

Washington Seaplane Pilots Association

Summer 2020 Newsletter

In This Issue:

- Goose in the Palouse
- A Petrel named *Daisy*
- Mt. St. Helens
- AIS Reminder
- Floathaven Splash-In
- Port of Kalama Proposal
- Amphib Gear Safety
- Saint-Ex on Water Flying



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Stephen Ratzlaff, President

This was supposed to be our mid-summer newsletter; however, it is looking more like the end of the summer... and what a strange summer it has been! We will all remember 2020 as the COVID-19 Summer. Hopefully you have been able to get out and get some float flying in while enjoying the good weather. It may be anecdotal, but it seems we have had a few more accidents than normal and this concerns us all. In particular, our hearts go out to the family and friends of those lost in the mid-air collision over Lake Coeur d'Alene, as

well as those impacted by the recent Beaver/Cub mid-air in Alaska. Multiple lives were lost in these two accidents alone, and while the preliminary report is available for the Coeur d'Alene collision, it is still too early to draw any major conclusions about either crash. It is, however, safe to say that in both cases, the pilots of the planes simply didn't see each other and met with fatal results.

In addition to the mid-air collisions just mentioned, we have observed an increase in

wheel down water landings, with two reported on Lake Washington, and one more in the Southeast. Fortunately, no one has been hurt in these incidents, but as a pilot who flies an amphibious Beaver, they certainly got my attention.

Gear down landings are serious business.

As WSPA, we analyzed ten years of amphib accidents and calculated that the average fatality rate is 1.3 deaths per accident/incident. We have a hunch that at least some of the more recent accidents have been the result of reduced flying from pilots sitting out the COVID-19 situation. It is imperative that we recognize this and take extra precautions.

Last October we held a safety stand-down at Kenmore Air to promote improved safety in float flying. One of the topics we covered focused on amphib operations. During the seminar, we presented four rules for amphib pilots to follow. I believe the first rule is the most important and is often overlooked – that is, to Raise the Gear Immediately Upon Departure.

Rules for Amphib Pilots

1. Gear Up Immediately upon Departure. It should be standard procedure and muscle memory to raise gear as the first action. The typical jet procedure is to raise gear upon positive rate of climb and the same works well for amphib. Even if the flight plan is to stay in the pattern, raise the gear upon take-off.
2. Have a formal post-takeoff cruise checklist. LUFF: lights, undercarriage, fuel & flaps
3. The gear indicators should be included when scanning the panel during cruise flight.
4. When approaching for landing, perform three complete GUMP-C checks. (Gas, Undercarriage, Mixture, Prop, Carb Heat).

August 2020

Visually check gear at least once as a part of GUMP.

Burke Mees wrote about the “amphib pilot's survival instinct, a nagging uneasy feeling that you get any time the gear is down. Extending the gear raises a red flag that calls attention to the existence of an abnormal and potentially dangerous configuration.” [Read more here.](#)

In addition to our standard checklists, scanning, and conversations about safety with our passengers, it's important that we share other solutions we find to be effective in alerting us to potentially hazardous configurations. Here are two worth noting.

Technology-Based Solutions

Wipaire has a new laser system which interrogates the surface to determine if it is water or land and informs the pilot if he/she is wrongly configured. I have one of these systems on the Beaver and am pleased with the added layer of safety. The most valuable component is not often advertised and that is a feature which warns the pilot if he/she leaves the gear down after departing an airport. Here is a brief summary of the features provided by this system.

Wipaire Laser

- Departure - Warns if gear is not up upon reaching cruise speed after departure (from an airport).
- Combines a laser to interrogate the surface to determine if it is water or land, a radar altimeter to determine altitude
- Checking the Terrain - At about 400 feet above ground level while preparing for landing the Laser Gear Advisory detects if you are over a water or land surface.
- Confirming Gear Position - At about 50 feet above ground level and below a certain speed if your gear is in the correct position for the landing surface there will be no further alerts and the surface landing light will remain lit to help advise your landing.

- ALERT - If the gear position is incorrect for the landing surface (or an asymmetrical gear position is detected) then an alert will sound.

Addison's Indicator System

Another technology solution has been designed and installed by Addison Pemberton in his restored Goose. I really like this solution because it is based on the assertion that amphibians are dangerous when the gear is down, and the pilot should always be at heightened alert when the gear is down.



He has a single (bright) red light on the panel indicating whenever the gear is down and noting that this is "unsafe."



