

This is Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, December 27, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

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Folks, we had an earthquake recently and it was nearby. Numerous news sources report a 4.1 magnitude earthquake occurred 3.7 miles west of Quilcene, 31 miles below the surface on Christmas Eve morning. The Pacific Northwest Seismic Network reported the quake as occurring at 7:14am. People who felt the quake ranged from British Columbia to Bremerton.

Two prominent fault lines – the Seattle and Tacoma faults – run below the Puget Sound region.

- The Seattle Fault Zone passes directly under Seattle and follows approximately the same path as Interstate 90. It's responsible for some of the largest earthquakes in the region in recent memory, such as the Tacoma 6.7 magnitude earthquake in 1965 and the 6.8 magnitude Nisqually earthquake in 2001.
- The Tacoma Fault is a series of smaller connecting fault lines and the primary fault line within the Tacoma Fault Zone is a 35-mile-long rupture between Kent and Union. That fault zone is responsible for many of Puget Sound's more minor quakes and is capable of producing a quake up to 7.0 in magnitude, according to a study by the Washington Military Department.

There have been no reports of damage.

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A press release from US Senator Maria Cantwell's office celebrates that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Airport Improvement Program, which Cantwell has championed, has funded improvements at 37 airports across the State of Washington in 2023. A total of approximately \$190.4 million dollars went directly to Washington state airports large and small during the year for projects to modernize runways, maintenance areas, and equipment. In addition, the State of Washington received a \$1,000,000 planning grant. The money came from the Federal Aviation Administration's three primary airport grant programs: Airport Infrastructure Grants, Airport Terminal Program, and the Airport Improvement Program.

Among these appropriations has been one and a quarter million dollars for the Olympic Peninsula. \$804,000 has been allocated to the Jefferson County International Airport to construct a taxiway and install Airfield Guidance Signs; \$300,000 for William R Fairchild International Airport in Port Angeles to construct a taxilane, construct a taxiway, and to construct and improve a hangar; and \$150,000 for Bowerman Airport in Hoquiam to reconstruct an apron and taxilane.

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And some very good news: according to the Pacific Whale Watch Association (PWWA) and Orca Behavior Institute (OBI), some whale species seem to be increasing. The PWWA represents ecotourism companies and tracks sightings of marine mammals spotted while on the water. OBI collects year-round data on killer whales "in the Salish Sea and beyond." According to the groups, whale sightings showed a record-breaking number of Bigg's orcas throughout the Salish Sea of British Columbia and Washington state. Bigg's orcas feed on sea lions and seals, which rebounded after programs to reduce their populations were eliminated.

Unfortunately, there were still few sightings of Southern Resident killer whales, which primarily feed on Chinook salmon. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said the population has shown an overall declining trend since 1995, prompting efforts to manage fisheries, slow down vessels and restore salmon habitats. For all types of whales, PWWA said vessels can help by slowing down, and people can help by not

polluting oceans with debris like plastic balloons. As for slowing down near whales, there are some regulations and recommendations in place. San Juan County also worked with groups like whale watchers to use a whale warning flag in areas where whales are swimming. And the Quiet Sound program is working to get voluntary buy-in from shipping companies and cruise ships to slow down as well, with 10% more vessels in 2023 able to meet recommended speed targets.

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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.