

COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA P.O. BOX 1872 VANCOUVER, WA 98668

ESTABLISHED 1970

website: www.moaacolumbiariver.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

December 2023

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Secretary: Jim Morse 360-433-5605 Treasurer: Larry G. DeVries 612-743-3509 **Immediate Past** President, Evelyn Brady 360-721-0865 **CRMF** president: Dave Casteel 360-834-2448 Army Rep: Jon Frederick 360-576-9078 Marine Rep: Terry Babin 360-608-7789 Navy Rep: **Rich Wersinger** 360-901-1915 Air Force Rep: Dave Casteel 360-834-2448 **Public Health Rep:** Chris Rubadue 425-269-1902 Surviving Spouse Liaison: Leah Davis 310-491-8891 Legislative Affairs: Buck Marr 757-636-8686 Membership Services: Terry Babin 360-608-7789 **Public Affairs:** John Donnelly 360-721-3792 Scholarship:

Chaplain:

Roster Manager: Jim Morse 360-433-5605

Seasons Greetings and Happy Holidays to everyone, whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Omisoka, Bohdi Day, Yule, or just enjoy the time of year. My wish is 2024 finds you healthy and full of joy and our nation coming together on a path forward for the good of all generations.

I held up the release of this newsletter to be able to comment after attending a dinner meeting sponsored by the

Portland Chapter of MOAA with National MOAA's President and CEO, Lt Gen Brian (BT) Kelly, USAF (Ret). Gen Kelly has an interesting a diverse

Thursday, Jan 18th Membership Meeting 40et8 Boxcar Vancouver **Details Forthcoming**

background which you can read on the MOAA site at MOAA - MOAA Staff. The event was attended bv representatives of the two



GEN Kelly presents Chapter Level of Excellence Award to President Rod Williams

local chapters (PDX and CRC) plus other from across Oregon and Washington. Five chapters were presented with the 2022 Level of Excellence Award by General Kelly. I was honored to be there



with my wife, Pat, to receive our award.

MG Buck Marr and his wife, Sherry, attended both as a CRC member and a former MOAA Board member. Col Dave Casteel and his wife, Marilyn, also attended as a CRC member and representing the Washington

State Council of Chapters of MOAA. In his remarks, Gen Kelly spent a lot of time addressing concerns I have also addressed several times in these newsletters—the key role of chapters in the advocacy role of MOAA for veterans and our need to continue to grow our chapters by including younger members.

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national MOAA. Both are nonpartisan.

President's Message continued

Our legislative lead, **Buck Marr**, addresses our advocacy role extremely well in his article further in this newsletter, as he does so well. Let me just reiterate the need to let our legislative representatives know what is meaning full to us or the voices they hear is only the lobbyist or another legislator pushing their agenda. **Gen Kelly** reminding us that MOAA does not just represent its officer members; that would be a small voice and not compelling to many in Washington, D.C. However, as we truly speak for all services and all ranks of service men and women plus their families the numbers become larger and the stories are more compelling. This is the impact we have to put before our representatives from <u>MOAA</u> | <u>Action Center (quorum.us)</u> not just once by regularly.

On chapter growth and being able to include younger members, we are doing many of the right things to make that happen. Many chapters hold all their meetings during the work week and lunch time when those still working have difficulty attending. That is why several of our meetings are on weekends or evenings to allow those with work or conflicting schedules an opportunity to attend. We also try to have interesting topics and speakers. If you are aware of locations or topics that may appeal to the chapter let a board member know and we will check it out. MOAA national is changing to a new roster system which will allow us to receive more information about potential members moving into our area so we can reach out to them. The best recruiting method has proven to be member to potential member one on one contact. Every chapter member must become a recruiter trying to identify someone who will be with the chapter for the long term. The perfect target member is a retiree or formerly serving veteran who sees this area as a long term place to live, kids are grown, and he or she is looking for an activity for both social and "good works". If you are not a great sales person, share their contact info with a board member.

