

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Thursday, November 21, 2024.

Tuesday's windstorm saw peak gusts of 61 miles per hour at Point Hudson, and spawned power outages for over 2600 households around Jefferson County, according to the Jeffco PUD. The largest outage affected Marrowstone Island, Oak Bay Road, and Center Road south to Dabob Road, with additional outages on Cook Avenue and F Street in uptown Port Townsend. Thanks to our PUD crews, all customers were restored by the wee hours of Wednesday morning.

According to the *Port Townsend Leader*, the Port Townsend City Council voted Monday to authorize the city manager to sign a nearly \$2.4 million contract with Active Construction Inc. to tackle the Water Street Sewer Replacement Project. The project, which is scheduled to begin this coming January, will take approximately 8 to 10 weeks, although equipment staging may begin as early as mid December.

The need for repairs was first identified in 2022, when a section of the sewer main near Gaines and Water streets failed, creating a sinkhole. The city found that the asbestos concrete pipe was rotting away due to gas emitted from the sewage. A second portion of the line failed this past August, near the ferry terminal. The area to be reconstructed will be the portion of Water Street between the Kearney Street Oval-About and the Ferry Terminal.

The *Port Townsend Leader* also reports that Port Townsend Paper Corp – or PTPC – has embarked on the process of getting a new operations permit that would limit the amount of dangerous chemicals flowing into area waterways and would add additional testing measures. Depending on the outcome of a state environmental review and public comment period, the mill could face a new set of requirements and the undertaking of an odor minimization study.

PTPC operates the unbleached pulp and paper mill in Port Townsend. Wastewater discharges from the mill, which have been going on for more than 100 years, are regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency through the state Department of Ecology. The proposed requirements and testing are part of the state's review of the mill's Draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The Clean Water Act prohibits anybody from discharging "pollutants" through a "point source" into a "water of the United States" unless they have an NPDES permit.

The permit contains limits on what can be discharged, monitoring and reporting requirements, and other provisions to ensure that the discharge does not hurt water quality or people's health. The mill's existing permit was issued in September of 2013, and was administratively extended in April of 2018. The draft permit imposes new limits on certain chemicals which have been proven toxic to humans, fish, and other animals, and gives PTPC four years from its effective date to prove compliance, and would also require new studies of pollutants in Port Townsend Bay, sediment monitoring near the company's dock, requirements to minimize spills of pulping liquors and turpentine to the wastewater treatment plant, an odor minimization study and other items, and requires annual progress reports throughout the permit cycle. A public hearing on the draft permit is scheduled for 5:30pm on December 4 in building 326 at Fort Worden, but written comments can also be sent to the Department of Ecology headquarters in Lacey before noon on December 12. Once the comment period ends, state officials will conduct a review and make a final decision.

And finally, Aircraft carrier-based flight training operations are happening again at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island. The training involves lower altitude flight training in close vicinity to the airfield, so Port Townsend residents will likely see and hear Navy jets as the pilots perform repetitive “touch and go” landings, which simulate landing on an aircraft carrier. The skills required to complete carrier landings must be practiced by pilots of all experience and skill levels to maintain proficiency. The current schedule includes Coupeville-area trainings in the late afternoons to evenings November 18 to today. And then from tomorrow on till the 24th, trainings are scheduled for the late morning to early afternoon.

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 Diane Walker. Thank you for listening.