

Salish Current

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

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News from the *Salish Current* May 7, 2021

[Second phase of fish passage work on Padden Creek](#)

Padden Creek's passage under 30th Street and Old Fairhaven Parkway in Bellingham is on its way to being better salmon habitat as well as less prone to flooding yards and homes, as culverts will be replaced with a fish-passage bridge.



By Mike Sato and Alex Meacham — In late April work began to correct fish passageways under Interstate 5 at the Old Fairhaven Parkway (State Route 11) exit and at the intersection of Old Fairhaven Parkway and 30th Street. When work is completed by the fall of 2022, coho, chum and chinook salmon will have access to 2.7 miles of the creek from its mouth in Bellingham Bay near the ferry terminal. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices — Acknowledge, learn transform: Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#)



The Chinese New Year parade in San Francisco — among the world's largest lunar new year celebrations — draws a diverse crowd and participants from multiple cultures.

By Terri Thayer — America continues to struggle to recognize the contributions of all to the building of this nation. In May — Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month — we have an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the resilience and voices of these communities. ([Read more.](#))

Health

Western Washington University will require COVID-19 vaccinations of all students attending on-campus classes in the fall quarter. Exemptions will be consistent with the existing policy for measles vaccination. ([Western Front](#))

San Juan County is the first in Washington to crack 60% for the percentage of population initiating vaccination, according to the state department of health. ([San Juan Update](#))

Sen. Doug Ericksen (R-Ferndale) objected to Gov. Jay Inslee allowing more capacity at venues where “vaccinated only” sections are created and plans again to make “vaccination discrimination” illegal. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Whatcom County 5/7/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 14.9/100K; 45.1% vaccinated
San Juan County 5/7/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 0.8/100K; 64.8% vaccinated
Skagit County 5/7/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 16.0/100K; 44.3% vaccinate

Education

Mike Stromme has been hired as the Lynden School District’s Interim Superintendent for the 2021-22 school year. He currently works in the Vancouver School District as a Deputy Superintendent and has a 33-year career in education. ([Lynden School District](#))

Government

Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council will meet on May 10. [Agenda items](#) include:

The Climate Action Committee at 10:45 a.m. will consider the city partnering with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) on the development of a [PSE community solar program](#) and hear a PSE presentation on its Beyond Net Zero commitments.

The Committee of the Whole at 1 p.m. will consider an [ordinance](#) to reduce single-use plastic waste and encourage compostable or reusable alternatives.

The Council will vote on final considerations of an ordinance to extend the moratorium on development of existing mobile home parks by six months, an ordinance establishing a Bellingham-Whatcom County Tourism Promotion Area, an ordinance establishing additional compensation for certain grocery workers, and ordinances related to the 2021-2022 budget.

The city of Bellingham’s six-year draft [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) is available for public review in advance of a public hearing at the May 24 City Council meeting. The Council is scheduled to vote on the TIP on June 7.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council met on May 4. [Agenda items](#) included:

[[AB2021-272](#)] The Council approved (6-0, Byrd absent) a one-year extension of the 2020-2021 collective bargaining agreement with the Deputy Sheriff's Guild through 2022 with a 2.75% wage increase and with all other terms and conditions of the CBA renewed and extended through 2022.

[[AB2021-256](#)] The Council approved (5-1, Donovan opposed, Byrd absent) the County Executive entering into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Military Department for FFY20 [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. Immigration Law).

[[AB2021-257](#)] The Council approved (6-0, Byrd absent) [the public participation plan](#) for Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation Amendments.

[[AB2021-185](#), [AB2021-186](#)] The Council approved (4-2, Ellenbaas and Kershner opposed, Byrd absent) ordinances for public hearings amending Whatcom County Code 9.32, Unlawful Discharge of Firearms, to establish a [no shooting zone in the Drayton Harbor Area](#) and to establish a [no shooting zone to be known as the Dearborn No Shooting Zone](#).

[[AB2021-161](#)] The Council approved (4-2, Ellenbaas and Kershner opposed, Byrd absent) an [ordinance](#) granting Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless, a nonexclusive franchise for the provision of wireless telecommunications services.

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham Commissioners met on May 4. [Agenda items](#) included:

The Commission approved (3-0) a [lease](#) between the Port of Bellingham and Fairhaven Industrial Marine Repair Facility, LLC (FIMRF), for property in Fairhaven. The rental term is 10 years with a five-year renewal option. The base rent for the premises is approximately \$819,000 per year. The first two months rent is abated and rent increases at a 3% rate at the beginning of years three, four and five. Rent for the second five-year period is subject to renegotiation. FIMRF will bring 20 full time jobs with additional jobs added over time to support their diverse and expanding operations.

Nature

The cities of Sedro-Woolley, Anacortes and Mount Vernon have joined with the Skagit Public Utilities District, the Port of Skagit and the Samish Indian Nation in opposing a proposal to mine for precious metals near the headwaters of the Skagit River in British Columbia. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The Philosophical Gardener writes: "Yes, one sees them now in supermarkets, bright red, big-bosomed fruits piled high in plastic boxes luring us to a summer fantasy but delivering pithy white centers and a taste only reminiscent of strawberries. If you want the real thing, in abundance, plant now."

([Rainshadow Journal](#))

Business

Going beyond rabbits and maple syrup, Valley Farmstead's family business along the south fork of the Nooksack River is evolving to foster and nurture a decentralized farming system that spreads know-how and wealth more widely and equitably among many small entrepreneurs. ([Seattle Times](#))

What's the island fallout from the national news about the world-renown Willows Inn scandal on Lummi Island? Former reporter, past Seattle City Councilperson and sometime island resident Jean Godden reports on island reactions. ([Post Alley](#))

Shell will sell its Puget Sound Refinery to HollyFrontier for \$350 million in cash plus the value of the hydrocarbon inventory currently valued between \$150 million to \$180 million. ([Hydrocarbons Technology](#))

San Juan County will hold an online public meeting May 13 to present its [Vessel Drift and Response Analysis for the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Southern Strait of Georgia](#). ([San Juan Islander](#)) See also: Rescue tug stationed in islands is best bet to avoid oil spills in San Juan – Gulf waters, study says ([Salish Current](#))

The city of Bellingham is taking [grant applications](#) for projects and programs promoting tourism and cultural activities in 2022. An estimated \$300,000 to \$400,000 will be available from federal and local lodging tax revenues.

Community

The "food desert" in Bellingham's Birchwood neighborhood has blossomed with food share boxes often filled by the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters with pasta, canned food, bread, fresh vegetables and various other pantry items provided to a community in need. ([Western Front](#))

Highway 20 was cleared of 37 miles of snow and opened to traffic on Wednesday. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Planners estimate that the Metro Vancouver population will increase by more than 1 million people to a population of 3.8 million residents by 2050. ([CBC](#))

Arts & Leisure

The fifth annual Cascadia International Women's Film Festival will be held online May 13-22. Festival passes are \$60 (\$35 for students), feature films can be viewed for \$12 each. Find program and ticket information [here](#).

Jump in!

Skagit Water Weeks is a collection of events throughout the month of May hosted by local organizations that teach about and celebrate one of our most treasured resources: water! Water is critical to our environment, economy and our cultural well-being. Find the schedule of events [here](#).

Whatcom County elected officials and local and regional service organization representatives will hold an online community visioning summit for the newly established Racial Equity Commission on May 22. ([Chuckanut Health Foundation](#))

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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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