

Good afternoon you are listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Simon Jaynes with local news for November 11, 2021.

Tuesday, November 9 was a wild day for weather and other natural phenomena in the North Puget Sound. Over the course of one single day we had a tornado warning in Kitsap County, flood warnings in Mason County, a two hour mid-day closure of the Hood Canal bridge due to high winds, and even a small earthquake near Mt. Vernon.

The tornado warning sparked a good deal of concern on the part of businesses and schools in Kitsap County, with Poulsbo and Bainbridge Island Schools deciding to shelter in place. The national weather service issued several location specific tornado warnings based on satellite imagery throughout the area. The National Weather Service was quoted as saying that tornados can happen in Western Washington in the Fall, citing examples of an F3 tornado in Kent and an F2 tornado in Port Orchard in 2018. Kitsap County Emergency Management said there were no reports of touchdowns, though there were many videos of heavy hail throughout Kitsap as well as footage of rotational funnel clouds recorded high above the surface of the water off Ediz Hook near Port Angeles.

Flood Warnings continue for the Skokomish River near Potlatch. Although waters may have receded since Tuesday, additional heavy rains are expected Thursday and Friday which might bring the river to moderate flood stage again. Motorists should not attempt to drive around barricades or through flooded areas. The high winds that that blew out electrical power for more than 64,000 customers east of the Hood Canal bridge and scattered outages in Jefferson County, also caused a brief closure of the Bridge on Tuesday. The Department of Transportation closed the bridge to vehicular traffic from 10:30am to noon, due to high winds and reports of waves actually washing over the bridge deck itself. It is a good reminder, especially with holiday travel plans approaching, that it is always a good idea to check weather forecasts and DOT alerts before embarking on any extended trips out of the area. The Washington State Ferries are also currently running on alternate schedules due to staffing shortages. You can search <https://wsdot.wa.gov/> for ferry schedules that are kept up to date.

Mt. Vernon, Washington was the epicenter of an earthquake on Tuesday afternoon. It was a small quake with a magnitude of 3.2 but located at a shallow depth of 9.6 miles.

This week, the leader of a maple tree poaching ring tied to the theft of several trees and blamed for starting a fire that burned 3,300 acres near Brinnon in 2018 has been sentenced to one year and eight months in prison. It is becoming more common across Western Washington, from backyards to stream banks: grand old big-leaf maples are being felled and dismembered to feed a black market born of an insatiable demand for the hardwood and its eye-catching ripples. Just like many other plants that are illegally harvested in the Northwest – from moss to bear grass to cedar trees – it's an underground trade that has grown up right alongside a legitimate one. And for the most part the buyers of this illicit high-value maple is the black market of suppliers for high end guitar manufacturers.

Justin Andrew Wilke, age 39, was sentenced to 20 months in prison late Monday in federal district court. Between April and August in 2018, Wilke and a gang of 2 to 3 other fellow conspirators conducted illegal logging operations in the Elk Lake area of the Olympic National Forest, according to court documents.

This is the first trial where DNA evidence from the maple trees was used to determine the outcome of the investigation, authorities said. "The DNA analysis was so precise that it found the probability of the match

being coincidental was one in many billions,” according to the research geneticist Dr. Richard Conn, who was present at the trial. On top of his prison sentence, Wilke was ordered to forfeit all of his proceeds from illegal trafficking and will be required to pay restitution to the United States Forest Service. An exact amount has yet to be determined.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 7 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 1,209. There are currently 35 active cases in isolation as Jefferson County’s vaccination rate hovers around 70 %.

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 Simon Jaynes. Thanks for listening and have a great day.