



GUEMES ISLAND FERRY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025



Fall Weather is Upon Us....and so is Nonpeak Season!

We hope you all had a wonderful summer season! We had another busy summer this year with over 52,830 vehicles and 121,139 passengers riding the Guemes from June to August.

The peak season ends September 30! Once nonpeak season starts on October 1st, you can start using your nonpeak tickets purchased before the start of the peak season earlier this year. You may also use any peak season tickets during nonpeak season. All tickets purchased in 2025 will expire on December 31st, 2025.

NONPEAK SEASON STARTS OCTOBER 1ST

- ✓ Nonpeak tickets purchased prior to the beginning of peak season can be used again starting October 1st!
- ✓ Peak tickets not used during peak season can also be used during nonpeak season.

MORE TICKET INFO FOUND AT
WWW.SKAGITCOUNTY.NET/FERRY

Employee Spotlight: Meet our Ferry Assistant Manager, Lee Fisher!



Lee comes to Skagit County after having lived in Alaska for 23 years. Prior to joining the Guemes Island Ferry team in June 2024, he worked in the container ship industry for over 20 years including 5 years in Dutch Harbor, home of the “Deadliest Catch” tv series. He called himself and his team the “librarians of the yard” as they managed detailed inventories of where all the containers were in the container yard and in the community and monitored check-ins and check-outs of each container. Lee eventually moved back to Washington state to be closer to family and was excited to find an opportunity in the maritime industry at Skagit County!

Lee is originally from Shoreline, Washington and is a graduate of the University of Washington with a degree in geography. He has a rescue Doberman from the Matanuska Animal Shelter named Bru, pictured here shortly after his adoption at the Byron Glacier near Anchorage, Alaska!

“Lee plays a vital leadership role in the ferry division. He is a key operational force behind our daily success. He manages a wide range of essential functions, including staff and rider support, accident and incident investigations, safety and training programs, regulatory compliance, terminal maintenance, IT systems and support, and project coordination. His work directly enables our ferry captains and crew to operate safely, efficiently, and reliably. We are incredibly fortunate to have him on our team,” said Ferry Division Manager, Rachel Rowe.



Lee has been thankful to be part of the Skagit County ferry team. He especially loves the ability to work outside in such a beautiful area and the teamwork & dedication of our crew on the Guemes. He’s a people person and having the ability to meet the Guemes Island community and visitors alike and help with their travel has been a highlight of work each day.

Budget Season has Started

The annual series of meetings for the next budget and ferry fare schedule started this week with the first work session between the County Commissioners and Public Works staff. The initial work session was an opportunity for staff to review the draft budget, ferry fare, and yearly reports. During the work session, ferry staff specifically reviewed the 2025 Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report and discussed the annual fare setting process, which includes a formula to calculate the estimated fare revenue needed to meet our annual fare recovery goal.

A few changes to the report were proposed during the work session, which were mostly administrative, and the newest version of the report has been posted to the [budget website](#) for your review. Below is a list of the available documents that have been shared with the County Commissioners for the upcoming budget meetings.

- [2025 Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report](#) (Updated 9/11/25)
 - 2026 Ferry Fare Proposal is included in this report.
- 2024 Ferry [Expenditure](#) and [Revenue](#) Reports
- 2025 (Jan. 1 through June 30, 2025) [Budget Monitoring Report](#)
- [2024 Ferry Budget Monitoring Report](#)

We are accepting comments on these documents and the draft ferry fare schedule for 2026 through October 21st at 2:30 p.m., which is when the public hearing will conclude. Comments may be submitted by email to ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us or by mail to 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

The upcoming ferry meeting schedule is posted below. After each meeting, a recording will be posted to the ferry 2026 budget website as well. You can rewatch the September 9th work session [HERE](#).

Date	Time	Meeting	Description	How to Join
9/9	1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Non-televised Work Session	Initial review with County Commissioners of budget and ferry fare documents.	Zoom and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon
9/16	8:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Televised Presentation	Ferry staff will present the proposed ferry fare schedule and fare setting methodology.	TV21 , Zoom , and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon
10/21	1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Public Hearing	Open public hearing to take feedback on 2026 ferry fare schedule.	TV21 , Zoom , and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon
11/10	1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Televised Hearing	Commissioners will consider the 2026 ferry fare schedule for adoption.	TV21 , Zoom , and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon

The Skagit County Commissioners will be evaluating the entire 2026 county budget over the next few months as well, which includes the budget for the Public Works ferry division. If you are interested in the general budget meetings and public hearing, the schedule for those meetings is below.

Date	Time	Description	How to Join
9/30	2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Non-televised work session with Public Works to review budget requests.	Zoom and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon
10/9	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Non-televised work sessions to discuss all requests and changes for the 2026 budget.	Zoom and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon
10/15	1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.		
The preliminary budget will be released on November 17 th , which will kick off the formal public comment period.			
12/1	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Public hearing to take feedback on the preliminary 2026 budget. The written public comment period will formally close at the end of the public hearing.	TV21 , Zoom , and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon
12/8	2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Televised hearing for the County Commissioners to deliberate and potentially adopt the 2026 budget.	TV21 , Zoom , and in-person, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon

Ferry Replacement Project Update

Applications now open for temporary Technical Advisory Group!

The Skagit County Commissioners will be conducting a value engineering assessment of the current all-electric vessel design and bid package to evaluate how to best reduce the cost of the vessel to meet our available budget. We will be putting out a Request for Qualifications in the coming months to select a third-party contractor to conduct this work. When the RFQ is released, we will send out a press release.

