

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers —

We recently completed reports to funders and foundations and in the process had a realization: After counting up the original news stories written by our freelancers and the local news stories compiled and curated in our weekly newsletters, we see that we have not actively promoted our goal to serve as a community forum — a place where you, the people of the community, can express what you think is important. So, we're extending a sincere invitation to you to use our letters to the editor and our Community Voices pages to express your thoughts. We ask that letters address issues reported in *Salish Current* and be 300 words or less; for community commentary, we ask that you suggest your topic to us and we will work with you to keep your essay to 800 words or less. Letters and essays should be fact-based, avoid snarkiness and promotions and spread light instead of heat. It's our community and *Salish Current* is a community service. Thank you for reading and for your support.

— Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor

News from the *Salish Current*, week of July 9, 2021

[Clock starts on Nooksack basin water rights inventory; stakeholders yet to discuss solutions](#)



A turbid stretch of the approximately 75-mile-long Nooksack River flows along the southern edge of Lynden. A process to establish water rights among various users in the river's 786-square-mile basin began on July 1.

By Mike Sato

Weeks of sparse rainfall and a historic heat wave marked the end of June — and the start of a process to establish water rights among various users in Whatcom County's Nooksack River basin. ([Read 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

Whatcom County Health Department announced this week a first case of the Delta variant was detected in Whatcom County, but with hundreds of cases found in the Puget Sound region, many more are expected here. ([KGMI](#))

Fire chiefs of local Whatcom County fire districts and departments reported on how many fireworks-related fire and medical emergency calls they responded to over the holiday weekend. ([Whatcom News](#))

Gov. Jay Inslee on Tuesday declared a state of emergency throughout Washington relating to the growing risk of wildfires and issued a statewide prohibition on most outdoor and agricultural burning through Sept. 30. ([Associated Press](#))

Whatcom County 7/9/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk; 3.7/100K; 59.2% vaccinated
San Juan County 7/9/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Low risk; 0.0/100K; 73.5% vaccinated
Skagit County 7/9/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk; 2.2/100K; 54.8% vaccinated

Government

San Juan County

San Juan County Commissioners have elevated and enhanced the county's Environmental Resources Division to an independent climate and environmental department with Kendra Smith as director. The move is meant to pre-empt the Charter Commission's proposal to establish a new department with an elected director. ([Orcas Issues](#))

The San Juan County Council on June 28 approved a proclamation establishing this month as "Plastic Free July." ([San Juan Journal](#))

Bellingham

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

[23029] Mayor's reappointment of Angela Nelson to her third term which will expire on July 6, 2024 to the Lake Whatcom Watershed Advisory Board.

[Committee of the Whole, 10 a.m., 1 p.m.]

[23038] Discussion of conducting [in-person meetings](#).

[23039] Awarding of bid for West Cemetery Creek Water Quality Improvements [Project](#).

[23044] Discussion of measures to [regulate restaurant delivery](#).

[23045-23049] Discussions of initiatives on renter relocation assistance, restricting use of advanced police technologies, neutrality in labor campaigns, and fair treatment of hourly wage and gig workers.

[23050, 23051] Resolutions to amend city charter to reduce the number of signatures required to propose a charter amendment and to propose an initiative by the petition method.

[23052] Receive update on [Safe Spaces program](#).

Whatcom County

The Council will meet on July 13. [Agenda items](#) include:

[[AB2021-393](#)] Authorize the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Commerce for resources to assist people who are experiencing homelessness obtain and maintain housing stability, in the amount of \$6,335,182.

[[AB2021-397](#)] Authorize the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and City of Lynden for Economic Development Investment (EDI) loan and grant funding to support the West Front Street Arterial Improvement Project, in the amount of \$2,000,000.

[[AB2021-398](#)] Authorize the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services for the administration of developmental disabilities services, in the amount of \$4,125,535.

[[AB2021-360](#)] Adopt [proposed ordinance](#) to establish an independent review of the community response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Port of Bellingham

The Port Commission will meet on July 13. [Agenda items](#) include:

Authorize Port of Bellingham Executive Director to execute a [contract](#) between the Port of Bellingham and Zayo Fiber Network for engineering, designing, permitting, and bid documents for construction of segment one, from Deming to Glacier, of the Whatcom County Rural Broadband Fiber Network.

Authorize Port of Bellingham Executive Director to execute a 2021-2024 [Interlocal Agreement](#) between the Port of Bellingham and the Public Utility District of Whatcom County (PUD) for the purpose of joint collaboration in the continued development and implementation of the Whatcom County Rural Broadband Fiber Network.

Approve [Small City Economic Development Funds](#) for projects in the cities of Blaine, Nooksack, Ferndale and Lynden.

Authorize amendments to the Aviation Department's 2021 [Operating Budget](#) to include expenses for the start-up of the announced New Air-Service by Southwest Airlines as applicable under the approved Air-Service Development and Marking Contract and the Port's Air-Service Incentive Program.

Nature

The Department of Ecology is taking public comment through Aug. 4 on the cleanup plan for the Chlor-Alkali Area of the former Georgia-Pacific West pulp mill on Bellingham Bay. ([Ecology](#))

The Whatcom Land Trust is building a riparian corridor along Skookum Creek, the largest cold-water tributary to the South Fork of the Nooksack. Its cold, clear water have a critical impact on the health of the Nooksack South Fork. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

The Whatcom County Draft Climate Action Plan is now available for public review. Comments may be submitted in the following ways by July 30, 2021. ([Whatcom County](#))

Skagit County received \$4.1 million in grants from the state Recreation and Conservation Office for a major expansion of Deception Pass State Park and small investments in area trails, roads and backcountry patrols. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Whatcom's parks and outdoors projects are getting almost \$5 million from the state Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to fund 14 local projects. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Lopez-based conservation biology laboratory Kwiaht has launched a two-year study of the distribution and hosts of local ticks, and the diseases they may spread to island wildlife as well as people. ([San Juan Journal](#))

Business

Last week's record-breaking heat wave left raspberries yellow and cracked and blueberries pink and shriveled. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Skagit County's berry crop was damaged in the recent heat wave and there is concern for potatoes and vegetable seed, two of the county's most important crops. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The Port of Bellingham has acquired a Liebherr Harbor Crane with a lifting capacity of 120 tons and a reach of 157 feet which will allow the port to handle bigger cargo. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Legislation that recently passed the U.S. House includes an earmark for \$8 million for the Guemes Island all-electric ferry project — an amount that would mean the \$19.5 million project is completely funded. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Commentary

Emmett O'Neill tells fish stories in "Four of Whatcom County's Best Hidden Fishing Spots." ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Community

Only 1% of sidewalks and 2% of curb ramps in Whatcom County fully comply with the standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act, according to a self-assessment that the county released in February. ([The Front Update](#))

Jump in!

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Join in the Pop-Up Pride Parade on a short route from the Bellingham Waterfront's Way Point Park, up Chestnut Street to the Depot Market Square. The event will be from 1 to 4 p.m. on July 11. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

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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