He goes one step further and asks his passengers on each flight to check his gear
August 2020

position; for that reason, he added indicator lights in the bulkhead of the passenger compartment. These show if the gear is up or down for water or land. The picture below shows the passenger indicators.



As Addison mentioned when we talked, gear down landings in a Goose are even more catastrophic than float planes. This old photo below shows the "aluminum can effect" to the nose, which generally results in severe injury to pilot and co-pilot.



To summarize, all amphib pilots must develop the muscle memory to reach down and raise their gear upon departure.

The key to safety in an amphib is to always raise the gear immediately

upon departure! The first action must be to raise the gear.

As Bruce Hinds, WSPA Vice President and past President recently quoted, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit!” – Aristotle

Resources

[WSPA Safety Stand Down Slides as presented in the November 2019 Newsletter](#)

[NTSB Aviation Accident Preliminary Report: Coeur d’Alene, ID](#)

[Wipaire’s Exclusive Laser Gear Advisory](#)

[Defensive Flying in the KCOE Area](#)

View slides from a recent webinar hosted by Mike Kincaid and Steve Lohrey (FAASTeam Representative for the KCOE area). For those who frequent Eastern Washington and North Idaho, join the discussion about safe flying in the KCOE area on this specially devoted page.

16 AUGUST 2020 – LAKE WHATCOM SPLASH-IN RECAP

Don Goodman, Secretary WSPA



When: Sunday, 16 August 2020 11:00 AM – 3:00PM, PDT
Where: Floathaven Seaplane Base – 0W7, Lake Whatcom, WA

If you end up holding a splash-in on the hottest day of the year, Lake Whatcom is the place to be! Yes, it was warm, but it was very pleasant in the shade of the many evergreens and hangar building. And, regardless of the temperature, we could not pass up the generous invitation from Floathaven owner, Mark Schoening, to try out their recently refreshed docking and hangar facilities. Dan Older (Old Aire) graciously offered his property to the north for ramping, parking, and beaching. A perfect combination!



John Cuny’s beautifully restored Seabee



Joel Mapes gets the Floathaven Seaplane Base stamp in his "Fly Washington" Passport

Fourteen aircraft arrived between 11am and 3pm. The Ellison-Mahon Gweduck and Chris Duffel's Lake Renegade arrived from Renton with a handful of young aviators, including two who had received their Private Pilot certificates the day before. What a great way to celebrate!



SeaRey, Icon A5, Lake Renegade, and Cessna 185

The clear winner for farthest traveled was Sean Reynolds and family in their Grumman Widgeon from Florida. The Reynolds' are on a multi-month journey across America and heard about our splash-in. It was wonderful to meet and host them and special to have both the Gweduck, which was originally based on the Widgeon design, and a Widgeon at the splash-in.



Sean Reynolds' Grumman Widgeon

We invited Teagan Ward, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator for the City of Bellingham. Teagan and a colleague were able to break away from a very busy boat launch to the north to spend

some time with the aircraft. It is always a pleasure to discuss AIS procedures with Teagan and demonstrate AIS compliance processes amongst the water flying community.

Our thanks again to Mark Schoening and Dan Older for their support and cooperation. It was a grand day on Lake Whatcom!



Nice lineup at the Floathaven dock with the Gweduck at anchor to the north.

RENTON AIRPORT MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Stephen Ratzlaff, President

Many of you are aware of the work that WSPA has been doing to “save the Renton Seaplane base.” By way of background, about three or four years ago, the Renton Airport staff began work on an FAA Master Plan for the airport. Along the way, the master plan consultants completed Chapter 2, which covers

the Forecast for aircraft. In the Forecast they determined that 737 deliveries would exceed 500 aircraft per year by 2020. For that reason, the 737 became the Design Aircraft for the airport and resulted in a new airport classification of D-III. If implemented, this new classification would reduce space for 737 operations, force the relocation of the seaplane base and a 75% reduction in capacity, and substantially reduce hangar/tie-down space. Finally, it would also require the city to eliminate one high school baseball field, move two fields and eliminate part of their historic high school building and cost a significant amount of money. The result is that no one, including Boeing, the City of Renton, the airport tenants, the seaplane businesses and pilots, or the high school support this. From a safety standpoint, it is also unnecessary since the 737s which depart Renton are not configured as standard 737s and will not return to Renton, even under emergencies circumstances.

