

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, June 30, 2026.

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With July 4th approaching, Washington State Parks is encouraging visitors to celebrate America's 250th Independence Day responsibly by keeping public lands safe, clean, and enjoyable for everyone. Each year, thousands of people gather at Washington's beaches and state parks for Fourth of July celebrations. While these outings create lasting memories, they can also leave a lasting impact when trash, fireworks debris, and abandoned gear are left behind.

Last year, volunteers picked up more than 141,000 pounds of trash from our state's beaches – July 5 didn't get the "Dirtiest Beach Day of the Year" title for no reason. Even the smallest items such as food wrappers, bottle caps and fishing line can pose serious risks to wildlife, pets and other visitors. Litter can be mistaken for food, become entanglement hazards, or wash into waterways, where it can harm marine life and pollute sensitive ecosystems. High tide is at 5am on July 5, making it imperative that visitors pick up their trash the night before.

Note also that fireworks are illegal on all state park lands, including the sections of ocean beaches directly in front of state parks. In addition, campfires must be at least 100 feet from the dunes, no more than four feet in diameter, and no more than four feet high. No fires are allowed on shellfish beds.

And if you plan to drive on the beach, only do so on hard-packed sand. The beach speed limit is 25 mph, and pedestrians and horses are always granted the right-of-way. Off-road vehicles are not permitted on Washington Beaches. And if you're driving TO those beaches, just a warning: work zone speed camera fines in Washington will go up to \$125 each, starting tomorrow. In the meantime, be sure to obey all posted "no parking" signs, don't park below the high tide line, keep seatbelts buckled when moving, and don't drive while intoxicated.

And one final reminder: even on warm, sunny days, ocean water in Washington remains cold. Prolonged exposure can quickly lead to hypothermia. Cold water, rip currents, and strong waves pose serious risks. Always keep a close eye on children near the surf, don't turn your back on the ocean, and have children and weak swimmers wear life jackets.

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Jefferson County officials also urge caution for this year's Independence Day celebrations, as dry conditions and fireworks make for a dangerous combination: just last week local fire authorities successfully contained a fire just outside Port Townsend city limits, so fire officials are asking the community to mark this year's celebration of America's 250th birthday with extra care. Jefferson County is currently under a Moderate Fire Danger rating but current field conditions remain dry. During Moderate fire danger, the discharge of consumer fireworks in unincorporated Jefferson County is legal, but only during dates and times set by Washington State law.

Permitted dates and times for fireworks under the current ruling are 9am to 11pm today until July 3; 9 am to midnight July 4, and 9am to 11pm on July 5. Fireworks discharge outside these dates and times is unlawful, and if a Declaration of High Fire Hazard is issued, all fireworks will be immediately prohibited, regardless of date or time. Residents should monitor county communications closely for changes in Fire Danger.

If you do plan to set off fireworks, have a garden hose or bucket of water close by, keep a shovel handy to smother stray sparks or embers, and after use, soak all spent fireworks in water for several hours before placing them in a metal container; not a plastic trash can. All residents are encouraged to report signs of smoke or

unauthorized fire activity by calling 911 immediately. Note also that this will be the last Fourth of July before Jefferson County's recently enacted permanent ban on consumer fireworks takes effect.

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And finally, as part of Washington State's America's 250th events, the Port Townsend Library is showing a family matinee called *National Treasure* this Wednesday, July 1. Watch Nicolas Cage in the Pink House tomorrow at 2:30 as he attempts to steal the Declaration of Independence in hopes of finding a treasure map on the back of the document.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Diane Walker; thank you for listening.