

## **Port of Illahee**

# **Renovation & Rehabilitation Project**

**The Port of Illahee has embarked on a major construction project to renovate the community dock facilities, which saves the dock from eventual demolition due to failing pilings but leaves the Port with an estimated \$1M debt. To offset the debt, the Port Commission has set up an 'Illahee Dock Fund' with the Kitsap Community Foundation (KCF). Donations of \$1,000 or more will be recognized on a bronze plaque to be placed on the site. To help support the Assist Fund, visit the KCF website and locate fund #117 "Illahee Dock Assist & Recognition Fund" to donate during the 'Great Give' campaign or whenever you are ready.**

**Assist Fund Authorization.** The 'Assist Fund' was authorized by Port Resolution 2024-09:

### **Resolution 2024-09**

### **Assist Fund Established for**

### **Waterfront Improvements, Public Pier, & Dock Rehabilitation Project**

**Whereas** the Washington State Revised Code of Washington (RCW 35.21.100 & 53.08.110) allows Junior Taxing districts such as the Port of Illahee, to accept gifts, and

**Whereas** the Washington State Revised Code of Washington (RCW 53.20.10) requires Port Commissions to adopt a "comprehensive scheme of harbor improvement" (Comprehensive Plan) prior to construction, which was approved (Resolution 2020-02), and provides the background to the process, and is available on the Port of Illahee's website: [portofillahee.com](http://portofillahee.com), and

**Whereas** over the past 6 years of planning, the project has been delayed for a variety of issues, primarily permitting, which have recently been resolved, such that the project is nearly ready for construction, which have also increased Port costs, and more recently the discovery of 20 failing pilings, with 17 supporting the Illahee Dock which has added an additional \$510,000 cost to the project, and

**Whereas** while Resolution 2024-08 actions have resulted in a funding path forward for the construction phase, there remains the \$700,000 bond plus the remaining \$319,000 (after a RCO grant for \$191,000) for the failing pilings resulting in the Port initially having an over \$1M debit, to be carried over the next 20 years, less the sale of Port assets such as the 5560 Ocean View property and the Illahee Road lot, and

**Therefore,** the Port of Illahee Commission has determined that additional funding will urgently be needed for future Port Commissions and that now is the opportune time for a fundraising campaign to cover present and future Port needs, and has decided to use the successful fundraising model of the Illahee Forest Preserve, which is as follows:

1. **Funds will be solicited from the Illahee Community and beyond for the subject project.**
2. **Contributions of \$1,000 or more will have their names inscribed on a bronze plaque, to be affixed in a prominent location on the site (28 characters maximum). Names will be listed by donation size, then alphabetically (see the dedication rock at the Almira entrance to the Illahee Preserve for an example).**
3. **Contributions to government agencies, such as Ports are deductible, receipts will be provided for any donations of \$250.00 or more.**
4. **The Port of Illahee will issue weekly progress reports during the construction phase of the project, including donation information. The project is scheduled to be completed within 330 days of the project award date. For questions, please contact the Port of Illahee administrator, [PortofIllahee@gmail.com](mailto:PortofIllahee@gmail.com).**

### **Brief Dock History.**

**Illahee Landmark.** The Port of Illahee dock is a recognized historical landmark and a community amenity for over 115 years. In the early 1900's it provided water access to the otherwise isolated Illahee community. Then as the community grew, the dock became part of the Mosquito fleet until road access became available. In the early 1940's the Navy took over the dock during WWII, and today it continues as a community treasure and recreational facility.

**Early Community History.** The Illahee community was first settled in 1885 and, though relatively small in size, has maintained its identity and unique character. Over 100-years ago, in 1916, Illahee was officially plated and chartered as a recognized community in Kitsap County.

**Community Dock.** Ole Hanson of Seattle built the Illahee Community Dock in the early 1900's for his Land Development Company. In 1916, Ole Hanson circulated a vigorous sales folder highlighting the water and forest views and the three existing houses. Ole's efforts resulted in increased building and the beginning of a flourishing resort and household area. Without roads, access to the area was by water only and citizens rowed to places like Bremerton or to Bainbridge Island.

**Mosquito Fleet.** Later, the power boats *Vashonia* and *Chickaree* made daily trips. As more small boats were added, they came to be called the Mosquito Fleet. The cost for getting to Bremerton or to Seattle was small, and these boats were the main means of travel for some time. See the following photo of the plaque that exists at the foot of the Illahee Dock for additional information on the Mosquito Fleet and the Illahee community.

## MOSQUITO FLEET HISTORICAL MONUMENT

In the 1800's, the Kitsap Peninsula was a land of verdant terrain, old growth timber, growing communities and booming mill towns. Settlers quickly recognized the practicality of Native Americans' form of transportation, travelling unencumbered on the waters in dug-out canoes, and adopted water based transport.

It began with rowboats going to the nearest settlement for mail and staple commodities. Soon, a sail and rudder were added to create the faster stoop or plunge. The need for safer, faster and more reliable all-weather transportation gave rise to small steamboats. These boats buzzed along so quickly, regularly and numerous that they came to be known as the "Mosquito Fleet." The typical boat was a small wood fuelled steamer with a narrow white wooden hull and knife sharp bow.

Water transportation was instrumental in developing a robust economy in the cities and communities that grew up along the 1,157 nautical miles of shoreline. Many independent lines competed against each other, vying for passengers, mail and freight. No one knows exactly how many boats were in the fleet, but estimates run as high as a thousand.

