

Hello again! This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, November 16, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

As first reported by Radio Pacific, an effort to stop the harvest of a 126-acre forest along the Elwha River known as the Power Plant Forest continues tomorrow when opponents will appear in Clallam County Superior Court. On June 30, the Earth Law Center, the Center for Whale Research, and the Keystone Species Alliance filed a legal action challenging the “Power Plant” timber sale. That challenge was denied by Judge Simon Barnhart and the timber auction was conducted on July 26.

Environmental activists attempted to stop the timber sale due to its status as a legacy forest. Legacy forests are defined as forests that are naturally re-grown second growth and not monoculture plantation forests. They contain old growth trees, complex canopies and understories, have higher biodiversity, higher resilience to forest fires, and sequester more carbon than plantation forests. If left alone, they’re our future old growth forests, but they’re not currently protected by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The company that won the timber sale bid has not yet started logging the Power Plant Forest, and an attorney representing the Earth Law Center is going to request in court Friday that there be a 3 month halt on logging activity at the site because the DNR has caused a 3 month delay in their case.

The lawsuit alleges that DNR failed to consider how the logging could impact salmon and orca populations. The Power Plant section also borders popular recreation routes such as the Olympic Adventure Trail, and they say timber harvest is incompatible with the ongoing restoration of the Elwha River since the dam removals that were completed in 2014. Joining them in opposing this timber harvest are State Representatives Mike Chapman and Steve Tharinger; and the City of Port Angeles has submitted a Trust Land Transfer application to the DNR.

For those interested in getting out to see more forests like the Power Plant, the Washington State Parks Department has announced its free days for 2024 on their website at <https://discoverpass.wa.gov/>. You won't need to pay for a Discover Pass when visiting Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, or Fish and Wildlife lands on free days. The dates include a number of state and national holidays, and there still remains one free day left this year on the day after Thanksgiving for those who want to work off some of that turkey.

And, while the holiday season can be a celebration for many of us, for the unhoused these cold days can be difficult. Thankfully, today marks the opening of the Winter Welcoming Center in downtown Port Townsend. This will be the fifth year that the Jefferson Interfaith Action Coalition operates the Pope Marine Building as a warming center for those who suffer from homelessness. The warming center is open seven days a week from 8:30am until 12:30pm and longer when the weather is severe. They provide warmth, WiFi, bathrooms, and community for those who have nowhere else to go.

The Winter Welcoming Center is supported in part thanks to the efforts of Give Jefferson who are currently running a donation drive through the end of the year. Give Jefferson supports a number of programs in our community for people living without homes, without food, and without medical and mental health care. The funds they raise support the local frontline organizations – like the Winter Welcoming Center – that provide safety net resources to meet needs like housing and shelter, food security, healthcare, children and family services, education, advocacy, and hope! If you’d like to make a contribution to help our neighbors weather

financial challenges and uncertainty, go to <https://www.givejefferson.org/>. Your generosity will make a difference to someone in need of support.

Lastly, if you want to thank the city for their part in helping the Winter Welcoming Center continue its efforts, pay attention because the City of Port Townsend announced changes to how they'll be taking written public comments at city council meetings. Effective December 1, the email address previously used to receive comments will no longer be active. All public comments will need to be submitted using a new form on their website. You can find the Public Comment submission link on the City Council webpage at <https://cityofpt.us/citycouncil>.

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.