

Hello again. This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, January 18, 2024 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

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Friends of Otto Smith will be relieved to know he is recovering after experiencing a heart attack during the Port Townsend City Council meeting Tuesday night. Smith collapsed while giving public comment on a resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza at the meeting on January 16. Thankfully, another person giving public comments that night happened to be an ER nurse at Jefferson Health and she and a friend jumped into action, immediately giving Smith CPR before EMT personnel arrived to resuscitate him. He was then sent to Saint Michael's hospital in Silverdale. One eyewitness noted on social media that they had spoken to Smith just before he was going to give public comment and Smith was upset the ceasefire resolution was pushed toward the end of the meeting. The update from Otto's Kristin to KPTZ Producer Pat Rodgers on Wednesday night noted that he is okay and at the University of Washington Medical Center.

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On the forest front, this Friday, January 19, at 1pm the Jefferson County Superior Court is scheduled to hear an important case for protecting older "legacy" forests in Jefferson County by preventing the "Last Crocker" timber sale. The hearing is on a motion for a preliminary injunction to stop a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) timber sale in Quilcene. If the court approves the motion, it will prevent DNR from logging the area until the judge issues a final decision in the case, which could take months.

The Legacy Forest Defense Coalition filed the lawsuit this month alleging multiple and continuing violations by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources of its own Habitat Conservation Plan and Policy for Sustainable Forests which I have previously reported has been the subject of a number of lawsuits. The fate of thousands of acres of rare, old lowland forests hangs in the balance as the DNR, under the leadership of Commissioner Hilary Franz, proceeds to allow logging companies access to what could otherwise become the old growth forests the DNR has committed to expanding but has yet to do.

Federal permits require that the DNR maintain or restore between 10 to 15 percent of state forestlands to old growth conditions by the year 2096. Currently, DNR is behind in meeting its old-growth forest targets across most of Western Washington.

If you need a better picture of what's at stake here, drive north on Highway 101 toward Discovery Bay, then turn right on Leland Valley Road East, and you will see Douglas fir trees towering close to 180 feet over the roadway. Up on the hillside to your right, is one of the last remaining century-old, lowland forests on the north end of the Olympic Peninsula. This forest was selectively logged sometime in the 1920s and left to grow back on its own. Because this forest has never been sprayed with herbicides and was allowed to regenerate naturally, it closely resembles the natural and old growth forests that once dominated the Olympic Peninsula.

There are about 76 acres of older, natural, structurally complex forest that would be destroyed by the "Last Crocker" timber sale. Activists are asking the court to invalidate the Board's approval of the timber sale based on the DNR's failure to account for the timber sale's probable and significant adverse impacts to the environment, and to prohibit DNR from commercially logging any part of the forest that may be classified as structurally complex.

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Finally, a bit of upbeat local business news: Three years after the fire that closed it, the Nordland General Store on Marrowstone Island is rising from the ashes with a grand re-opening scheduled to happen during Tractor Days, the last weekend of May. The new incarnation will be formed as a cooperative corporation, or “co-op.” Their founding volunteer Board of Directors are all islanders, with years of combined experience in business, community organizations, and eating and buying local.

The store traces its roots back to 1922, when brothers Elmer and Harry Johnson began operating a small trading post from the shores of Mystery Bay. A ferry boat brought island-produced eggs, poultry, vegetables, and strawberries to the markets of Port Townsend and Seattle in exchange for dry goods and animal feed for Islanders. The co-op plans to continue that tradition by showcasing local farmers, producers, and makers. So far, they’ve raised start-up funding from over 30 founding investors, and hope to raise additional funding from the broader community. If you’d like to be a part of this new venture or just learn more, go to <https://www.nordlandgeneralstore.com/>.

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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.