

STRATEGIC PLAN



Photo by Stephen J. Brown, courtesy of Washington State Ferries

SIX YEAR PLAN — 2009-2015

WASHINGTON STATE
MARINE EMPLOYEES' COMMISSION

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A. MISSION

The mission of the Marine Employees' Commission is to encourage peaceful labor relations between Washington state ferry system management, state ferry employees, and their bargaining representatives, in order to provide continuous operation of the Washington state ferry system.

B. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The Marine Employees' Commission was established by the Washington State Legislature in 1983. The Commission's enabling legislation is found in Chapter 47.64, Revised Code of Washington.



PRIORITIES OF GOVERNMENT

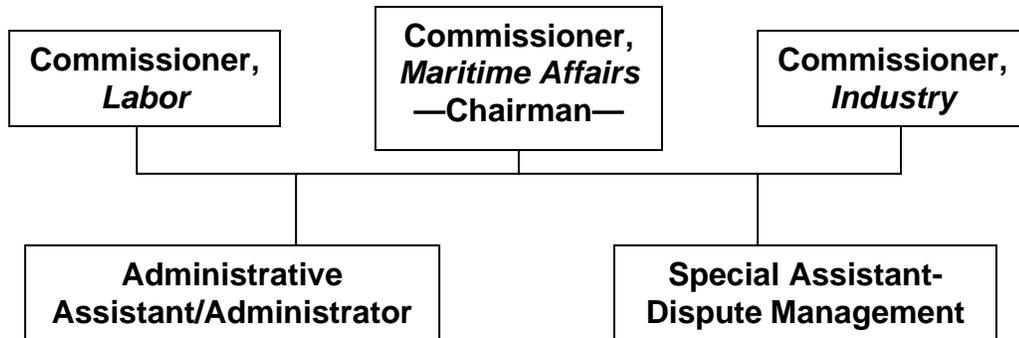
Statewide Result

Improve statewide mobility of people, goods, information, and energy.

OVERVIEW

ORGANIZATION

The Marine Employees' Commission (MEC) is composed of three Governor-appointed Commissioners representing labor, industry and maritime affairs. Staff consists of one administrative assistant who serves as the agency manager and one special assistant for dispute management.



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Washington State Ferry (WSF) System is the nation's largest ferry fleet, consisting of 28 vessels and carrying more than 25 million passengers each year, 11 million vehicles, and is very important to transportation, tourism, and the overall economy of the Puget Sound area.

The Washington State Legislature established the MEC in 1983 to protect the rights prescribed by Chapter 47.64 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW): rights of the employer, employees, labor organizations, and the public. The MEC, by providing the specialized attention required to resolve the unique and complex labor relations questions that arise in the operation of the WSF system, ensures that the operation of the ferry system is not disrupted by labor disputes. The WSF system operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so disputes must be resolved quickly.

The MEC has had a long and successful history working with ferry employees. The MEC's **purpose** is to:

- ◆ Adjudicate all complaints, grievances and disputes between labor and management arising from ferry system operations
- ◆ Provide impasse mediation
- ◆ Investigate charges of unfair labor practices
- ◆ Determine bargaining units
- ◆ Conduct salary survey
- ◆ Certify fair representation organizations

GOAL, OBJECTIVES, RELATED STRATEGIES



C. GOAL

The MEC has just one goal: to resolve labor disputes between the Washington State Ferry System and state ferry employee union representatives in a timely way to avoid disruption of ferry service.

D. OBJECTIVES AND F. RELATED STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE 1

The MEC will assist state ferry system management and state ferry employee unions to achieve fair and harmonious settlements in the unique and complex labor relations disputes between them.

Strategy

The MEC will regularly bring together state ferry system management, ferry employee union representatives and ferry employees in a neutral setting for the general discussion of disputes between them.

Strategy

The MEC will efficiently manage cases filed before it by state ferry employees, their representative labor organizations and ferry system management. The MEC will achieve its efforts to promote peaceful labor relations, as well as avoid more costly adjudicatory proceedings, by encouraging the parties to use the statutory means available to negotiate settlements of disputes that arise between them.

