

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Thursday, July 20, 2025.

Much of the area lost both internet and cell service yesterday. Initially it was thought the loss was triggered in relation to Tuesday's power outage along Oak Bay Road, which affected over 750 customers from Port Hadlock to north Port Ludlow. That outage was caused by a fallen tree and a broken utility pole, but was resolved within a few hours, ending at about the time customers were beginning to report issues with Centurylink, Astound, Verizon, and AT&T.

The Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management (Jeffcom) issued a bulletin late yesterday, explaining that there was apparent vandalism to a communication infrastructure near the intersection of highways 19 and 20 that caused the disruption to cell and internet services in the county. Luckily Jeffcom was able to receive calls and dispatch as normal.

Though the initial threat to sell off Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands was removed from the megabill President Trump signed last week, the Trump administration has announced that it will be opening nearly 59 million acres of National Forest wilderness to road building and development, including almost 86,000 acres of our own Olympic National Forest.

According to the *Port Townsend Leader*, the Wild Olympics Campaign, a broad coalition working to protect wild forests and river watersheds on the Olympic Peninsula, is gathering support for the recently reintroduced Wild Olympics Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. First introduced in 2012, the act proposes about 126,600 acres of new wilderness designation within Olympic National Forest and designates 19 rivers, totaling roughly 464 miles, as Wild and Scenic Rivers. The legislation was reintroduced in May and is now awaiting committee consideration in both the House and the Senate.

The Hood Canal bridge will be reduced to one-way traffic from 8 am to 4 pm next Tuesday, July 15, in order to replace a 6000 pound hydraulic cylinder on the west span of the bridge. The cylinder, also called a ram, is needed to replace a cylinder that leaks. Since the discovery of the leak, the bridge has been restricted to 300-foot openings, as the 600-foot openings needed to accommodate certain commercial and military vessels and to relieve pressure during storms have not been feasible with the leaky cylinder. There will be several additional closures of the drawspan on Wednesday the 16th to allow crews to flush the hydraulic system, so if you're traveling either day, come prepared for some long waits.

A new thermal imaging system for whale detection has been installed on the radar tower at Point Wilson to help commercial mariners avoid whales. According to the *Port Townsend Leader*, the camera captures thermal signatures and feeds them into a computer, which then compares the data against infrared profiles stored in its memory. If the artificial intelligence (AI) detects a match, a human is alerted.

If the human concurs with the AI, the location, direction, and speed of the whale or whales are sent to the captains of cargo ships, tankers, ferries, and other vessels located within ten nautical miles of the sighting via a

free app called the Whale Report Alert System. With this information, mariners can adjust their course or slow down to lessen their impact on the whales.

Two new fires have erupted on the Olympic Peninsula.

The human-caused Bear Gulch Fire, which started on the evening of July 6, is burning on the north side of Lake Cushman, near Mount Rose in Hoodspport. Though the fire consumes approximately 200 acres, there is no current threat to structures or nearby communities.

The Toonerville Fire, which ignited Tuesday afternoon near Toonerville Road in Belfair, has prompted Level 3 (urgent) evacuation orders for the Toonerville Road communities. And Level 2 (be prepared) evacuations are in effect for surrounding areas. As of last night it had grown to 100 acres but was still not contained.

And finally, for those members of the community who were deeply troubled by the recent suicide at Sirens, the American Legion will be making their hall available to help community, co-workers, friends and family process this painful loss and honor the young man who took his own life.

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.