

Good afternoon, thanks for being here with us at 91.9 KPTZ FM. I'm Simon Jaynes in Port Townsend, Washington with your local news for Friday, December 9, 2022.

Yesterday, the US House of Representatives voted 350 to 80 to pass the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This legislation – which now heads to the Senate – includes the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) which contains specific projects and earmarked funds for projects in this region.

Senator Maria Cantwell secured language within the bill providing for Army Corps of Engineer Projects in Port Townsend, Port Angeles, and the Duckabush River Estuary. The WRDA is a broad-spanning piece of legislation that authorizes a wide variety of projects in the waterways of Washington. Among them are construction of a fish passage on the Howard A. Hanson Dam, which will allow salmon to reach 60 miles of ideal spawning habitat in the Upper Green River, and significant provisions to protect Southern resident orcas and marine mammals.

The bill would initiate the Port of Port Townsend Boat Haven Breakwater feasibility study, evaluating the transfer of the portion of the breakwater owned by the Port of Port Townsend to the Army Corps of Engineers. Boat Haven Marina is home to 475 commercial and recreational vessels and more than sixty marine trades businesses. The portion of the breakwater owned by the Port was originally built in the 1930s and is deteriorating. Emergency repairs have kept the breakwater functioning. But having the Army Corps assume ownership of the portion owned by the Port could lead to renovation of the breakwater to keep the boats, businesses, and the surrounding community safe.

The bill would direct the Army Corps of Engineers to also consider taking further action and providing resources to reconnect the Duckabush River to neighboring floodplains and wetlands by modifying local roads, elevating Highway 101, and rerouting utilities. The Duckabush River estuary is blocked by the highway. Restoration of a natural estuary is expected to improve habitat for Hood Canal summer chum and Chinook salmon, and reduce seasonal flooding. A new 1,613 foot-long estuary-spanning bridge is being designed to provide a wildlife corridor and help eliminate vehicle/wildlife crashes.

The WRDA also provides funding for critical stormwater and wastewater projects across the State of Washington. It allocates \$7.5 million for the City and Port of Port Angeles for wastewater infrastructure, including stormwater management. The current sewage collection system consists of both separate and combined sewer systems, and the wastewater collection system overflows during storms due to insufficient capacity. Major storm events during the winter of 2020 caused capacity issues, which highlighted the necessity of new sewer lines and pump station mains. The NDAA now heads to the Senate, where the bill is expected to be considered next week, before ultimately heading to the President's desk. You can check in with KPTZ news in the coming weeks for an update on the bill's progress.

A new grant-funded program administered by the Clallam Economic Development Council (EDC) has received quite a bit more interest than they bargained for. According to the *Peninsula Daily News*, the program being offered through the EDC website would provide free bookkeeping training to a limited number of qualified applicants. Over the first three days that the Olympic Peninsula Small Business Boost program began accepting applications on its website, 234 people applied to be one of 20 chosen to receive free classes.

In a Clallam EDC press release Executive Director Colleen McAleer said, “We’d had such a huge demand which we didn’t anticipate...We didn’t know if we’d have a solid 20.” The program is a partnership among the Clallam EDC, EDC Team Jefferson, and Peninsula and Grays Harbor colleges.

In yesterday’s *PDN* article, Suzanne Ames, president of Peninsula College, which will teach the program’s bookkeeping courses, called the response to the program “amazing.” “No one expected that,” she said, “but it says a lot to me about the fact that there really is a demand for training that leads to a job.”

The popularity of the bookkeeping training has led the OP Small Business Boost partners to examine how they might reallocate the funds; they have been working with the Department of Commerce on how that might be done. EDC Director Colleen McAleer told the *PDN*: “We are considering putting more money towards the bookkeeping program so we can increase the number of bookkeepers from 20 to maybe 30 or 35.” The program was one of 24 cities and economic development organizations awarded grants out of 120 applicants.

Tomorrow, December 10th will be the second to the last Port Townsend Farmers Market of the season. It might be hard to remember with the cold winter weather upon us, but over the next two Saturdays, locals and out of town visitors alike can still stock up on fresh, locally grown produce and artisan and prepared foods from 10am to 2pm on Tyler Street, Uptown Port Townsend.

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 Friday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I’m Simon Jaynes. Thanks for listening, and have a great weekend.