

# Salish Current

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

**Dear Readers** — This week's issue features a story by freelance reporter Alex Meacham, a recent Western Washington University graduate with a degree in environmental journalism. We're proud to have talent like Alex as part of our reporting corps and finally met him in person last weekend after working together remotely for over a year during COVID. We hope you find stories like Alex's in *Salish Current* informative and important. Please share his story and introduce us to other readers. We thank our freelance reporters and ask that you support them with a [donation](#). Thank you — **Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

## News from the *Salish Current*, April 9, 2021

### [North Fork Nooksack Forest project: thinning for habitat or harvesting for profit?](#)

A U.S. Forest Service map highlights the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Project area (in pink outlined by dark green) and proposed treatment stands (bright green), in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.



*By Alex Meacham* — The draft proposal drew 299 comments across a range of environmental groups, logging interests and tribal government during the comment period. Next steps — including whether to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) — are up to project managers to decide.

(read more)

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

It's too soon to talk about reopening Canada-U.S. border, says Dominic LeBlanc, Intergovernmental Affairs Minister. LeBlanc says there's too much uncertainty about the pandemic's path in the coming months for the

federal government to engage in discussions about reopening the Canada-U.S. border. ([CBC](#)) Meanwhile: British Columbia announces record-breaking 1,293 new COVID-19 cases. ([CBC](#))

Six Washington residents have become ill in an outbreak of *Salmonella typhimurium*, believed to be linked to wild songbirds, particularly pine siskins, state health officials said Monday. ([Associated Press](#))

The city of Bellingham doesn't require bicyclists to wear a helmet because, according to Chris Comeau, transportation planner for Bellingham Public Works, "Requiring the wearing of a bicycle helmet actually creates a barrier to entry for some... people, in that, they simply may not be able to afford a bicycle helmet and therefore could be penalized and get a ticket for riding a bike without a helmet... And that's a social equity issue." ([Western Front](#))

Whatcom County 4/9/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 10.3/100K  
San Juan County 4/9/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 8.9/100K  
Skagit County 4/9/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 13.8/100K

## **Government**

### **City of Lynden**

The city of Lynden council has approved an increase in park impact fees assessed on new construction from the \$936 approved in 2004 to \$2,925. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

### **City of Bellingham**

The Bellingham City Council will meet on April 12. [Agenda items](#) include:

Mayor's Appointment of John Baker, Holly Pai, and Australia Shanghai Cosby as Primary Representatives and Marciano Sanchez Lopez as an Alternate Representative to the Immigration Advisory Board (Approval)

[\[22953\]](#) Ordinance Relating to Hazard Pay for Grocery Workers Committee of the Whole 1:30 p.m.

[\[22930\]](#) Part 3 in a Series of Staff Presentations in Preparation for City Council Adoption of the 2021-2022 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Action Plan

[\[22954\]](#) Introduction of the City's Update of its Shoreline Master Program (SMP)

### **Whatcom County**

The Whatcom County Council met on April 6. [Agenda items](#) included:

"I am pleased to share that the State of the County is strong," County Executive Sidhu said in his State of the County address. "Faced with an unprecedented challenge, Whatcom County rallied, demonstrating its resourcefulness and resilience." ([transcript](#))

[\[AB2021-184\]](#) The council approved (7-0) an ordinance amending Whatcom County Code 9.08.020 Unlawful Exposure to include an exception for breastfeeding.

[\[AB2021-190\]](#) The council approved (6-1, Elenbaas nay) an ordinance imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance and processing of applications and permits for new or expanded outdoor recreational cannabis growing and/or processing facilities.

[\[AB2021-191\]](#) The council authorized (6-1, Elenbaas nay) the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide funding for rental assistance and emergency shelter in motels in the amount of \$618,121 for a total amended contract amount of \$1,514,822.

## **State Legislature**

The legislature in a 44-5 bipartisan vote approved a measure originally introduced by 40th District Rep. Debra Lekanoff to replace Washington's Marcus Whitman statue in the National Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of Billy Frank, Jr., a Nisqually tribal member who championed treaty rights and protecting the environment.

[\(Associated Press\)](#)

[HB 1569](#): Concerning green electrolytic hydrogen was introduced by Rep. Alex Ramel (Bellingham) (D) on April 3, 2021

## **Elections**

Lynden Mayor Scott Korthuis announced his intent to seek reelection.

## **Nature**

At Bellingham's Boulevard Park, a two-year design and permitting process gets underway to determine the extent of historic pollution on the north end of the park before beginning construction to remove structures, cap contaminated soil and protect the shoreline planned for 2023. [\(KGMJ\)](#)

Seattle City Light announced Wednesday that in response to requests from the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe and other stakeholders it has broadened its study plan for the relicensing of its Skagit River dams. [\(Skagit Valley Herald/paywall\)](#)

The Britt Slough wetlands in the side channel of the south fork of the Skagit River is scheduled for restoration by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group this summer. [\(Skagit valley Herald/paywall\)](#)

Western Washington University professor of biology David Hooper received a \$30,000 grant to conduct research on the links between policy and riparian restoration for nutrient retention in the Nooksack River watershed. [\(Western Front\)](#)

[MJB will remove 100-foot towers after ospreys leave nest](#)

Installation of streets and utilities on 28 acres of MJB Properties' central waterfront land will begin in June or July, but removal of two 100-foot towers will have to wait until October. (Anacortes American/paywall)

## **Business**

The Nooksack Indian Tribe is partnering with SpaceX's Starlink communications system to test 102 kits on the reservation for high-speed internet service in remote rural areas. ([Nooksack Tribe](#))

Comcast will invest \$4.2 million to expand service to 815 homes in the City of Sumas. ([News Direct](#))

The median sales price of a Whatcom County home rose 19.1% to \$500,000 and Bellingham's median price rose 20.3% to \$607,500 compared to a year ago. ([KGMI](#)) The median closing price for a home sold in Skagit County in March was \$485,550, a 27% increase over the previous March. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The online publication *My Ferndale News* has rebranded itself as *Whatcom News* and extended its open-access news and event coverage throughout Whatcom County. ([Whatcom News](#))

## **Community**

The city of Bellingham has begun its search for a permanent police chief by posting a [job description](#) and a [recruitment brochure](#). The application deadline is April 11 and residents are welcomed to [share their thoughts](#) through April 16 about what kind of police chief and policing they would like for the city.

Bellingham Public Library has received a Certificate of Substantial Completion for the Central Branch main floor remodel project which allows Library staff to complete several additional tasks required for reopening the Central Library in late spring 2021. ([Bellingham Library/Whatcom Talk](#))

The city of Bellingham expects a tiny-house village called Gardenview Village at 1399 Woburn Street to open for houseless residents by the end of spring. Road2Home and Low Income Housing Institute will be the primary operators of the Gardenview Village. ([Western Front](#))

## **Arts & Leisure**

Eight years ago this month, President Barack Obama signed a proclamation establishing a San Juan Islands National Monument. The story of the historic lighthouse on Patos Island is documented in *Patos Island Lighthouse*. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

## **Jump In!**

San Juan County Preservation Trust presents a free online program, "Just a Moment" featuring various islanders with expertise in natural history. Check out Season Two's [offerings](#).