

Washington State Ferries Service Contingency Plan Executive Summary

The Washington State Ferries (WSF) Service Contingency Plan, replacing the previously shared Service Restoration Plans, explains current staffing and vessel availability and how each will be improved by new programs to recruit, hire, train, and retain employees, and for vessels, a new-build program. It also details how WSF will add service when it has the boats and crewing availability to do so, without specific timelines rendered impossible by the dynamics of crewing attrition and maintaining aging vessels.

The **goals of the Service Contingency Plan** are to:

- Provide a measure of **predictability** about service WSF will be able to operate for the next four-to-five years.
- Be **transparent** about decisions, considerations, and priorities when service adjustments are necessary; and how WSF will manage unplanned service disruptions.
- Provide **consistency** in service to enhance reliability for customers.
- Outline how WSF will **communicate** with customers, community members, and other partners.

WSF is limited by both crew and vessel availability:

- **Crewing** - As the result of new programs requested by Governor Inslee and funded by the legislature, WSF expects crewing levels to continue to increase over the next 18-24 months. This will increase reliability and allow for crewing more vessels. However, with a global shortage of mariners affecting ferry systems around the world, cancellations due to crewing, while decreasing, will continue. See page four of the Service Contingency Plan for further details.
- **Vessels** - In 2015, WSF had 24 vessels; WSF's fleet now consists of 21 vessels. This reduction in fleet size, combined with an aging fleet, means WSF generally has no spare vessels available. In 2023, the legislature changed state law to allow WSF to expand its new vessel build program out of state, which should allow new vessels to be added to the system more quickly. WSF's new build team are working to adjust the process to the new legislative direction and expect a "Request to Bid" to go out in the spring, with a contract to build at least the first of five new vessels signed by summer. In the meantime, WSF's Vessels department is focused on preservation and maintenance with new funding, which will help us increase reliability of the existing fleet. With a fleet ranging from five- to 64-years-old, in service 20+ hours a day, there will be disruptions, but WSF is doing what it can to lessen them. See page three of the Service Contingency Plan for further details.

WSF's Service Plan

Until both new vessels and sufficient crew are available, WSF can reliably operate 15 vessels in service as a baseline. As such, vessels would be assigned to provide the following service:

- Anacortes/San Juan Islands – Four vessels, including the Interisland (No Sidney service)
- Port Townsend/Coupeville – One vessel, year-round
- Mukilteo/Clinton – Two vessels
- Edmonds/Kingston – Two vessels
- Seattle/Bremerton – One vessel
- Seattle/Bainbridge – Two vessels
- Fauntleroy/Southworth/Vashon – Two vessels
- Point Defiance/Tahlequah – One vessel

There will be times when WSF has the available vessels and crewing to provide additional service above this 15-boat baseline – temporarily – on one or more unrestored routes, prioritized in this order:

1. Add a third vessel at Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth.
2. Add a second vessel at Seattle/Bremerton.
3. Add a second vessel (shoulder/summer seasons) at Port Townsend/Coupeville.

At times when vessel and/or crew availability is not projected to be consistent over an entire season, additional service may be unscheduled, with a route operating on an alternate schedule. WSF will operate additional scheduled service on a route when projected vessel and crew availability allows for doing so for an entire season. See page nine of the Service Contingency Plan for further details.

Approach to unplanned service disruptions

If a vessel unexpectedly goes out of service, WSF's priority is the safety of our passengers and our crew. WSF will consider moving vessels around the fleet to cover prioritized service needs, but in general, for the first 24 hours, no vessels would be moved. The exception is for the Fauntleroy/ Vashon/Southworth and Seattle/Bremerton routes, which are already on significantly reduced service. See page 10 of the Service Contingency Plan for further details.

Customer Information and Service Disruption Communications

To allow customers to plan their travel, WSF works hard to communicate any service disruptions to the traveling public and to the broader community. WSF shares service information and context around service disruptions and provides travel information in several ways, as described on page 12 of the Service Contingency Plan.