

Hello there! Thanks for tuning in to 91.9 FM KPTZ. I'm Simon Jaynes. Here is the local news for Port Townsend on this Thursday, July 7, 2022.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife issued an emergency order last week and is again reminding all boaters in the Puget Sound to be whale-wise. 13 southern resident Orcas have been declared “vulnerable.” The order applies to commercial whale watching tour boats, requiring vessels to keep at least half a nautical mile away from the endangered Southern Resident orcas this summer. The WDFW notes numerous whales in poor body condition and several pregnancies have been reported. The new restrictions go into effect for the July through September season when commercial viewing of Southern Resident orcas is otherwise permitted daily. Licensed operators are not permitted to approach Southern Residents within a half-nautical mile outside of this viewing season and this summer, the whale-watching fleet will be required to observe the same viewing distance. These are not ideal conditions for the whale watching business, but necessary caution when considering the poor health of many resident whales.

There was an independent study released the same week as WDFW's findings, which offers some background and explanation for the whale population's declining health. University of British Columbia researchers looked at the availability of prey for southern resident killer whales and they found a fluctuating level of salmon, from spawning areas on rivers had a detrimental effect on killer whale health. While it certainly isn't hard to imagine that a dwindling food supply would lead to poor outcomes for the Orcas, this type of scientific study, using data and tracking from the past 40 years is what forms the foundation of state wildlife agency decisions. The U of BC study pinpointed 4 years since the early 2000s that lacked enough available prey to where the killer whales expended more energy than they took in. Scientists call that an “energy deficit”. According to an article published in the Bellingham *Herald*, the final three years of the study, from 2018 to 2020, showed an energy deficit, as did 2008. Fanny Couture, lead researcher for the study, said in a video interview, “It really appears like they cannot take (many) more rough years”. For now, the public is mainly being asked to follow the increased restrictions, and to treat any killer whales as endangered Southern Residents, especially when unsure if one of the vulnerable whales is nearby. Anyone interested in more specifics of the food study can follow a link to it in the transcript to this broadcast.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0270523#sec009>

Twelve Washington marine state parks now allow boaters to pay moorage fees by phone. Each buoy will have a buoy number and phone number to call to make a payment. Previously, boaters at these parks had to go to shore to pay for overnight moorage. This call-in option started in 2021 as a pilot program at Jarrell Cove State Park. The program expands this year to include 10 parks in the San Juan Islands and two in Skagit County. The buoys will continue to be first-come, first-serve, and remote payment requires cell service. A transaction fee of \$4.50 will be charged for all phone registrations. The system can service boaters with annual buoy permits and boaters can still register on shore if they prefer.

For a list of the marine state parks implementing this new moorage program you can go to the Washington State Parks Website (<https://www.parks.wa.gov/civicalerts.aspx?aid=804>).

KPTZ is now reporting COVID-19 case data on a weekly basis per the Department of Public Health's weekly report. This week's numbers for Jefferson County numbers were reported by Jim Burke in Tuesday's broadcast, but it should also be noted that in Clallam County there was one more death since last week: a patient who was 88, who was vaxxed and boosted, and had a pre-existing condition.

Dr. Berry stressed in her Monday Briefing that above the age of 65, if you have underlying health issues, a second booster is recommended. In Clallam County the case rate is 737 per hundred thousand. There have been a total of 13,764 cases since the pandemic began. Six people are currently hospitalized, and there has been a total of 117 deaths.

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.