The chapter just had two fantastic holiday centered meetings which were well attended. Our November 16th meeting was at the Cascadia Tech Culinary Academy. The students served an excellent Thanksgiving lunch. As a chapter we are very pleased to support Cascadia Tech and those students who are

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selecting alternatives to college after high school or looking for means to pay for college. We also heard from Lori Pugh, President, Clark County Veterans Assistance Center (CCVAAC), who gave us a detailed look at the goals and programs of the CCVAC. Several chapter members were so moved by her presentation they said they would be volunteering to give time and funds to support the CCVAC directly. As all members should know the CCVAC has been a prime subject for our Support the Troops charity through our Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) for several years. We were able to obtain a MOAA Community Grant to support their annual 2023 Stand Down in September of this year. We anticipate applying again for 2024. On December 3rd we held our Holiday Dinner Meeting at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Vancouver. The great location, friendly ambience, and excellent meal and service is why the OSF was selected for a second year in a row for our CRMF Scholarship Recognition and Fund Drive. In his CRMF article further in this newsletter, Dave Casteel covers this in more detail.

Our next membership meeting will be on January 18th at the 40et8 Boxcar (2809 NE 78th St, Vancouver, WA 98665). Expect an invitation email from our secretaries **Jim and Pat Morse**. The program with be Red Cross CPR and family emergency preparedness. This is a topic you should not miss. If you have taken it before, it may be time to refresh.

Rod Williams President

The Caring for Survivors Act, by Leah Davis, Surviving Spouse Liaison New, Simpler Eligibility Verification Requirements for SBP Annuitants 2023

Extracted from The USAF Afterburner Newsletter, Vol 64 Issue 2, 2023

CLEVELAND—Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuitants need to verify their eligibility regularly to continue to receive SBP annuity payments. The requirements depend on the SBP annuitant's age and relationship to the military service member. Beginning August 2023, DFAS is reducing the requirements for SBP annuitants to one annual eligibility verification. Previously, some SBP annuitants needed to complete multiple forms each year. MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

Surviving Spouse Liaison's Article continued

Now, SBP annuitants will only need to complete and submit one of the annual verifications each year. We also changed the names of two of the annual eligibility verifications, so all names now identify the purpose. Plus, the due dates are easy to remember they are due the first day of the month of the annuitant's birthday.

The three types of annual eligibility verifications are:

(1) School Certification.

(2) Survivor Benefit Plan-Marital Status Update; and

(3) Foreign Address Update for Mailed Check.

Summary of new annual requirements

• If you are a SBP child annuitant aged 18-22 (and not documented as incapacitated), the School Certification/Previous Attendance Letter is the only annual verification you need to submit.

• If you are a SBP child annuitant age 14-17 (and not documented as incapacitated), the Survivor Benefit Plan-Marital Status Update is the only annual verification you need to submit.

• If you are caring for an incapacitated SBP child annuitant age14 or over, the Survivor Benefit Plan-Marital Status Update is the only annual verification you need to submit.

• If you are a SBP spouse/former spouse annuitant under the age of 55, the Survivor Benefit Plan-Marital Status Update is the only annual verification you need to submit.

• If you are a SBP annuitant receiving a check in the mail outside the United States and do not need to submit a school Certification or a Survivor Benefit Plan-Marriage Status Update, the Foreign Address Update for Mailed Check is the only annual verification you need to submit.

See the DFAS "Manage your SBP Annuity" webpage for more details. <u>https://www.dfas.mil/managesbp</u>

Leah Davis Surviving Spouse Liaison: 310-491-8891 leah@sanfill.com

Chapter Dues Renewal for 2024 and New Two-Year Option, by Larry G. DeVries, Treasurer

The Columbia River Chapter annual dues for 2024 are up for renewal just around the corner. We will be taking those chapter dues renewals <u>after January 1</u>, <u>2024</u>.

The one-year dues renewal is standard. The fee is \$20.00 per member.

An additional feature of the MOAA Join/Renew/Donate function is a Two-Year Renewal option.

If you wish to renew for two years that option is available to you. Choose whatever fits your situation. We will keep records of those taking the second year.

