

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nhatt Nichols, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

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Early on Wednesday, May 7, activists erected a tree-sit and blockade of a logging road off Walkabout Way in Port Angeles, blocking access to the Parched Timber Sale. Logging operations set to begin that morning were halted, and one person occupied a tree-sit anchored to debris blocking the road while around 50 supporters gathered nearby. Olympic Forest Defenders say that the 192-acre forest slated to be cut is one of the last low-elevation mature forests in the Elwha watershed, and contains complex ecosystems, critical habitat, and developing old-growth characteristics.

On May 6, A Clallam County Judge granted a 14-day temporary restraining order pausing logging operations after an appeal by the Legacy Forest Defense Coalition and Earth Law Center. That restraining order isn't set to expire until the 20th of May. State Lands Commissioner Dave Upthegrove released the following statement about the tree-sit: "This stunt is dangerous, reckless, and counterproductive. Their actions put the safety and lives of my employees at risk, and I will seek the prosecution of those involved to the fullest extent of the law. This kind of dangerous vandalism makes it harder to advance a positive environmental agenda."

In a statement released May 9, the tree sitter, using the moniker Red Breasted Nuthatch said, "Our new lands commissioner, Dave Upthegrove, promised to protect mature forests; we are here to help him keep his promise." The tree-sitter is demanding immediate cancellation of the Parched Timber Sale, a pause on all logging in the Elwha watershed, and a permanent ban on logging the remaining mature forests in western Washington.

In a March 4 editorial in the *Seattle Times*, Commissioner Upthegrove emphasized the importance of seeking "collective input from our trust beneficiaries – including schools, counties, and essential services — alongside tribal governments, environmental groups, the industry, and the public – to help us develop an improved management plan for these forests."

The City of Port Angeles and the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe have raised concerns about the sale. Shannon Cartmel, in a statement from the City of Port Angeles wrote, "Harvesting timber within the Elwha River Watershed poses a direct threat to our only water source, putting the health and safety of thousands of residents at risk."

Similarly, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe has petitioned to stop all timber sales along the Elwha River Watershed. The petition states: "We do not understand a way of thinking that would spend hundreds of millions on Elwha River restoration but continue to industrially log in that same watershed We do not understand a way of thinking that takes too much and says it is never enough; that would disrespect a River that gives us so much life and now hope."

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In a 3-to-2 vote on Wednesday, May 7, the Quilcene School Board voted in favor of adding a resolution that prevents trans students from playing on the sports team that aligns with their gender. This has been a hotly contested issue at prior school board meetings, with teachers, students, and the school district's lawyer speaking out against proposals that would effectively ban trans students from playing sports in Quilcene. Curtis Leonard, the school district's legal advisor, cautioned the board against enacting a resolution that violates state and federal law, and that this resolution would likely end in litigation. Quilcene School District currently has no students who identify as transgender.

Board member Vivann Kuehl was the lone board member arguing against the proposal: [recording]“This is illegal. It takes up a lot of time. The people that we had here talking before were concerned about what’s fair and what’s safe. So I kind of looked into that about what’s fair and what’s safe. So what they talk about when they talked about fair was that there were people who are winning individual sports. We don’t have any of that. We have team sports. We have team sports on purpose. So people can learn to play as a team.” The resolution passed with board members Ron Frantz, Jim Hodgson, and board chair Shona Davis voting in favor, and members Jon Cooke and Vivian Kuehl voting against.

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