

Massachusetts DoH detects West Nile Virus in mosquito sample from Mattapoisett

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) announced today that West Nile virus (WNV) has been detected in a mosquito collected from Mattapoisett.

WNV is most commonly transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquitoes that carry this virus are common throughout the state and are found in urban as well as more rural areas. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe infection.

While the Mattapoisett Board of Health continues to work closely with the MDPH and other agencies, residents may find additional information about WNV and reports of current and historical WNV activity in Massachusetts on the MDPH website: www.mass.gov/dph/mosquito.

BayCoast Bank continues strong SouthCoast community lending support in 2023

“BayCoast Bank, one of the most recognizable names in community banking, continues its strong history of supporting the mortgage, business, and community development lending needs of the SouthCoast. Once again, BayCoast Bank is ranked

as a top ten residential lender in total market share in 30 local communities during the first half of 2023.

The Warren Group Inc.¹ lists BayCoast Bank as the number one mortgage lender in a number of the following local cities and towns and a top ten mortgage lender in Acushnet, Berkley, Dartmouth, Dighton, Fairhaven, Fall River, Freetown Lakeville, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Rehoboth, Rochester Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea, Wareham, and Westport Massachusetts, in addition to Barrington, Bristol, East Greenwich, East Providence, Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth, Providence, Pawtucket, Smithfield, and Warren in Rhode Island.

BayCoast Bank has earned a strong reputation for quality and excellence, becoming a leading, trusted mortgage and business lender in the region. The lending team at BayCoast Bank cares about helping members of the community reach their homeownership and business goals by offering personalized service to suit each customer's unique needs.

BayCoast's reputation for being a strong local lender is also highly focused on the community

and community redevelopment projects aimed at improving the overall quality of life in our immediate area. Projects like River's Edge in Fall River, and the Foss Marine Terminal and National Downtown Club in New Bedford, will help transform our local economy by opening the doors to a host of new business, career, and educational opportunities.

BayCoast's participation in the redevelopment of River's Edge, located at 20 Turner Street in Fall River, provides 50 apartments, with both market and affordable rate units, in addition to retail space on the first floor. BayCoast Bank opened one of their newest branch locations at this property last year which overlooks the city's scenic waterfront.

BayCoast also provided financing support for the Foss Marine

redevelopment allowing that space to be transformed into a green energy staging and storage area for the construction of offshore wind turbines. The New Bedford Foss Marine Terminal opened in March 2023, after a year of site redevelopment, and now serves as a new base of operations and terminal logistics facility to support offshore wind projects in Massachusetts and across the northeastern coast of the United States.

“This project has made New Bedford one of the leading locations for the development of renewable offshore clean energy,” said Carl Taber, Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer with BayCoast Bank. “In addition, it will create good jobs, help local businesses that support turbine construction workers, as well as increase revenue for ancillary businesses.”

BayCoast Bank’s financing of the National Downtown Club redevelopment will also help transform New Bedford’s historic waterfront district. The block sits roughly midway between the waterfront and the Whaling Museum and Seaman’s Bethel/Mariner’s Home. The historic building will be completely renovated to support a new restaurant on the highly visible property across from the State Pier. The project will have 28 apartments, with five affordable units, and retail space on the ground level when complete.

“BayCoast Bank is proud to be the community bank that is financing these types of projects,” said Nick Christ, President and CEO of BayCoast Bank. “New Bedford and Fall River have long been the main economic drivers for the SouthCoast, and we are proud to directly support redevelopment projects that will improve our local economy and boost the tourism industry.” “

New Bedford Police respond to Blue Meadows Apartments shooting, at least one injured

Late Thursday night, the New Bedford Police Department received reports of shots fired at the Blue Meadows Apartments on Dartmouth Street across from Stop and Shop. In addition, they received a report that a person came into St. Luke's Hospital who had sustained at least one gunshot wound.

It is currently unclear if the person drove themselves to the hospital or they were brought there by a friend or family member.

At the scene of the shooting at the Blue Meadows Apartments police encountered a vehicle "riddled" with bullets and another car with a bullet hole. NBPD had the car riddled with bullets to police headquarters and impounded as evidence.

