

You're listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. This is Lily Haight with what's new in this week's Port Townsend Leader.

The United States now has more than 1.2 million cases of the coronavirus. But Jefferson County's case numbers have held steady for more than 25 days.

The death toll in the United States is more than 71,000.

In Washington state, there are now more than 15,000 confirmed cases and 841 deaths.

Of the 28 confirmed cases in Jefferson County, 26 people have recovered.

The Board of Health will hold a special meeting at 5 p.m. on May 7th with the county commissioners and city council members to discuss if the county should move ahead to Phase 2 of reopening businesses.

Phase 2 allows outdoor recreation such as camping and going to beaches with fewer than five people, social gatherings of no more than five people, and limited non-essential travel within proximity of one's home. It also allows certain businesses to reopen, including manufacturing, new construction, domestic services, retail, real estate, professional services, hair and nail salons, and restaurants at less than 50% of normal capacity and with tables that seat five people or less.

Jefferson is one of 10 counties the governor approved to move forward with Phase 2.

According to public health officer Tom Locke, no decisions have been made yet. The meeting of the Board of Health on May 7 will be a "scoping meeting" to discuss how to make the most community-minded decision.

While some counties, like Kittitas county, have already applied to go to Phase 2, Locke expects it will be a two-week process to determine what, if anything, can reopen in Jefferson County.

Out of the 10 counties, Jefferson is the closest in proximity to the I-5 corridor, which was the epicenter of the state's outbreak of coronavirus. In addition, Jefferson County has the oldest population in the state, meaning there is a high number of residents who are at risk of complications from the virus.

A new Victory Garden movement is growing in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

In times of war, governments have encouraged citizens to plant home gardens to grow vegetables and take the pressure off of the national food supply. Called "Victory Gardens," they first became popular during World War I, in 1917.

One hundred years later, in the middle of a global pandemic, seed companies are seeing a greater demand for local, organic seeds. According to Kristina Hubbard, from the Organic Seed Alliance, this is because of the movement to grow food at home.

Tessa Gowans, owner of Seed Dreams, a local seed growing company in Port Townsend, said she has seen her seed sales quadruple this season.

Gowans credits this new demand for seeds, especially local seeds, to people wanting to know where their food comes from, and hoping to create more sustainable and self-reliant food sources, such as Victory Gardens.

In addition, people who are stuck at home during the governor's Stay Home, Stay Healthy order, have more time on their hands and have been spending that time gardening.

A Clallam County man was charged last week in federal court for attempting to promote mislabeled drugs as a prevention against COVID-19, according to federal prosecutors.

Richard Marschall, 67, allegedly called himself a health coach and promoted two drugs online, which when taken in combination as a "dynamic duo" he said could "stop" coronavirus.

Prosecutors said in a press release that an undercover agent spoke with Marschall over the phone and ordered the "dynamic duo" for \$140.

When the drugs arrived it was determined they were manufactured in Illinois and Texas and were included with documents that said they can “crush viral infections including those in the Corona family, like in China Corona-19.”

One was a substance derived from garlic and another from larch trees.

Marschall was previously convicted of distributing misbranded drugs in 2011 and 2017 after he sold HCG, a hormone produced in pregnant women, as a weight-loss supplement.

The Washington Invasive Species Council is asking state residents to participate in the “census” of Scotch broom across the state.

Scotch broom is a yellow flowered invasive species that crowds out native species by forming impenetrable strands that cause problems for grazing, farming, outdoor recreation and creates fire hazards.

While widespread and not likely to be fully eliminated from the entire state, action is being taken to remove Scotch broom from parks, roadsides, forests, riverbanks and other at-risk landscapes.

People can participate in the “census” by identifying patches of Scotch broom, snapping a photo and uploading them to invasivespecies.wa.gov/report-a-sighting/.

Be sure to get close enough that the plant can be identified and include a description of the size of the patch and its location.

For these stories and more, check out this week’s edition of the Leader on newsstands and online now. This is Leader news reporter Lily Haight, on KPTZ 91.9 FM.