

# Salish Current

Independent, fact-based news for Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties

## News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Aug. 7, 2020:



The "wall of green" in the produce section at the Community Food Co-op in downtown Bellingham is stocked primarily by local farmers. The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed additional challenges on the industry, including its vulnerable workforce. (Amy Nelson photo © 2020)

## [Farming is more challenging than ever during the pandemic](#)

By *Kimberly Cauvel*

— Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, farms are facing more challenges than ever during the busy season, with their workers among the most vulnerable to the virus and produce reaching fewer buyers through usual markets, festivals and tourism outlets.

"The pandemic has been a very serious problem," Save Family Farming Executive Director Gerald Baron said.

It's exacerbating existing weaknesses — and inequalities for consumers who rely on schools, senior centers and assistance programs — in the local food supply chain, according to the Whatcom County Food System Committee. [Read more here...](#)

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## [‘A very complex issue’: Ramel gives update on San Juan Islands ferry delays](#)

*By Mike Sato*

— “It’s a very complex issue we deal with on a weekly basis,” said Rep. Alex Ramel (D-Bellingham) in response to major Washington State Ferries (WSF) delays faced by passengers on the San Juan Islands route.

“We’re in a pandemic and the most important thing has been to keep things moving,” the 40th legislative district representative said. [Read more here...](#)

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## [Local schools seek parent, student feedback before announcing fall plans](#)

*By Genevieve Iverson*

— *Updated:* As fall school start dates approach, many local districts are waiting to release detailed back-to-school plans amid uncertain COVID-19 health concerns. In the past few weeks, parents and students have been encouraged to participate in a number of communication methods that districts have put in place, such as virtual online calls, surveys and comment portals. [Read more here...](#)

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*Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equality and healing for all people. #SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter #NoJusticeNoPeace*

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## News from around the region:

### **Health & Safety**

- Beginning Monday, Whatcom County Health Department will begin field testing a low-barrier, mobile COVID-19 model and have fully operational mobile testing available within two weeks in Whatcom County. ([WCHD/Whatcom Watch](#))
- Whatcom County Health Officer Dr. Greg Stern recommended that public and private schools plan for remote learning for the start of the school year. ([WCHD/Whatcom Talk](#))
- The first joint meeting between the newly-elected commissioners of the San Juan County Public Hospital District and the San Juan Island Fire and Rescue District ended abruptly after a vulgar statement was made by fire commissioner Frank Cardinale. Public Health District commissioners would like Cardinale removed from the steering committee working toward integration of the two entities and questioned the merger itself. ([San Juan Journal](#))
- Whatcom County residents are asked by the county health department to take a [10-minute online survey](#) seeking to understand people's choices to adopt personal prevention practices such as limiting social gatherings or wearing masks in public or social settings. ([WCHD](#))

### **Education**

- Bellingham, Ferndale, Mount Baker and Meridian schools will begin remote learning for the start of the school year in September. ([Bellingham Herald](#))
- San Juan Island public schools will begin Sept. 3 with remote learning for nine weeks before evaluating future learning options. ([San Juan Update](#))
- Anacortes schools will begin the year with remote learning two weeks later than usual on Sept. 14. ([Anacortes American](#))
- The Bellingham School District has created a position to help lead the district to confront institutional bias and carry out new equity practices. The director of equity, diversity and inclusion will support efforts to recruit and develop a more diverse workforce to provide a better racial match between student and teacher. ([Western Front](#))
- The Ferndale School District has received from Moody's Investor Service an Aa2 rating in advance of the district's \$28.6 million bond sale. ([My Ferndale News](#))

### **Government**

- Primary election results, two top candidates (as of 5 p.m., Aug. 6, 2020)
  - San Juan County District 1 Commission: Christine Minney, Ryan Palmateer

