

This is Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, June 7, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

Jefferson and Clallam counties are beginning burn bans as fire season arrives on the North Olympic Peninsula. The *PT Leader* reports that Jefferson County's burn ban went into effect Sunday and will be lifted September 30. Clallam County's burn ban will go into effect on July 1, unless fire conditions increase before then. East Jefferson Fire Rescue said in a press release that Jefferson County has seen above-average temperatures and a lack of significant precipitation in an earlier-than-normal dry season. The burning restrictions are specific to the county's land clearing and outdoor burning activities. Recreational fires such as outdoor ovens, barbecues, and fire pits are not currently impacted.

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell joined U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator (NOAA) Rick Spinrad, Ph.D., to announce a \$3 billion framework to build climate resilience and support coastal communities through Inflation Reduction Act funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Included in the historic nationwide effort is millions of dollars that will support salmon recovery in the State of Washington. In a press release from her office, Senator Cantwell said, "This is a record amount of investment in salmon, salmon habitat, and in salmon recovery. [This funding] is about removal of fish barriers, such as levees – or what we call deadbeat dams – investments in culverts and blockages and helps to ensure salmon migration routes enable more salmon to return to their spawning grounds." This funding represents NOAA's largest-ever investment toward salmon and steelhead hatchery infrastructure. NOAA, in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, will direct funding to boost salmon production to support salmon and steelhead stocks, in turn supporting tribal fisheries, and orcas who rely on Chinook salmon for survival. These projects will expand existing hatcheries to increase salmon production, as well as construct new hatcheries. One of the top threats to Southern resident orcas is their ability to find their favorite prey, Chinook salmon. This funding will support orca recovery and access to prey.

Bears are closer than you think. Five days ago, a black bear was spotted in the Strawberry Point area of Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island. Since then, there has been an unconfirmed report of bear scat in Kala Point on social media online. Coincidentally, the National Parks Service informs us that Graves Creek Road in Olympic National Park has reopened following bridge repairs. That includes Graves Creek Campground and the East Fork Quinault Trail to Enchanted Valley. Park scientists have encountered numerous bears in this area. Visitors traveling to Enchanted Valley should be prepared for bear encounters, including bears that may be habituated to humans. Bear canisters are required for anyone camping at Enchanted Valley. And if you should be so fortunate as to encounter Ursus Americanus (a black bear), stop, remain calm, and assess the situation. If the bear seems unaware of you, move away quietly when it's not looking in your direction. Continue to observe the animal as you retreat, watching for changes in its behavior.

If a bear walks toward you, identify yourself as a human by standing up, waving your hands above your head, and talking to the bear in a low voice. Don't throw anything at the bear that the bear could interpret as a threat or a challenge. If you cannot safely move away from the bear or the bear continues toward you, scare it away by clapping your hands, stomping your feet, yelling and staring the animal in the eyes. The more it persists, the more aggressive your response should be. If you have bear spray, use it.

And, in the Race to Alaska everyone made it to Victoria in relatively calm conditions without incident. Well, no, not quite everyone. One craft – Flow State Wingfoil – made it to North Beach, a trip of just over 4 miles, due to lack of wind. The other entrants will take off tomorrow from Victoria for Stage 2. You can follow the progress of the race at R2AK.com (<https://r2ak.com/race-to-alaska-trackers/>).

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Casey Dolan and I thank you for listening.