

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers — *Salish Current*, like many not-for-profit organizations fundraising this week and next, depends on our readers' support. Our endeavor is simple: We will offer — and continue to offer — all of our in-depth reporting to anyone, regardless of their ability to pay, because we believe that in a democratic society, news is a public service, not a product. To do that, we need individual support from readers like you. Our editors are all volunteers and our stories are free to read, but we pay our freelance reporters for what they write. This week, we feature a news story by freelance reporter Alex Meacham, a recent graduate of WWU's journalism program who has written several stories for you, and a story by our WWU journalism intern Kenneth Duncan, who appears in *Salish Current* for the first time. Please share these stories with others to help build our readership, and please make a [donation](#) to help pay our freelancers for their work. Thank you — **Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

News from the *Salish Current* April 30, 2021

[Little estuary to see big restoration investment](#)



Restoration plans call for establishing a fish-friendly estuary at Little Squalicum Park on Bellingham Bay, where currently the stream is routed through the confines of a concrete culvert.

By Alex Meacham — A small city park on Bellingham Bay will soon include a valuable asset for the local aquatic ecosystem, as the City of Bellingham identifies funding needed to establish an estuary at Little Squalicum Park.

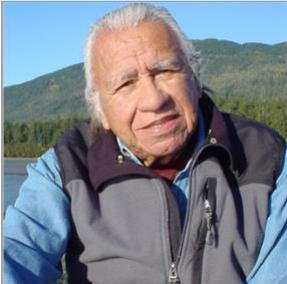
[Late data delays Whatcom County districting; US Census blames COVID-19](#)



Whatcom County council districts were redrawn in 2016, with each containing a population around 42,000 as specified by law.

By Kenneth Duncan — A months-long delay in the delivery of 2020 U.S. Census data has compelled the 2021 Whatcom Districting Committee to postpone updating county voting district maps, despite the county charter's strict May 1 deadline on map generation and submission.

Doing the work of the people: Nooksack adjudication, honor for Billy Frank, Jr., and a wrap-up of 40th and 42nd legislator success



Billy Frank, Jr., lifelong native rights and environmental activist, will be honored with a statue in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol, per legislative action in the 2021 session. Frank, who died in 2014, was a member of the Nisqually Tribe. (Image: THISISINDIANCOUNTRY, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

How did bills introduced by 40th and 42nd District legislators fare in the session ending on April 25? See an update on the full list — planning for zero-emissions transportation, standardizing definitions around homelessness to help improve services, and more.

***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 & Safety

The Point Roberts fire chief is asking state officials for permission to offer surplus vaccinations to Canadians who would remain in their cars. ([Vancouver Sun](#))

Len Saunders, an immigration lawyer in Blaine, says vaccines in Washington are as plentiful as candy, and British Columbians facing a short supply may find getting a shot may prove as easy as hopping on a plane and finding a willing pharmacy. ([Vancouver Sun](#))

Homeless people in need of hygiene, medical and behavioral health services, or non-hospital respite will be able to be helped at The Way Station in Bellingham as a result of \$4 million granted in the state budget to a partnership of Unity Care NW, Opportunity Council, PeaceHealth and the Whatcom County Health Department. ([Whatcom Talk/Unity Care](#))

Whatcom County 4/30/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 16.3/100K
San Juan County 4/30/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 4.9/100K
Skagit County 4/30/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 23.7/100K

Education

Ferndale Schools broke ground this week on the \$124 million new high school project to replace all buildings except for the Performing Arts Center and upgrade the existing stadium, ball field and track. ([KGMJ](#))

Western Washington University has approved demands made five years ago for a Coast Salish-style longhouse to be built on campus, according to Laural Ballew, Western's executive director of American Indian, Alaska Native and First Nations Relations and Tribal Liaison. ([Western Front](#))

Government

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on April 26. [Agenda items](#) included:

The Council held a public hearing then adopted (7-0) a resolution forming a Bellingham-Whatcom County Tourism Promotion Area.

The Council held a public hearing then adopted (5-2, Knutson and Vargas opposed) an ordinance requiring hazard pay of \$4/hr to workers in grocery stores of more than 40 workers.