In 2019, WSPA published a [white paper](https://tinyurl.com/wspa-rentonwhitepaper) on the Airport Master Plan to document the adverse results and underlying problems with the basis for the plan. At the beginning of 2020, this came to a head with the City. The citizens elected a new mayor, Armondo Pavone, who has worked to turn this around. Over 30 individuals have testified to the City Council and the Council is pushing back on the Master Plan. I’ve attached a white paper we authored which describes the situation. They formally announced in winter 2020 that they would seek legal counsel from attorneys specializing in airport issues. They also mentioned that they would accept contributions from interested parties to help defray their costs. WSPA, along with some of our members, offered to contribute to this effort. Since that time, activities have mostly been on hold as COVID-19 arrived and other changes took place. The other changes include the resignation of the airport manager, Harry Barrett, and the retirement of the transportation manager, Greg Zimmerman. Since then, the city has hired Martin Pastucha as the new Public Works Administrator and elevated the position of the airport manager to director. They are now seeking the airport director and he/she will report directly to Martin. The FAA NW Mountain Regional Manager, who has responsibility for Renton, also changed and the new (acting) manager is William “Chuck” Garrison.

For continuing communication, we created a Facebook page which we welcome our members to join. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/615701742501593> (Or search for “Renton Airport - Aircraft Owners & Pilots”).

August 2020

I want to thank our WSPA members who have worked on this activity including:

Karen Stemwell
Shane Carlson
Rob Spitzer
Doug Norberg

Todd Banks
Steve Taylor
James Young
And others...

The next RAAC (Renton Airport Advisory Committee) meeting is scheduled for the evening of 10/13/20. This is open to all interested parties and we will attend. We also expect to publish more materials and continue to pursue our objectives. If anyone would like to assist in this effort, please contact Stephen Ratzlaff, 206-250-1625.

MOUNT ST. HELENS – 40 YEARS AGO...



St. Helens local, Harry R. Truman, in the hat (many years before the eruption) next to a floatplane on Spirit Lake.

If he had gotten a seaplane rating - then maybe... No, those that knew him say he still wouldn't have left.

A GOOSE IN THE PALOUSE

Addison Pemberton



From Addison Pemberton in Spokane, Washington on the trials and tribulations of MES training in a big twin seaplane...

To all: The Goose is a stick and rudder pilot's dream machine with more switches, levers, and valves than a steam locomotive or WW2 submarine. This makes the airplane really fun - far from the rudderless, magenta line, glass cockpit, autopilot world of today's aviation. As an example, to start a Pratt you caress the big radials to life with a well-rehearsed switch-wobble, pump-prime, and engine control overture unique to every old airplane and engine. The Goose is truly one of the great airplanes full of character with cathedral windshields and a tall, moose-like stance.



A fun few weeks of intense training has paid off. Scott McKinley, Ben Littlefield, and Andy Bradford passed their Commercial MES check rides in my Goose.

Our treasured DPE from Pasco, Jim "the flying" Fish was able to give back-to-back check rides, including oral and flight exams in an afternoon (Andy) and the following morning (Scott and Ben).



The Goose was flown nearly 20 hours over ten days with nearly 100 landings to its credit for MES prep. This included a big, rough, white-water day on Lake Pend Oreille for Andy, Ben, and Scott. Big water work in the Goose requires big split-second control inputs to maintain the magic nose attitude to prevent porpoise and dangerous pitch-ups. Takeoffs in the Goose in challenging water is like trying to give a cat a bath, or perhaps feeding a tiger raw meat with your bare hands while wearing roller skates. It's all about muscle memory and the airplane is amazing in big water when done right. This requires having both hands clinched on the yoke to prevent it from being jerked out of your hands. On benign bath water, the Goose slides on the water like a butterfly with sore feet. Lots of single engine work which the airplane does well, and a constant string of emergencies tossed in kept Ben, Scott, and Andy's shirts moist and a sweat beaded brow.



Our one close call came when coasting slowly up to a small bay buoy, with engines off, near Sandpoint with a 3 kt tailwind. Scott, in the nose, caught the buoy with the mooring pole and was quickly extracted from the airplane, hooking his feet under the sheet metal and as the mooring pole passed my co-pilot widow. I grabbed the pole to help Scott and within a few seconds I was torn from my seat and was being pulled out the co-pilot window – and got pinched between the airplane and the pole. The airplane stopped and the mooring was a success amid Scott's now bloody hands and my bruised forearms. This was to the delight of locals on a nearby dock, grateful for the Keystone Cops display.

Lesson learned – stopping an 8,700 lb. airplane downwind even at slow speed can make for a quick physics lesson!