In conjunction with the value engineering effort, the County Commissioners are convening a temporary Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to help evaluate previous vessel replacement studies along with the outcomes of the value engineering study. The TAG will be responsible for creating a recommendation to the County Commissioners for a preferred propulsion system for the new ferry. The TAG will not only evaluate a new ferry design but also consider refurbishing the existing ferry to use for the next 10-15 years.



The TAG will consist of nine voting members and the Ferry Division Manager as a non-voting member. Membership will include five residents of Guemes Island and four Skagit County residents at-large, who do not live on Guemes Island. The at-large representatives will preferably be familiar with local vessel operations, private marine delivery or shuttle service, shipbuilding, naval architecture, emergency operations, or other relevant experience.

Applications for the TAG are now open at the portal on our [website](#). After opening the link, please scroll down until you see the Guemes Ferry TAG application. You can view more information about the TAG charter, membership requirements, meeting expectations, and expected outcomes on the ferry replacement [website](#).

Maintenance Updates



Outdrive Repair Effort

Ferry Division Chief Engineer, Joe Greene, recently visited [Pacific Star Marine](#), in British Columbia, to check in on the progress of the ferry outdrive overhaul. The outdrive was removed from the vessel in January 2025 after the loss of the propeller. While the overhaul was part of routine maintenance on the ferry's outdrives, additional work is needed to replace the propeller shaft and rebuild the lower unit. These costs will be submitted to the insurance company for reimbursement. You can see in the photo here the propeller shaft with significant corrosion requiring the shaft to be replaced.

The ferry outdrives have been in service for over 35 years and are carefully maintained to keep them running safely and reliably. However, some parts of the steering system are becoming outdated

and harder to replace. Joe is actively exploring solutions to modernize the steering systems and extend the life of these outdrives. Replacing the outdrives would cost well over \$1 million, which is out of our budget right now.

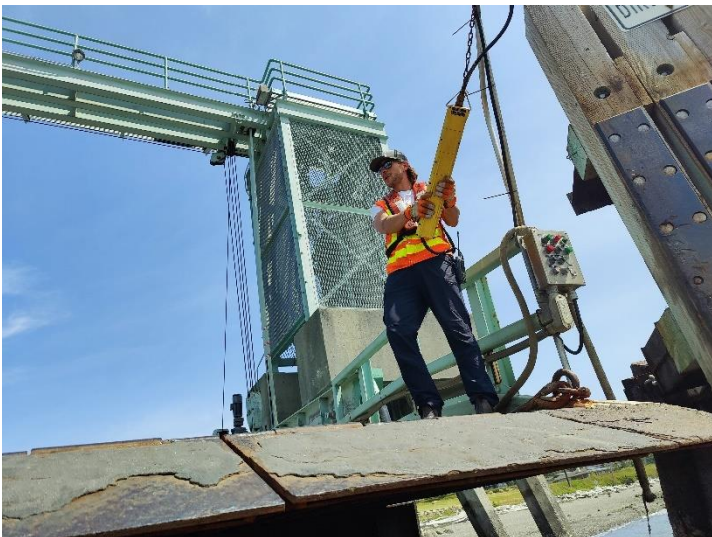
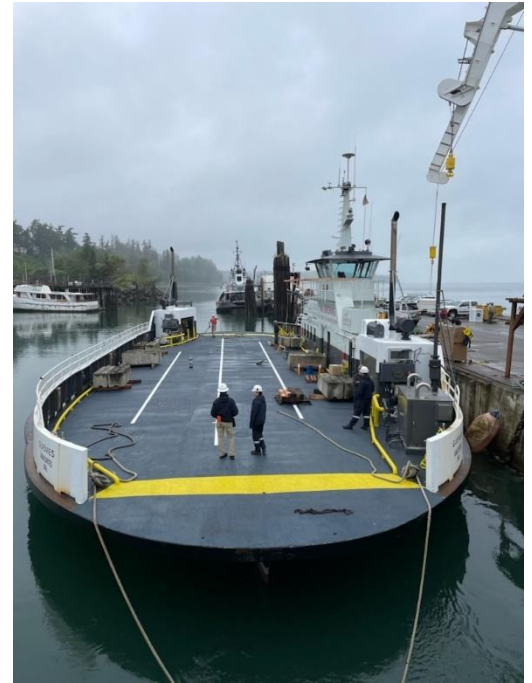
Upcoming Parking Lot Closure

Staff will be conducting storm water systems maintenance in both Anacortes parking lots on October 14th, which means we will have some partial lot closures from 8:30 p.m. on October 13th through 6:00 a.m. on October 16th. We will have a more detailed map of the closures in the coming weeks.

Additional maintenance period next spring

Please be advised the Ferry Division is planning to have a pier-side maintenance period in the late spring or early summer of 2026. The work will not require the vessel to drydock. The U.S. Coast Guard is requiring the County to replace four small sections of steel on the vessel deck forward of the car deck. This was called out during the 2025 drydock; however, if done at that time, the ferry's return would have been delayed even further. Other maintenance items will be addressed during this time as well, including a full replacement of wiring connected to the engines that caused a shutdown in June of this year.

Given the vessel's age, there are times when annual maintenance periods are beneficial, and doing this in 2026 should reduce the amount of time out of service for the next required drydock in spring of 2027.



Submitted Photo of the Month – NEW!

Every month in the ferry newsletter we would like to feature a photo submitted by one of our readers! Have a great photo of the ferry or Guemes Island you'd like to see here? E-mail Jenn Rogers, Communications Manager, at jrogers@co.skagit.wa.us so we can share it with everyone!

The first photo we will feature is one you might have seen pop up a few times on our social media! Pictured here is Alex Jungnitz, one of our purser deckhands.

Feedback? We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts, ideas, or feedback on our monthly newsletter, Jenn Rogers, Communications Manager, would love to hear from you! You can e-mail her at jrogers@co.skagit.wa.us