Strategy

When a dispute is filed, the matter will be promptly docketed and scheduled for a settlement conference and hearing as appropriate. The MEC will provide the assistance of a commissioner as a mediator in an effort to reduce the need for more elaborate and costly procedures.

OBJECTIVE 2

If the parties are unable to reach an informal settlement, the MEC will provide specialized attention to the efficient and timely resolution of a dispute.

Strategy

A commission member will serve as an impartial arbitrator or as a hearing examiner at an adjudicatory hearing. After briefs have been submitted, the MEC will promptly issue a clearly written, well-reasoned decision which can be easily understood and implemented by the parties.

GOAL, OBJECTIVES, RELATED STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE 3

The MEC will make every effort to foster strong collective bargaining relationships between the parties.

Strategy

Commission and staff will meet with parties to collective bargaining agreements in eleven monthly public meetings per year to review the status of current cases on the MEC docket and monitor progress made toward resolution of contract negotiations.



OBJECTIVE 4

The MEC will continue on-going professional training of commission members and staff, to ensure Commissioners are up-to-date in the rapidly changing labor and arbitration field.

Strategy

New commission members will attend the National Judicial College's fair hearings course, if needed. Commissioners are encouraged to attend an annual labor law conference and a public sector collective bargaining conference as well as seek out training opportunities in mediation and other means of collaborative bargaining.

OBJECTIVE 5

As required by RCW 47.64.220, the MEC conducts a biennial survey of generally prevailing levels of compensation, benefits and conditions of employment. The results of the survey are used by ferry system employee unions and management to generally guide, but not define or limit, collective bargaining for WSF labor contracts.

Strategy

The MEC will report the results of the wage and benefit survey of comparable marine and shipyard operations in Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and California to ferry system management and labor unions, the governor and the legislature prior to the start of contract negotiations.

GOAL, OBJECTIVES, RELATED STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE 6

As required by Executive Order 02-03, the MEC established sustainability objectives and prepared a Sustainability Plan to modify its practices regarding resource consumption, vehicle use, purchase of goods and services, and facility construction, operation and maintenance.

Strategy

The MEC established objectives in the areas of employee education and awareness, office environment, transportation (vehicle use), purchasing, health and safety, and energy efficiency in existing buildings.

Strategy

The MEC developed performance measures to describe how success will be measured and how data collection will occur.



E. PERFORMANCE

MEASUREMENTS

Major Activity: Resolving Labor Disputes

1. Percent of labor disputes resolved through Commissioner mediation
2. Days to issue decision after receipt of briefs
3. Percent of decisions reversed by Superior Court or remanded to MEC
4. Number of cases filed with MEC

ASSESSMENT

Performance Measure 1—Percent of labor disputes resolved through Commissioner mediation

		Actual Results
'05-07 Target	→ 77%	64%
'07-09 Target	78%	
'09-11 Target	79%	
'11-13 Target	80%	

E. PERFORMANCE

Performance Measure 2—Days to issue decision after receipt of briefs (*new '07-'09*)

'07-09 Target	—————>	45
'09-11 Target		45
'11-13 Target		45

Timely decisions are vital, especially in termination cases and other cases involving employee livelihoods and health.

Performance Measure 3—Percent of appealed decisions reversed by Superior Court or remanded to MEC

		Actual Results
'05-07 Target	<2	0
'07-09 Target	<2	
'09-11 Target	<2	
'11-13 Target	<2	

Labor relations law continues to increase in complexity. The quality of the decisions written by the Commission is reflected in the low number of reversed or remanded appealed decisions.

Performance Measure 4—Number of cases filed with the MEC (*new '07-'09*)

'07-09 Target	—————>	<24 per year
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G. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The agency's internal Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) meetings are held quarterly. Results for the previous quarter are reviewed and suggestions made for the next quarter's improvement. All results are posted on the agency's public web site and an annual summary is distributed at the agency's July public meeting.

During 2007, the agency's OFM budget analyst requested modification of one performance measure and addition of a new performance measure for the 2007-2009 fiscal year, to better reflect the agency's activities. The agency's performance measure relating to timeliness of decisions was changed from "Percent of decisions issued in 45 days or less after filing of briefs" to "Days to issue decision after receipt of briefs". A new performance measure was added to document case load – "Cases Filed Per Quarter".

