

Hello again. This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, January 4, 2024 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

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I haven't been one to cite *The Leader* much, but I have to commend them for running a front page story on the controversy regarding Indian Island Naval Base and its supply of Tomahawk missiles to Israel. Their story this week quoted County Commissioner Kate Dean who took a 2-week trip to Israel in 2017 where she met with an Israeli military general who was all too familiar with Jefferson County, noting with appreciation that Israel gets many of their Tomahawk Missiles from Indian Island. The Tomahawk Missile is a long-range cruise missile that has come under fire for its use in modern conflicts like the war in Iraq.

Local activists have taken up the cause, adding fuel to an old fight against the military depot's presence. Using federal tax information gathered by the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, they estimate that Washington State supplied more than \$118 million in military aid to Israel in 2023. Over the decades, Jefferson County residents have voiced their concerns about the existence of the Naval Magazine in their backyard. And now, activists are asking for a renewed effort to contact federal representatives in opposition to using our place of residence as a loading dock for weapons used in the Israel-Palestine conflict. They note that the easiest way to find and contact your local representative is by downloading the 5CALLS app at [5calls.org](https://5calls.org).

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Speaking of making noise on the water, organizers of Washington State's Quiet Sound project say they have recruited more vessel operators for the second year of a voluntary, seasonal slowdown of shipping to help protect endangered killer whales in Puget Sound. The project seeks voluntary speed limits when killer whales are on the move between Admiralty Inlet and Puget Sound.

During the 2022-23 season, 53% of vessels met the recommended speed targets: 14.5 knots or less for vehicle carriers, cruise ships, and container vessels; and 11 knots or less for bulk carriers and tankers. Underwater noise intensity was reduced by almost half in the slowdown zone, according to organizers, and orcas were present in the slowdown area for 36 days of the 80-day slowdown, or 45% of the time. During the first six weeks of the current slowdown period that started in October, 63% of vessels were able to meet the recommended speed targets, a 10% increase from last season. Moreover, organizers say this was the first season that the voluntary slowdown overlapped with cruise season. Of 26 cruise ship transits in the area, 22 vessels participated in the slowdown.

The current slowdown is in effect until January 12 and takes place in the inbound and outbound shipping lanes of Admiralty Inlet and Puget Sound which are critical habitat for the endangered Southern Resident killer whales. During fall and winter, the orcas swim, rest and forage for salmon in Puget Sound and adjoining waters. Underwater noise has been identified by scientists as a major threat to orcas because it interferes with their ability to hunt, navigate, and communicate with each other. Slowing down reduces underwater noise and quieter waters give orcas better opportunities to hunt and communicate with their pods.

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It may not be so quiet at Point Hudson, however, as the Port of Port Townsend announced the contractors working to replace the south jetty have begun working 24-hour shifts 6 days a week to help complete the project. Doubling the work is expected to get the in-water portion of the project done by the end of January, said Port of Port Townsend Executive Director Eron Berg. That end-of-January date is a must set by federal and state fisheries biologists to ensure safe passage of young salmon and other protected species.

Despite the added hours, however, Berg said the noise impact should be minimal. Almost all of the steel pilings had been vibrated into place already, with a dozen final ones pounded past obstructions by a pile-driver. While a few have yet to be leveled, most of the remaining in-water work involves installing tie rods and placing an estimated 5,000 tons of armor rock inside the pilings. Based on Orion's work last year rebuilding the north jetty, Berg said neighbors may hear crane operations and rock placement, but not for long and hopefully not too disruptive.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturdays. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.