

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Taylor Clark, filling in for Diane Walker, who wrote this local news and commentary for Tuesday, September 16, 2025.

The City of Port Townsend, which relies on precipitation in the Olympic Mountains to meet our municipal and industrial water needs, has issued a voluntary water conservation notice to the community for households, businesses, and industrial water use. Flow in the Big Quilcene River, our primary water source, is typically sustained by the snowpack through July, but by early September it is often necessary to utilize water from Lords Lake, a 500-million-gallon storage reservoir. But dry conditions this year have accelerated depletion of the watershed snowpack, and drawdown of Lords Lake Reservoir began this year on August 11. While precipitation may minimize reservoir drawdown at times, the City is asking customers to voluntarily conserve water until autumnal rains replenish the flow in the rivers.

The Port Townsend Paper Mill, which uses a large proportion of our water supply, has already implemented a number of additional conservation measures to reduce water consumption. But if Lords Lake Reservoir empties, the Mill will be required to curtail operations or shut down. Port Townsend is not alone in announcing water issues; In response to continuously decreasing flows in the Elwha River – Port Angeles' primary source of drinking water – that city's water supplies are critically impacted. Port Angeles City Manager Nathan West has declared a stage III water shortage, with commensurate restrictions on outdoor water usage.

Whether you live in Clallam County or Jefferson County, you can assist with water conservation until the winter rains begin, by reducing or avoiding outdoor watering, hosing down of paved areas such as driveways and patios, and washing cars, boats, or trailers at home.

In fire news, yesterday's rain did little to slow our two local fires. Bear Gulch Fire continues to expand and now consumes 10,843 acres, of which less than 10% is contained. The level 3 evacuation order for homes near Dry Creek Trail remains in place.

The Tunnel Creek Fire has expanded to approximately 290 acres. There is still no current threat to structures or nearby communities, but the Tunnel Creek Trail remains closed.

Jefferson County has announced that as of September 8, residents and businesses in Port Hadlock can now connect to the Port Hadlock Wastewater Treatment System and decommission their septic systems, allowing for use of previously encumbered land. Once connected to the sewer, a parcel can potentially take advantage of urban zoning rather than the more restrictive transitional rural zoning allowed with septic systems. This will enable more businesses and residential development within this area.

The Port Townsend Arts Commission provides grants to projects that demonstrate artistic merit and enhance the experience of residents and visitors through accessible, public-facing activities. Its funding program has been supporting arts and civic engagement through creativity since 2001, and it serves as the only public funding source for individual artists in Jefferson County. This year, more than thirty artists from across the community submitted requests for funding that represented a wide range of disciplines. Nineteen received funding between \$450 and \$2,700.

Earlier this year, an additional \$17,000 in grants was awarded. Recipients included Eden Bloom, Timothy O'Connell III, and Lindsey Wayland; the Port Townsend Youth Theater Company, a senior project mural by Port Townsend High School students, Port Townsend Pride, a youth-created mural in The Nest coffee shop, a community block printing event from the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, the Salish Sea International Butoh Festival, and a concert of Handel's *Messiah* from Community Chorus of Port Townsend and Rainshadow Chorale.

In its final grant round of the year, the Port Townsend Arts Commission has announced awards totaling \$9,900 to nine creative projects by Jefferson County artists and organizations. Funded organizations include: Songwriting Works, the Mythsinger Legacy Project, KPTZ Radio, PT Artscape, PT STEM Club, the Jefferson County Historical Society, Bobby4Bobby, Key City Public Theatre, and the Quilcene Theater.

And finally, USGS reports a level 2.9 earthquake occurred 7 kilometers East/Northeast of Marrowstone Island at 1:30 this morning. If you felt it, or you didn't, you are welcome to report your experience on the USGS website. A link to the reporting form is here:

https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/eventpage/uw6218999%201/tellus?fbclid=IwY2xjawM2VY1leHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFHYjMz%20QUtldGoxbW5xdE5OAR4cIpgxXBp710DkzKNyegAAoJciDHoikpeE6%209RiJM9uJFnSedaBBFtMh9qh1g_aem_YXTlkTEvpR1-zsvsaJyIew

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