

This is Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, July 26, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

According to the Washington state Department of Ecology this past Monday, Jefferson County is in a drought emergency along with 11 other counties in Washington state. The rest of the state is a drought advisory area. Early snowmelt, a lack of spring rain, and low stream flows have prompted the declaration with only 49% of the usual rainfall for June recorded for the state, thereby denying soil the moisture to face the summer heat.

In a press release, the Department of Ecology said, “Streamflows and reservoir levels in some areas are far below normal, with forecasts indicating little likelihood that conditions will improve this summer. These conditions are leading to undue hardship for water users, including small community water systems and farmers.” New legislation passed this spring makes \$3 million in emergency drought funds available as grants to support communities, irrigation districts, tribes, and other public entities facing hardships. Declaring a drought emergency also allows the Department of Ecology to process emergency water right permits and transfers.

And in a connected story, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources is declaring the following burn restrictions on DNR-protected land in part or all of Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, King, Mason, Pierce and Thurston counties: Effective July 21, 2023, the following are prohibited on DNR-protected lands across the Central Lowlands FDRA: Campfires, recreational fires, rule burning, permit burning, and charcoal and briquettes. Cooking stoves, barbecues, and recreational fire pits fueled by propane or gas with a shutoff valve remain authorized. Check with your local fire district and county as additional restrictions may apply. Fireworks and incendiary devices, such as exploding targets, sky lanterns, or tracer ammunition, are illegal on all DNR-protected lands.

Registered Nurse Lisa Markli of Port Angeles was found dead in Olympic National Park last Saturday, some two weeks after her retirement from the North Olympic Healthcare Network. According to park officials, Markli, 62, was backpacking alone on the Bailey Range Traverse, a remote, off-trail route. A Coast Guard helicopter located her body at 12:55pm Saturday below Stephen Peak above the Hoh River, and soon after a ground search team confirmed her identity. The search had begun Thursday for Markli after she was reported overdue. Search teams were composed of Olympic Mountain Rescue, Seattle Mountain Rescue, Jefferson County Search and Rescue, Everett Mountain Rescue, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and National Park Service personnel. In addition, aerial resources continued to search the area.

Originally from Idaho, Markli attended Pacific Lutheran University, where she received a bachelor’s degree in biology. She taught anatomy/physiology, kinesiology and pathology in the Peninsula College Massage Therapy Program and became an RN in 2004. She had reportedly hiked the Bailey Range Traverse before. With her husband, adventurer and author Chris Duff, she offered kayaking lessons in 2016 and participated in many outdoor adventures. She had lived in Port Angeles since 1988.

Numerous travel restrictions are popping up this summer on the Olympic Peninsula. The Washington State Department of Transportation Blog announces that, as part of a culvert replacement project at Leland Creek and

two of its tributaries, a section of US 101 will close starting next week. From July 31 to August 21, US 101 will be closed between Lords Lake Loop Road and Leland Cut Off Road. The culverts will be replaced one at a time to allow access for local traffic. Non-commercial traffic will detour onto Center Road. Commercial traffic will use State Route 3 in Shelton and the SR 104 Hood Canal Bridge. And a culvert under US 101 between Gardiner and Sequim will be replaced. From 7pm August 13 to Friday night, August 18, US 101 near the Jefferson and Clallam county line will be down to one alternating lane at Eagle Creek.

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.