

Port Of Newport Disinvites Famous Tall Ships, But Trying To Salvage Visit

By [TOM BANSE](#) • JUN 7, 2018

"Battle Sail" tours involving the tall ships Lady Washington, left, and Hawaiian Chieftain were to be offered at Newport, Oregon, in July until the port canceled the ships' docking permit.

RICK HORN / GRAYS HARBOR HISTORICAL SEAPORT

The Port of Newport on the Oregon coast has revoked a docking permit for a pair of tall ships based out of Aberdeen, Washington. Efforts to reach a compromise between the port and the ships' operator seem to be foundering.

The two replica sailing ships, the Lady Washington and Hawaiian Chieftain, voyage from port to port—and maritime festival to festival—along the West Coast for much of each year. Both vessels were booked for three weeks of tours and mock battle outings this July from the Newport Bayfront.

But now the [Port of Newport](#) has cancelled the port call. Local fishermen and neighbors [raised objections to the port commission](#) about congestion, lack of parking and lost business at the height of tourist season. The elected commissioners voted on May 29 to take back the moorage agreement that port staff had signed in April with the [Grays Harbor Historical Seaport](#).

Brandi Bednarik directs the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport, which runs the tall ships. She said the dis-invitation came as a complete surprise.

"Over the three week period, we were completely sold out," Bednarik said. "And we also had a wedding, a charter, a funeral service and a couple of groups that booked family reunion tours."

Bednarik said more than 2,100 people had reservations for the scheduled Newport sailings. Her nonprofit will offer refunds or an opportunity to rebook tours out of Coos Bay or Astoria where port calls could be extended, if negotiations to re-accommodate the tall ships in Newport fail.

Bednarik and the Port of Newport both confirmed that the port this week emailed proposals to salvage the situation after GHHS began publicizing its predicament.

Bednarik said in an interview Thursday that she was giving serious consideration to an alternate moorage option along a less congested dock that could preserve the original July schedule. But the compromise was beset by questions about whether it had sufficient depth to accommodate the Lady Washington and the lack of electricity and potable water connections.

"Hopefully we'll work something out," Port of Newport Administrative Supervisor Karen Hewitt said Thursday afternoon. "We haven't given up."

A petition to the port commission signed by more than two dozen fishing boat captains and crew members acknowledged that the tall ships are unique, but requested the visit be scheduled during Newport's off season.

"We are concerned that the vessels, along with their customers, will displace our critical operational abilities," the fishing industry petition stated. "Imagine the '4th of July' for three solid weeks."

In a press release Tuesday, Bednarik said the short notice cancellation would have "deep and long-lasting" negative consequences for the tall ship operation, in large measure due to lost revenue that can't be made up later in the season.

She said the Grays Harbor-based tall ships have called on Newport many times before, including a successful visit as recently as this April.

The [Lady Washington](#) previously achieved Hollywood fame, appearing in TV shows and movies including *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* and *Star Trek: Generations*. The sail and motor-powered vessel is a full-scale replica of a Revolutionary War-era trading ship. She was launched from a shipyard in Aberdeen in 1989.

The original Lady Washington voyaged to the Pacific Northwest in 1787.

The [Hawaiian Chieftain](#) is a sister ship of similar vintage purchased by GHHS in 2005. She was built in Hawaii in 1988 based on the designs of coastal packet ships that were the backbone of Atlantic coast passenger and cargo service in colonial times.