

# Salish Current

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

**Dear Readers** — We welcome this weekend's forecast of rain and the end of fire season. Still fresh in mind are the past summer's heat and drought which brought the reality of climate change home to many. **Alan Fritzberg** shows and tells his story about the decades-long changes he's seen on Mount Baker. Out on and in the water, **Gretchen Wing** brings us the challenge science reporter Lynda Mapes sets out if we want to save our resident killer whales. Good stories for the start of our fall season that we hope you enjoy and will share with others. Thank you for reading and thank you for your [support](#). — **Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

**Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equality and healing for all people.**  
**#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter #NoJusticeNoPeace**

## News from the Salish Current, week of Sep. 17, 2021

### [Community Voices / End-of-summer hike brings home climate effects on Mount Baker](#)



*Substantial glacier loss on Mount Baker over the past several decades and high meltwater streamflow bear witness to effects of climate change including this summer's extreme hot weather.*

**Story and photos by Alan Fritzberg** — Hotter-than-usual weather — including a heat dome incident — resulted in more extensive snow and glacier melt than usual on Mount Baker this summer. A hike up Heliotrope Ridge Trail yielded dramatic close-up views of how much the mountain has changed over the last several decades. ([Read more.](#))

### [Author of 'Orca' has a message: hope has a price tag](#)



*Science reporter Lynda Mapes' work takes her to locales such as the Elwha River, where she reported on the science of dam removal. In her new book, Mapes says she came to understand that orcas are "the key to what's going on in this place."*

**By Gretchen K. Wing** — "Orca: Shared Waters, Shared Home" begins in crisis, as author Lynda Mapes tells the gut-wrenching story of Tahlequah (J35), the mother orca who in 2018 carried her dead baby around for 17 days. ([Read more.](#))

## Letters to the Editor:

- San Juan County exemplifies state's successful vaccination strategy
- Vaccinated In restaurants still exposed to unvaccinated 12 and under children

## **News from around the region**

### Health and Safety

Over 70% of all British Columbians are now fully vaccinated ([Vancouver Sun](#)) As of Sept. 13, 68% of the Washington state population 12 and up is fully vaccinated. ([WDOH](#))

Sen. Doug Ericksen (R-Ferndale) has renewed his call for a legislative hearing on the Dec. 22, 2020, train derailment and fire near Cherry Point after a federal agency report cited BNSF safety lapses and "possible" sabotage. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Whatcom County 9/17/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 34.1/100K; 75.1% vaccinated

San Juan County 9/17/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium; 4.9/100K; 77.9% vaccinated

Skagit County 9/17/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 45.3/100K; 65.4% vaccinated

### Government

#### San Juan County

The San Juan County Commissioners met on Sept. 14. [Agenda items](#) included:

The council voted to continue the public hearing, discussion and decision regarding planning commission recommendations on the [2021 Docket](#) to Sept. 28. The council agreed on docket items regarding stormwater, commercial composting, trees and Eastsound planning but needed more information regarding indoor recreation facilities in rural areas and build-out analysis.

Jim Corenman, Ferry Advisory Committee Chair, briefed the council on the San Juan County ferry situation and recent weekend schedule cancellations. The transportation crisis consists of limited number of vessels in an aging fleet and aging maritime crews with low vaccination rates in the engine rooms. The crisis will be with the islands for the foreseeable future. ([Watch at 2:06 -2:44](#))

The Council will meet again on Sept. 21.

#### City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on Sept. 13. [Agenda items included:](#)

- Committee of the Whole: The council authorized (6-0, Knutsen excused) the mayor to enter into an interlocal agreement with Whatcom County for a Homeless Communication Strategy.

- Committee of the Whole: The council awarded bids (6-0, Knutsen excused) to Forma Construction and Colacurcio Brothers as qualified firms to perform general construction work in accordance with the City's Job Order Contracting Program (JOC).
- Council Member Vargas expressed her gratitude toward Anne Deacon, who has worked for the Health Department for many years and will be retiring soon. Council member Hammill discussed the ways Anne Deacon's work with the City and County affected the community throughout her years of service.
- Council Member Vargas reported that the Winter Sheltering efforts will be extended thanks to Christ the King which has offered a program providing 40 beds for shelter that begins in October and will go through March. Council President Stone Hannah also thanked Christ the King for their service.
- On Sept. 20, the council will initiate the first of eight virtual public comment sessions at 7 p.m. allowing speakers three minutes to address council president Hannah Stone and two council members. The public can [join the session](#) at any time. The sessions, which will be held on Mondays when the council does not meet, will not be broadcast, filmed or replayed by the City.

The council will meet again on Sept. 27.

#### Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council met on Sept. 14. [Agenda items](#) included:

- [AB-2021-487] Authorized (5-2, Byrd, Elenbaas opposed) the county executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Michael Bobbink for hearing examiner services.
- [AB2021-359] Approved (5-2, Kershner, Elenbaas opposed) to hold a public hearing to designate four wildlife species as "Species of Local Importance"
- [[AB2021-489](#)] Approved (7-0) the 2022 recommended Convention Center (Lodging Tax) allocations for tourism-related facilities and activities as defined through RCW 67.28.1816 in the amount of \$1,469,575.

The council will meet again on Sept. 28.

#### Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham Commission will meet on Sept. 21. [Agenda items](#) include:

- The commission will hear an update on the Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

The commission will meet again on Oct. 5.

- Harcourt amended Master Development Agreement: Port of Bellingham Public Affairs director Mike Hogan responded a week ago to an inquiry from *Salish Current* regarding the status of the amended MDA. The draft approved by the port commissioners needed to have all the detailed exhibits, figures and other miscellaneous components finalized and completed. "Port and Harcourt staff have been working on these together and plan to have the final revised agreement executed next week. The Port and Harcourt continue to be in agreement on the revised MDA and the timing of execution has been tied to administrative issues and coordination across international time zones ... The revised MDA includes the requirement that condo building units A and B are completed no later than 24 months from executing the agreement and Building C within 18 months following completion of Buildings A and B."

## Elections

The Bellingham City Club will host a virtual county council candidate forum on Sept. 22 featuring District 1 candidates Eddy Ury and Kaylee Galloway, and District 3 candidates incumbent Tyler Byrd and Rebecca Lewis. The City Club on Sept. 29 will host a second virtual Bellingham city candidate forum featuring at-large candidates Kristina Michelle Martens and Russ Whidbee, and Ward 6 candidates incumbent Michael Lilliquist and Eve Smason-Marcus. Registration for the Sept. 22 event closes midnight Sept. 20; registration for the Sept. 29 event closes Sept. 27. [Register here.](#)

The Bellingham-Whatcom County League of Women Voters will host [virtual candidate forums](#):

- Oct. 1 — Port of Bellingham
- Oct. 5 — Whatcom County Council
- Oct. 7 — Ferndale City Council, Ferndale School District
- Oct. 8 — Bellingham City Council, Bellingham School District
- Oct. 13 — Lynden City Council, Lynden School District, Blaine School District
- Oct. 14 — Blaine City Council
- Oct. 16 — City of Bellingham Citizen Initiatives 1-4

The Bellingham/Whatcom County chapter of the League of Woman Voters invites the Whatcom County community to [submit questions](#) to the candidates in advance of the chapter forums scheduled for early October.

The San Juan County League of Women Voters will hold a virtual forum on Oct. 12 at 5:30 p.m. on six proposed county charter amendment proposed by the Charter Review Commission. To register, email [charterreview.forum@gmail.com](mailto:charterreview.forum@gmail.com)

## Nature

Forest health experts lay the blame for Western red cedars dying to the massive amounts of greenhouse gases humans have pumped into the planet's atmosphere. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

At the University of Washington's Friday Harbor Labs, scientists are engaged in a captive breeding program to save the sunflower sea star from a mysterious wasting disease. ([UW Magazine](#))

A third Asian giant hornet nest located on this side of the border was eradicated by the state Department of Agriculture on Sept. 11 and a fourth nest located in east Blaine is scheduled to be eradicated. ([The Northern Light](#))

The Baker Lake Trail area at the edge of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest complex will be the first in Washington recognized in a national network of protected, publicly accessible old-growth forests. The network will include 25 states. The list of old-growth sites is developed and maintained by the Old-Growth Forest Network, a national organization with local volunteers. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

## **Business**

Whatcom County has issued its [2021 Community Food Assessment](#), a snapshot of how food is produced, transported and consumed throughout the county, and asks for public review by Sept. 30. ([Whatcom County Health Department](#))

Sales of single-use plastic bags will be banned in Washington state beginning on Oct. 1 after governor Jay Inslee rescinded the proclamation delaying the original Jan. 1, 2021, start date. ([The Northern Light](#))

The Blaine City Council on Sept. 13 gave final approval to part of the 353-unit East Maple Ridge plat allowing development of 48 single-family lots and 12 multi-family parcels that will contain 48 units. ([The Northern Light](#))

Staffing shortages at Washington State Ferries resulted in 51 canceled sailings on the Anacortes/San Juan Islands route between Sept. 9 and Sept. 13. ([Associated Press](#)) See also: Living and working around ferry delays, cancellations in the San Juans ([Salish Current](#))

## **Arts and Leisure**

Join the [2021 Whatcom Artist Studio tour](#), Oct. 2-3 and 9-8, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. See sculpture, glass, jewelry, painting and more. Meet the artists and learn more about their inspiration and techniques in creating their works of art.

New concertmaster Dawn Posey is the featured soloist in the first Bellingham Symphony concerts of the 2021-2022 season, Sept. 25 and 26 at Mount Baker Theatre. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

"Future Artifacts" at the [Museum of Northwest Art](#) features work by Lummi Nation glass artist Dan Friday, who draws from cultural themes and uses modern processes — while still maintaining basic Native American qualities. Through 10/10.

Join journalist [Lynda Mapes](#) on a dive into the world of the endangered southern resident orcas when she talks about her book, *Orca: Shared Waters, Shared Home* on Sept. 18 at 2 p.m.. The talk is hosted by the Lopez Island Library and has been moved to Zoom because of the weather. [Register here.](#)

## **Jump in!**

The City of Bellingham is organizing its third annual [ALL IN for Climate Action Week](#) from Sept. 20 through Sept. 26. Join in on community fun and informative events, activities and presentations about climate actions that make an impact.

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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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