Seaplane 101 which was violated: Always dock and moor into the wind! We all know seaplane skills are always put to the test when the engines are cut.

It is clear we live in seaplane heaven. "If it's not safe we are not going to do it, if it's not fun we are not interested."



Andy Bradford, Scott McKinley, and Ben Littlefield stand with Addison in front of the Pemberton Goose.

Addison Pemberton, Spokane, WA

Cell: 509-995-6240

[Visit Pemberton & Sons on Facebook](#)

From all of us at the WSPA, congratulations to Andy, Scott, and Ben on this major accomplishment, and to Addison on another successful MES training!

Coeur d'Plane: "DAISY" A SCODA SUPER PETREL LS

by Tonya Rutan



Daisy in her natural habitats. Photos by Mike Satren and Trevor Budge

One day last April, as we sat gazing out across the lake, my husband turned to me and said, "I think I need to buy you a seaplane." I quickly, and wholeheartedly, agreed. Eight days later a blue and white light-sport, bi-wing amphibian dubbed "Daisy" found a home in our hangar on Pappy Boyington Field in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho.

Friends were surprised when they learned my husband bought a seaplane — in years past when Burt wanted an airplane, he designed and built it. I had earned my SES Private license in a PA-12 on straight floats, but soon learned that one can't rent a seaplane. Burt set out to build an all composite long-range, fuel efficient flying boat for one of his most important customers yet — his wife. He envisioned the 49th manned aircraft of his career "SkiGull" as a light, long-range amphibian that we could fly to Hawaii non-stop with golf clubs and a hammock stowed in the baggage compartment. Flight tests on water proved to be more challenging than we had ever dreamed. After six years of "sanding on carbon fiber" in our garage and hangar, Burt turned to me with those welcoming words, "I think I need to buy you a seaplane." He reminded me that one of our original goals was to explore the local lakes and picnic on our riverbanks.



In the "homebuilt" world we call aircraft that are certified and manufactured "store-bought" airplanes. The Super Petrel was designed in 2001 and FAA-certified in 2014 as an S-LSA. There are more than 350 Super Petrels flying in 23 countries worldwide, but only 35 fly in the U.S. Most live on the waterways of Florida. Burt and I had never laid eyes on, nor heard of, a Super Petrel, produced by Scoda Aeronautica in Ipeúna, Brazil, until we purchased it last April.

For details, see <https://superpetrelusa.com>

Burt found “Daisy” in Trade-A-Plane — a 2015 Super Petrel with a 100-hp Rotax 912 ULS engine — owned by a gal in Minnesota. Intrigued by its unique bi-wing configuration, Burt was pleased with its avionics (including autopilot); its simple systems; useful load; and good water performance. The airplane has no water rudder; no need for flaps; and its landing gear retracts with a Johnson Bar. I liked that it was a flying boat, a pusher and cute as a bug in a rug.



What sold us on the airplane was a 2018 video of an inadvertent gear-down water landing of a pilot flying with his eight-year-old son. During the terrifying moment when you realize your gear is down for water landing, the airplane just decelerates, splashes, complains loudly about ill treatment, but doesn't flip, break, or sink.

What surprised me, after it was delivered, was the number of pillows I needed to reach the brakes and rudder pedals. I'm rather petite, 100 lbs and 5-foot-one. The airplane is petite — 830 lbs empty weight and a 29-foot wingspan. I had assumed, because of its light-sport status that it would fit me like a glove, and that my six-foot-four, long-legged husband would be crushed into a tight seat under the canopy. Not so. The legroom and headroom is for “tall people.”

Turns out that the airplane's namesake “Petrel” is a long-range ocean bird which clocks more time on sea than on land.

Our goal is simple — explore our local lakes; picnic on the riverbanks.



AIS - AIN'T IT SWEET!

Bruce Hinds, Vice President WSPA

Sweet and a bit salty – if you cooked your AIS like a clam bake – but the short time it takes to complete the Aquatic Invasive Species Training is what is **sweet**. It takes most folks 30 minutes – the record is 23 minutes.

Please watch the video, take the test, and print the certificate.



In the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Montana, we can perform our own seaplane inspection and decontamination. Your seaplane can actually be impounded if an inspection can't be performed!

We are the only non-state, non-federal agency to have this kind of approval.

