

Salish Current

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

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Feb. 19, 2021:

[Community Voices / Thoughts on the Puget Sound Partnership and recovering Puget Sound](#)



*The iconic Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) is among many species whose existence depends on a healthy Salish Sea. (Image courtesy Zureks, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons)*

By Al Bergstein — When the Puget Sound Partnership, which is tasked with the recovery of Puget Sound, recently announced updates to their “desired outcomes” for recovery, I cringed. Why? Because we are now 14 years since the Partnership started this process, and in short, it’s not going well. ([read more](#))

The essays, analyses and opinions presented as Community Voices express the perspectives of their authors on topics of interest and importance to the community, and are not intended to reflect perspectives on behalf of the Salish Current.

*

From the Editor’s Desk / '[We seek truth and report it accurately and fairly](#)'



*By Mike Sato — The proliferation of media platforms where facts, news and opinion swirl and mix often creates ideological divides and culture bubbles. In launching *Salish Current*, we thought it important to make clear distinctions between news and opinion. ([read more](#))*

*

Letter to the Editor: ['How will visionary leadership work?'](#)

*

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

* * *

News from around the region:

Health and Safety

- Whatcom County's COVID-19 rate by school districts as of Feb. 16 was Blaine 193, Lynden 499, Nooksack Valley 497, Ferndale 407, Meridian 260, Mt. Baker 152, Bellingham 149. (Rate is the number of confirmed cases per 100,000 people over the past two weeks.) ([The Northern Light](#))
- Canada will not require COVID-19 testing for Point Roberts residents who travel through Canada for essential services. ([Gov. Jay Inslee's Office](#))

Education

- Gov. Jay Inslee has announced that K-12 schools across the state can reopen for in-classroom instruction. The push to reopen schools comes amid fierce debates about the risks of sending kids and educators back into school buildings during the Covid-19 pandemic. ([KUOW](#))
- Western Washington University, in collaboration with Green Flower, will provide Western students with cannabis certificate programs in business, law and policy, healthcare and medicine, and agriculture and horticulture. ([Western Front](#))
- San Juan Islands Community Network will host a virtual forum discussing how island schools are responding to the health and educational challenges posed by COVID-19. [Register here.](#) ([San Juan Update](#))

Government

- Anacortes Mayor Laurie Gere announced Thursday night that she will not seek re-election as mayor after her second term expires at year's end. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))
- [City of Bellingham](#)

The Bellingham City Council will meet on Feb. 22. [Agenda](#) items include:

- [22007] Broadband Advisory Workgroup Meeting Recording: A [resolution](#) providing clarification and direction regarding the broadband advisory group.
- [22914] Habitat Restoration and Stewardship in Lower Whatcom Creek Corridor. [Staff report](#) and [presentation](#).

- [22910] Analysis of Proposed BMC Amendments for Tent Encampments and Camping in Public Places. [Staff memo](#). [Ordinance](#) declaring an emergency and requiring an immediate revision to city code regulating removal of encampments on city park property. [Draft emergency ordinance](#) interim amendments (encampment).

- Whatcom County

- [Whatcom County redistricting committee](#) has met on Jan. 28 and Feb. 4 to begin deciding the boundaries of the five county council districts. The committee appointed Gary Jensen, former Ferndale mayor, to serve as a fifth member and chair, and Tjalling Ypma, Western Washington University math professor, as districting master. ([Lynden Tribunes/paywall](#))

The Whatcom County Council meets on Feb. 23. [Agenda](#) item include:

- [\[AB2021-124\]](#) Authorize the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to administer rental and utility assistance to eligible recipients, in the amount of \$6,807,911. [Staff memo](#).
- [\[AB2021-125\]](#) Authorize the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and DH to implement a COVID-19 social marketing campaign plan and messaging platform, in the amount of \$200,000. [Staff memo](#).