The street had at least 6-7 evidence cones, most of which were bullet casings.

"It's a drug fest down there. It's not worth living in that area." said Jamie Smith. Echoing a common complaint for those who live in the apartments and nearby,

All photos by Carlos Pimental Felix :



24-year old Massachusetts man convicted of grooming, sex trafficking a minor

“A Canton man was convicted today by a federal jury in Boston of sex trafficking a minor who had been reported missing.

Keion Rowell, 24, was convicted following a four-day jury trial of one count of sex trafficking of a child. U.S. District Court Judge Leo T. Sorokin scheduled sentencing for Dec. 11, 2023. Rowell was arrested and charged by criminal complaint in April 2022 and subsequently indicted by a federal grand jury in May 2022.

“Justice was delivered today. Mr. Rowell preyed on a vulnerable 15-year-old girl, grooming her and then trafficking

her and pocketing the money. This conduct is despicable and has no place in a civilized society. This prosecution should send an unmistakable message that this office and our law enforcement partners are dedicating all the resources needed to make sure predators like Mr. Rowell will face the full weight of the law,” said Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. “Sex trafficking causes immeasurable physical and long-term emotional suffering, and this office will continue to work tirelessly to seek justice for the brave survivors.”

“Keion Rowell forced a 15-year-old child into sexual servitude, for his own greed and financial gain,” said Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division. “While FBI Boston’s Child Exploitation – Human Trafficking Task Force can’t erase the harm he’s done, we’ve made him answer for it. We thank the jury for bringing justice for his victim and ensuring Mr. Rowell can’t claim anymore.”

According to evidence presented at trial, on or about Jan. 18, 2021, Rowell met the 15-year-old victim, who had recently run away from home. Almost immediately, Rowell created and posted numerous online commercial sex advertisements that contained photos of the victim, including nude photos, and told her that she would have to engage in prostitution. Rowell then communicated with sex buyers and sent the victim to meet with those men to have sex in exchange for money he kept. On Jan. 28, 2021, approximately 10 days after the victim had been reported missing, law enforcement participated in an undercover operation to rescue her. When she was recovered, the victim had Rowell’s phone which contained photos of the victim, photos of Rowell and information about his personal bank accounts, links to online advertisements for commercial sex and communications with sex buyers.

If you or someone you know may be impacted or experiencing commercial sex trafficking, please contact USAMA.VictimAssistance@usdoj.gov.

The charge of sex trafficking of a child carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, with a maximum sentence of up to life in prison, five years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy and FBI SAC Cohen made the announcement today. Valuable assistance was provided by the Boston and Belmont Police Departments, as well as the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority Police. Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian A. Fogerty of the Civil Rights & Human Trafficking Unit and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Alyssa Tochka are prosecuting the case.”-Massachusetts Department of Justice.

New Bedford prepares for Hurricane Lee; possible closure of barrier, important contact numbers

“The National Weather Service Boston Office has issued a Tropical Storm Watch for Southern Bristol County including New Bedford. Winds will increase on Friday and remain gusty through Saturday night. Tropical storm-force winds are expected late Friday night and Saturday near the coast. Buzzards Bay is not anticipated to experience a significant storm surge, but residents are advised to beware of possible rip currents and heavy surf on ocean-facing beaches. Heavy

rains may also produce localized flooding in low-lying areas.

City Beaches, CoveWalk, HarborWalk, Fort Taber, and City-Operated Boat Ramps Closed Effective Friday, September 15, at 8:00 p.m.

City Beaches, CoveWalk, HarborWalk, and Fort Taber will be closed to the public effective Friday, September 15, at 8:00 p.m. Police will be making regular patrols of the South End beaches, HarborWalk, CoveWalk, and Fort Taber, and will remove people from those areas. Information regarding re-openings will be provided in future updates.

Possible Closure of the New Bedford Hurricane Barrier Navigation Gate

The Army Corps of Engineers may make a determination regarding the closure of the New Bedford Hurricane Barrier in conjunction with high tide events. The New Bedford Port Authority encourages all vessel owners to make arrangements for berthing or hauling in the harbor as far in advance of the arrival of storm conditions as possible. Vessel owners should monitor the usual channels for updates on the status of the Navigation Gate.

