

# Salish Current

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

**Dear Reader** — We've come to the last two weeks of our NewsMatch fundraising campaign, and have \$5,000 to raise to match a grant from the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Partner Fund which recognizes news service to communities of color and newsrooms led by people of color. Please [donate](#) and join our Publisher's Circle and check out the list found in this week's **Editor's Desk** column.

This week, take the time to read and enjoy **Matt Benoit's** news feature on the business past of local millionaire David Syre who is underwriting the soon-to-be-published *Cascadia Daily News* and **Kenneth Duncan's** illuminating story on our local cannabis industry.

**Eric Hirst** provides a Community Voices column on the alarming declining of summer flows of the Nooksack River and its tributaries, and **two letters to the editor** respond to stories about wild turkeys and Navy Growler jet noise.

As we leave 2021 and move into the new year, we're asking you, our readers, to share a thought about the coming year by finishing the sentence: "**In 2022, I look forward to...**" in 300 words or less, accompanied by a photo of what you look forward to. We've provided some examples to inspire you, so send in your sentence and photo to welcome in the new year.

And if you like more news — [Salish Sea News and Weather](#) curates environmental news from local publications every weekday morning and posts a [weekly update on Fridays](#). We'll include the weekly update in this newsletter as another community news service.

— 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. 17, 2021

### [Half a century on, Syre influence continues](#)



*The halls are decked with evergreen garlands and the shoppers outfitted with protective face masks on a mellow December morning during a COVID-19 holiday season at Bellis Fair.*

*By Matt Benoit* — Local real estate developer David Syre was a driving force behind some of the most high-profile Whatcom County construction over the last 40 years. His vision as a developer evoked both applause and dismay, not only locally, but from Alaska's Kodiak Island to the tip of South America.

[\(Read more.\)](#)

## Spikes in local cannabis business amplify challenges, revenues



*With spikes in demand, keeping up with a turbulent supply chain is difficult for local dispensaries — one of many challenges faced by cannabis businesses, including smaller local shops such as West Coast Wellness at Nugent's Corner.*

*By Kenneth Duncan — Cannabis industries in Whatcom, Skagit and San Juan counties have experienced a large increase in both revenue for retailers and excise tax proceeds for governments over the past two years. But sales growth means competition for supplies and workspace, and smaller, more locally based businesses are struggling to keep a foothold. ([Read more.](#))*

## What's life without a future?



*What are you looking forward to? Salish Current readers report they plan to head outdoors — and into books and music — in 2022; visitors to a beach on the Oregon coast may be pondering their futures as well, as the sun sets on an autumn day.*

*By Salish Current Readers — What's life like without a future? What are you looking forward to? Salish Current readers plan to head outdoors and into books and music in 2022 — and dream of a major pandemic slowdown, in which variants become weaker and weaker, regulations ease, masks come off and we dance in crowded nightclubs. ([Read more.](#))*

## Community Voices / Is time running out? Streamflow trends in the Nooksack watershed



*While streamflows in the Nooksack River watershed may be high enough for lively rafting some days, overall summertime declines are creating problems for salmon and other fish and wildlife as well as farms and other users dependent on the water supply.*

*By Eric Hirst — Given the high volume of rain and flooding during the past few weeks, it may seem strange to talk about water scarcity in the Nooksack River system. Although the watershed has ample water in the winter (often too much water), it holds too little in the summer to support healthy salmon. Complicating the water supply issue are the adverse effects of climate change. ([Read more.](#))*

## [Editor's Desk / Publisher's Circle donors give vote of confidence to community journalism](#)



Double down? Yes! NewsMatch — the opportunity to have your donation to nonprofit *Salish Current* matched dollar-for-dollar — is on through December, so there are still two more weeks to get your donation in and qualify for that match. *Salish Current* is not done fundraising for matching funds yet; we still have a few thousand dollars more to raise — but we've come a long way with the votes of confidence cast by donors in our Publisher's Circle. The Circle's grown and shows the breadth and depth of support from readers in Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties. ([Read more.](#))

### [Letters to the Editor](#)

- Tony Angell — Island turkeys: weigh consequences before introducing foreign species
- Karen Sullivan — State, citizen groups win first round in lawsuit against Navy

## **News from around the region**

### [Health and Safety](#)

As of Dec. 21, Canada will require that all travelers coming back into Canada after trips of 72 hours or less to the United States or other international locations will have to take a PCR test in a country other than Canada, before their scheduled departure. ([CTV](#))

Washington state researchers reported earlier this week that 13% of 217 positive coronavirus case specimens had the mutation characteristic of the Omicron variant, up from 3% and 7% in samples tested earlier, meaning that the variant is spreading fast in the state. ([NY Times/paywall](#))

B.C. health officials announced yesterday that there were 135 Omicron cases, up from 44 on Tuesday, with a total of 743 new COVID cases reported. ([CBC](#))

Whatcom County 12/17/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 18.8/100K; 74.6% vaccinated

San Juan County 12/17/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 10.6/100K; 83.6% vaccinated

Skagit County 12/17/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 17.8/100K; 69.2% vaccinated

### [Government](#)

#### [City of Everson](#)

Everson Mayor John Perry reported that about a third of the city's residences suffered "significant amount of damage" in recent flooding and the Everson City Council passed a declaration of emergency to allow city personnel to immediately hire contractors to begin the repairs for the most urgent needs. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

## City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on Dec. 13. [Agenda items and meeting video:](#)

### Public Hearing

- The council took public comment in consideration of Amendments to Bellingham Municipal Code [BMC] Chapter 17.10 and the Washington State Energy Code - Commercial, Requiring Electrification and Efficiency Standards for Certain Multi-Family and Commercial Buildings. ([Ordinance Presentation](#)) The council voted to refer the amendments to the Climate Action Committee.