- State Legislature

- House Bill 1072 — [Removing only one of the restrictions on the use of civil legal aid funds](#) Introduced by Rep. Debra Lekanoff (Whatcom County) (D) on Jan. 11, 2021 and passed 56 to 40 in the House. HB 1072 removes the prohibition on the use of civil legal aid funds to represent individuals who are in the United States without legal authority. Referred to the Senate Law & Justice Committee.
- House Bill 1279 — [Modifying the Washington main street program tax incentive to respond to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) Introduced by Rep. Alicia Rule (Whatcom County) (D) on Jan. 19, 2021 and passed 96 to 0 in the House. HB 1279 expands the total business and occupation (B&O) tax or public utility tax (PUT) credit allowed under the Main Street Tax Incentive program to 90 percent, for contributions made to a designated local program or the state Main Street Trust Fund beginning in calendar year 2021. Referred to the Senate.
- House Bill 1537 - [Terminating certain tax preferences for fossil fuel products](#) Introduced by Rep. Alex Ramel (Bellingham) (D) on Feb. 16, 2021.
- House Bill 1534 — [Establishing a carbon pollution tax that recognizes the nature of energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries](#) Introduced by Rep. Sharon Shewmake (Whatcom County) (D) on Feb. 12, 2021.

- Senate Bill 5450 — [Prohibiting the inappropriate use of Native American names, symbols, or images as public school mascots, logos, or team names](#) Introduced by Sen. Doug Ericksen (Ferndale) (R) on Feb. 12, 2021.
- In the battle within the state Republican Party about election fraud, Bob Eberle, a prominent Skagit County Republican and former three-term lawmaker, said he's no conspiracy theorist. But he does believe that Republican Secretary of State Kim Wyman has failed to secure our state's elections. ([KUOW](#))

Nature

- Seattle's Skagit River dams hurt salmon, orcas and Native American culture, agencies say ([KING](#))
- Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group celebrated 30 years of salmon recover in the Skagit River watershed. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Several sites in Anacortes are targeted for cleanup and/or monitoring by the state Department of Ecology. These sites include: Anacortes Port Log Yard Site, 718 4th St., Custom Plywood Mill Site, Dakota Creek Shipyard, Quiet Cove on O Avenue between 2nd and 3rd streets, Whitmarsh Landfill Site, formerly a natural lagoon on the south shore of Padilla Bay, Cap Sante Marine Site, between 11th and 13th streets east of Q Avenue, former Shell Oil Tank Farm Site, Scott Paper Mill Site and Wyman's Marina and Wholesale Supply Site. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))
- Kathryn Sobocinski, Assistant Professor at Huxley College, will speak via Zoom on "[The State of the Salish Sea: A Preview of the Upcoming Report](#)" on Feb. 25.
- Based on new findings published in the *Journal of Marine Science and Engineering* that found that Growler jet noise is not largely attenuated within the first meter or two of water, Citizens of the Ebey's Reserve filed notice Feb. 9 with the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Department of Interior of its Notice of Intent to Sue under the Endangered Species Act. ([COER](#))

Community

- A random survey of 1,594 Bellingham residents by Western Washington University's Center for Economic and Business Research found that 57% of residents ranked homelessness a top concern for the city. ([Western Front](#))
- 2021 Ski to Sea Postponed Until 2022 ([Whatcom Events](#))
- The 2021 Anacortes Waterfront Festival is cancelled. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))
- The Whatcom County Home & Garden Show, usually held each March at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden, is rescheduled to Sept. 24-26, 2021. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

- In 2019 Congress passed the Maritime Washington National Heritage Act designating 3,000 miles of Washington State's saltwater shoreline, from Grays Harbor County to the Canadian border as a nationally significant cultural landscape. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation in co-sponsorship with Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism and the Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom County has scheduled a webinar at 5 p.m. on Feb. 23. [Register](#) to learn more.

* * *

Like this newsletter? Share it. And it's easy to subscribe by reply mail. Your email address will never be shared-- and you can unsubscribe at any time. Mike Sato.

* * *

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.

Support: Please Donate to *Salish Current* (Thank You!)

Facebook: Follow and engage with us [Salish Current](#)

Twitter: Follow and engage with us [@currentsalish](#)

Say something: SalishCurrent@gmail.com

And check out what's new on [Salish Current](#)