

# Salish Current

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

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Feb. 12, 2021:

## [Doing the work of the people: legislation introduced by 40th and 42nd District legislators](#)



*The legislative session is on, although not in the state Capitol building this year as COVID-19 safety precautions continue. District 40 and 42 legislators have introduced bills on issues such as farm worker housing, food security, water rights, economic recovery, broadband access and more.*

By Mike Sato — A month into the 2021 state legislative session, it's time to review the legislation introduced by our elected representatives and compiled as of Feb. 9 by [WashingtonVotes.Org](http://WashingtonVotes.Org). Here's a list of bill titles and links showing their work. ([Read more.](#))

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## [Artist's Corner / Tailored to the task](#)



*Juvenile northern harrier (hand-colored drawing by Tony Angell)*

By Tony Angell — Throughout the fall and winter, the northern harrier is a regular presence along the outer fields, sloughs and dikes bordering the Salish Sea. ([Read more.](#))

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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 and Safety

- Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties are allowed to move to Phase 2 beginning Feb. 15. ([Whatcom County Health Department](#))
- The concerns of Surrey-area residents about the potential spread of COVID-19 as people from British Columbia and the United States meet at a cross-border park should be directed to the federal government, Premier John Horgan said Wednesday. ([CBC](#))
- Western Washington University's Student Health Center has registered nearly as many positive COVID-19 cases halfway through winter quarter as were reported for the entire fall quarter. The increase is attributed to social gatherings. ([Western Front](#))
- A joint effort of San Juan County, the Washington National Guard and the Washington Department of Health will deliver 1,900 first doses of the COVID vaccine next week to San Juan County. The team will return 28 days later to deliver second doses. ([Dept. of Emergency Management](#))

### Government

- San Juan County
- The San Juan County Council met on Feb. 8 and heard staff present a work plan and a draft resolution amending Resolution 03-2021 to extend the vacation rental moratorium for one year to Jan. 13, 2022. [Read here.](#)
- On Feb. 8, the council discussed a draft organizational charter for a regional partnership among Snohomish, Whatcom, Island, San Juan and Skagit counties. [Read here.](#)
- On Feb. 9, the council heard a presentation by Nuka Research on ship drift and response analysis for the rescue of disabled vessels in transboundary waters. [Watch here \(2.21.54\)](#)
- City of Bellingham
- The Bellingham City Council met on Feb. 8. Council [actions](#) include:
- Council member Huthman introduced an emergency ordinance to temporarily suspend removal of homeless encampments, like the one at Geri Field. After discussion, council members Huthman and Hammill moved to submit the draft ordinances into the public record and direct the administration to review for feedback. The motion carried 4-0-3 (Knutson, Anderson and Vargas abstaining).
- Council members Anderson and Lilliquist moved to prepare a resolution that stipulates that meetings of the Broadband Workgroup be recorded and made available online. Motion carried 7-0.

- [22904] The Council heard a presentation by the Whatcom County Health Department on serving the homeless. [Watch here.](#)
- [22505] The Council heard a staff presentation of the 2021 implementation plan for the Climate Action Plan. [Watch here.](#)
- [22909] The Council discussed guidelines for public comment during the council's evening session. [Watch here.](#)
- Whatcom County
- The Whatcom County Council met on Feb. 9. Council [actions](#) include:
  - [\[AB2021-091\]](#) Authorized a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Transportation in the amount of \$2,047,063 for a total amended contract amount of \$2,197,063 for the construction of the Lummi Island Breakwater Replacement to allow the *Whatcom Chief* ferry to dock safely. [Adopted 7-0]
  - [\[AB2021-080\]](#) Authorized an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the United States Department of the Treasury for rental and utility assistance and other housing expenses, in the amount of \$6,911,585. [Adopted 7-0]
- Port of Bellingham
- The next meeting of the Port of Bellingham Commission has been rescheduled to Feb. 18. [Agenda includes:](#)
  - Broadband update
  - Marine Trades Area Cleanup and Redevelopment
- State Legislature
- 40th District State Rep. Debra Lekanoff, D-Bow, has introduced legislation to ban Native American names, symbols and images for use as public school mascots, logos or team names, as of next Jan. 1. ([Associated Press](#))
- 40th District State Sen. Liz Lovelett, D-Anacortes, has introduced Senate Bill 5012 to help cities fund affordable housing by adding a tax at checkout for customers renting short-term units or homes. ([Western Front](#))

## Nature

- Tony Parkin has been hired as the new Executive Director of the Islands' Oil Spill Association (IOSA). ([Orcsonian](#))

- DNA analysis used to identify sources of bacterial pollution in the Skagit and Samish river watersheds has found multiple sources from humans, wild animals and domestic animals throughout the area surveyed. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- The Discovery channel will release a feature documentary titled “Attack of the Murder Hornets” on Feb. 20 featuring Blaine beekeepers and Washington Department of Agriculture entomologists tracking the giant hornets last fall. ([The Northern Light](#))

## **Business**

- The National Transportation Safety Board has found that the 2019 crash of a loaded propane tanker into the Petrogas Cherry Point pier was caused by "nonpertinent" conversation between the pilot and the ship's master that distracted the bridge crew's attention. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))
- After continually hearing Whatcom County employers voice frustration about not being able to find diverse candidates, Distinctive Voice Consulting owner Kim Harris has started a job board to help local businesses hire from a diverse group of workers. ([The Northern Light](#))
- Residents living on Fidalgo Island near the Lake Erie Pit appealed this week to the Skagit County Commissioners a hearing examiner's decision that allows a pit expansion from 17.7 to 53.5 acres. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- The Shell Puget Sound Refinery on March Point paid a \$191,000 fine in a settlement with the Environmental Protection Agency for a three-and-a-half hour discharge of 700 pounds of pollutants in 2015 in violation of the Clean Air Act. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

## **Community**

- On Feb. 12, 1974, Federal Judge George Boldt issued an historic ruling reaffirming the rights of Washington's Indian tribes to fish in accustomed places. The "Boldt Decision" allocates 50% of the annual catch to treaty tribes, which enraged other fishermen. At the same time Judge Boldt denied landless tribes — among them the Samish, Snoqualmie, Steilacoom and Duwamish — federal recognition and treaty rights. ([History Link](#))
- Lummi Nation fisher Ellie Kinley is featured in a story about her family's fishing traditions and the difficulty of being a fisher in modern times. ([National Fisherman](#))
- "Art as Protest/Art in the Time of COVID" is a virtual exhibit online during February hosted by the Children's Lit Conference in advance of their Feb. 27 annual gathering of educators, librarians, writers, and artists. ([WWU Children's Lit Conference](#))

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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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