



**Contact:** Larry Phillips 206-477-1004 / Kathy Lambert 206-477-1003

September 22, 2014

## **Recognizing the region's maritime heritage: Council approves designation of certain shorelines as "County Maritime Heritage Area"**

### **Recognizing the significance of Salt Water Shorelines, as well as the Ship Canal and Lake Union**

Before there were jets and computers, our region was known for its stories of encounters with the continent's edge, its shipping and fishing boats and the historic saltwater culture. The Metropolitan King County Council today gave its unanimous support for the effort to recognize the historic, recreational and economic value of the region's waterways by supporting the effort to designate certain county shorelines as "County Maritime Heritage Area."

"Stunning views from our saltwater shorelines are part of our great King County heritage, and we have worked to build vibrant communities and a growing economy on Puget Sound for decades," said Council Chair Larry Phillips, the prime sponsor of the adopted ordinance. "We are defined by our waters and shorelines and our interaction with them over time, and that story should be highlighted and celebrated."

"Our shorelines have always been important and the path of significant commerce. Protecting them for future generations is vital," said Councilmember and ordinance co-sponsor Kathy Lambert. "I'm hopeful that our work to designate them as a maritime heritage area will encourage our colleagues at the state and federal levels to take similar action."

Efforts to encourage the State Legislature to designate saltwater shorelines statewide as a maritime heritage area have so far been unsuccessful. Advocates are seeking county designation, as a step towards support at the state level, and ultimately for Congressional designation of saltwater shorelines as a National Maritime Heritage Area. A county maritime heritage area designation, like the state and federal designation, is limited in its effect: it

carries no regulatory, procedural, or property management constraints. It is intended solely to support heritage and tourism potential.

National Heritage Areas (“NHA”) are places recognized by Congress as having nationally important heritage resources. NHA’s are locally initiated; the National Parks Service coordinates with local interests in the development of designation proposals. There are currently 49 designated National Heritage Areas throughout the country, though none in Washington.

National Heritage Areas are operated by local groups through public-private partnerships with the National Parks Service. The Parks Service provides technical and financial assistance, while the local partners retain all decision-making authority.

Over the last decade, there has been a local effort to recognize the historic legacy of the region’s saltwater shorelines along with increasing tourist awareness of the region’s maritime history. A Maritime Heritage Summit recommended the establishment of the National Heritage Area for these locations with the goal of:

- Honoring the area’s cultural resources;
- Increasing public awareness of the resources;
- Promoting tourism and economic development;
- Coordinating with other designated county maritime heritage areas;
- Encouraging designation of the state’s saltwater shoreline as a national maritime heritage area.

Today’s ordinance would designate King County’s saltwater shoreline as a county maritime heritage area—to encourage designation at the state and national levels. The county designation would include:

- Federal, state and tribal lands within the county that allow public access, at least a part of which are located within a quarter-mile landward of the saltwater shoreline.
- Lake Washington Ship Canal and Lake Union shoreline.

“Establishment of a Maritime Heritage Area is an economic development measure intended to boost heritage tourism and highlight the crucial role maritime trades and industry have played in development of our region,” notes Chris Moore, Executive Director of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. “County designation will further our cause toward state and federal recognition, helping us to tell the story of our treasured waterways on a national level.”

Nothing in the ordinance will create any regulatory jurisdiction or grant any regulatory authority or abridge the rights of any owner of public or private property within the designated area.

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