

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 1, 2025.

Recreational shellfish season opens today at Fort Flagler State Park, and luckily the biotoxin levels at Fort Flagler have dropped below the closure limit. Jefferson County Public Health has therefore lifted the closure of shellfish harvesting from Port Townsend Bay, Marrowstone Island, Kilisut Harbor, and Mystery Bay, although clammers should note that the shellfish season is closed at Mystery Bay State Park. Chimacum Tidelands is closed to the south of Chimacum Creek. And Discovery Bay and Sequim Bay remain closed to all shellfish harvesting.

Today also marks the start of the state's 2026 fiscal year. That means a number of new state laws go into effect today, including fee hikes for hunting and fishing licenses, workplace protections for immigrants, and increased requirements for gun dealers. Drivers can also expect increased prices at the pump, as a 6-cent hike in Washington's fuel tax also goes into effect today.

The cost for fishing and hunting licenses will increase by 38% but will include discounts for seniors and disabled veterans. An annual combination fishing license will cost \$74.37, a deer tag will cost \$61.70, and a deer tag with a discounted small game license, \$92.06. For gun sellers, the new laws will involve more elaborate video surveillance systems, quicker response to police requests, and fingerprinting and background checks for employees, who must now be over the age of 21.

The gas tax hike – the first in nine years – was created to help alleviate a projected billion dollar shortfall in the next two-year transportation budget. According to the Washington State *Standard*, state officials attribute the shortfall to an inflation-fueled surge in construction costs, but also to flattening gas tax receipts as more drivers opt for electric vehicles and gas-fueled cars become more fuel efficient. Today's increase will push the state's per-gallon tax rate on gas and other vehicle fuels from 49.4 cents to 55.4 cents. Starting July 1 of next year, it will rise each year by 2% – about a penny annually – to account for inflation.

An additional 3 cent tax will be charged on diesel fuel, so a total increase of 9 cents, and that additional amount will go up another 3 cents two years later and then be subject to a 2% boost each year starting July 1 of 2028.

Port of Port Townsend commissioners are concerned about the future of the ramp and dock at Port Hadlock. According to the *Peninsula Daily News*, the condition of the dock is deteriorating, there's not enough parking, there are safety concerns regarding the condition of the pilings, and it's being used for unauthorized activity, which frequently necessitates law enforcement involvement.

Though it's a facility that does cost money to operate and maintain, the dock generates no revenue, as the fee for use is solely on the honor system. According to Commissioner Pete Hanke, it's an important community asset, but also a liability, and "a management nightmare because we can't watch it." Hanke suggests installing security cameras paired with a smartphone as a good way to manage the area remotely, adding that the nearby Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding and Star Marine should be involved in discussions about how to handle security and access.

The port will be looking into conducting public outreach to understand how the facility is used and who uses it as it moves forward. Commissioner Eron Berg said port staff would get an estimate for the cost of replacing the old creosote pilings and float. The state Recreation and Conservation Office's Boating Infrastructure Grant Program does provide funding for renovating floats, docks, and piers.

And finally, good news for users of the Port Townsend ferry: A second ferry has now been added to the Port Townsend-Coupeville run for the duration of the summer. But any listeners planning to head to Seattle today via the Bainbridge or Bremerton ferries have been advised to expect delays at the Colman Dock due to in-water construction at the terminal. The two ferries will be using the same slip for unloading and loading, so walk-on passengers may be asked to load and unload via the car deck.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker. Thank you for listening.