

Washington Sea Grant Coastal Resilience Fellowship Description

2026-2028

About the Host

Host Organization

Evergreen Coast Economic Development District (ECEDD)

Location

Lacey, WA and project sites
In Mason & Pacific counties

Mentors

Annette Roth, Executive Director, ECEDD

Kevin Shetty, Executive Director, Mason Economic Development Council (Mason EDC)

This fellowship will be co-hosted by Mason County EDC and Pacific County EDC, with ECEDD serving as the primary host. ECEDD will administer the fellowship and guide the regional workplan, while Mason County EDC and Pacific County EDC will host site visits, provide resources, and connect the fellow to local networks. Together, this partnership will support a fellow focused on strengthening coastal resilience through modernization of port infrastructure.

Project Title

Supporting Maritime and Port Infrastructure to Foster Coastal Resilience

Work Set-up

Hybrid - ECEDD prefers the fellow to live locally and work a mix of office and home days. The fellow will also travel to various site visits throughout the region.

Coastal Resilience Capacity Need

This project advances coastal resilience by strengthening the ability of nine rural ports in Mason and Pacific Counties to prepare for and adapt to changing coastal conditions. These rural ports operate essential infrastructure but often face limited staff capacity, aging assets, and challenges accessing technical assistance or competitive funding. By increasing regional capacity, the project helps ports collaborate more effectively, assess vulnerabilities, and pursue the resources needed to sustain operations and invest in future infrastructure.

The project also strengthens the ability of regional economic development organizations to support coastal resilience. By creating shared planning tools, consistent assessment methods, and coordinated regional strategies, it sets foundational conditions for economic development organizations, ports, and coastal industries to work together and thrive. This regional alignment ensures that infrastructure planning and resilience efforts support the long-term needs of maritime businesses, outdoor recreation, and other coastal-dependent sectors.

Through improved collaboration, clearer priorities, and expanded capacity for funding, planning, and communication, the project supports a more resilient coastal economy. Together, these efforts equip rural ports and their partners to reduce risk, maintain essential services, and strengthen long-term resilience for the communities and industries that depend on them.

Our region's small and mid-sized coastal ports face growing pressures from aging infrastructure, increasing climate impacts, and rising competition for funding. Many ports are stretched thin, operating with limited staff capacity that makes it difficult to plan strategically, pursue grants, and advance long-term resilience and sustainability projects. Mason EDC, Pacific EDC, and ECEDD are committed to supporting these efforts, yet our own staffing limitations restrict the technical assistance and coordination needed to move coastal resilience forward.

Port resilience is deeply tied to the regional economy. Resilient ports can better adapt to sea level rise, stronger storms, and other coastal challenges. Healthy, future-ready ports strengthen community stability, protect working waterfronts, and support sustainable economic activity across marine, outdoor recreation, and coastal resource sectors. When ports modernize infrastructure, reduce environmental impacts, and plan for long-term sustainability, the region is better positioned for business development, community preparedness, and long-range prosperity.

Since launching the regional Port Forum in Fall 2025, we have built strong relationships and momentum, but lack the capacity to advance shared priorities.

A fellow would provide essential support by deepening engagement, assisting with research, and helping translate regional challenges into coordinated strategies that strengthen coastal resilience and long-term community sustainability.

Mentorship Experience

Leadership development is essential to building resilience and long-term success. This fellowship will include mentorship from Annette Roth of the Economic Development District and Kevin Shutty of the Mason County EDC.

Annette brings mentoring experience through supervising staff and coaching participants in the Change Leader Institute. Her background in classroom teaching informs an open and collaborative approach that emphasizes shared feedback, accountability, and building confidence. She focuses on clear expectations, thoughtful reflection, and helping emerging professionals take ownership of their work while providing steady support when challenges arise.

Kevin brings a practical, hands-on mentorship style grounded in his experience working directly with rural communities, port leaders, and small businesses. As adjunct faculty at Olympic College, he also brings academic oversight experience that strengthens his ability to guide emerging professionals. He emphasizes problem-solving, clear communication, and helping mentees navigate real-world constraints while building the skills needed to lead effectively. His

approach focuses on professional growth through applied learning and consistent encouragement.

Both mentors are committed to creating a constructive and collaborative learning environment. If additional support is needed, the host organizations will draw on regional partners, peer networks, and professional development resources to ensure the fellow has well-rounded guidance throughout the fellowship.

Organizational Values

Our organizations work to create a welcoming and accessible environment for anyone interested in coastal, waterfront, port, and marine-related work. We recognize that many people, especially those in rural communities or without industry networks, may not see clear pathways into these fields. To broaden participation, we emphasize practical support, clear communication, and relationship-driven engagement that meets people where they are, whether they are small port commissioners, job seekers, students, or community members.

Across Mason EDC, Pacific EDC, and ECEDD, we view diversity as essential to economic resilience and long-term success. We work to make coastal and marine professions more approachable by reducing barriers, sharing information openly, and creating opportunities for people with a wide range of backgrounds to participate in coastal decision-making.

As regional conveners, we intentionally foster inclusive spaces where all voices are welcomed and valued. This approach expands who participates in shaping coastal priorities and helps strengthen the future talent pipeline for marine and coastal industries. Our commitment is to support equitable opportunities and broad community involvement that benefits the entire region.

