

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for December 15, 2021.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 8 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 1,366. There are currently 25 active cases in isolation and one Jefferson County resident hospitalized.

As always, you can find updated case information, as well as where to get your vaccine or booster shot, at the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=845>), or Jefferson County Government Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/jeffcowagov>).

A federal judge ruled last Friday that the Navy “turned a blind eye to data” while assessing the impact of Growler operations at the Naval Air Station on Whidbey Island. While the Growlers are particularly disruptive to residents of Whidbey Island, Port Townsend has its own coalition of advocates opposed to the environmental disruption caused by the Navy’s Growler training program – specifically the impact they cause on the Olympic National Park.

In 2019, the state attorney general and the organization called Citizens of Ebey’s Reserve filed separate lawsuits, which were later joined into one, in the U.S. District Court. They argued that the Navy violated the National Environmental Policy Act and other federal laws by not adequately analyzing the impacts an increased number of the Navy aircraft would have on the environment and the community.

And on Friday, Chief United States Magistrate Judge J. Richard Creatura filed the report that found the Navy did in fact violate the National Environmental Policy Act by failing to disclose the basis for greenhouse gas emission calculations; failing to quantify the impact of increased operations on classroom learning; failing to take a hard look at species-specific impacts on birds; and failing to give detailed consideration to the idea of moving some operations to the base in El Centro, California. The parties in the case were given 14 days to file written objections and Judge Creatura asked both sides to submit a stipulation regarding the appropriate remedy or a stipulated briefing schedule within 30 days.

If you want to read more about the potential environmental impact of the Growler training program, head to RainshadowNorthwest.com, where local journalist Karen Sullivan has detailed the ongoing battle between local environmental activists and the Navy, in her piece titled “The Loudest Jets in The Quietest Park” (<https://rainshadownorthwest.com/2021/11/01/the-loudest-jets-in-the-quietest-park/>).

Drivers on Washington Street may have noticed that the miniature roundabout in front of the county courthouse has been partially deconstructed.

While opponents of the mini roundabout installation on Washington may have had hope that they were going to be removed, KPTZ reached out to Public Works Director Steve King and found out that the first roundabout was removed after it was hit by a truck, and it will not be replaced because the city will soon begin to install the roundabouts permanently.

The roundabouts were first temporary so that the city could determine whether or not they would help with traffic calming on Washington. A speed study showed that before the roundabouts were constructed, most drivers traveled between 29 and 30 miles per hour, but after the roundabouts went in, speeds dropped to between 26 and 28 miles per hour.

The temporary roundabouts were not solely funded by the city. The test project was a funding partnership between the neighborhood members who donated money to fund the materials for the project, while the city provided the labor to install them. The neighborhood was then able to raise more funds to have the roundabouts permanently installed.

According to King, the permanent roundabouts will be buried in the ground, making them more solid. But despite the neighborhood support of the project, not everyone is a fan of the roundabouts. Last winter, when the public works department solicited feedback from neighbors, more than 30 people submitted comments critiquing the efficacy of the roundabouts, the difficulty of making left turns with the new road layout, and the necessity of them to begin with.

And in other city news, today at 5pm, join in the conversation about the Sims Way Gateway project and boatyard expansion. The city will be hosting a virtual town hall about the project that will remove and replace the border of Poplar trees on Sims Way. You can tune in by going to the city's website (<https://cityofpt.us/publicworks/project/sims-gateway-and-boat-yard-expansion-project>) and joining the Zoom meeting. KPTZ will also be broadcasting the event live, listen in by tuning to 91.9 FM.

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.