

The Ironbark Project

April 2010

The Ironbark Project is a candidate for \$1 million in grant money from the Partners in Preservation Seattle-Puget Sound Initiative!

The Ironbark Project is a major step in preserving the *Arthur Foss's* 1889 Douglas fir hull. Like many older wooden tugs, *Arthur's* hull is covered with a thin ironbark (a tropical hardwood) sheathing to protect it during the tug's hard working career. The Ironbark Project will dry-dock the *Arthur Foss* to remove this sheathing and allow shipwrights to inspect and repair the hull planking beneath.

The Ironbark Project follows surveys and repairs made during the *Arthur Foss's* last haul-out in 2007. The tug was out of the water at Northlake Shipyard for five days for a thorough bottom-scrubbing and paint job, plus service to the overboard discharges and propeller tube. Shipwrights also reefed several leaking butt joint between plank ends, pulling old caulking out and replacing it with new oakum and tar.

While the shipwrights and painters were working, professional marine surveyors went over the boat, preparing a detailed condition report on the hull to inform the next steps of preservation. The surveyors' top recommendation? Remove the ironbark sheathing, for two reasons. First, now that the *Arthur Foss* is moored in Lake Union, the ironbark is trapping fresh water against the Douglas fir hull planks, creating an environment for rot to set in. Second, the ironbark is blocking repairs to the planks beneath.

Northwest Seaport used these recommendations to design the Ironbark Project as a major first step in both preserving the *Arthur Foss's* hull and returning the tug to cruising condition. The sheathing will be systematically documented, removed, cataloged, and stored, and surveyors will conduct a complete assessment of the exposed hull. Shipwrights will perform initial repairs while laborers clean and repaint the hull again. Following this dry-dock period, NWS will create a detailed preservation plan, determining any planks to be replaced and outlining a master schedule for haul-outs and other major maintenance and repairs.

