

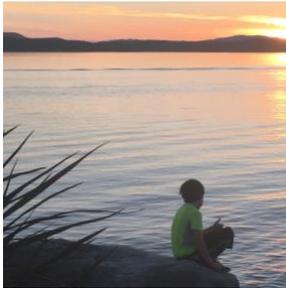
Salish Current

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

Dear Readers — One of the principal reasons we publish *Salish Current* is to provide information that allows readers to be informed participants in their local democratic processes. Today is the filing deadline for our Aug. 8 local primary elections and we will do our best to report in upcoming weeks on the candidates and issues. We feature this week a story by **Heather Spaulding** about how San Juan County citizens are proposing some major revisions to the county charter to take to the voters. Also find links below for joining a discussion of justice and equity, learning about Native fishing traditions, becoming a more informed traveler and more. We hope these are the kinds of articles and listings that help address the need for independent, local reporting for our readers. We call it a public service, not a product, and hope you will encourage others to read [Salish Current](#) and to [support us](#). Thank you.
— **Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

News from the *Salish Current*, week of May 21, 2021

[‘Bold’ ideas around equity, environment proposed as San Juan reviews its county charter](#)



A home rule charter review underway in San Juan County is an opportunity for residents to assess county governance and renew the vision for the future; at left, a view at sunset from Lopez to San Juan Island.

By Heather Spaulding — San Juan County voters could be voting this fall to create a county climate and environment office and a justice and equity commission by amending the county's 15-year-old home rule charter. ([Read more](#))

[Community Voices / Trouble in paradise: Lummi Islanders react to a national expose of its famous restaurant](#)

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.

By Jean Godden — A historic inn on Lummi Island — the latest incarnation of a presence on the island for more than 100 years — made national news lately when a story focused world attention on problematic operations. ([Read more](#))

This article is reprinted courtesy of [Post Alley](#) where it ran on May 7, 2021.

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*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

Canada-U.S. border restrictions have been extended another month to June 21. ([CTV](#)) The lengthy closure of the border has been especially wearing on Point Roberts, a community in northwestern Washington state that is cut off from the U.S. mainland by the Canadian border. ([NW News Network](#))

Fire Chief Christopher Carleton of Point Roberts wants to invite Canadians to be vaccinated with shots that are not used in the isolated border community. ([NW Public Radio](#)) Whatcom County Health Department says "no" to Canadians getting shots in Point Roberts. ([KGMI](#)) The Public Health Agency of Canada declares it OK for Canadian residents to get vaccinated in the U.S. and avoid quarantine on return if they have an exemption for essential medical services obtained abroad. ([CTV](#))

Skagit County in 2020 had 40 accidental drug overdose deaths, up from 18 in 2019, and the number of deaths may be higher after the county gets test results for other potential victims. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) See also: "Pandemic job loss, quarantine, anxieties fuel opioid use surge," Heather Spaulding, [Salish Current](#).

The Drayton Harbor shellfish harvest area currently meets water quality standards but is threatened with restrictions due to bacterial pollution according to the Washington State Department of Health. ([Whatcom News](#))

Whatcom County 5/21/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 14.0/100K; 48.4% vaccinated
San Juan County 5/21/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 4.9/100K; 67.2% vaccinated
Skagit County 5/21/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 12.1/100K; 47.4% vaccinated

Education

Western's new two-year budget from the state is nearly as large as it was last biennium. These investments include \$51 million for the new Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Building, \$4.5 million towards a Coast Salish-style longhouse for Native American students, over \$1 million every two years for an Ethnic Student Studies program, and more. ([Western Front](#))

Government

Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council and its committees will meet on May 24. [Agenda items](#) include:

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.

