

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, June 11, 2024.

Your weekly reminder that the intersection of State Route 19 and State Route 104 is closed for the next few weeks as crews build the roundabout at that intersection. WashDOT has set up temporary signals at the intersection of Center Valley Road and State Route 104 so taking a left to head toward the bridge will be safer. But it will add a few miles to your trip.

This is from The Peninsula Daily News: It was a windy start to the 2024 Race to Alaska – the R2AK – and while several boats were able to complete the first leg of the race to Victoria, British Columbia, several others had to wait overnight before crossing the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Jesse Wiegel, race boss for Northwest Maritime, which hosts the race said, “There was wind in the morning but didn’t reach its full crescendo until about 4pm (Sunday), by which point most boats were off of the water.”

Teams have 36 hours to reach Victoria for what’s known as the proving ground. With gusts between 20 mph and 30 mph, Wiegel said several boats took refuge inside the Dungeness Spit overnight and made the crossing early Monday morning, when the weather was calmer. Two human-powered teams, the stand-up paddleboarder SUP N IRISH and two-person rowboat Hard on Port, took refuge in the San Juan Islands. As of mid-day Monday, two teams were still on their way to Victoria with only hours to spare. According to the race’s live tracker, the one-person pedal-power vessel team Barely Human was nearing Victoria Harbor while SUP N IRISH was still inside the San Juan Islands.

Forty-three teams left from Port Townsend on Sunday – only one entrant, team Fossil Fuel, wasn’t able to make it to the starting line – and at least 32 will leave Victoria on Wednesday. Seven of the teams that left Port Townsend intended to just reach Victoria, Wiegel said, but of the teams that were planning to run the whole race, several had already bowed out. Wiegel said it’s often the case that the smaller, human-powered vessels struggle to make the crossing, particularly as the weather picks up over the day.

Hard on Port, the two-person rowboat team, called from Friday Harbor to say they would not be making it to Victoria. The monohull sailboat team Occam’s Laser – whose destination was just Victoria – suffered a broken boom and had to be towed by the Canadian Coast Guard. The one-man sailing dinghy team Make Fetch Happen also pulled out after taking shelter near Sequim Bay.

This is the last year the Race to Alaska, or R2AK, will be held annually, as Northwest Maritime announced earlier this year the race will be moving to a biennial schedule. It’ll be flip-flopping with the WA360. The first team to reach Ketchikan will walk away with \$10,000 in prize money.

Last year, the monohull sailboat team We Brake for Whales came in first with a time of five days, 18 hours and 59 minutes. The last team to arrive, the kayaker Sporting Chance, clocked in at 18 days, 23 hours, and nine minutes.

The only rules of the race are vessels cannot be motorized and no help can be pre-arranged along the way. Teams are free to stop and make use of facilities at any of the towns along the route, but support teams are not allowed. Remaining teams will leave from Victoria at noon Wednesday.

The custom-built trimaran team Malolo was the first to arrive in Victoria, making the crossing in less than five hours. That wasn’t a surprise, Wiegel said, as Malolo was the fastest boat in this year’s fleet.

By the way, an absolutely stunning photo (from Steve Mullensky/for *Peninsula Daily News*) is in that article from the *PDN* (<https://www.peninsuladailynews.com/news/windy-start-hampers-several-craft-in-race-to-alaska>) of the boats setting off at sunrise from Port Townsend on Sunday. The clouds and the colors were quite spectacular Sunday morning.

Next year is the return of the WA360, which is a race that is round trip from Port Townsend – “a rollicking counterclockwise slide through the waterways of Washington,” according to the Race to Alaska website (<https://r2ak.com/>).

Also in the *Peninsula Daily News* today: Naval Magazine Indian Island will conduct a security training exercise on Thursday. Training activities will occur near Port Townsend Bay and may include harbor security boats engaging in high-speed maneuvers, vehicles with lights and sirens, and announcements over the base’s loudspeaker notification system during the exercise, the Navy said in a press release.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can reach out to us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.