Use the Join/Renew/Donate steps described in the November 2023 newsletter (page@htinued on page 3]



To get to those pages quickly, scan the above QR code with your smartphone and the link will be displayed for you on your phone. Click the link.

Proceed with the Join/Renew/Donate pages.

This QR code is now on the chapter website also.

We will continue to accept chapter dues renewal payment by check through the USPS mail as we have in the past. Renewal letters are scheduled to go out in January 2024.

> Larry DeVries CRC Treasurer

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December 2023

Federal Legislative Update: by Buck Marr

Since my last update, the Hill has been remarkably animated and historically nonproductive. We need to help them flip the "nonproductive" piece. First a glance at the big picture then a closer look at MOAA priorities.

At this writing, 30 members of the House of Representatives have decided to seek other opportunities and not run for their current seat. That is nine more retiring members than pieces of legislation passed into law in 2023. The expectation is that many more Members will make the decision to not run. So where are we as a funded and functioning government?

On 30 September, lawmakers passed a "panic" short-term budget extension which kept the government open till 17 Nov. And, of course, we experienced another cardiac event approaching 17 Nov. Only with overwhelming support from the opposition party was the Speaker of the House able to push through an unusual "ladder" **funding** bill. It established two stopgap concurrent receipt measure deadlines: Jan 19 and Feb 2.

However, we must recognize that the practical definition of "**funding**" the government depends on whether you are a federal legislator or in the Department of Defense. The federal government to include the defense community is operating with a temporary funding measure that has frozen spending at FY23 levels. The entire U.S. Middle East operation was not planned and is being paid for "out of hide." Money is being cut from previously programmed training, exercises, and deployments to pay the costs of Middle East operations.

There is even some talk of a full year continuing resolution. DoD has never operated under a full year continuing resolution. It would present a devastating outcome. A full year of operating under a continuing resolution is estimated to be about a \$35B cut to the defense establishment. Military personnel funding would have a \$5.8 billion shortfall.

We must pass a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). It is a series of U.S. laws which specify the annual budget and the expenditures of the Department of Defense (DoD). It has passed 62 years in a row and has never faced bigger hurdles to passage than this year.

So, what is the holdup? The Speaker of the House has stated the goal to pass the NDAA is Christmas. But interestingly, when the legislators pushed the stopgap funding deadlines into January and February, they removed the pressure of passing the NDAA before Christmas. Now, every legislator with a personal hot button issue is trying to tie it to the NDAA. The "hot" button subjects range from geopolitical issues like Ukraine, Israeli/Hamas, Taiwan, Iran to domestic issues like border security, abortion restrictions, fentanyl control and the list goes on and on.

Our elected officials are facing a daunting task within the confines of the lowest Congressional public approval rate in history...13%. Draw your own conclusions.

It would be easy to join the large number of people throwing well earned darts at members of the 118th Congress. I would ask the advocacy warriors of the Columbia River Chapter to resist that easy and natural solution. Whatever the magnitude of the problems facing the legislative branch of the U.S., we must offer positive assistance. Unlike 82% of our Congressional members, we have served in our country's defense forces and frequently done it in harm's way. Who better to provide advice and recommendations to our representatives? Who better understands the hardships and challenges of a veteran's family while that member serves in the corners of the world? Who better than veterans to empathize and support a surviving spouse? Who better than a veteran's partner can understand the anguish of a disabled servicemember? Who better knows the health challenges of retirees? Look in a mirror my friends and you will see someone well qualified to assist the elected legislators.

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Federal Legislative Update continued

There are many topics to advocate for but I recommend that at the top of the list we work with extra diligence to get the FY24 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed quickly.

Here are some other important MOAA advocacy subjects. I encourage each of you to select one or two topics near and dear to you and send a note to our WA legislators. Details are on the MOAA website in the Legislative Action Center.

-Include the Richard Star Act in the NDAA or as a standalone bill.

-Co-sponsor H.R. 1413, the Expanding America's National Cemetery Act.

