

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I am Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

The Department of Natural Resources reports that Cooke Aquaculture Pacific has dismissed its own appeal of the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR's) cancellation of Cooke's net pen leases at Rich Passage and Hope Island. Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz said, "Washingtonians should remember this day. This is truly the end of dangerous and destructive net pens in the state. Cooke Aquaculture has finally realized that its fight to continue to put our waters and salmon at risk was futile. And, as the courtroom battles and corporate tantrums fade away, we're left with a Washington with cleaner waters, stronger habitats, and healthier salmon."

The story began on August 19, 2017 when 300,000 Atlantic salmon escaped after a faulty net-pen at the Cooke Aquaculture facility near Cypress Island collapsed. DNR terminated that lease as a result and fined Cooke \$332,000. Cooke was also found negligent by the state Department of Ecology. Then the DNR terminated Cooke's Port Angeles lease for failing to maintain the facility in a safe condition. In 2018 the State Legislature took action and phased out Atlantic salmon farming.

In 2022, Commissioner Franz signed a Commissioner's Order prohibiting commercial finfish net pen aquaculture on state-owned aquatic lands, saying "there is no way to safely farm finfish in open sea net pens without jeopardizing our struggling native Salmon." In May 2023, Cooke was required to remove the last pen from Washington waters in Rich Passage. And, in early 2024, DNR began an official rule-making to ban fin fish net-pen aquaculture in Washington state.

The skating community in Port Townsend is coming together to make the local skatepark accessible for nighttime use. As of yesterday afternoon, they've raised \$3,000 on GoFundMe to get solar powered lights installed. In a GoFundMe press release, Samantha Stromberg, a spokesperson for the effort, says, "As many of us that have lived in town know, the fall and winter months can get quite dreary and dark. It becomes a challenge to use the skatepark especially for those in school or with 9-5 jobs. The solution I thought of was seeking lighting for the skatepark. I initially proposed my idea to the city council which then turned into my senior project. We've teamed with SOL, a solar-powered lighting company, which fits the needs of preserving our Victorian town by making sure the look of the poles will match existing light poles around town. The lights will be on a timer so for those worried about excess lighting and maintaining a dark skies city, this should help."

Field carrier landing practice operations for aircraft stationed at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Complex are taking place this week, including landing practices at the Outlying Landing Field in Coupeville this past Monday and Tuesday evenings. Expect to hear the sound of Growlers this mid-afternoon, then evening through tonight, Thursday night to late night, and early late Friday morning to early afternoon. Comments, including noise complaints, can be directed to the station's comment line at 360-257-6665 or via an email to naswi_noise_comments@us.navy.mil. All other questions can be directed to the public affairs office at 360-257-2286.

And if that's not enough to satisfy your military fascination, the Navy announces that Naval Magazine Indian Island will conduct a security training exercise tomorrow. Training activities will take place on the magazine's pier and may include boats on the water, the use of blank ammunition, loud sirens, and bright blue flashing lights. The public could hear announcements from the base's loudspeaker notification system during the exercise, the Navy said in a press release.

And this should make everyone feel good: Even more than what was reported last week here on KPTZ, more than half of Jefferson County's registered voters handed in their ballots for the presidential primary election, making the county tops in the state for voter turnout. The second round of ballot-counting in the all-mail election found that the turnout in Jefferson County was 52%, well surpassing the state turnout of 30%.

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. I'm Casey Dolan and I thank you for listening.