

Good afternoon. You've got 91.9 KPTZ tuned on your FM dial or computer – here in Port Townsend Washington. I am Simon Jaynes, bringing you your local news for April 8, 2022.

COVID-19 rates in Jefferson County are still in the moderate range today, but they are on the higher end of that range and appear to be in an upward trend. The two-week case rate has increased in the last four days from 146/100,000 on Tuesday to 171/100,000 as of today. Jefferson County Public Health has reported 16 new cases of COVID-19 in the past 2 days bringing our total case count since the beginning of the pandemic to 3228. There are 36 active cases in isolation. We will await the upcoming BOCC health briefing on April 11 to find out if Dr. Allison Berry believes we are beginning to see another surge of cases. In the meantime, it is important to note that the Department of Health still recommends mask-wearing in public indoor spaces as the safest course of action. You can find the most up to date health information at the [jeffersoncountypublichealth.org](https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/202/Public-Health) under the COVID-19 tab (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/202/Public-Health>). If you have had a positive at-home test result please visit the website and follow the instructions to let the department know.

Multiple fire departments and agencies battled a large commercial fire yesterday in downtown Friday Harbor on San Juan Island. It lasted for hours and caused millions of dollars in damage. The fire in the area of Front and Spring streets was called in by a tow truck driver Thursday at 3:43am. Multiple buildings were involved, according to Kimberley M. Kimple with San Juan County Fire Protection. One of the buildings damaged dates back to the 1870s. A tavern, coffee house, kayak rental business and real estate offices are among the properties affected. Washington State ferries were used to transport firefighters and equipment from Orcas and Lopez islands to San Juan Island. The fire was mostly contained by Thursday evening but it continued to smolder and proved difficult to fully extinguish.

According to Deputy State Fire Marshal Amy Thornton, “State fire assistance has been mobilized...in support of local firefighters who have contained the Spring Street Fire located in San Juan County, near Friday Harbor. The Spring Street Fire has destroyed multiple buildings in one square block. Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste authorized the mobilization of state firefighting resources on April 7, at 7:30pm at the request of San Juan Island County Fire District 2.” No injuries were reported and there was no evidence that anyone was inside the buildings when the fire started. An investigation into the cause is ongoing and could take weeks to complete.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources announced Wednesday morning the launch of a historic carbon project on state trust lands that will offset millions of metric tons of emissions by protecting an estimated 10,000 acres of Western Washington’s forests. The project is broken into two phases and will launch in Thurston, Grays Harbor, Whatcom, and King counties. Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz launched the initiative Wednesday, signing a Commissioner’s Order and moving 3,750 acres into protection status. The forests will be entered into leases, similar to existing DNR leases for renewable energy businesses, which stipulate their use for storing carbon and generating revenue through carbon markets.

The DNR initiative represents and actual “first in the nation” in that this is the first time a state agency is using carbon markets to immediately remove stands of trees from the planned harvest schedule, many of which were slated for imminent logging. Over 900,000 carbon offsets credits will be generated from the project in the first ten years, which is equivalent to offsetting over 2 billion miles driven by gas-powered cars, according to the

EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies. According to Commissioner Hilary Franz, "This represents the next generation of carbon projects – a truly transformative approach to preserving our most ecologically valuable forests and supporting our communities."

Anyone checking local ferry schedules for route updates has likely noticed a slight delay in the Washington State ferry system's Service Restoration Plan. The WSF released an update yesterday stating, "We have had a small setback in service restoration efforts this week because of an unusually high number of relief requests among our employees, likely due to a common cold affecting many in our workforce. This is an unfortunate example of why this process will be a slow turn of the dial." The state agency went on to explain that while the immediate goal remains to restore service to pre-pandemic levels on a route-by-route basis, they can't provide set timelines for each run because of unpredictable factors like this.

There have been some areas of progress with certain services coming back online – such as late-night service on the Seattle-Bremerton and Seattle-Bainbridge routes. The Port Townsend-Coupeville route is currently running on its regular winter schedule but is not scheduled to increase service for the summer season.

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 Friday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Simon Jaynes, thanks for listening and have a great day