About the Fellowship Position

Fellow Project Scope

The Coastal Resilience Fellowship project will support rural coastal resilience by helping the nine small and mid-sized ports in Mason and Pacific Counties plan for, fund, and advocate for resilient maritime infrastructure. These ports serve local employers and their workforce who depend on reliable docks, utilities, and transportation access. Strengthening resilience will support both new opportunities and the tenants and workers who already rely on these facilities. The ports also attract new investment and play a central role in disaster response, especially during a Cascadia Subduction Zone event, when ports such as Shelton will be critical to regional recovery.

The fellowship will enhance the capacity of regional economic development organizations to support these ports by improving coordination, strengthening shared planning processes, and expanding their ability to help ports navigate funding, regulatory, and technical challenges. Building on existing collaboration among regional ports, the fellowship will develop practical

tools and shared frameworks that strengthen long-term climate, economic, and emergency preparedness.

The project will last two years. In year one, the fellow will focus on research, planning, regional engagement, and development of core toolkits and assessments that move ports from identified needs toward actionable steps. In year two, the fellow will support early implementation, grant development, refinement of shared strategies, and coordination that will help ports advance high-priority projects. All deliverables are tailored to rural ports with limited staffing, with the goal of creating a model that can extend to additional ports across the broader coastal region.

Intended Outcomes and Project Components

Research on Best Practices and Existing Regional Work

The fellowship will begin with research reviewing national coastal resilience strategies and synthesizing existing regional work, including WA Sea Grant reports, port plans, infrastructure assessments, maritime workforce analyses, and economic studies. The fellow will identify gaps or stalled projects, align overlapping efforts, and summarize approaches relevant to resilience, modernization, and long-term preparedness. This foundational work will guide development of practical tools and strategies.

Port Infrastructure and Vulnerability Assessment Toolkit

The fellow will create a toolkit that helps ports identify and prioritize infrastructure needs. This will include methods for evaluating asset conditions, climate risks, and utility vulnerabilities, with key focus areas such as sea level rise, storm events, and long-term planning. Additional components may include an underutilized lands survey, an initial conditions report, an infrastructure gap analysis, and strategies for supporting existing tenants and attracting new maritime opportunities.

Grant Writing Support

To help ports with limited administrative capacity, the fellow will develop a grant writing toolkit that may include narrative templates, scopes of work, budget examples, and funding checklists. This will help ports compete for state and federal grants needed for modernization, resilience upgrades, and planning.

Advocacy and Communication Tools

The fellow will prepare an advocacy toolkit with messaging guidance, project summaries, and coordinated regional talking points that help ports communicate infrastructure and resilience needs to elected leaders, agencies, employers, and community partners. These tools will highlight the importance of resilient ports for local businesses, workers, and community safety.

Regional Collaboration Framework

A collaboration framework will outline approaches for long-term coordination among regional ports, including shared project development, joint climate risk assessments, and integration of resilience into capital planning. The framework will be designed to expand to additional ports over time.

Together, these components will strengthen port capacity, improve regional coordination, support local employers and workers, and create a scalable model for advancing coastal resilience across the region.

Desired Outcomes from the Fellowship

Success for this fellowship means producing clear, usable tools that strengthen regional coastal resilience while also giving the fellow valuable professional experience.

For the project, success includes developing practical toolkits for infrastructure and vulnerability assessment, grant-writing resources that help ports navigate funding opportunities, advocacy tools that support effective communication with officials and partners, and a regional collaboration framework that encourages shared planning and long-term coordination.

For the host organizations, success means establishing a stronger foundation for coastal resilience planning, gaining a clearer understanding of regional needs and opportunities, and creating a model that can be expanded to additional ports across the broader coastal region.

For the fellow, success includes gaining hands-on experience in applied research on coastal resilience and port infrastructure, working directly with rural communities and port staff, and developing practical tools with visible real-world impact. The fellow will strengthen skills in project management, stakeholder engagement, communications, and regional planning while building a strong professional portfolio and expanding their network across coastal resilience, maritime, and economic development fields.

By the end of the fellowship, the fellow will have contributed to meaningful regional progress and developed skills that prepare them for future leadership roles in coastal and climate resilience.

Example of Day-to-Day Fellow Activities

- Research and analysis. Reviewing resilience plans and regional studies.
- Outreach and partner engagement. Engaging ports and partners to gather needs and priorities.
- Toolkit and framework development. Creating practical tools and resources for immediate port use.
- Project coordination and documentation. Tracking progress and maintaining organized project materials.
- Regional collaboration support. Supporting shared planning across ports and economic development agencies.

Candidate Experience and Skills

- **Minimum education level:** Bachelor's Degree
- **Required skills/experience**
 - Research and analysis

- Communication and writing
- Project coordination
- Basic planning skills
- **Preferred skills/experience**
 - Data organization
 - Community engagement
 - Coastal or marine resilience
 - Stakeholder facilitation
 - Familiarity with port, maritime or utility infrastructure, or a desire to move into this sector

Networking and Professional Development Opportunities

- Engagement with 9 port districts, public utility districts, and Mason County government staff
- Attendance at 1-2 regional conferences, depending on fellow's interest
- Participatory role and/or attendance at economic development agency events, such as the 5-county regional EXPO