Please complete your training before your next flight. Print your certificate and either keep in with your license or display it in a cabin window for everyone to see.

www.SeaplaneAIStraining.com

FROM OUR FRIENDS AT THE FAA

(taken from a recent email from the FAA)



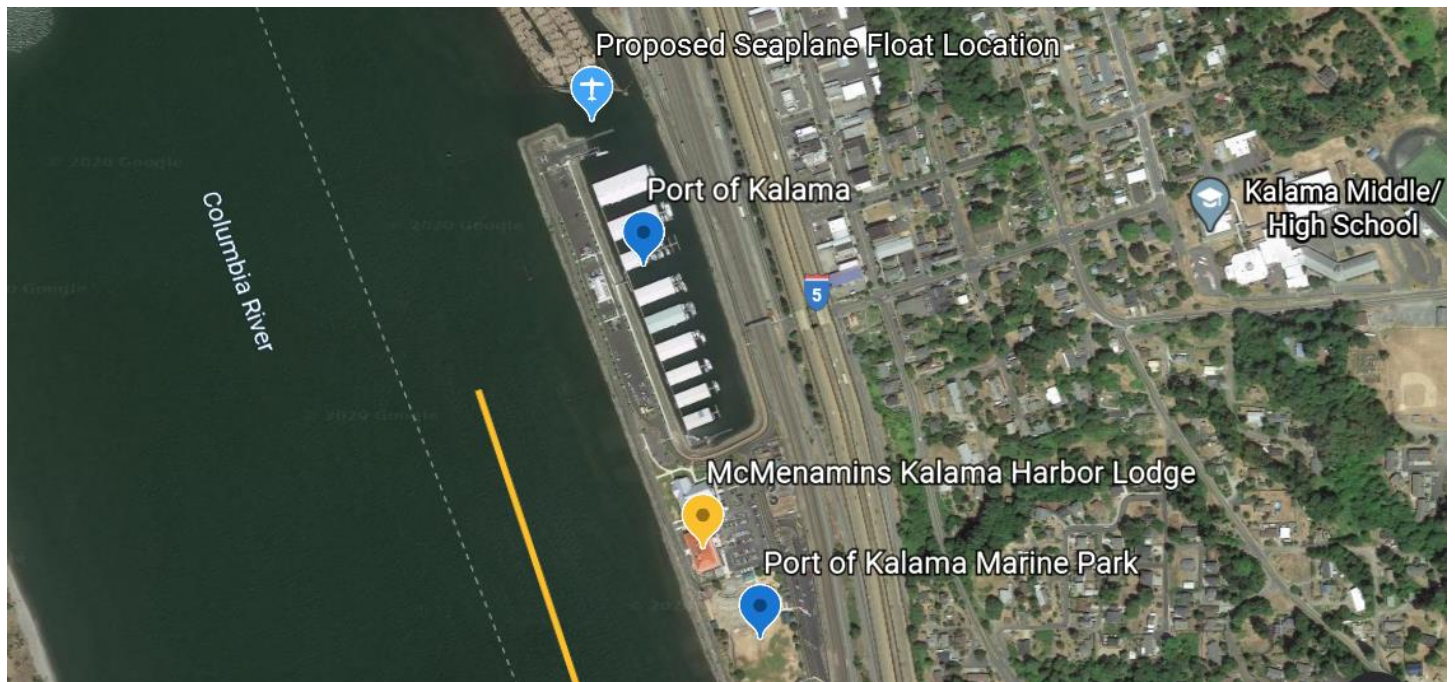
a Podcast for People Who Are Curious About Aviation

It's no secret that we at the Federal Aviation Administration think aviation is incredible. We want to share this passion with the world, through stories that will inspire the next generation of aviation professionals.

We're excited to share the launch of our first-ever podcast, *The Air Up There*. Read more about the [podcast launch](#) on our blog.

The COVID-19 public health emergency changed the way that many Americans do their job. Curious how it's affected the way we move traffic through the sky? Listen to [Episode 1: Air Traffic Amid A Public Health Emergency](#).

PROPOSED SEAPLANE FLOAT AT PORT OF KALAMA



WSPA At Large Board Member, Kevin Franklin has been leading the effort to establish a seaplane float at the Port of Kalama. Kevin prepared a proposal to this port's Economic Development Committee that describes an ideal location for the float and shows similar floats and docks at other ports.

This portion of the Columbia River has ample approach for seaplanes with an area approximately 10 miles in length by 2,000 feet in width yet also has the typical river obstacles of old pilings and stumps near the shoreline.