The council will hold public comment sessions at 7 p.m. on Dec. 20 and Dec. 27. These sessions may be accessed via [Zoom here](#). (Meeting ID: 923 0705 9297 Password: 018602)

The council will hold a swearing-in ceremony for Hollie Huthman, Michael Lilliquist, Skip Williams and Kristina Martens at 7 p.m. on Jan. 3.

No summary of council actions at its Dec. 13 meeting was available at press time.

## Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council listed no further meetings in 2021 as of press time.

## Port of Bellingham

At its Dec. 7 meeting, the Port of Bellingham Commissioners by consent agenda approved setting the executive director's base salary to the amount approved on July 13, removing the Dec. 31, 2021, sunset clause, effective Dec. 7. Motion to approve an additional 5% annual increase, effective Jan. 1.

Executive Director Rob Fix's 2020 salary was \$182,636.88 and his 2021 salary is \$204,918.58. In 2022, his salary will be \$215,164.51.

By comparison, the Port of Olympia executive director will make \$191,227 in 2022. ([The Olympian](#))

## Nature

Only lately has attention been devoted to the long, narrow jets of air that carry huge amounts of water vapor from the tropics to the Earth's continental and polar regions. They can run 250-350 miles wide and contain the flow of 25 Mississippi Rivers. ([Post Alley](#))

State Fish and Wildlife Department is proposing raising the dike around Wiley Slough on the south Skagit River delta because the diking isn't protecting neighboring farms or providing flood protection. ([Skagit Valley Herald/payewall](#))

Chief Magistrate Judge J. Richard Creatura found that the Navy's environmental impact statement "turned a blind eye" to data that did not support the Navy's goal of increasing Growler jet operations from an air station at Whidbey Island by not disclosing greenhouse gas calculations nor quantifying noise

impacts on classroom learning, birds and animals. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#)) Also: Community Voices / The loudest jets in the quietest park: How Growlers invaded the Olympics ([Salish Current](#))

Gov. Jay Inslee has a new \$187 million plan for Washington salmon recovery included in his 2022 legislative budget and policy proposals. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

## **Business**

Flooding of the Sumas Prairie, an old, dry lakebed now occupied by farms that supply British Columbia with its milk, butter and cheese, could cost hundreds of millions of dollars and raises complex questions about whether Canada or the United States is responsible for the damage. ([KUOW](#))

Harbor Custom Development (HCD) has signed a \$14 million contract to acquire Grandis Pond, the largest east Blaine housing development which will bring 1,000 lots to east Harvey Road in the next 10-15 years. HCD is the Gig Harbor-based real estate company that purchased the Horizon at Semiahmoo housing development in late June for \$14.3 million. ([The Northern Light](#))

Most of the Swinomish Tribe reservation abuts water. After tribal harvesters saw declines in littleneck and butter clam harvest, the tribe began working to combat the effects of climate change and to build a traditional clam garden. ([Crosscut](#))

Multifamily housing permit applications in the city of Anacortes have increased in the last two years with permits issued for 123 dwelling units in 2021 for townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, apartment buildings and accessory dwelling units. ([Anacortes American](#)) Also: Gov. Inslee joins legislators in supporting a statewide end of single family zoning laws to allow more multifamily dwellings to be built. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Cities from Eugene to Bellingham are considering bans on natural gas furnaces and water heaters in new commercial buildings, but natural gas has its defenders, too, who have beaten back proposed phase outs before. ([NW News Network](#)) Also: The Bellingham City Council heard public comment on Monday on its proposal to join the electrification movement against climate change ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

## **Community**

The N Avenue Park in Anacortes has been renamed Q'elech'ilhch Park in honor of the Samish Indian Nation and to pay tribute to the tribe whose land the City of Anacortes sits on. ([Anacortes American](#))

## **Arts and Leisure**

Up Close & Personal: The Body in Contemporary Art. The exhibition examines the human body through the expressive lens of 60 artists. Curated by Amy Chaloupka from the Collection of Driek and Michael Zirinsk, Lightcatcher Building, Whatcom Art Museum, through Feb. 22.

## **Jump in!**

### [Whatcom County Library System Friends of the Library Online Bookstore](#)

Need gifts for the last few names on your list? Shop online this holiday season for gently used books, CDs and DVDs carefully curated by Friends of the Blaine, Deming, Everson, Ferndale and Lynden libraries. Proceeds benefit your local libraries.

### [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 Thurs.-Sun., donations accepted.

### [Virtual Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference 2022](#)

"Honoring our Ancestors: Visions for Future Generations and the Salish Sea," April 26-28. Early registration is now open.

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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, Managing Editor**

### **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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