

# Salish Current

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

**Dear Reader** — It's been a very trying and difficult time with the destruction and dislocations caused by floods in our readership area, and yet very heartening how communities have come together to do what needs to be done. Please donate to the relief efforts through local foundations, churches and community groups. It's sometimes awkward to be asking you to support *Salish Current* when more immediate needs from disasters occur. Donate what you can afford to address the immediate need for flood relief and consider a smaller recurring [monthly donation](#) to *Salish Current* of \$10 or what's affordable monthly. With your ongoing support, we'll be reporting on the aftermath of the flood, measures to address climate change and the changing faces of the Nooksack River valley.

A monthly donation made during this month's [NewsMatch Campaign](#) will be matched for the total 12-month's donation. So, your \$10/month donation this month will bring *Salish Current* \$240. Please support both the flood relief efforts and support independent, fact-based news that's free to read and free of advertising. Please make your [donation online](#) using PayPal or your credit card of choice. Thanks to those who already have donated during our NewsMatch campaign and thank to those in our Publisher's Circle below who encourage you to donate during our campaign. Thank you to all!

#### **Publisher's NewsMatch Circle (as of Nov. 26)**

Eric Hirst, Elsie Heinrick, Barbara and Mike Ryan, John Binns and Julie Fleetwood Binns, Betsy Gross, John and Kathy Whitmer, Floyd and Dixie McKay, Sarah Spotts and Kevin Covey, Shaun Hubbard and Harold Kawaguchi, Alan and Lisbeth Hadden Fritzberg, Cindy Madigan, David and Bonnie Dick, Tony Angell and Lee Rolfe, Jill Bernstein, Kathy Fletcher and Ken Weiner, Cindy Madigan, Ellyn Murphy, Carol Comeau, Theresa Morrow and Bill Ristow.

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

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

## **News from the *Salish Current*, week of Dec. 3, 2021**

### **[Small batches, partnerships and goats: family dairies evolve](#)**



*A family farm for four generations, Beanblossom Acres near Lynden transitioned from cows to goats, one of many changes the local dairy industry has seen in recent years.*

*By Lauren Gallup* — Whatcom County is one of the top milk-producing counties in the state — and nationwide — but the business of dairy has changed, with increasing costs for land, equipment and labor; new technology; and competition from the world market. But family farms remain

in the county — and many are surviving changes in the industry by making changes of their own. ([Read more.](#))

## [Devastated after flooding, north Whatcom County moves into recovery mode](#)



*Clean-up crews in hazmat suits remove insulation material from a flood-damaged residence in Everson; a van awaits loading while sandbags stand against further water damage. Recovery efforts will continue into 2022 for especially hard-hit areas in Sumas, Ferndale, Nooksack, Everson and Lynden.*

Well over 700 homes have been reported damaged in Whatcom County after the area endured three atmospheric rivers in less than three weeks. While cleanup is underway, the impacts on lives and livelihoods will continue for some time. ([Read more.](#))

## News from around the region

### Health and Safety

B.C. confirmed Tuesday it identified its first case of the COVID-19 omicron variant in an infected individual who had traveled recently to Nigeria. ([CBC](#))

After a Whatcom County jail inmate tested positive for COVID-19 last week, 10 more inmates and two staff members have also tested positive and 17 more inmates were moved to quarantine. ([KGMI](#))

The state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction reported that as of late October, nearly 10% of public school employees were granted COVID-19 vaccine exemptions for religious reasons and fewer than 1% for medical reasons. ([The Northern Light](#)) See also: "Not taking it: the hows and whys of religious exemption from the COVID-19 vaccination requirement" ([Salish Current](#), Nov. 19, 2021)

Children's shoes were placed by parents and children on the steps of the San Juan School District Office to show how many students would not attend school if vaccinations were mandated. The school district has no plans to unilaterally impose a mandate. ([San Juan Journal](#))

Whatcom County 12/3/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 27.2/100K; 73.3% vaccinated  
San Juan County 12/3/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 17.1/100K; 82.2% vaccinated  
Skagit County 12/3/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 26.8/100K; 68.2% vaccinated

### Education

Sumas Elementary School was damaged heavily by November floods and will be retired early due to its being beyond repair. ([KGMI](#))

## Government

### San Juan County

The San Juan County Council met on Nov. 29 and 30. Agenda items included:

The council unanimously approved the following:

- 2022 Annual Construction Program and the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan 2022-2027
- 2022 Capital Improvement Plan and the 2022-2027 Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan
- Property Tax Levy for Land Conservation Futures for 2022
- Property Tax Levy for County Roads for 2022
- Property Tax Levy for Current Expense for 2022

The council made additions and adjustments to the [San Juan County Budget for Years 2022-2023](#) and will resume discussion at its Dec. 7 session.

