

This is Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, September 20, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

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The Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the Puget Sound Partnership have announced the award of 150 grants in 29 counties, culminating in a nearly \$82 million investment in recovering at-risk salmon species, according to a new press release by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation office. Of those 150 grants, 66 – totaling nearly \$54 million – will target projects in and around Puget Sound. The grants focus on improving salmon habitat and conserving shorelines and riverbanks. The grants awarded to Jefferson County cover many projects and total nearly \$4 million. Included among those projects is \$334,000 awarded to the Jefferson Land Trust for the conservation and restoration of Lower Chimacum Creek. Clallam County will receive nearly \$3 million and Kitsap County will receive \$2 million. King County will receive nearly \$4.5 million.

Funding for the grants came from the state Legislature through the salmon recovery account and the Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration fund, which are supported by the sale of state bonds and from the federal government through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. Recovery efforts during the past 25 years have helped some populations approach recovery goals, such as Hood Canal summer chum and Snake River fall Chinook, while others, such as Puget Sound Chinook and upper Columbia River spring Chinook, continue to fall further behind and remain in crisis. For full detail of all the projects, please go to <https://rco.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/NEWS-274-SalmonPSARGrants.pdf>.

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According to the *Peninsula Daily News*, wildfires ignited by lightning last month in Olympic National Park swelled during a huge growth spurt this past weekend, prompting the closure of more trails in the park, while winds brought a smoke haze to the lowlands as well as ash to some areas of the North Olympic Peninsula. The Delabarre Fire in the Delabarre Creek drainage in the remote south-central portion of the park, which only last week was about one acre in size, exploded into an estimated 1,500 acres. Warm temperatures and low relative humidity pushed the spread of the Delabarre Fire to the northeast over the ridge and into the Buckinghorse Creek drainage. Smoke seeped into the lowlands and led to reports of not only smoke but also ash – something few residents have seen from park wildfires – on Deer Park and Lost Mountain roads and even in downtown Sequim. Much of that smoke apparently is from the Low Divide Fire in the North Fork Quinault drainage, estimated at 274 acres last Sunday. Despite the visual confirmation of the presence of smoke, the Olympic Region Clean Air Agency and others that monitor air pollution say air quality in Clallam and Jefferson counties is good. Seven fires are burning in the park now. Park fire officials continue to maintain their mostly hands-off strategy to the fires since none threaten critical infrastructure or communities. Overall, fires will be allowed to burn themselves out.

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State House Republicans are pushing a bill to provide monetary relief to drivers in the 2024 session. The state's cap-and-trade program, passed by Democrats and Governor Inslee in 2021, has been wildly successful and raised about three times more revenue than anticipated, but it also contributed to the increase in the cost of gasoline by about 50 additional cents per gallon. In a press release, John Sattgast, Senior Public Information Officer Broadcast Coordinator for Washington State House Republicans, says the new proposal is called the Carbon Auction Relief or “CAR” Payment Program. Put forth by Representative April Connors of Kennewick, it would send excess revenue from the carbon tax to vehicle owners in the form of a check. Connors elaborates, “This could be up to \$100 per registered vehicle. So, for a family driver of two, that would be about \$200.

We're hoping that those overages could be, when you renew your car tab the next year, up to \$250 per registered vehicle or up to \$500 a family.” Republicans assert that Connors’ proposal wouldn't change efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and would use the excess carbon auction profits to provide relief to struggling Washington families.

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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](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Casey Dolan and I thank you for listening.