Buttonwood Park Zoo Closed on Saturday, September 16

Buttonwood Park Zoo will be closed to the public on Saturday, September 16.

The City of New Bedford Recycling Center Closed on Saturday, September 16

The Recycling Center located at 1103 Shawmut Ave. will be closed on Saturday, September 16.

New Bedford Regional Airport to Remain Open As Long as Safe

The New Bedford Regional Airport will remain in operation for as long as it remains safe. Passengers should contact their air carriers, including Cape Air, directly to confirm their flight status.

Hurricane Preparedness Tips for Residents and Business Owners

Mayor Jon Mitchell advises residents and business owners to review the “Hurricane Preparedness Checklist” available on the city [webpage](https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/emergency-management/prepared/) (<https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/emergency-management/prepared/>) and to take proactive steps to protect their property from rain and wind damage.

Important Emergency Contact Numbers

- To report a downed power line, medical, fire, or other emergencies, please dial 911.
- In the event of power loss, residents are encouraged to call Eversource at 1-800-592-2000 (Residents should not assume that an outage affecting their location has already been reported.) Eversource strongly urges the public to stay away from all down wires and to report them immediately.
- The New Bedford Police Department can also be reached on its non-emergency line at (508) 991-6350.

New Bedford’s BPZ00 provides home to orphaned black bear cubs

“The Buttonwood Park Zoo has a deep, rich history of caring for black bears and is once again providing a home for an adorable pair of cubs recently orphaned in the wild.

BPZ00 has been without black bears since last September, with the passing of 23-year-old Toby. He, along with two females Amy and Ursula, had lived at BPZ00 since 2000.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game contacted BPZ00 in late June, inquiring if there was space for two cubs who had been

orphaned because of bear/human conflicts in Homer and Eagle River in Alaska.

“Providing a home to orphaned, non-releasable wildlife is paramount to our mission,” said Zoo Director Gary Lunsford. “Given that BPZ00 has been caring for black bears since our inception in 1894, we jumped at the opportunity to work with officials in Alaska to provide a forever home to these cubs in need.”

The two cubs, an approximately eight-month-old male, and a seven-month-old female, arrived at BPZ00 the last week in August and are currently quarantining under the watchful eyes of BPZ00 vet staff.

“We are already getting a clear picture of their individual personalities,” said BPZ00 Veterinarian

Emmy Budas. “He is the sweet and gentle type – gently taking treats from us, while she is showing us her sassy side. Both cubs are eating well and appear to be in excellent health.”

After spending time getting to know their personalities, zookeepers and veterinarian staff carefully considered names for the cubs. With a nod to their Alaskan homeland, the male cub has been named Moose, the official state land mammal, and the female Oona, named after an inland lake, not far from Juneau.

Moose and Oona will remain in quarantine for approximately 30 days to ensure they are in good health and to give them time to adjust to their new environment.

Black bears have been making local headlines this summer, spotted lumbering through towns on the South Coast and South Shore. As their natural habitats here, and in Alaska, continue to shrink, bear/human conflict increases with detrimental implications for the animals. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, or MassWildlife, offers a variety of

resources on their website to prevent conflicts with black bears, including limiting food sources, protecting pets, crops, bees, and livestock with electric fences, or removing bird feeders.

“We look forward to introducing the new bears to the community,” Lunsford said. “We expect this will happen sometime towards the end of September. In the meantime, please do your part to keep bears wild. You should never feed or otherwise approach a wild bear. Be respectful of nature so that we can protect it together.”

The Buttonwood Park Zoo is located at 425 Hawthorn Street in New Bedford. The Zoo is open from 9:00 am until 5:00 pm with the last admission at 4:15 pm from April through October, and from 9:00 am through 4:00 pm, with the last admission at 3:15 pm from November through March. Ticket prices for non-New Bedford Residents are \$10 for adults/\$6 for children 3-12; Ticket prices for New Bedford Residents are \$7.50 for adults/\$4.50 for children 3-12. For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit bpzoo.org.

