

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for September 29, 2021.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 11 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 988. In the past two weeks, there have been 101 reported COVID-19 cases in Jefferson County. There are currently 48 active cases in isolation, and 66 test results pending.

The Fort Worden PDA is requesting assistance from Jefferson County to obtain a line of credit guarantee for \$375,000 to help complete the PDA's financial restructuring. The PDA's Executive Director Dave Timmons met with county commissioners at their Monday meeting to discuss the PDA's current financial status. Timmons said the organization has been working through a major reconciliation of the Fort's finances since 2015, and working closely with the state auditor's office on an accountability audit. The PDA has worked to pay off and close all former credit cards. They are well underway with the reorganization of the PDA board and implementation of the new hospitality organization that will run the hospitality side of the Fort. He said that as of January 1, we can expect to see the hospitality organization up and running independently of the PDA board.

According to Timmons, the PDA lost more than 3 to 4 million dollars worth of income due to the pandemic. But he hinted at things looking up for business at the Fort – including mentioning some big events that may be announced in the future. Timmons explained to commissioners that the PDA board is putting together a financial strategy that gives them two years to get their debt under control. Part of their strategy includes requesting a line of credit from Jefferson County which would act as a last line of defense for the PDA if they cannot make a debt payment. In response to his request for a line of credit for the PDA, the commissioners authorized county staff members – including the county administrator, county treasurer, and chief civil prosecuting attorney – to study the request from the PDA. A formal motion will be presented to the commissioners for potential action in a forthcoming meeting.

Jefferson County was awarded \$887,750 in state grants for salmon recovery projects this year. The grant awards were given to several different organizations within the county for projects that include conserving land, restoring fish passages, and pulling invasive weeds. The Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group was awarded over \$400,000 to buy 30 acres of historic floodplain in the Moon Valley Reach downstream of the State Route 101 bridge. This project will allow for future restoration work to re-connect floodplain habitat with the Big Quilcene River and improve both water quality and habitat. They were also awarded about \$50,000 to complete a groundwater assessment and develop a preliminary design of a channel connection in an oxbow of the Duckabush River, about 1 mile upstream of the State Route 101 causeway.

Some of the state salmon grants will go towards work done on the west side of the county. The 10,000 Years Institute was awarded \$80,000 to remove reed canarygrass and other non-native plants introduced from nearby roads and logging into DNR's Clearwater Corridor Natural Resources Conservation Area in the lower 14 miles of the Snahapish River on the coast. The Quinault Tribe was awarded \$76,000 to produce final engineered designs to remove one barrier to fish passage in a tributary of the South Fork Salmon River on the Quinault Indian Reservation. All of these projects are funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, a state organization that hopes to provide local communities the funds to work on habitat restoration to bring back salmon populations in Washington. While habitat restoration is important work, there are some salmon recovery activists, including the local North Olympic Orca Pod (NOOPs), who you may see around town dressed up in orca costumes, who believe it is not enough, and that the best and fastest way to encourage salmon recovery is to remove the Snake River dams in Washington and Idaho.

Port Townsend Main Street Program announced the cancellation of two big downtown events this October. The annual Girls Night Out, which was planned for October 7, is now cancelled due to concerns from the event's main sponsor, Jefferson Healthcare, that it could impact community safety due to the continued spread of the Delta variant in Jefferson County. The event is supposed to support breast cancer awareness, and shops downtown often offer specials and sales to raise funds for cancer screenings for those in need. (It is unknown why the event is called "*Girls*" night out, when its purpose is to support "*Women's*" health.)

Main Street also cancelled the annual Halloween trick-or-treat for the second year in a row due to COVID concerns among shop owners downtown. For the kiddos who are missing out on their normal trick-or-treating, the Elks Lodge on Otto Street will be hosting a drive-thru trick-or-treat on September 30 from 5-7 p.m. Their event will be contact-free in the effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

And that's it for today's local news. 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. I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.