-Oppose any efforts to cut TRICARE and/or raise TRICARE fees.

-Protect TRICARE beneficiaries from excessive pharmacy copay increases.

-Co-sponsor H.R. 1764, the Military Food Security Act.

-Restore100% BAH for servicemembers and their families living off-base.

Let us not fall into the trap of Congress bashing and do not be discouraged to the point of not advocating. One of my favorite parables talks to our part in the legislative process:

On my way home one day, I stopped to watch a Little League baseball game that was being played in a park near my home. As I sat down behind the bench on the first base line, I asked one of the boys what the score was. "We're behind 14 to nothing," he answered with a smile. 'Really,' I said. 'I have to say you don't look very discouraged.' ''Discouraged?", the boy asked with a puzzled look on his face. "Why? We haven't been up to bat yet."

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Message to the Columbia River members: Grab a bat! You're up next!

The Bottom Line: Do not let the chaos in our Congress distract you from our role as the top veteran advocacy organization in America.

Being well read and knowledgeable on the issues is not good enough anymore; we must be continually communicating with our national legislators to be effective advocates.

Buck Marr Federal Legislative Affairs







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Legislative Contacts

MOAA Legislative Action Center

https://moaa.quorum.us/issueareas

MOAA Capitol toll free hotline at 1-866-272-6622

White House

Comments: 202-456-1111 Switchboard: 202-456-1414 TTY/TTD: 202-456-6213 E-mail: https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

Congresswoman Marie Gluesenkamp Perez Washington's 3rd Congressional District

https://gluesenkampperez.house.gov/

Washington, DC Office:Vancouver, WA Office:U.S. House of Representatives1053 Officers Row1431 Longworth House OfficeVancouver, WA 98661BuildingPhone: (360) 695-6292Washington, DC 20515Phone: (202) 225-3536

Contact Congresswoman Gluesenkamp Perez via email <u>https://gluesenkampperez.house.gov/contact</u>

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell <u>https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/</u>



The U.S. Government's Portal: http://www.usa.gov/

- U.S. Senate: http://www.senate.gov/
- U.S. House of Representatives: http://www.house.gov/



WASHINGTON, DC	SW WASHINGTON	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON	
511 Hart Senate Office Building	The Marshall House	915 Second Avenue	
Washington, DC 20510	1313 Officers Row	Suite 3206	
Phone: (202) 224-3441	Vancouver, WA 98661	Seattle, WA 98174.	
Fax: (202) 228-0514	Phone: (360) 696-7838	Phone: (206) 220-6400	
TDD: (202) 224-8273	Fax: (360) 696-7844	Fax: (206) 220-6404 - FAX	
Contact Senator Cantwell via email: https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form			

Contact Senator Cantwell via email: https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form

U.S. Senator Patty Murray <u>https://www.murray.senate.gov/</u>

WASHINGTON, DC	SW WASHINGTON	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
154 Russell Senate Office Building	The Marshall House	2988 Jackson Federal Building
Washington, D.C. 20510	1323 Officer's Row	915 Second Avenue
Phone: (202) 224-2621	Vancouver, Washington 98661	Seattle, WA 98174
Fax: (202) 224-0238	Phone: (360) 696-7797	Phone: (206) 553-5545
	Fax: (360) 696-7798	Toll Free: (866) 481-9186
		Fax: (206) 553-0891

Contact Senator Murray via email: https://www.murray.senate.gov/write-to-patty/

Vancouver Area Washington State Legislative Districts and Representatives

Legislator	District 49	District 17	District 18	District 14	District 20
Senator	Annette Cleveland	Lynda Wilson	Ann Rivers	Curtis King	John Braun
	786-7696	786-7632	786-7634	786-7626	786-7638
Representative,	Sharon Wylie	Keven Waters	Steph. McClintock	Chris Corry	Peter Abbamo
Position 1	786-7924	786-7994	786-7850	786-7810	786-7896
Representative,	Monica Stonier	Paul Harris	Greg Cheney	Gina Mosbrucker	Ed Orcutt
Position 2	786-7872	786-7976	786-7812	786-7856	786-7990

Note: All phone numbers are 360 area code, except where otherwise noted. Toll free **1-800-562-6000** More info at www.leg.wa.gov/legislature

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Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) Update by Dave Casteel CRMF President

On December 3rd, we held our annual Christmas holiday scholarship recipient reception at the Old Spaghetti Factory.

