

# PORTS 101

Washington State is one of the largest locally controlled public port system in the world with 75 port districts. By design this port system allows “Washington’s products to share a single market: the world”. (\*) Washington is also the only state in which ports are governed by publicly-elected officials created by the people in 1911. Washington State is one of the most trade dependent states in the nation with one in every four jobs in Washington tied to trade activity.

Port districts are unique special purpose districts. Their primary mission is to promote economic and industrial development along with multi-modal transportation.

Ports can build and operate commercial and general aviation airports, marine terminals, marinas, railroads, and industrial parks. In addition, ports can lease public property for commercial activities, create public amenities to provide recreational opportunities, and stimulate tourism.

Ports are also involved in substantial environmental restoration projects, cleaning up polluted properties from the industries of generations past.

Washington State laws pertaining to the establishment, authority, and governance of ports are located in [Title 53 of the Revised Code of Washington](#).

## PORT OF BENTON HISTORY

Port of Benton formed in 1958; was chartered to “**promote industrial development and transportation, including general aviation, in Benton County.**” The Port is governed by three elected Commissioners, who serve as the policy makers and final authority in major Port decisions. Each commissioner represents a separate district within the Port boundaries. The day-to-day operations of the Port are managed by an executive director selected by the Commission.

The Port of Benton’s district is two-thirds of Benton County, bordered on the west by Yakima and Klickitat Counties, on the north by the Columbia River, on the east by the Port of Kennewick, and on the south again by the Columbia and Yakima Rivers. The Port is funded by revenues from its business operations, grants, bonds and a property tax levy collected from throughout all of Benton County.

The Port of Benton is focused on making financially sound strategic investments

that strengthen the community, as it transitions away from federal resources/Hanford project. The Port of Benton's primary activities are to develop locally grown businesses, recruit industrial and commercial companies, and maintain multi-modal transportation operations, including a barge facility, two airports, and its short line railroad.

The Port of Benton conducts annual public tours which is a unique opportunity to tour the port's aviation facilities in Richland and Prosser along with other port development areas. Port staff highlights area business and the port's role and partnerships in the community's regional economic initiatives.

These tours include access into the U.S.S. Triton Sail Park and are free and open to the public. Priority goes to first time registrants.

For more information contact the Port offices