- San Juan County District 2: Rick Hughes, Cindy Wolf
- Whatcom County Superior Court Position 2: Evan Jones, James Erb
- Whatcom County Superior Court Position 4: David Freeman, Jim Nelson
- Skagit County Commissioner District 1: Mark Lundsten, Ron Wessen
- Skagit County Commissioner District 2: Peter Browning, Mary Hudson
- Skagit County Superior Court Position 3: Tom Seguire, Elizabeth Yost Neidzwski
- Skagit County PUD Commissioner District 1: Kenneth Goodwin, Andrew Miller
- Port of Bellingham  
The next meeting of the Port of Bellingham Commission is scheduled for Aug. 11 at 4 pm. Click here for [how to participate](#).
  - Consent agenda: The Commissioners will adopt the minutes of their [July 23 budget retreat](#).
  - Consent agenda: Approval by Commission of a [rental rate structure](#) for the new "Downtown Waterfront Site"— the open area near the Pump Track — which put in place contract, liability insurance and fees for managing the open space.
  - Sea K Fish Site: Enter Agreed Order with Ecology to perform a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study and develop a draft Cleanup Action Plan at the [Sea K Fish cleanup site](#) in the Blaine Marine Industrial Area.
- City of Bellingham  
The next meeting of the Bellingham City Council is scheduled for Aug. 24 at 7 pm.
- Whatcom County  
The next Whatcom County Council meeting is scheduled for Sept. 15 at 7 pm. There will be a discussion on the budget. [Click here to participate](#).
- San Juan County Superior and District Courts will begin jury trials in the fall if pandemic conditions allow. ([San Juan Update](#))

## **Nature**

- The Lake Whatcom Management Program work plan for 2020-2024 which protects the environmental health of the watershed, drinking water and surrounding habitat has been adopted and approved by the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County and the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District. ([Western Front](#))
- Noctiluca, a marine algae that turns waters dramatically orange, bloomed in Chuckanut Bay on Tuesday. ([KOMO](#))

- The nonprofit Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group will improve salmon habitat at Presentin Park near Marblemount with \$265,600 from a penalty levied against Cooke Aquaculture for allowing Atlantic salmon to escape from net pens in 2017. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

## **Commentary**

- Since 2004, more than 2,000 American newspapers have gone out of business. *Washington Post* media columnist Margaret Sullivan talks about the decline of local news coverage, a crisis she says is as serious as the spread of disinformation on the internet. Her new book is *Ghosting the News: Local Journalism and the Crisis of American Democracy*. ([NPR](#))

## **Business**

- McClatchy Co., owner of the *Bellingham Herald*, will exit bankruptcy now that a federal bankruptcy judge approved the \$312 million sale of McClatchy Co. to the hedge fund Chatham Asset Management, its largest lender. The federal agency Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation which takes over pension plans from distressed companies will assume McClatchy's plan. ([The News Tribune](#))
- Lynden-based Edaleen Dairy reports that their three stores along the Washington-British Columbia border have had 65% less sales than in 2019 due to the border closure. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

## **Community**

- Chad A. Schmitt has been charged by Ferndale Police with 3rd degree malicious mischief for damaging an extender pole and protective case for a GoPro camera at July 31 during rallies for Black Lives Matter and support in local police. ([My Ferndale News](#))
- The Whatcom County Library System has boosted its Wi-Fi service around its Deming, Everson, Ferndale and Sudden Valley branch parking lots and at its Birch Bay bookmobile stop for greater community internet access. ([WCLS/Whatcom Talk](#))
- The Whatcom County Library System trustees have decided to pursue separate funding approaches to building a new Birch Bay library and to remodel the Blaine Library and will not place a single joint levy on the August 2020 special election ballot. ([Northern Light](#))
- If you have something to say about Bellingham city projects and policies, check out the new public comment platform, [Engage Bellingham](#), and have your say.
- Orcas Island Health Care District commissioners unanimously voted to begin negotiations with Island Hospital to operate a consolidated medical clinic on Orcas Island. ([Orcas Issues](#))
- The Whatcom Family YMCA which for 40 years has served the Lynden community will not be reopening due to financial uncertainties. ([Whatcom Family YMCA/Whatcom Talk](#))

- Bellingham's Village Books founders Chuck and Dee Robinson are auctioning off a large collection of first editions, many of which are signed or inscribed, advanced reading copies, and book ephemera in an [Aug. 7-16 auction](#) to benefit the Book Industry Charitable Foundation. ([Whatcom Talk](#))
- Bellingham holds the second of four virtual "listening posts" examining systemic racism. The next session will be held on Aug. 10, online here to speak [cob.org/listen0810](http://cob.org/listen0810), meeting ID 997 6322 7294, password 123. To watch or listen only, the meetings will be live on BTV television, Comcast channels 10 and 321, and on the city's [YouTube channel](#).

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*Salish Current is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, online local news organization serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Salish Current exists to protect and improve democratic governance by reporting and curating local news with independence and strict journalistic integrity.*

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