Thanks to your generosity, this year, we again gave out four scholarships:

- Three went to Clark College which we increased to \$1,250 each-- a \$250 increase each over what we have done for many years in an effort to partially combat the rising cost of tuition and books
- One to WSU-V in the amount of \$1,500.

At Clark College we have endowment. As of June 30, 2022 it stood at \$91,685 with a reserve of nearly \$5,000!

At WSU-V, we will pay the final installment in the Spring that will fully endow the **Col Paul & Ivadell Crosby** Columbia River Chapter MOAA scholarship at \$25,000. (Which I will abbreviate as CPIC for this article).

With your ongoing generous support, our plan is to continue adding to these endowments and taking advantage of last-minute offers to match funds. We also hope to increase the amount of these scholarships over time.

The highest priority for these scholarships is to award them to a veteran going back to school. Former Marine **Alexander Vazquez** received our WSU-V CPIC. BTW, **Alexander** sent us a very nice video personally thanking us for the scholarship. (Which I plan to add to our website).

We also awarded three scholarships to Clark College students. Unfortunately, none of them were able to join us here today due to a variety of reasons. All sent thank you notes, which I read to those at the dinner.

1. Noah Allen, recipient of the Col James Chriss scholarship is majoring in Business Administration. His father, Sergeant First Class Ryan Allen, Oregon Army Guard, is going on 20 years active duty and works at the Portland MEPS. Noah said, "my father was deployed in Saudi Arabia when I was born, which was really hard on my family, but I have so much respect for him, and how much he has sacrificed. My father was also presented with the 2023 **Murray Crowe Award** for outstanding military service." Note, this is a new Oregon Army Guard award. **Murray Crowe** was a patriot and war hero in **OIF** (Operation Iragi Freedom) & **OEF** (Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan) who recently passed away. **Murray Crowe** was a Sergeant First Class in the Army Guard and recruiter just like Noah's dad in the Oregon Army Guard.

2. Meschelle Kellum, recipient of the Col Daniel Doty scholarship is a general AA transfer majoring in English. Meschelle wrote, "Thank you for awarding me with the Scholarship. This scholarship has greatly supported my academic goals by giving me financial peace of mind so that I can focus on school and extracurricular activities. With this scholarship, I am one step closer to achieving my goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree in English... After Clark, I plan on transferring to a four-year university and studying English literature." My connection to the military is through my father and grandfather. My grandfather was in the Air Force and my dad was in the Navy. My dad was born at Fairchild Airforce Base. Although I am not in the military, my familial connections to the military have always been strong because of the longstanding impact that the military had on my family. Although I could not attend your dinner, I hope my appreciation for this scholarship is evident in my message. I hope to attend future events and meet everyone to say my thanks in person."

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CRMF Update continued

3. Bruce Adams, recipient of the CAPT Robert Fleming, USN scholarship who is majoring in Health Information Management. Bruce wrote, "...It is a great honor to receive your generous scholarship that will help fund my education at Clark College. I am most grateful for your belief and support and I would like to thank you for choosing me. I started my second year in the Health Information Management program which will allow me to return to the healthcare environment which I love...The onset of a medical condition necessitated my leaving my previous role, and I found myself lacking the skills and physical abilities to continue in my previous role...while losing my ability to speak is daunting, with your generous donation, I will be able to continue my education at age 46. I am a proud member of the Phi Theta Kappa chapter with a GPA of 3.97...Your generous scholarship and investment my future goals will not be forgotten. Thank you again for your generous and thoughtful scholarship." Note. I met Bruce at the Clark College reception. He communicates totally using his smart phone. The good news is that he was just hired by the VA and works in an Information Management position at the Vancouver campus that accommodates his disability.