### City of Blaine

City Manager Michael Jones was voted a 5% salary increase by the city council and will earn \$143,280 annually. ([The Northern Light](#))

### City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on Nov. 22. [Agenda items](#) included:

- The council approved 6-0 (Hammill excused) a \$25,000 contract with Cascadia Law Group to develop with staff a ballot measure for November 2022 to finance a Climate Action Fund. ([Staff memo](#))

The city council will meet on Dec. 6. [Agenda items](#) include:

#### Public Hearing

- An [ordinance](#) renewing the grant of a franchise to Comcast Cable Communications Management, LLC to operate and maintain a cable system in the city of Bellingham.

#### Public Works and Natural Resources

- **23182** Post Point Resource Recovery Project Update ([Staff memo](#))

#### Planning

- **23183** Consideration of a draft [ordinance](#) amending certain sections of the Bellingham Municipal Code to improve the city's code enforcement procedures ([Staff memo on improving land use enforcement](#))

The city council will meet again on Dec. 13.

The next Bellingham City Council Public Comment Sessions will be held on Dec. 20 and Dec. 27. To participate, [click here](#). (Meeting ID: 923 0705 9297 Password: 018602)

## Whatcom County

The county council will meet on Dec. 6. [Agenda items](#) include:

### Public hearing

- [AB2021-654 Resolution](#) approving the Shoreline Management Program Periodic Update 2020

### Consent Agenda

- **AB2021-701** Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to operate the Whatcom Homeless Service Center in the amount of \$1,650,248 for a total amended contract amount of \$4,158,271. ([Staff memo](#))

### Other Items

- **AB2021-747** [Resolution](#) eliminating the barriers to removing excess gravel from the Nooksack River
- **AB2021-734** Request authorization for the county executive to enter into an [agreement](#) between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council for providing a 5,000-square-foot child care facility located in a qualified census tract in the amount of \$1,000,000
- **AB2021-735** Request authorization for the county executive to enter into an [agreement](#) between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council for the development of affordable housing for low-income households in Whatcom County in the amount of \$3,000,000
- **AB2021-738** Request authorization for the county executive to enter into a [contract](#) between Whatcom County and Allison Hunt, M.D., for fulfilling the duties of Whatcom County medical examiner in the amount of \$1,838,739
- **AB2021-722** Request confirmation of the county executive's [appointment](#) of Allison Hunt, M.D., to serve as Whatcom County medical examiner

The council will meet again on December 21.

## Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham Commission will meet on Dec. 7. [Agenda items](#) include:

### Consent Agenda

- Reaffirmation of the [contract](#) with Chmelik, Sitkin, & Davis, P.S., Attorneys at Law, as the Port's general legal counsel. Due to cost increases over the past four years they are raising the hourly capped rate from \$275 to \$300, effective January 1, 2022.
- Approve setting the executive director's base [salary](#) to the amount approved on July 13, 2021, removing the 12/31/2021 sunset clause, effective December 7, 2021. Motion to approve an additional 5% annual increase, effective January 1, 2022.

### Presentation

- Boardmill Building

### Action Items

- Authorize the port commission to approve the [Draft 2021 Port of Bellingham Districting Plan](#) for publication.

- Authorize the executive director to enter into an [Initial Offer of Financial Aid](#) with the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) for the construction of segment two located in north Whatcom County in the amount of \$2 million. Segment two is located north of Lynden and along the Canadian border. It is approximately 47.5 miles and includes middle and last mile fiber construction passing approximate 450 homes and businesses.

## Elections

Washington state redistricting was not completed on deadline by the state commission but the maps forwarded to the state Supreme Court show Whatcom County remaining in the 42nd legislative district and returning to the 2nd congressional district instead of the 1st congressional district. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#)) The Washington Supreme Court declines to redraw political maps and accepts redistricting commission's work ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Joe Timmons [D-Bellingham] [announced](#) his candidacy for the 42nd district representative position to be vacated by Rep. Sharon Shewmake.