About Black Bears

American black bears are one of eight species of bears found around the world. Common across North America, they are currently present in 40 U.S. states, 12 provinces and territories of Canada, and 6 states of northern Mexico. Loss of habitat and unregulated hunting resulted in extirpation of black bears across large portions of their range by the early 1900s. While loss of forest cover has eliminated black bears from many areas, their numbers are increasing. Climate change seems to have enabled black bears to range farther north. American black bears are the smallest of the three bear species in North America, ranging from 200 – 600 pounds, with males being significantly larger. Average life expectancy for American black bears is 20 years. “

Town of Freetown transfers full ownership of retired K-9 Koda to Sgt. Thomas Long

“There has been a lot of information and misinformation released surrounding the retirement of the police dog Koda.

I want you to know we reviewed all the information surrounding the K-9 program and did not take the decision to retire the dog lightly.

The main reason we began discussing ending the K-9 programming was due to Sgt. Long’s pending promotion from patrolman to Sergeant. A sergeant’s primary role is to supervise and support patrolmen on their shift. If a sergeant was also the K-9 officer, they may not be available to supervise or assist their patrolmen in the event that a call came in during their shift requesting assistance of the K-9. Additionally another officer may need to be called in on an overtime basis to backfill the sergeant.

Koda the police dog, being 7 years old was too old to re-assign to a new handler and it was decided that he be retired and that Sgt. Long would be offered the dog.

Per the CBA, Sgt. Long has been offered Koda at no additional cost to him. The Town is asking Sgt. Long to sign an agreement that transfers ownership of the dog to him. That agreement merely calls for him to acknowledge that he understands and is aware of the current physical condition of the dog, that he is aware that the dog is a trained police dog and that he accepts any risks that may come along with owning such a dog. The agreement goes on to state that Sgt. Long will assume all of

the costs and responsibilities of owning the dog and that he will hold the Town harmless for any claims that may arise from the dog in the future. These provisions have been included to protect the Town and its taxpayers from legal liability in the event that any incidents occur after the dog becomes Sgt. Long's personal property.

At no time was euthanasia discussed in regards K-9 Koda.

On the agenda tonight is to approve the agreement between the Town and Sgt. Long."-Town of Freetown.

New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of September 18, 2023 – September 22, 2023

The City of New Bedford has roadwork sites for the upcoming week of September 18, 2023 – September 22, 2023, and they are as follows:

Eversource will be working on gas main relays and services on:

- Main relay on Berkley St from Commonwealth Ave to end of road
- Main relay on Church St from Carlisle St to Shaw St
- Main relay on Hudson St from Brock Ave east to end of main
- Main relay on Longwood Ave from Commonwealth Ave to end of road
- Main relay on Rockdale Ave from Allen St to Bluefield St
- Regulator work on Potter St at Rockdale Ave headed east

towards Nashua St

- Services on Gaywood St from Brownell Ave to end of road
- Services on Lynwood St from Brownell Ave to end of road
- Services on Pauline St from Brownell Ave to end of road
- Services on Sheldon St from Brownell Ave to end of road

Other:

- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working at various locations throughout the city on roadway and sidewalk patches.
- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working at MassDOT project #609201, located at the intersection of Acushnet Ave & Peckham Rd/Sassaquin Ave.
- Contractors (PA Landers and various utility companies) will be working at MassDOT's Kings Highway project. Minor traffic impacts and lane shifts required.
- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working on a road reconstruction project at Acushnet Ave from Tarkiln Hill Road to Monmouth Street.
- Contractor (PJ Keating) will be milling the roadway surface at Acushnet Ave from Tarkiln Hill Road to Monmouth Street. Acushnet Avenue between the section of Tarkiln Hill Road to Monmouth will be shutdown to all traffic while work is taking place. Police details will be in place.
- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working on a road reconstruction project at Wood Street from the town line to Church Street.
- Contractor (PJ Keating) will be milling the roadway surface at Wood Street from the town line to Church Street. Wood Street between the section of the town line to Church Street will be shutdown to all traffic while work is taking place. Police details will be in place.
- Contractor (PA Landers) will be working on Braley Rd Sidewalks between Acushnet Avenue and Phillips Road. Minor traffic impacts and lane shifts required.
- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will continue site work at the future South Coast Rail station platform locations in the city. (Church St at Carlisle St and Wamsutta St at Acushnet