The Council approved (7-0) an interlocal agreement with Whatcom County to support, develop and fund a process to create recommendations on the establishment of a countywide [Racial Equity Commission](#).

The Council approved (7-0) to authorize the Mayor to enter into an updated interlocal agreement with Whatcom County for the Ground Level Response and Coordinated Engagement ([GRACE](#)).

The Council approved (7-0) to extend and renew an ordinance establishing a moratorium on development applications and permits relating to the redevelopment of the manufactured home parks in Bellingham.

[22505] The Climate Action Committee voted (7-0) to direct staff to develop an ordinance based on the City of [Seattle's energy codes](#) for commercial large and multifamily buildings.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council will meet on May 5. [Agenda items](#) include:

[AB2021-256] Approve the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Military Department for FY20 [Operation Stonegarden](#) in the amount of \$405,600. Operation Stonegarden supports enhanced cooperation and coordination among local, Tribal, territorial, state and federal law enforcement agencies to secure the borders of the U.S. Participating agencies will not enforce Title 8 (U.S. ImmigrationLaw).

[AB2021-257] Discuss and vote on the [public participation plan](#) for Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation Amendments

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham Commission will meet on May 4. [Agenda items](#) include:

[Authorize sale of vessels](#) in port moorages seized for nonpayment of port charges.

[Modify the lease](#) between the Port of Bellingham and Pacific Cruises Northwest, Inc. d/b/a Port Fairhaven to include exclusive seating areas and allow the sale of liquor while operating a fish and chip restaurant in the Bellingham Cruise Terminal.

Vote to amend [the Delegation of Authority](#) to the Executive Director to take action to enforce property-related agreements within the Waterfront District, including property transaction agreements and development agreements, including the Master Development Agreement. This authority would include issuing notices of default and notices of termination. Any settlement of an enforcement action or modification of any existing agreement would require Commission approval.

Nature

New Department of Natural Resources maps modeling the effects of a tsunami generated from a magnitude 9 quake shows Bellingham's waterfront and downtown covered by several feet of water, the Nooksack River Delta under six to 16 feet of water, and low-lying areas of Skagit County under several feet of flooding. ([KGMI](#))

A team of researchers from Washington Sea Grant, Northwest Straits Commission and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife have started setting traps for invasive green crabs in Drayton Harbor. ([The Northern Light](#))

Business

The renown Willows Inn on Lummi Island is accused by former employees for faked ingredients, sexual harassment and an abusive kitchen. ([NY Times](#))

The Anacortes City Council approved a \$5.1 million contract to extend the city's fiber internet to 2,308 households in the city's west side. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The Port of Bellingham will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 86% after signing an 18-year-contract with Puget Sound Energy to purchase 100% renewable energy. ([Western Front](#))

Commentary

Different seabird species come and go in very different cycles — rhinoceros auklets now, glaucous-winged gulls later. Scoters and long-tailed ducks are common in the winter, but scarce in summer months ... Ross Anderson says, "If you're asking yourself 'So what?' that's OK. I ask myself that question frequently. And I help count those birds." ([Rainshadow Journal](#))

Community

The western portion of the Red Road to D.C. Totem Pole Journey will visit San Juan Island on May 10 and Orcas and Lopez islands on May 11. ([Orcasonian](#))

Why does the Lincoln Theater in Mount Vernon keep a single, bare light bulb — what executive director Roger Gietzen calls a "ghost light" — burning on its mostly dark stage? ([KUOW](#))

The Lynden Chamber of Commerce decided to cancel the annual Farmers Day Parade and Raspberry Festival for 2021 after deciding they could not meet state guidelines for these events. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

A new trail section in Waypoint Park on the Bellingham waterfront will connect Roeder to Laurel Avenues, with the Acid Ball sculpture as the centerpiece to the trail. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

The nonprofit service Island Rides has been providing free, on-demand rides daily to those in need on San Juan and Lopez island and is now planning to bring the program to Orcas Island. ([San Juan Journal](#))

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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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