H. ASSESSMENT OF EXTERNAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The MEC exists to serve the Washington state ferry system management; ferry employees and their labor unions, which include:

- ◆ **Inlandboatmen’s Union of the Pacific (IBU):** 800 members
- ◆ **Dist. No. 1, Marine Engineers Beneficial Association (MEBA):** 400 members
(200 licensed members, 200 unlicensed members)
- ◆ **Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P):** 175 members
- ◆ **Puget Sound Metal Trades Council:** 100 members
(Electrical Workers, Machinists, Carpenters, Sheet Metal Workers,
Teamsters, Pipefitters, Boilermakers)
- ◆ **Office and Professional Employees’ International Union (OPEIU):** 60 members
- ◆ **Ferry Agents, Supervisors & Project Administrators Association (FASPAA):** 40 members
- ◆ **Service Employees’ International Union (SEIU):** 6 members

In July 1, 2006, a number of changes became effective in the collective bargaining law that applies to ferry workers (RCW 47.64):

- 1) The negotiation process must begin before the adoption of the relevant biennial budget and requires review of the funding request and submission of approved requests in the Governor’s budget.
- 2) The employer is now represented by the Governor or Governor’s designee.
- 3) Impasse procedures must be implemented by April 15.
- 4) Funding requests must be submitted to the Director of Office of Financial Management by October 1 and the Director must certify the request.
- 5) The Legislature must approve or reject the request for funds as a whole for each agreement.



I. ASSESSMENT OF INTERNAL CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL HEALTH

1. **Planned Shifts in Strategies**

The MEC conducts an annual Self-Assessment to assist in determining internal capacity and financial health. In addition, the agency also completes an Information Technology Portfolio each year to determine technological capacities and needs. No shifts in strategies are planned at this time.

2. **Significant Effects of Civil Service Reform and Contracting Out**

None are anticipated at this time.

3. **Agency Staffing and Organizational Capacity Comparison with Tasks**

The agency has great difficulty attracting quality candidates for its Commissioner positions. Private arbitrators currently are charging \$1,200.00 per day, but the agency's Commissioner positions are Class 4 and are compensated at the meager rate of \$100.00 per day.

One of the agency's greatest challenges is the requirement to do all the things the large agencies are, but with only two part-time staff. Staff time is currently limited by FTE and funding to a total of 1.4 FTE.

4. **Need or Opportunity for Shift in Technology or Service Delivery Methods**

Meeting notices and minutes are now distributed electronically and posted on the MEC's web site to save employee time, supplies, and postage costs. Decisions are posted on the agency web site as soon as they are served and MEC's digest of significant decisions is also now distributed electronically and posted on the agency web site. Other communication activities are regularly reviewed for potential cost savings through electronic distribution.

Current facilities and technology are sufficient to handle the present caseload. The two desktop computers are nearly the end of their 3 year life cycle, so they will be replaced soon. No other requests for additional capital or technology are planned at this time.



CONCLUSION

The Marine Employees' Commission may be one of the state's smallest agencies, but the results of its efforts help to keep 28 ferries running and 25 million passengers moving.



APPENDIX

Marine Employees' Commission
16 Year Financial Plan
2009-2025

	Biennium	Maintenance Level Carry Forward	Proposed Performance Package Requests	Estimated Total
6 year	2009-11	\$449,050	\$8,000 (<i>training, materials</i>)	\$457,050
	2011-13	\$457,050	\$20,000 (<i>merit increases, new computers</i>)	\$477,050
	2013-15	\$477,050	\$25,000 (<i>staff retirement-one time cost</i>)	\$502,050
10 year	2015-17	\$502,050	\$20,000 (<i>merit increases, new computers</i>)	\$522,050
	2017-19	\$522,050	\$25,000 (<i>staff retirement-one time cost</i>)	\$547,050
16 year	2019-21	\$547,050	\$12,000 (<i>merit increases, new computers</i>)	\$559,050
	2021-23	\$559,050	None planned	\$559,050
	2023-25	\$559,050	\$12,000 (<i>merit increases, new computers</i>)	\$571,050