Nearby are various attractions such as McMenamins Kalama Harbor Lodge, the Westin Amphitheater, the Town of Kalama and the beautiful Kalama Marine Park.

The proposal was received with interest and discussions on next steps for the float have begun, yet they are not yet ready to proceed with official seaplane base status.

Thank you, Kevin, for expanding seaplane opportunities in the area and if you have any questions, Kevin's contact info is in the Board of Directors section at the end of this newsletter.

POP-UP SPLASH IN – HOLLYWOOD BEACH, PORT ANGELES

A pop-up splash-in to Hollywood Beach, Port Angeles was held Tuesday, August 18, 2020 to promote the opening of PROPS at the Wharf, a nearby brewpub, created in August 2020 in response to the pandemic so that people can gather and socialize safely outdoors. Beer, wine, liquor, and light snacks were available, and a portion of all proceeds from sales was donated to the Hollywood Beach Seaplane Authority, which will be bringing historic seaplane service back to Hollywood Beach.



The Gweduck was a surprise visitor, joining Kevin Franklin and Don Goodman (180/182). The Port advised the new float dock is targeted for installation in May 2021. This will be a very cool Olympic Peninsula float destination.

Links:

[Google Maps to Beaching Location](#)

[WHARF Site](#)



ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY'S THOUGHTS FOR THE HYDROPLANE PILOT



I don't normally think of seaplanes when it comes to Saint-Ex, but the following sent to us from WSPA Secretary, Don Goodman, shows us that one of the greatest aviation writers of all time knew water flying, in addition to P-38s (and everything he flew before that).

Did you know that frequently, Saint-Ex. would scribble down thoughts, pictures, and entire chapters while flying?

From "Wind, Sand and Stars" by Antoine De Saint-Exupery

"Air and water, and not machinery, are the concern of the hydroplane pilot about to take off. The motors are running free and the plane is already ploughing the surface of the sea. Under the dizzying whirl of the scythe-like propellers, clusters of silvery water bloom and drown the floatation gear. The element smacks the sides of the hull with a sound like a gong, and the pilot can sense this tumult in the quivering of his body. He feels the ship charging itself with power as from second to second it picks up speed. He feels the development, in these fifteen tons of matter, of a maturity that is about to make flight possible. He closes his hands over the controls, and little by little in his bare palms he receives the gift of this power. The metal organs of the controls, progressively as this gift is made him, become the messengers of the power in his hands. And when his power is ripe, then, in a gesture gentler than the culling of a flower, the pilot severs the ship from the water and establishes it in the air."

REQUEST FOR INPUT: HELP SAVE ALASKA'S LAKE CABINS

The Recreation Aviation Foundation (RAF) preserves, maintains, and creates airstrips for recreational access, and they need your help. According to the RAF, there are 144 public use cabins in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, with 26 accessible by flight only. They may be in jeopardy of closure due to decreased funding and a reduced workforce that strains US Forest Service resources. As such, the RAF is seeking input to the Forest Service to help preserve and prioritize work on the fly-in cabins. To date, the majority of feedback received supports cabins that include the drive-in, boat-in, and hike-in options, with few to no voices representing the fly-in only cabins. To provide input and feedback, visit the RAF Appeal for Support at <https://theraf.org/your-input-could-save-a-tongass-fly-in-cabin/>.

For more information on Alaska's public cabins, the following website was created and is maintained by Tom Bass. <http://www.publiclakecabinsak.com>

WSPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Washington Seaplane Pilots Association is managed by a board of volunteers, each with varying levels of aviation knowledge and experience. The actions of the board represent the interests of its members.

It is the intent of the board to carry out meaningful actions that advance the mission and goals set forth by the organization. [Click here to read more about each member](#), and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.



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For general questions, send us an email to admin@washingtonseaplanepilots.org.

If you have questions, photos, or interesting stories you would like to share, we'd love to hear from you. Contact our newsletter editor, Scott Cooper – pilotcooper@gmail.com and you just may find your story show up in a future issue.

As a reminder, in a recent newsletter, Scott appealed to those with knowledge of the history of the WSPA to reach out and share any insights on the events and actions of the board of the past. Our board is relatively young in our relationship to this organization, and we would like nothing more than to recognize the efforts of our founders and carry out the vision they imagined for our members.

Thank you to Tonya Rutan, Addison Pemberton, and Burke Mees for contributing to this issue of the WSPA Newsletter.

To read Burke's piece, *Landing Gear and the Amphib Pilot's Survival Instinct*, [visit our website](#) or [click here](#).