

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with with local news and commentary for Thursday, July 13, 2021.

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Jefferson County added three new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, for a total of 465. Twelve active cases are now in isolation and 21 people are awaiting test results. As of Monday, two people are in the hospital and one is in the ICU with COVID. According to County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke, COVID-19 cases in Jefferson are circulating among those who are unvaccinated. Five of the ten cases originated from a single household. Locke reported that 70% of the eligible county residents 12 years and older are now fully vaccinated. This is among the highest rates in the state, but we're not completely safe. Locke said we need that population immunity rates in the 80-85% range to really control the transmission of variants. People who have had COVID-19 still need to get vaccinated because it is the only way to give them good protection from the variants that are likely coming, according to Locke. It takes five to six weeks from the first vaccination to be fully protected.

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Fire danger is at the highest level. A burn ban is in effect, and people around the county are all pulling together to exercise extreme caution and not do anything that could aggravate the fragile situation.

Just kidding. On Saturday afternoon a Shine resident was using a propane torch to burn away some weeds on their property when high winds caused an ember to blow on some shrubbery and ignite, burning the plants and mulch and erupting into heavy flames and thick smoke. The owner and neighbors were able to contain the fire with a garden hose until the fire department arrived, but it could have been much worse. The home owner was not cited, but was advised about the high fire danger and the existence of the burn ban. His name was redacted from the fire report; otherwise we would read it on the air. A bit of public humiliation, to go along with that slap on the wrist. So, people: no propane torches until further notice. If the weeds bother you, deal with them the old fashioned way. And no charcoal barbecues. Just because an area is green it doesn't mean that it can't go up in a flash.

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Any mention of infrastructure suggests traffic and potholes, but Derek Kilmer-who represents Jefferson County in Congress, has expanded the definition. In a newsletter, Kilmer said that the Pacific Northwest has faced horrific news regarding the potential catastrophic die-off of salmon populations resulting from rising water temperatures from the recent heat wave. He attributes this partially to deteriorating infrastructure and failing culverts that have long had a negative impact on water quality and have threatened the salmon that are so important to our economy and identity. To address this, Kilmer introduced an amendment to the latest infrastructure bill that establishes a new grant program within the U.S. Department of Transportation for culvert restoration – providing a historic investment in critical fish passage and recovery efforts for our region and our country. Having the federal government step up – and pick up some of the tab for these investments – is a big deal, he said. By establishing the National Culvert Removal, Replacement and Restoration Grant Program and providing dedicated funding for culvert restoration, the federal government can restore fish passages and provide critical access to upstream habitat for aquatic species.

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Ballots go out this week, deciding several city council, fire commission, and school board positions in the county. While most people will vote by mail, Jefferson County has an Accessible Voting Unit located in the courthouse next to the Auditor's Office. It is available 8:30am-4:30pm weekdays; Election Day hours are from

8:30am-8pm. For more information, or if you haven't received your ballot within a week, contact the elections division, 360-385-9119 or by email [elections@co.jefferson.wa.us](mailto:elections@co.jefferson.wa.us).

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org).

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.