## Nature

Bellingham rainfall totaled 14.57 inches, the most precipitation recorded at the airport since records began being kept in 1949. ([KGMI](#))

Over 70,000 invasive European green crabs have been removed from the Lummi Sea Pond and the Lummi Nation has described the invasion as a disaster. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Lummi and Nooksack Tribes fear flood waters will devastate salmon runs and flood damage estimates rise to \$50 million. ([KUOW](#)) ([KNKX](#))

## Business

The Baumgardner Dairy Farm is one of about 100 dairy farms in Skagit and Whatcom counties but one of the hardest hit by the flooding which claimed the lives of 44 cows the family had nurtured and watch grow up. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

The recently updated Salish Sea Vessel Traffic Projections (Nov. 2021) provided by Friends of the San Juans shows that at least a 25% increase in large, ocean-going commercial vessel traffic could occur if all of the proposed new and expanding terminal and refinery projects are permitted and constructed, as compared with 2020. ([San Juan Journal](#)/Friends of the San Juans)

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community has received two major grants to build the first modern-day clam garden in the United States. ([LaConner Weekly News](#))

The San Juan County Economic Development Council is asking for donations of \$500 per student for maritime certification which would allow students to obtain Ordinary Seaman Merchant Marine Credentials necessary for work on ferries or other local maritime services. ([EDC](#))

The Port of Anacortes Commission redistricting process is underway to apportion evenly the population within its five port districts. ([Anacortes American](#))

## **Commentary**

Religious exemptions to vaccination? Weighing religious commitments against civic responsibilities — and more. ([New York Times/The Ethicist](#))

## **Community**

Live performers will play at Whatcom Live Aid Dec. 10-11 to benefit relief flood efforts at Mount Baker Theater's Walton Theater, Boundary Bay Brewery, The Honeymoon Meadery, Bellingham Arts Academy for Youth, The Firehouse Arts and Event Center, Sylvia Center for the Arts and the Everson Arts Center. Donations will be directed to the [Whatcom Community Foundation's Resilience Fund](#).

Whatcom County flood response has moved to recovery as an estimated 700 homes were damaged and dozens of people were in emergency shelters as of Wednesday. ([KGMI](#))

'There's nothing to stop it': Floodwaters rising in Abbotsford as Nooksack River overflows ([CBC](#)) And: Before-and-after photos from the Sumas Prairie region of Abbotsford show the area's slow recovery ([CBC](#))

The ballot measure to build a Birch Bay library failed in the Nov. 2 election by 26 votes and will be back to voters in a Feb. 8, 2022 special election. ([The Northern Light](#))

## **Arts and Leisure**

### [Bellingham Symphony Orchestra Holiday Joy](#)

The BSO performs toe-tapping favorites and Ramona Abbott narrates A Dickens Christmas Carol Suite with the orchestra. 12/4, 5. [Mount Baker Theater](#).

[A Christmas Carol](#): The greatest ghost story ever old. Produced by The Lincoln Theater, directed by Angela Marinella. Pre-show features The Devillies playing old Irish and English songs and old English Christmas carols by the Madrigal Singers. Dec.3-5, 9-11. [The Lincoln Theater](#), Mount Vernon.

[Western Washington University Music Department](#) returns with live performances:

- [WWU Vocal Jazz Ensemble](#), directed by Mike Scott and Tim Fitzpatrick. Dec. 3, 8 p.m., Performing Arts Center 155 - Concert Hall.
- [Fifth Inversion in Concert: Trip the Light Fantastic](#) with the faculty wind quintet. Dec. 6, 8 p.m. Performing Arts Center 155 - Concert Hall.

## **Jump in!**

### [Port of Bellingham's Holiday Port Quest](#)

Santa, Treasure Quest, 'Virtual' Gingerbread Contest and More Dec. 3-5, Port of Bellingham Fairhaven Terminal.

### [Deck the Old City Hall](#)

Whatcom Museum's Historic Old City Hall is decked out for the season with a variety of themed, decorated holiday trees in the Rotunda Room. Open Thursday-Sunday, donations accepted.

The [Whatcom County Library System](#) presents:

- Mushrooms of the PNW – Sustaining People and Soils, Dec. 8, 7-8 p.m.  
All fungi have an important role in the ecosystem. Mycelia of mushroom store incredible amounts of carbon underground. In this richly illustrated presentation, author and researcher Daniel Winkler will help you identify mushrooms while steering you clear of dangerous look-alikes.
- Botany of the Pacific Northwest, Dec. 11, 7-8 p.m.  
There are over 3,000 native plant species in Washington state yet many people can't tell a fir from a hemlock or a calyx from a corolla. By putting names to these plants, we can begin to understand the important role each one plays in keeping our planet healthy and well fed.

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### **Nonprofit *Salish Current* is Women- and Minority-Led.**

*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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