



**October  
2020**

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**WoW Member:** Catherine Chu  
**Hometown:** Shanghai, China  
**Current City:** Seattle, Washington  
**Current Job:** Capital Project Manager, Port of Seattle  
**Alma mater:** University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
 Tongji University, Shanghai, China  
**Degree:** Master of Landscape Architecture

Catherine is currently serving as the Program Manager for the WEDA Pacific Chapter Board of Directors. Women of WEDA (WoW) asked Catherine some questions in order to get to know her better, and she had some great things to say about how her international experiences have had an impact on her professional life, how she works to promote social justice issues within the Port of Seattle, how she has worked to balance being a single mother and her career, and even her admiration for the Dalai Lama.

**WoW:** Who is a person you admire and why?

**CC:** Dalai Lama. I admire him for his intellect and wisdom. Most people already know him as a Buddhist and for the Buddhist values he advocates, such as peace and compassion. However, do you know that he is also passionate about science, and that Buddhism and Science can be very compatible?

**WoW:** If you could have coffee with anyone in the world, who would it be?

**CC:** Matthieu Ricard, who is a French writer, photographer, translator, who received a PhD in molecular genetics and became a Tibetan Buddhist, and who has been called “the world’s happiest man” based on a 12-year brain study on meditation and compassion led by neuroscientists from the University of Wisconsin. What an interesting man, right?

**WoW:** Tell us about your work-life, including an overview of your job and roles.

**CC:** I work for the Port of Seattle as a Capital Project Manager. My area of focus has been environmental sustainability, dredging, sediment remediation and environmental cleanup. I remain inspired by being part of the leadership making the Port a more sustainable agency. My job entails leading multidisciplinary teams and delivering projects from planning through construction completion.

**WoW:** What inspired you to join the Port of Seattle and what has the evolution of the business been like since you joined?

**CC:** When I joined the Port in the 1990s, it was growing tremendously, and it offered many opportunities to clean up industrial waterfront properties and develop brownfield land for industrial, commercial and recreational use. I was living in a neighborhood adjacent to one of the Port’s container terminals where the Port was implementing a project to clean up the historical pollution under Superfund, redevelop the property for use that included an expanded cargo terminal and a neighborhood park. The Port’s business growth has slowed,

## WELCOME

Women of WEDA (WoW) was founded to create both an empowering and a safe space for women, women-identifying people, or anyone who considers themselves to be in the minority to network, discuss issues, and gain advice from others in the sector who work/live in similar situations (e.g., obtaining a seat at the table, having your voice heard once you are at the table, managing multiple different hats in work/life)

## Upcoming Events

**October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020 - presentation:**  
*Restoring Coastal Marsh Habitat in West Bay, LA, Young WEDA paper*  
<https://www.westerndredging.org/index.php/events/weda-webinar-restoring-coastal-marsh-habitat-in-west-bay-la>

**October 29<sup>th</sup> 2020; 2-5pm - WEDA Pacific Chapter Virtual Meeting Hosted by the USACE South Pacific Division**  
<https://www.westerndredging.org/index.php/regionalchapters/pacific-chapter>

**December 18<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Rebecca Gardener: *Engineering in Nature (Tech Notes)*** – Information to be provided at a later time.

## Past Events to Revisit

**July 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Safety Commission Virtual Panel**  
<https://www.westerndredging.org/index.php/safety-comm-panel>

**August 14<sup>th</sup> 2020 - Reservoir Sediment Panel**  
<https://www.westerndredging.org/reservoir-sediments-panel-webinar>

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (cont.), Catherine Chu

**WoW:** In your experience, what are the most important factors to remember when managing business development pursuits for a business, and how do you implement these lessons?

**CC:** Just as aligning career goals with personal values is important, I think aligning business development pursuits with the company's values and strategic goals is important. I also think understanding the customers or business partners and their values and goals is important. When these values align, and when we also have a competent and committed team, success is likely. For example, the Port of Seattle has triple-bottom-line goals for financial sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social justice. In keeping with these values, I led a project team that developed and delivered a project to install solar panels on the roof of the Port's headquarters building at minimal cost to the Port by leveraging grant funding. This project provided business opportunities to a local woman and minority owned contractor through a competitive selection process while aligning with the Port's strategic goal to be the greenest and most energy-efficient Port in North America.

**WoW:** How have your past professional and academic experiences and lessons prepared you for the work you do today?

**CC:** I'm fortunate to have had international life, education, and professional experience. I'm a Chinese native and I still have strong ties with friends and colleagues in China, many of whom work in science, technology, engineering, and politics. I have also traveled extensively through Europe and am an intermediate French speaker. This international and multicultural experience has served me well for working in a globally oriented organization.

