

Hello again! This is not Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, July 6, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

Smoke could be seen from a fire that broke out on Protection Island yesterday as East Jefferson Fire Rescue sent units to investigate. As first reported in *The Leader*, East Jefferson's Battalion 13 responded to get a visual confirming the fire and Marine 16 launched, though during a conversation between myself and Fire Chief Bret Black he said that unit remained in standby and never had to be called in during the physical containment of the fire.

By the time I spoke with Chief Black Wednesday evening, he said the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had contained the fire, though the DNR could not be reached for comment. The smoke was first reported at approximately 2:20pm Wednesday coming from the south end of the island. After the fire was confirmed, local DNR units responded via air. Federal firefighters quickly arrived and East Jefferson firefighters were able to clear the scene by around 3pm. The island's only resident, Marty Bluewater, wrote on Facebook just prior to 4pm that the fire may have been caused by a maintenance mower, and called once more for a fire truck to be placed on the island.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office put out a release on social media asking people to stop calling as they were inundated with calls regarding the fire. All that attention probably stems from the August 2021 human-caused blaze consumed approximately 25 acres on the south-western side of the 379-acre federally protected refuge. As part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has jurisdiction over the 48 acres on the west end of the island known as the Zella M. Schultz Seabird Sanctuary. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's website, 70% of nesting seabirds in the Puget Sound area and Straits of San Juan de Fuca depend on the 100-acre island's unique habitat, including 50% of the last remaining tufted puffins in Puget Sound.

And that was the second time in as many days that the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office was inundated with calls. In correspondence between myself and Detective Sergeant Brett Anglin, he said that the Sheriff's Department responded to at least 46 complaints about fireworks on the 4th of July, and added that there were likely many more that were not documented due to the large volume of calls at the time. While officers issued a plethora of warnings to those ignoring the ban, Anglin noted that one individual in particular refused to comply and was issued two \$1000 fines and warned for incarceration on the next violation. In regards to the fireworks issue, Anglin said, "To be successful in enforcing the law, deputies must carefully balance their interactions with the public to attempt to obtain willful compliance with the law. This is a community problem that will require a community solution to fix. History has shown that forcing law compliance through fines or arrest (especially new laws) should be the last resort. Education over enforcement should be a priority and not purely thrown on the backs of our men and women in law enforcement."

In better, wetter news, the Center for Whale Research said it has received photos showing what appears to be a new calf in L pod, one of the two groups of South Resident Orcas native to our local waters. Monika Wieland-Shields at the Orca Behavior Institute alerted the group to a Facebook post by Howie Tom showing a calf with members of the L77 matriline on June 19 off Tofino, British Columbia. The Center for Whale Research released those photos on their website at <https://www.whaleresearch.com/>. This new calf appears to be over three weeks old and would be the first new calf in L pod since L125 was born in 2021. In a press release on

June 23, the group noted that researchers still need to conduct on-the-water encounters with the orcas to determine who the calf's mother is, assess its health, and assign it an alphanumeric designation. Since that time, they have not reported any further encounters with the L pod.

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. This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.