

Sandman Tugboat Auction (As of July 2025)

Background & Context

- The Sandman is a historic 60-foot wooden tugboat, listed on national, state, and city historic registries.
- Owned by the Sandman Foundation, a nonprofit formed to preserve the vessel, it was hauled out at Swantown Boatworks in May 2023 for needed repairs.
- After haul-out, it was discovered that the vessel was in far worse condition than anticipated.
- Nearly two years out of water has caused severe structural degradation—dried-out planks and hull shrinkage—posing a tipping hazard and significant safety risk.

Financial & Safety Considerations

- The Sandman Foundation fell behind on payments, accruing \$28,966.66 in unpaid charges for storage and related services.
- Despite efforts by Port staff to resolve the issue collaboratively, no payment plan or preservation strategy materialized.
- The vessel has become a public liability, necessitating action to protect Port staff, tenants, and infrastructure.

Legal Process & Due Diligence

The Port followed a formal, legally mandated process under RCW 53.08.320, which outlines how ports may impound and dispose of derelict or abandoned vessels:

- October 2023 – April 2025: Multiple direct contacts with representatives from the Foundation.
- November 2023 – April 2025: Official notices issued, including:
 - 60-day delinquency notice
 - Certified 10-day pre-impound letter

- Certified Impoundment Notice
- Public notices in The Olympian newspaper
- Online and onsite postings at Port facilities

All actions taken are in full compliance with Washington State law and Port policy.

Auction & Next Steps

- Auction Date: July 23, 2025 at 11:00 AM
- Location: Swantown Boatworks
- Starting Value: Estimated at \$10,000 (sold *as-is, where-is*)
- Auction Conditions:
 - Buyer must have no outstanding debts to the Port.
 - Vessel must be removed within 10 days or buyer must post a letter of credit for moorage.
 - If unsold or buyer fails to meet conditions, ownership reverts to the Port after 10 days.

Commitment to Preservation

- The Port deeply values the cultural and historical significance of the Sandman.
- Staff have worked in good faith with stakeholders and community members to identify preservation options.
- The Port remains open to working with any qualified historic nonprofit or maritime preservation entity able to take responsibility for restoration and safe stewardship of the vessel.

Fact Sheet: Sandman Tugboat

Item	Details
Vessel Name	Sandman
Type	60-ft wooden tugboat
Historic Status	Listed on National, State, and City Historic Registers
Owner	Sandman Foundation (nonprofit)
Location	Swantown Boatworks, Port of Olympia
Date Hauled Out	May 11, 2023
Condition	Structurally compromised due to extended dry storage
Current Status	Impounded
Outstanding Account Balance	\$28,966.66
Auction Date	July 23, 2025 @ 11:00 AM
Auction Location	Swantown Boatworks
Next Steps if Unsold	Ownership reverts to Port; may transfer to nonprofit or proceed to demolition

Sandman Tugboat Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Why didn't the Port waive the fees to help preserve the Sandman?

A: Public ports are required to treat all users fairly and cannot subsidize private organizations indefinitely with public funds. Fees must be applied consistently across all tenants.

Q2: Could the Port have done more to save the vessel?

A: The Port extended flexibility over two years, deferred enforcement actions, and proactively engaged multiple parties—including the Foundation, private individuals, and local preservation advocates. Unfortunately, no viable plan emerged.

Q3: Can a preservation group still step in?

A: Yes. Qualified nonprofits or maritime preservation entities are welcome to contact the Port prior to or even after the auction to explore options for transfer and restoration.

Q4: What happens if no one buys the vessel at auction?

A: Ownership reverts to the Port 10 days after the auction. A marine survey will be conducted (as required by the Department of Licensing). If no qualified party assumes responsibility, the vessel may be dismantled and removed due to safety concerns.

Q5: Why is the vessel considered a hazard?

A: The vessel has been out of the water for nearly two years, which has caused structural wood shrinkage. This increases the risk of tipping, collapse, or failure if moved or left unattended—posing risks to nearby workers, equipment, and infrastructure.