**WoW:** What would you say is your biggest career milestone to date and why?

**CC:** My election to the Board of Directors for the Western Dredging Association – Pacific Chapter. This position represents the culmination of years of hard work and dedication to the dredging industry.

**WoW:** How would you say being a woman has affected your professional experience? What can we do to create more equal, uplifting spaces for women in your industry?

**CC:** As a woman, I feel that I bring a more collaborative and inclusive style to project teams, which ultimately results in higher-quality outcomes. I believe career options for women in the fields of science and technology have advanced considerably in recent years: I'm seeing more and more young women taking up interest in STEM in high school and college. I believe that women who are already established in the field should support them when they enter the traditionally male-dominated work force in order to ensure that they are seen and heard for the work they do. We should also promote more women into leadership roles.

**WoW:** What's the gender ratio like in your industry? Do you see it evolving? Why or why not?

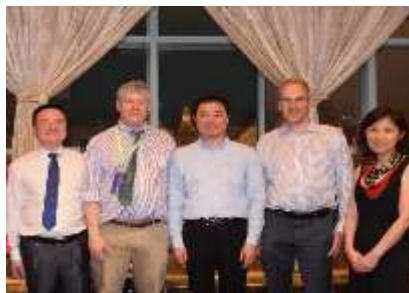
**CC:** I work for a public agency and I think we are doing much better in the area of gender equality in the science and engineering field compared to the private sector. As a Port project manager, I often see private engineering firms assemble all male project teams coming for interviews for Port projects. I'm glad we are the leaders in gender equality, and I hope to see more and more public and private sectors follow this trend.

**WoW:** What would you say is your biggest strength in your role(s)? What would you say is the skill you most need to improve?

**CC:** My life experience as a single mom for most of my kids' upbringing while having a career as a female leader in a technical field and has taught me resiliency, perseverance, and empathy. I have strong leadership and planning skills. I'm very strategic. The skill I most need to improve is perhaps my depth of technical expertise. While many at the Port call me "Dredge Queen", I nevertheless know that I have not yet mastered the field; I am often humbled when meeting top national and global experts in the field.

**WoW:** Who are some women in your field that you look to for inspiration?

**CC:** One of my early mentors and technical advisors on dredging was Nancy Case O'Bourke, engineer and project manager at Dalton, Olmsted & Fuglevand. Nancy has nearly 40 years of engineering, construction, and project management experience in the dredging and environmental field, and she mentors and supports other women professionals such as myself. I think Nancy truly deserves the "Dredge Queen" title.



Catherine attending the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Dredging Congress in Shanghai, China

Contact Catherine on LinkedIn:  
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Special thanks to Teal Dreher for coordinating the above interview!

## Opportunities for Women of WEDA:

### Join the new WODA Working Group on Reservoir Dredging:

WODA, the World Dredging Association made up of WEDA, EADA, and CEDA, is initiating a few technical working groups each of which will be tasked with providing a technical guidance document on a specifically-selected subject related to Dredging.

The very first WODA Working Group, which is just getting started, is on the subject of “Reservoir Dredging”. This new working group can use a few more participants from WEDA, so if you are reading this, please consider joining!

In summary the Working Group goals are:

- a) Produce a WG report (target date of end of 2022) with guidance on:
  - i. how to extend the lifetime of a reservoir through dredging
  - ii. how to improve the productivity of a reservoir by dredging
  - iii. how to include dredging into the early design and planning phase
  - iv. how to utilize dredging techniques to improve the ecosystem, and
  - v. best practices and case studies
- b) Promote the exchange of knowledge during the process

WG meetings are being held virtually (through MS-Teams) every other month, and WEDA is aiming for a total number of participants from the Americas (WEDA’s region) of about 15. Members of the WG are expected to participate in the meetings as well as do some work for the WG in between meetings.

The subject of Reservoir Dredging has been selected by WODA in large part because it’s a new and emerging subject, and for that reason WEDA is not looking for existing experts on the subject, but individuals who are interested in the subject and enthusiastic about working with others around the world to establish this world-wide guidance document. Of course, some background in and knowledge about dredging is important. If you’re already a WEDA member – your interest and knowledge in the topic is probably sufficient!

Individuals who have backgrounds in engineering, ecology, consulting, cost-estimating, or any other field, are encouraged to reach out. We are hoping to get participants with a diversity of experiences and backgrounds.

If you are interested, or have further questions, get in touch with **Marcel Hermans, at 503-329-7326 or [marcel.hermans@portofportland.com](mailto:marcel.hermans@portofportland.com)**. Please reach out at your earliest opportunity!



### Have something to share?

**If you have opportunities to share, or want to get more involved with Women of WEDA, please email:**

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