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March 19, 2025

Puyallup Tribe partners to build \$200M terminal at Port of Tacoma

By **SHAWNA GAMACHE**
Special Projects Editor

The Puyallup Tribe of Indians and the Northwest Seaport Alliance (NWSA) announced Monday an agreement to build a new berth at the Port of Tacoma's East Blair Waterway, expanding shipping capacity and work opportunities for the tribe and greater region.

The tribe will fund, build and own the new pier, which has a working name of Puyallup Tribal Terminal, on 22 acres of land it already owns along the waterway beside the port's existing East Blair 1 berth, and will be responsible for maintaining, repairing and replacing facilities at the new terminal, according to a Monday release announcing a memorandum of understanding between the tribe and the alliance.

NWSA, a marine cargo operating partnership of the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, will continue to manage cargo activities at East Blair 1, which primarily imports automobiles and heavy equipment that are driven off vessels and prepared for transport across North America. NWSA and the tribe will divide operating income generated by both terminals per a revenue-sharing agreement, and will jointly market and operate East Blair 1 and the Puyallup Tribal Terminal.

AECOM is the designer for the Puyallup Tribal Terminal project, which is estimated to cost about \$200 million, according to Puyallup Tribal Enterprises, the tribe's economic development arm, which anticipates the project being completed in three to five years.

It will take six months to design the terminal and another 18 months for permitting. Construction will most likely have to be conducted over two seasons, working around U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulations that usually prohibit work in the waterway from mid-February to mid-July as it impacts fish, Puyallup Tribal Enterprises said.

The port will work alongside the tribe to finalize design, permitting and construction. The new pier will feature comparable capabilities to the existing pier, including on-dock rail, the release said, and the design will include carbon reduction technology. NWSA will offer technical support to ensure consistency and efficiency between the piers.

The Port of Tacoma and the tribe have already worked together on advance preparations needed in the waterway, and the port, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has done conceptual design work, waterway depth analysis, and ship simulation to ensure plans for cutback and dredging work will not get in the way of vessels navigating to the piers, the release said.



Photo courtesy of the Puyallup Tribe [\[enlarge\]](#)

The Puyallup Tribal Terminal will be built in the foreground, below the existing East Blair 1 berth.



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The Puyallup Tribe of Indians has more than 6,000 members and is one of **Pierce County's** largest employers. The partnership also includes a Tribal Employment and Development Program that will provide training to its members for opportunities in the maritime environment. That program will include a pathway to maritime work for younger members, likely including partnering with Chief Leschi High School and the maritime skills center being built along the Foss Waterway by Tacoma Public Schools and the Port of Tacoma, Puyallup Tribal Enterprises said. The tribe also has members and spouses working for its global logistics company Tahoma Global Logistics, which will gain direct access to shipping lines to market its services, and also plans to develop a career transition program for members interested working at the terminal.

The Port of Tacoma's 2,500 acres include several major container terminals and maritime and industrial businesses and facilities. Most of the port's property is in the Tacoma Tideflats, with about two-thirds of the Tideflats property licensed to the NWSA. The Port recently chose Parametrix of Puyallup to develop an update its 2021-2026 Strategic Plan.



Image courtesy of the Puyallup Tribe [\[enlarge\]](#)

The tribe owns the land, labeled East Blair 2 here, where the new terminal will be built.

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