

Script 4/15

You're listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. This is Lily Haight with what's new in this week's Port Townsend Leader.

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There have been no new cases of coronavirus in Jefferson County since last Thursday. There are 28 confirmed cases in the county, and more than 600 people have been tested. As of April 15th, there were more than 10,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Washington, with a total of 516 deaths in the state.

County Public Health Officer Tom Locke said Jefferson, Clallam and Kitsap counties have seen a drop-off in new cases. Influenza cases have also slowed down, indicating that social distancing measures are working.

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A recently released 2018 study of greenhouse gas emissions in Jefferson County shows the county has reduced its emissions by 40% since 2005, a sign the county is on track to reach its goal of reducing emissions by 80% of 1990 levels.

The study released this week by the city's and county's Joint Climate Action Committee found that switching from Puget Sound Energy to Jefferson County PUD in 2013 had a large impact on the overall reduction in emissions since the PUD acquires electricity from Bonneville Power Association, which sources power from hydroelectric dams.

However, the study also shows Jefferson County residents create more than half of our greenhouse gas emissions through driving. Due to an increase in population, the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) in Jefferson County are 19% higher than in 2005.

The full study can be found on the city's website.

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Several native plant enthusiasts have noted the year's first sightings of the native fairy slipper orchids in Douglas fir forests of Port Townsend.

According to botanist Fred Weinmann, who's been keeping records in Old Fort Townsend State Park for a couple of decades, the earliest we have seen a fairy slipper orchid on the Quimper Peninsula is March 31st. The jewel-like fairy slipper, also known as calypso orchid or calypso bulbosa in Latin, is one of more than 40 native orchids found in the state of Washington, and at least seven species that can be found on the Quimper Peninsula.

Each fairy slipper flower is solitary on a short stem emerging from a single broad basal leaf. The name calypso refers to the lid or hood (from the Greek word kalyptra, meaning covering or veil) that protects the reproductive parts of the flower. Like many terrestrial orchids, the fairy slipper has a bulbous root, inspiring its species name, bulbosa.

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The Port Townsend/Coupeville ferry route will continue one-boat service until June 20 due to a decline in ridership.

Washington State Ferries announced April 11 it will extend the winter sailing schedule for all ferry routes through June 20.

Ian Sterling, director of communications for Washington State Ferries said no one should be on a ferry unless it's absolutely essential.

"We want to keep the system operating for healthcare workers, emergency responders and for goods such as food stocks for stores," he said.

The Port Townsend/Coupeville route has seen a decline in ridership since February. Compared to last year, the first full week of April saw a 72% decline in ridership. On Sunday, Feb. 16, 2,354 people rode on the ferry. One month later, on March 16, there were 982. During the week, ridership has dipped to fewer than 500.

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The Leader is celebrating National Poetry Month by publishing poems by local writers in each weekly edition of the paper this April. Check out this week's poems on page 18 of the paper.

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For these stories and more, check out this week's edition of the Leader on newsstands AND ONLINE now. This is LEADER NEWS REPORTER Lily Haight, on KPTZ 91.9 FM.