

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Jefferson and Clallam counties for Tuesday, January 10, 2023.

Washington State Ferries (WSF) is hosting two community meetings Wednesday at 12:30 and Thursday at 6pm to engage and inform those they serve. Both meetings will cover the same material and are designed to give participants the option to join the meeting that best fits their schedule. Advance registration is required to participate (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/washington-state-ferries/about-us/community-participation>).

As published yesterday on the PT *Leader* website, 32 acres of upland forest and shoreline property was donated to the Jefferson Land Trust by Carolyn and Clayton Wright after being in Carolyn's family for more than a century. Sarah Spaeth, the land trust's director of conservation and strategic partnerships, said, "To find a parcel of land in this region with mature forest that's also connected to the shoreline is very rare. It has an incredible amount of conservation value and benefits a lot of wildlife species... We're so thankful that Carolyn and Clayton chose to work with us to protect it forever in this truly generous way. It's such an amazing gift."

The parcel, located north of Brinnon along the west side of US Highway 101, includes a sliver of Hood Canal shoreline and contains key wildlife habitat, including some of the Olympic Peninsula's last remaining old-growth forest. The land is part of a migration corridor used by the Brinnon elk herd and other large mammals. Seasonal streams pass through a ravine that runs east under the highway and empties into Hood Canal, offering safe passage between forest and shoreline for wildlife. Both the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Jefferson County identify the shoreline as Priority Aquatic Habitat.

The property was initially acquired by Carolyn Wright's family, the Irles, in 1916. According to family lore, one of her ancestors, Dr. Ruth Irle Davies, provided medical services to a patient who couldn't pay the bill and offered the property as compensation instead. It was passed through the family until it came into the possession of Carolyn's uncle, Roger D. Irle, who grew up on Monroe Street in Port Townsend in the '30s and '40s. He left to attend Harvard, eventually earning a doctorate degree in sociology and later a degree in divinity, teaching sociology in Illinois and at the University of Oxford, and finally retiring to Sumner, Washington. He became tired of the constant letters he received from loggers interested in cutting the forest of the property. He offered it to his "favorite niece" but if she didn't take it, Irle said, he'd consider giving it to a conservation organization. Irle passed away in June of last year. The Wrights currently reside in Spokane and, Clayton says, had no practical use for the land. Their deep love of Puget Sound caused them to consider Irle's suggestion to give the land to a conservation organization so it would remain undeveloped.

Clayton Wright said, "We had heard about how Hood Canal has suffered from oxygen depletion and red tides, and didn't want to add one more septic system to contribute to the problem. We were also concerned that the upland forest would be logged, which would be a crime after having been preserved for so long." According to the Land Trust, development or logging would have dramatically and negatively impacted wildlife populations, disrupted the connectivity of the wildlife corridor and waterways, and risked the future of the precious old-growth forest. Spaeth said, "Walking onto the land was astonishing. The enormous old-growth cedars, firs, and maples, and the ravine, elk tracks and bear scratches on trees – it was all magical."

To guarantee the land can never be developed or deforested, the Land Trust sold the development rights to the Navy through the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program at a bargain sale rate, placing a restrictive easement on the land, officials said. The funding the nonprofit received in return will help remove

some dilapidated structures and carry out stewardship activities and monitoring on the land, now and into the future.

The City of Port Townsend will host Public Open House #1 to gather community feedback on the Port Townsend Golf Course and Mountain View Commons Concept Planning Effort on Wednesday, January 11 from 5 to 7pm at the Fort Worden Commons

(https://cityofpt.us/sites/default/files/fileattachments/engage_pt/page/20561/open_house_flyer_011123.pdf).

The in-person Open House will include childcare. You can visit the city's website for information on how to register. An online version of the Open House will be held the following day Thursday, January 12 from 4 to 5:30pm (<https://cityofpt.us/engagept/page/virtual-open-house-envision-port-townsend-golf-course-and-mountain-view-commons-0>).

In Jefferson County, the two-week COVID-19 case rate is 252 cases per 100,000 people. 38 new cases were added this week. Submit your Public Health questions to Dr. Allison Berry and Willie Bence by emailing contactus@kptz.org by Friday January 13 at noon, to be answered the following Tuesday, January 17 at 9:45 on *Morning on the Salish* with host Chris Bricker on KPTZ.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!