I have mentioned to each them that we hope to have them attend one of our luncheons early next year so we can meet them in person.

Although the Old Spaghetti Factory was a Scholarship event, I mentioned to all attending that we fully anticipate supporting veterans **this month** after our boards meet using our Support the Troops Fund.

These include the Clark County Veterans Assistance Center (whom you heard from at last month's meeting who are working to get veterans off the street and off dependencies and into stable environments), and the VA transplant lodge <u>as well as</u> the Fisher House--both on the Vancouver VA campus.

I recently spoke to both new managers at the Fisher House & Transplant lodge and learned of their needs. <u>Both are at capacity</u> and can use our support. You probably remember that the transplant lodge houses the veteran and their caregiver while waiting for, or undergoing a liver or kidney transplant, or while undergoing oncology treatments. Fisher House also houses some of these veterans and caregivers as an overflow to the Transplant lodge.

There is also a hospice facility at the Vancouver campus that I would also like to reach out to in order to learn if there is something we can do to support these veterans and their families (some of whom are housed at the Fisher House). Terry and I know a member of the local Marine Corps League that volunteers there whom we can ask how we might help.

By the way, the restrictions at the Fisher House have been fully lifted and we can again support them with meals—meals as simple as purchasing something like fried chicken and adding a salad and dessert...

Again, thanks for all YOU do to help our fellow veterans and their families...

If you have questions or need additional information please contact **Dave Casteel** at 360-834-2448, <u>shilocamas@comcast.net</u> or

<u>CRMFpresident@comcast.net</u>, or **Frank Hill** at 360-241-8252, <u>hillhouse2@comcast.net</u>.

The Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) is an IRC 501(c)3 public charity to which donations are tax deductible. Our Federal tax ID# is 47-4776049. We encourage you to consult with a tax advisor for complete information about the tax deductibility of your gift.



Chapter ~ Membership Eligibility

Chapter membership is open to active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers of the following uniformed services: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Surviving spouses of deceased officers are also eligible to join.

Columbia River Chapter ~ Affiliate

Our chapter is an affiliate of the more than 350,000 member national MOAA which is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. MOAA and the chapter are nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organizations. Our chapter is an IRC 501(c)19 war veterans organization.



Newsletter Editor

Our Chapter Secretary, **Jim Morse**, coordinates calendar inputs and newsletter distribution. You can contact him at 360-433-5605 or email him at <u>jlmorse77@gmail.com</u>

Newsletter Editor: **Rich Wersinger**. You can contact him at 360-901-1915 or e-mail him at editor@moaacolumbiariver.org.

Newsletter Distribution

We continue to distribute our newsletter by e-mail. If you are receiving this via postal service and would prefer e-mail please notify **Jim Morse**, our Chapter Secretary at 360-433-5605 or jlmorse77@gmail.com.







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Columbia River Chapter Membership 2024 Calendar Events

Date	Event	Program/Speaker
Thursday 40et8 Box (2809 NE		Program: Safety at Home 40et8 Boxcar (2809 NE 78th St, Vancouver, WA 98665) 1130: Start (email invitation to be sent out prior)
15 February Thursday	Membership Meeting Annual CRC Business Meeting Annual CRMF Meeting Election Of Officers	Mardi Gras Theme. Speaker TBD. Wear your beads!! 40et8 Boxcar (2809 NE 78th St, Vancouver, WA 98665) 1130: Start (email invitation to be sent out prior)
21 March Thursday	Membership Meeting	St Patrick's Day garb-wear Green- Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR)Update PROGRAM: Speaker may be Frank Green, an Assistant Program Administrator for the IBR program. He represents WSDOT. Bio: <u>Frank Green is an Assistant</u> <u>Program Administrator for the IBR program</u> 40et8 Boxcar (2809 NE 78th St, Vancouver, WA 98665) 1130: Start (email invitation to be sent out prior)

CRC Newsletter Schedule First week of month	-	in the second
February	November	
April	December	101
June		
September		





Jump to Our Chapter Website