Ave.) If you have questions, please email the project team at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us

- Contractor (SCR Constructors) will continue site work at the future pedestrian bridge across Route 18 impacting parking along Purchase Street between Willis Street and Pearl Street and at the Division of Career Services on Acushnet Avenue. Temporary detours may be in place pending construction activities occurring. If you have questions, please email the project team at SouthCoastRail@dot.state.ma.us

- Contractor (Middlesex Corp) will be working on Nash Rd between Church St and Mt. Pleasant St. Traffic will be reduced to one lane and will have police details on site to assist with traffic.

- Contractor (Newport) will be working on Nash Rd between Church St and Mt. Pleasant St. Traffic will be reduced to one lane and will have police details on site to assist with traffic.

New Bedford Police charge 20-year old city man with south-end shooting

“NEW BEDFORD – New Bedford Major Crime Detectives have placed a male under arrest for a recent shooting in the city’s south end.

On Wednesday, September 6th, at around 1 PM, south-end units responded to a ShotSpotter activation in the area of the Ben Rose housing development. Bullet casings were discovered and there was damage sustained to a nearby vehicle.

Detective Roberto DaCunha was assigned to further investigate

the incident. During the course of his investigation, he was able to determine that Mr. JONATHAN OVALLE, 20, of 17 Division St., fired two rounds from a handgun at a passing vehicle. There were no injuries to any of the vehicle occupants.

A warrant was requested for OVALLE. On the afternoon of September 12th, he was located near his residence and taken into custody without incident. He has been charged with discharging a firearm within 500 feet of a building, carrying a loaded firearm without a license, destruction of property, and assault by means of a firearm. He is currently being held without bail at the Dartmouth House of Correction pending.”- City of New Bedford Police Department.

New Bedford man whose negligent driving resulted in death of Assonet woman convicted

“A 51-year-old New Bedford man was convicted by a jury of his peers late this afternoon in New Bedford District Court of Motor Vehicle Homicide by Negligent Operation in connection to the 2022 death of an Assonet woman, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

The jury deliberated for less than an hour before returning its guilty verdict around 4 pm today. The trial began yesterday afternoon.

At around 2:30 am on August 20, 2022, state and local police were called to an area of Route 140 North in New Bedford after

receiving a 911 call about a motor vehicle vs. pedestrian incident.

Evidence at trial showed that Christopher Noguera was driving northbound on Route 140 in his Ford F-150 when he crossed over into the breakdown lane and slammed into Joy Swartzendruber, who was standing next to her Toyota Avalon. Dash-cam video seized from the defendant's vehicle showed that the victim was clearly standing off the roadway when the defendant's truck first impacted the rear driver's side of her vehicle and then into her and other portions of her vehicle. Her vehicle had all its lights on and was visible to other motorists on the highway. The victim was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The video also showed the defendant driving negligently during the minutes before the crash. His vehicle could be seen frequently drifting from lane to lane and into the breakdown lane in the moments before the crash.

The defendant remained on scene after the crash and was not impaired or excessively speeding. However, the jury found he clearly was operating his motor vehicle in a negligent manner, which directly led to the fatal incident.

The maximum sentence allowable for the charge is two-and-a-half years in the house of corrections.

Assistant District Attorney Patrick Driscoll, who prosecuted the case, argued that the defendant should be sentenced to two-and-a-half years in the house of corrections with two years to serve and the balance of the sentence suspended for three years. The defense requested minimal jail time.

Judge Kristen Stone, however, sentenced the defendant to two years in the house of corrections, with one year to serve and the balance of the sentence was suspended for three years. This "split sentence" means if the defendant is charged with a new crime during the three years after his eventual release from jail, he could be liable to serve the remaining year of

the jail term. The defendant also had his driver's license revoked for 15 years.

"The defendant's negligent operation of his pickup truck resulted in a terrible tragedy that could easily have been avoided. The victim was clearly in the breakdown lane when the defendant struck and killed her. My heart goes out the family for their terrible loss. I hope today's verdict, and the sentence imposed by the court, provides some consolation to them," District Attorney Quinn said."