

Salish Current

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

Dear Reader — *Salish Current* has been selected to receive an additional \$8,500 in matching funds from NewsMatch for our dedication to serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit communities of color. Funders Knight Foundation, Facebook Journalism Project, Walton Family Foundation and the Democracy Fund will [double your donation](#) made by Dec. 31 in support of our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Please make a [one-time donation or a monthly donation](#) to support nonprofit, independent, fact-based community news.

We sincerely thank the many donors listed in our [Publisher's Circle](#) for supporting community news that's free to read and free from advertising.

We're also heartened by all the readers who have shared one thing they will be looking forward to in 2022. After all, what's life without a future? [Please check out what's new.](#)

And thank you to Matt Benoit for his excellent reporting work on who local millionaire David Syre is and why he is underwriting the soon-to-launch *Cascadia Daily News*. Thank you also to Lauren Gallup for wading into the challenges facing dairy farmers after the big flood. And thank you to all our board members, advisors, freelancers — and you, dear readers — for making *Salish Current* possible.

For more reading over this long weekend: [Salish Sea News Week in Review 12/23/21](#): Yule log, climate adaptation, derelict vessels, GasLink protest, climate ambitions, Growler noise, ghost river, shoreline returned, pileated woodpecker, manure management

— 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. 23, 2021

[21st century evolves from setbacks to optimism for Syre](#)



The opening of Bellis Fair in 1988 was a highlight among early-era successful ventures for Whatcom developer David Syre; the 21st century brought bumpier times. (Tore Ofteness photo courtesy Whatcom Museum)

By Matt Benoit — Despite success in the 1980s and 1990s, Whatcom County real estate developer David Syre and the company he founded faced setbacks at the turn of the new century. These days, he looks forward to countering misinformation through a local news project. ([Read more.](#))

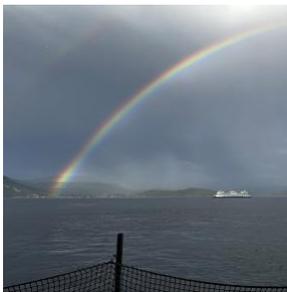
[Whatcom farmers face manure management challenges after flooding](#)



A manure lagoon near Lynden sits adjacent to where a dike along the Nooksack River failed during flooding in November. (Photo courtesy Washington State Department of Agriculture)

By Lauren Gallup — Flooding in Whatcom and Skagit counties in November put major stress on local dairies, including lost animals and lost revenues for some. Now there's another hurdle: With storage lagoons overflowing, where can they store all that manure? Farmers and county and state agencies are stepping up to the challenge, to prevent pollution downstream and restore infrastructure. ([Read more.](#))

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



Salish Current has been selected to receive an additional **\$8,500** in matching funds from NewsMatch for our dedication to serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit communities of color. Funders Knight Foundation, Facebook Journalism Project, Walton Family Foundation and the Democracy Fund will [double donations](#) made before Dec. 31 to *Salish Current* in support of our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

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. [Take a look here.](#)

News from around the region

Health and Safety

British Columbia is cancelling thousands of scheduled surgeries, shutting down bars and gyms and limiting gatherings in an effort to prevent the Omicron COVID variant from overwhelming hospitals. ([The Tyee](#))

The City of Bellingham's Young Adult Winter Shelter has opened at Civic Field in partnership with Northwest Youth Services and Whatcom County. ([City of Bellingham](#))

Skagit County has funded an emergency cold-weather shelter at Skagit First Step Center in Burlington and increased funding for its motel voucher program. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Here is a list of shelters in Washington state, including those in this readership area. ([ShelterList](#))

Whatcom County 12/23/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 22.4/100K; 75.2% vaccinated
San Juan County 12/23/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 9.8/100K; 84.4% vaccinated
Skagit County 12/23/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 27.5/100K; 69.6% vaccinated

Government

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council will hold a public comment session at 7 p.m. on Dec. 27. The session 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.

Whatcom County

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

Elections

Following Sen. Doug Ericksen's [R-Ferndale] death Dec. 17, the 42nd District Republican party needs to nominate three candidates by Dec. 31 for Whatcom County Council consideration and selection. The council in special session this week voted (4-0, Frazey, Browne and Donovan absent) to vote on Ericksen's replacement. Elenbaas and Byrd suggested councilmembers individually interview the candidates and forego the customary candidate questionnaires and council interviews before voting. The 2022 legislative session begins on Jan. 19. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Services for Doug Ericksen will be held at noon at Christ the King Bellingham, on 4173 Meridian St. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Nature

Washington State Department of Natural Resources plans to put out to bid next spring to sell an estimated \$2.2 million in trees on Anderson Mountain between the south end of Lake Whatcom and Sedro-Woolley. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Right after a court report critical of the Navy's environmental review of Growler jet noise operations at the Whidbey Naval Air Station, the Navy released a noise monitoring report concluding that the monitoring used was accurate and that results showed actual noise levels lower than what was modeled in its review. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

These days the Nooksack River flows from Mount Baker to Bellingham Bay on Puget Sound but a few hundred years ago, it flowed north into Canada. In November, the Nooksack rediscovered that old route north. ([KUOW](#))

As the region's rivers overflowed from historic rainfall, the next generation of struggling fish may have been swept away, too. ([High Country News](#))

Commentary

Tim Johnson in his last *Gristle* column reflects on Gene Knutson's city council tenure, changes in the council and the unfinished business of the city. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

Community

About 85% of the homes in Sumas were damaged when the Nooksack River overflowed in November and the threat of more severe weather looms while the town is still recovering. ([KUOW](#))

The state Department of Commerce has awarded \$5 million toward an estimated \$23 million planned affordable housing and childcare facility in downtown Bellingham proposed by the Opportunity Council. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

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!

[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.

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.

Facebook — Follow and engage: [Salish Current](#) Twitter — Follow and engage: [@currentsalish](#)
Say something: SalishCurrent@gmail.com Check out what's new: [Salish Current](#)