

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Ann Katzenbach with local news for April 22, 2022.

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The COVID-19 rate in Jefferson County remains at a high level, with 15 new cases reported. You are urged to wear a quality, well-fitting mask in indoor public places and to notify the health department if a home test for covid has been positive. A federal judge has ruled that passengers on public transportation cannot be forced to wear masks. Buses, trains and planes are among the most likely places to come in contact with the covid virus, and, despite the new ruling, most doctors and scientists strongly advise travelers to keep masked up in these enclosed spaces.

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Earth Day was first celebrated on April 22, 1970. The date marks the beginning of the modern environmental movement and was inspired by the growing awareness of pollution and ravages of a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara CA. The website Earthday.org calls this day, "the largest secular observance in the world marked by more than a billion people every year as a day of action to change human behavior and create global national and local policy changes."

Tomorrow, Saturday, at Fort Flager, volunteers are needed to help remove scotch broom. Bring your own tools, water, masks, and gloves starting at 9am and ending around 1pm. And on Sunday, April 24, there will be a beach cleanup from 9am to 1pm. Both events are organized by Friends of Fort Flager. You can volunteer at any state park clean ups even if you don't have a pass. More Sunday beach clean-ups are scheduled at Fort Worden State Park, Downtown Port Townsend, Indian Island County Park, and Shine Tidelands State Park. This is a huge effort coordinated by the Washington CoastSavers and the Port Townsend Marine Science Center. You'll find bags and other equipment being given out at most beaches and more information at [coastsavers.org](http://coastsavers.org).

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And for earth and poetry lovers, there is an Earth Day poetry event at Manresa Castle tonight at 8pm. Poets and writers will be visiting the Green Room for a low-key reading.

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The Rhododendron Festival has been taking place for almost 90 years It stopped for World War II and for COVID-19, but now it's back with all the events that have made it so popular through the decades. But this major undertaking is in dire need of more volunteers. Festival organizers warn that "Without an infusion of new life and ideas, the town's favorite festival will be no more." If you are interested in volunteering, please send an email to [rhodyfest@gmail.com](mailto:rhodyfest@gmail.com).

That goes for the Maritime Center as well. They put on three big summer events: the Wooden Boat Festival, the Race to Alaska, and 70-48, the paddle, pedal, or row race from Tacoma. These involve visitors who come from all over the world, and volunteers can lend a hand in many ways, from selling souvenirs to handing out information to answering phones and even tending bar. Go to the Maritime Center's web page and find volunteer forms under Take Action (<https://nwmaritime.org/take-action/volunteer/>).

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Turning to more weighty matters, the recent state audit of Jefferson County's accounting procedures found rather serious financial errors. According to the *Leader*, these included the misclassification of more than \$113 million dollars in ending cash and investment balances. Also, state fund revenues and expenditures were overstated by \$516 thousand dollars. In response to an email inquiry from KPTZ, County Commissioner Greg Brotherton gave assurances there is no evidence or suspicion of fraud and that the discrepancies did not affect any aspect of the current budget. He explained that the eye-catching amount of over a million dollars was not county funds, but rather special taxing districts' investment funds. New systems are now in place, according to Brotherton.

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And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Ann Katzenbach. Thanks for listening. Have a great earth-healing weekend and don't forget: there's a film festival going on. You can stream some great movies from now until May 1.