

StoryTree

Meet Captain Peter Wilcox.

***He's giving forward by taking on the marine climate crisis,
one ecosystem at a time.***

When Captain Peter Wilcox was a freshman in college, he selected an ecology course as his only elective. This new look at science – one that focused on whole systems and respecting all the Earth's species – set the stage for a career focused on the environment and people's relationship to the planet.

When it came time to retire from a career that included working as a solar architect, solar architecture professor at three universities and



housing director for Multnomah County, Peter wasn't ready to call it quits on his passion for ecology. His latest non-profit, the Inside Passage Decarbonization Project (www.decarbthepassage.net), brings together boaters, tribes and First Nations, local governments, fisherman and others to pursue avenues to dramatically decrease the carbon footprint of boats working and visiting in the Inside Passage—the protected waterways from Washington, through British Columbia and to the top of Southeast Alaska. The program is helping create demand for boats with green propulsion systems, clean fuel infrastructure

along this inland waterway, and ships made from much more sustainable materials.

As a lifelong sailor, the Decarbonization Project has deep personal meaning to Peter. "I've been saying to myself and my friends for years that it's time for really bold and audacious action," he says. "And I kept hearing that ringing in my head as I looked at what was happening to this place I love so much. Encouraging people to think bigger while recognizing that we need to move at a larger scale and make progress more quickly, has been very rewarding."

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Peter's coalition-based approach and willingness to support any effort to bring decarbonization projects to the Inside Passage (not just his own nonprofit) make the project different and exciting. His emphasis on tackling a global problem at the local level is also inspiring. With nations struggling to meet their goals under the United Nations Climate Accords, local,



ecosystem-based decarbonization efforts are likely the way future efforts to combat climate change will succeed. Peter's project demonstrates that boaters can decarbonize, one boat, one port and one watershed at a time.

Though the Decarbonization Project started out slowly, it has rapidly gained momentum in the past two years. "The SAGE Legacy Fellowship really helped me plan for the future and determine how to make the project scale," he says. Since participating in the program, the project has received tax-exempt, nonprofit status to be more attractive to potential funders.

Peter and his wife Bridget, who is also very involved in the Decarbonization Project, spend their summers voyaging on their sailboat, demonstrating, and conversing, giving talks, and awarding golden



Decarbonizer streamers to people and organizations who are making a substantial difference in decarbonizing within the Inside Passage. Boaters receive the award by, for example, switching to electric propulsion or replacing fossil fuel generators with solar, along with several other methods. Ports, other marine organizations, and businesses also receive the awards for leading, advocating and taking actions that can impact whole communities. They are awarded for many reasons including teaching or organizing events that influence the next generation. His favorite part is meeting with young people. "They light up when they see on our flagship, AMA Natura, just what we are doing," he says. "They recognize that we focus on solutions, not just talking about problems." The look in their eyes reminds him that his actions will result in a healthier local ecosystem and more livable planet far into the future.