

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke with your local news and commentary for Thursday, December 12, 2024.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WASHDOT or WSDOT) issued a press release with some good news. According to one of the nation's largest bicycle advocacy organizations, there is no state more supportive of people who travel by bike than Washington. Washington leads the U.S. in fostering bicycling and systems that support it, earning it the top spot in the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly State rankings for 2024.

The competitive ranking program evaluates states based on their commitments to bicycling across five categories: infrastructure and funding, education and encouragement, traffic laws and practices, policies and programs, and evaluation and planning. Gov. Jay Inslee said, "Making it easier for more people to cycle safely to work, school, or for fun has been an important part of our transportation planning. Many of these efforts are supported by our Climate Commitment Act which is paving the way for more riders and also educating them so they can ride confidently."

According to the League, Washington received top ranks due to the state's comprehensive attention to the issues faced by cyclists as well as its longstanding and continued leadership that moves bicycling forward. The advocacy group highlighted Washington's Statewide School-Based Bicycle Education Program as a national model for what state government, local agencies, and bicycle-education organizations can accomplish together. It also pointed to the state's planning work that provides safe bicycle infrastructure and design guidance.

Washington has an extensive history of support for cyclists. The state has taken the program's top spot for all but one year since the survey launched in 2008. Washington was rated third in the nation in 2022, ending the state's 14-year run at the top of the rankings. Rankings were not awarded in 2023.

- Bicycle Friendly State rankings: <https://bikeleague.org/new-bicycle-friendly-state-rankings-highlight-progress-and-challenges-for-safer-cycling-across-america/>.
- Statewide School-Based Bicycle Education Program: <https://www.waesd.org/services/bike-ed/>.

From the PT *Leader* yesterday: the Jefferson County Land Trust, which acquired the 853-acre Chimacum Ridge property in December of 2023, plans to open the Chimacum Ridge Community Forest to the public in 2025. It will host public tours before it officially opens. (The trust is a private, nonprofit conservation organization that works to preserve open space, working lands and habitat in Jefferson County.)

The forest (located between Center and Beaver Valley in East Jefferson County) will offer ecological, economic and social benefits, promoting a regenerative relationship with the land, according to the trust's website. Staff and volunteers are focused on building infrastructure, including trails, signage, parking, and policies for future use. The forest will feature walking, hiking, horseback riding trails, and wheelchair-accessible paths, all nestled among 40-year-old Douglas firs, western red cedars, western hemlocks, and Sitka spruce trees. The forest will also drive a local wood economy, providing timber and other non-timber resources, while still providing critical wildlife habitat and sequestering carbon. Staff are working on completing ecological studies and permitting necessary for sustainable timber harvesting.

The Land Trust will host a few free driving and walking tours of the community forest this month. More information can be found at <https://act.saveland.org/event/chimacum-ridge-public-tours/e584030>.

And in a related story, this reporter attended the Olympic Housing Trust (OHT) Holiday Party on Monday and Kellen Lynch, Outreach and Development Manager, spoke about the ways in which OHT is providing permanently affordable housing to communities on the north Olympic Peninsula. They have been doing just that in Clallam county and now they are working to do the same thing here in Jefferson County with the Dundee Hill Project, made possible by a generous land donation. That project is set to break ground in the spring of 2025.

Another interesting collaboration is developing between the Olympic Housing Trust and the Jefferson Land Trust. Jefferson Land Trust is the owner of approximately 16 acres of property in Chimacum. That property has farmland, open space, and creek habitat, and is managed to protect these natural features in perpetuity. The Land Trust has long considered the potential to dedicate a portion of that property to be permanently used for affordable housing in support of its focus on protecting local farmland and its longstanding commitment to supporting our local farmers, farms, and food system.

On December 30, KPTZ will air an *Attention Please!* and include interviews with Kellen Lynch of the Olympic Housing Trust and Richard Tucker, the Director of the Jefferson Land Trust, to discuss this collaboration, plus the upcoming event of Chimacum Ridge.

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. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.