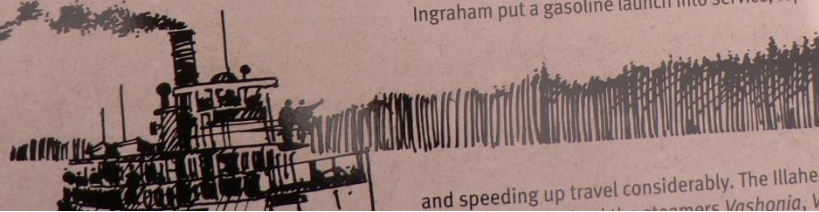
The Mosquito Fleet was gone by the late 1920's. The development of automobiles and trucks and a free highway system with auto ferries to support them rendered the steamers uncompetitive. The boats were dismantled or discarded, ending the romantic era when these ships plied the waters of our Inland Sea.

## ILLAHEE

Illahee, "a place of rest," was born in 1885 when William Christianson took up the first homestead. His nephew, Samuel Anderson built a home on the property in 1895 and ran cattle he sold to nearby saw mills and lumber camps. Ole Hansen platted Illahee in 1916 and sold lots primarily for vacation homes. The beautiful views, proximity to Seattle and delightful

climate made Illahee a popular summer resort. Two turn of the century buildings and their owners figured prominently in the evolution of Illahee: The home of Dr. Ray Schutt and the Old Homestead Inn operated by the Palbitskas.

There were no useable roads to the interior until about 1930. Forced to the water, residents would row to Crystal Springs across the bay to get mail and enable children to attend school. They also rowed as far as Bremerton and Seattle. In 1914 Major Ingraham put a gasoline launch into service, replacing rowboats



and speeding up travel considerably. The Illahee dock, built by the steamers Vashonia, Verona,

**Dock Takeover.** In April 1941, the U.S. Navy took advantage of the area's sheltered deep water and assigned a small crew of four men from the Naval Degaussing Station in San Diego to establish a station. The crew initially moored a small deperming (degaussing) barge at the end of the dock and later placed six mooring buoys out in the middle of the bay. The purpose of the Degaussing Station was to reduce the permanent magnetism of the steel of a ship in order to protect it from attracting magnetic mine explosives.

**World War II Use.** At the outbreak of World War II, the Navy took control of the community dock and established a larger presence in the community by stationing three large barges, many launches, and two Coast Guard patrol boats. One huge ship after another was degaussed in this area. Each ship was wrapped with several thousand feet of electric cable as it floated quietly between the buoys. These cables went down the side and many times around the hull making a 674-foot electromagnet that neutralized (or degaussed) each ship. When the war ended, the Navy left the community dock, but continued to use the degaussing area at mid-channel until the buoys were removed in the 1970s.

**Photo Documentation.** Photos of the area were strictly forbidden during the war effort, and only recently was one discovered that was taken from the window of a nearby house and is the only photo documentation currently available of what the facility consisted of.



(Above is the window photo and below an enlarged photo of the Naval facility at the dock)



## **Pending Port Projects**

**Another Illahee Store?** Early in Illahee's history there has always been a local store with the last one being the Illahee Food Store, that was forced to close around 2000 due to leaking gasoline tanks. The 1970's building has been vacant now for 25 years but has been kept up with a new roof and cleanup of surrounding landscaping. The photo below shows two earlier stores, the top from the 60's and the bottom one in the 30's

**Store Cleanup Plans.** To facilitate the removal of the leaking gasoline tanks, referred to as Underground Storage Tanks (USTs). The Port of Illahee purchased the store at a sheriff's sale with the intention of remediating the area of the contamination and then leasing out the building for a store or mercantile. The Port applied for a statewide grant program designed to cleanup USTs and scored #16 in the state and is looking forward to cleaning of the site in 2025.

**Expanding Illahee Creek Delta.** In 2007 the Port realized the expanding Illahee Creek delta was extending toward the dock and applied for a grant to study the watershed and determine what could be done to preempt the eventual need to dredge at the dock. Below is a current photo of the delta. The \$268,000 Centennial Clean Water Grant noted the need to control the stormwater surges from the upper reaches of the watershed, along with limiting further development. The study helped with the gifting of the Rolling Hills Golf Course to Kitsap County, and the installation of new retention facilities. Currently the Port has noted their support of the purchase of the last remaining South Fork of Illahee Creek properties for a proposed Watershed Park.





**Threatening Upstream Dam and Plans.** In 2020 the Department of Ecology became aware of a previously unknown dam on the South Fork of Illahee Creek. While the earthen dam installed in 1931 appears to be intact, the roadway that was constructed above the dam is problematic and engineering solutions are being investigated. The riser-culvert controlling the height of the impounded water is regularly monitored until a more permanent solution is found. Should the riser-culvert fail, the roadway could be washed out and downstream water release would likely take out the Illahee Creek culvert under Illahee Road, and possibly nearby homes. It is because of this threat that the Port of Illahee strongly supports the purchase of the watershed properties.

**Disintegrating Tire Reefs.** Recently it has been discovered the tire reefs installed in front of the Illahee Dock to promote fish habitat and recreational SCUBA diving, are now breaking down and posing an environmental risk to the area. There are 138 tire clumps forming the reefs and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is requiring the Port to clean up the tires by 2028.