horus Horizon in June of 2020 while still in boatschool. From there, Lou has been building the business step by step with the help of the Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship and the Economic Development Council.

Though their skills are very traditional, Lou's use of they/them pronouns is something people around the port are still getting used to. When I spoke with Lou, they emphasized that there needs to be more visibility for transgender people in the trades. So far, their experience has been a positive example.

[Lou] "I feel as though I've been pretty fortunate in the interactions that I've had with people. I've worked at one of the large outfits and all of the folks there that I had worked with have been very receptive because I showed up the first day of work at coffee break at 10 o'clock and was like, 'How do we feel about pronouns here?' I asked my supervisor and this person was pretty open to having conversations about it. And since I had gotten hired there I know that more nonbinary and transgender folks have appeared and been hired and are doing really well there. That brings me so much joy to see that."

Lou also mentioned there are still some people that they're working with who require more patience, and that they try to be as understanding as they can be, though it can get exhausting to have to continually correct people. But Lou also made sure to note that they've received a lot of compassion from the local community, and they're hopeful for the future.

[Lou] "I think it's a huge shift that is starting to happen, so you know the trades can change."

Another artfully crafted change that recently arrived at the Boat Haven Marina is Rebecca Welti's new sculpture Crab Zoea. Welti magnifies the microscopic by making massive plankton sculpture which translate marine science into art. She previously made waves at the JUMP! Playground at H.J. Carrol Park with the climbing/sitting structure representing the larva of sea urchins and sea stars. This new piece represents the first larval stage in the life of the dungeness crab. Welti says on her website that by creating playful public sculpture and hands-on educational materials, she hopes to inspire people to love and protect the organisms that make life on earth possible.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.