[22917] Public Works and Natural Resources Committee: Authorize the Mayor to Enter Into an [Inter-Agency Agreement](#) with the Department of Ecology for National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Funding for the [Little Squalicum Estuary Project](#)

[23000] Community and Economic Development Committee: Consider [Interim Housing Strategies](#) (i.e. Shelter) for Those Experiencing Homelessness

The Council of the Whole will discuss: [City priorities](#); [American Rescue Plan Act Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund](#); and [Library services in a time of COVID](#)

The Council will vote to adopt an [ordinance](#) to reduce single-use plastic waste in Bellingham and to encourage compostable or reusable alternatives

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council met on May 18. [Agenda items](#) included:

[AB2021-227] The Council adopted (5-2, Elenbaas and Kershner opposed) an [ordinance](#) imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance and processing of applications and permits for new or expanded facilities in the Cherry Point urban growth area, the primary purpose of which would be the shipment of unrefined fossil fuels not to be processed at Cherry Point.

[AB2021-185, AB2021-186] The Council approved (5-2, Donovan and Frazey opposed) an [ordinance](#) amending Whatcom County Code 9.32, Unlawful Discharge of Firearms, to establish a no-shooting zone in the Drayton Harbor area of Whatcom County and approved (6-1, Frazey opposed) an [ordinance](#) amending Whatcom County Code 9.32, Unlawful Discharge of Firearms, to establish a no-shooting zone to be known as the Dearborn No Shooting Zone.

Elections

The filing period for the Aug. 8 primary election closes at 5 p.m. on May 21.

Whatcom County: [Who Has Filed](#)

Skagit County: [Who Has Filed](#)

San Juan County: [Who Has Filed](#)

Nature

Whatcom County and the state Department of Ecology will alter the flow of Swift Creek to allow removal of naturally occurring asbestos deposited in the creek by Sumas Mountain. [\(KGMI\)](#)

Tara Galuska has been named as the state's orcas recovery coordinator to work with partners to help implement recommendations of Governor Inslee's Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force and to track accomplishments. [\(San Juan Journal\)](#)

On May 25 at 12 noon, Frank Lawrence III (Lummi) and George Swanaset, Jr., "Yel7qaynem" (Nooksack) talk online about tribal fishing culture: the importance of fishing, the First Salmon Ceremony, and their mission to preserve a fishing life for future generations. [Register](#) by May 24.

Commentary

Bellingham resident Floyd McKay, emeritus professor of journalism at Western Washington University, analyzes the recent vote by five small Eastern Washington rural counties to leave Oregon to join the state of Idaho as symptomatic of a deeply polarized populace. [\(Post Alley\)](#)

Community

Free passenger ferry between Bellingham and Point Roberts will switch to sailings on Mondays and Thursdays on June 3. [\(KGMI\)](#)

Local officials like Tony Casale, director of Leased Housing at Bellingham and Whatcom Housing Authority, worry about whether a new state bill addressing the state eviction moratorium scheduled to expire on June 30 will alleviate pressures of the expiring moratorium and improve tenant protections. [\(Western Front\)](#)

San Juan County Commissioners on May 18 were given four options by Director of Community Development Erika Shook for establishing countywide and/or island-specific caps on vacation rental permits (excluding Friday Harbor) as a starting point for discussion. She said the options were numbers based and are starting points for discussion. [\(Orcsonian\)](#)

The annual Anacortes Shipwreck Fest and the Oyster Run are again canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [\(Anacortes American\)](#)

Arts & Leisure

Bellingham City Club on May 26 (12:10- 1:30 p.m.) hosts a virtual presentation by travel guru Rick Steves who will talk about traveling to Europe and what to expect when venturing across the pond. [Registration](#) for the free event closes at midnight May 24.

The Blaine Harbor Music Festival will be held online this year July 12-17. [\(Northern Light\)](#)

Jump in!

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](#))

On Monday May 24 (2-6 p.m.) join in the Red Road to D.C. Totem Pole Journey Blessing at the Bellingham Waterfront on Granary Avenue. Sponsored by the Port of Bellingham, the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, Whatcom Museum, Dana Lyons and the Allied Arts of Whatcom County.

Zoom in on May 26 (4-5:30 p.m. PDT) to a free State of the Salish Sea series symposium featuring an overview of the report by lead writer Kathryn Sobocinski and feature contributors Tara Martin and Aquila Flower discussing the Fraser River delta and new Salish Sea digital atlas maps. [Register here.](#)

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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.

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