

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, May 5, 2026.

The Olympic Region Clean Air Agency (ORCAA) reports that this week is National Air Quality Awareness Week. With the federal government making Forest Service contracts conditional on a state's conformation to federal policies on DEI, transgender athletes, and immigration, millions of dollars in wildfire grant funding and fire reduction projects are at stake – which could mean an increase in wildfires and increasing danger of smoke inhalation.

According to the *Washington State Standard*, at least one state is reporting that the new rules have stalled work to reduce wildfire risk and assist with projects on national forest lands. Other states say the requirements are so vague that they don't know how to follow them. And some timber industry leaders believe the standoff could cut into their revenues.

Here in Washington State, the confusion is already starting to slow down or shut down work, so wildfires – already a greater risk due to warmer weather and a reduced snow cap – are a serious concern. Even if no local wildfires threaten our communities, wildfire smoke is frequently transported great distances. In recent years, smoke from fires in Oregon, Montana, British Columbia, and even Alaska has caused elevated levels of air pollution in ORCAA's jurisdiction – and that can affect your health.

To protect your health and that of your loved ones, ORCAA encourages you to stay informed about current and potential local air quality, and air quality elsewhere in the country if you're planning to travel, by visiting the ORCAA and EPA links: <https://www.orcaa.org/air-quality/current-air-quality/> and <https://fire.airnow.gov/>.

The Port Townsend School District has announced which positions will be cut as a result of this year's budget shortfall. According to the *Peninsula Daily News*, an orchestra teacher at Blue Heron Middle School will lose their position, and the former band teacher, who has taught orchestra in the past, will now teach both classes. In addition, a science teacher nearing retirement has volunteered to start working half days. Art teacher Sarah Estrem will transfer from Blue Heron to fill a vacant role at Salish Coast Elementary School, and the middle school will no longer offer art courses to sixth graders. And finally, the district will be reducing one and a half full-time-equivalent intervention employees at Blue Heron and integrating intervention into regular class time.

A water sample taken from Anderson Lake in late April has revealed anatoxin-a levels more than 200 times higher than the Washington State recreational criteria. Exposure to anatoxin-a can result in illness and death in people and animals when ingested, even in tiny amounts. Washington State Parks has posted "Danger – Keep Out of Lake" signs, and all water-based recreational activities such as fishing, boating, and swimming, are prohibited until the bloom dissipates and the toxin levels decline. Anderson Lake State Park remains open for other recreational activities such as horseback riding, hiking, biking, and birdwatching.

The annual vibrio bacteria warning is in effect now until October for the recreational shellfish harvest in the Hood Canal. Vibrio bacteria cause vibriosis, an intestinal disease that can be contracted by eating raw or undercooked shellfish. If you are recreationally harvesting shellfish in the Hood Canal remember to cook them

thoroughly! Vibrio bacteria can be destroyed by cooking all shellfish to 145 degrees for at least 15 seconds before consumption. For more information, visit <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/shellfish/recreational-shellfish/illnesses/vibriosis>.

And finally, a note for travelers who plan to use the Hood Canal Bridge in the coming weeks: There will be a series of overnight full closures beginning next Monday, so anyone who relies on the bridge for work, appointments, travel, or family needs should plan accordingly. The bridge will be closed to all travelers from 10pm to 5am on the following nights:

Monday, May 11 through Thursday, May 14

Monday, May 18 through Thursday, May 21

Tuesday, May 26 through Thursday, May 28

Please note: the bridge will not open during these closures for ANY traffic, including emergency response.

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.