

Salish Current

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

Dear Reader — This past week was [National News Literacy Week](#), an annual event that “underscores the vital role of news literacy in a democracy and provides audiences with the knowledge, tools and abilities to become more news-literate. It also aims to inspire news consumers, educators and students to practice news literacy and to strengthen trust in news media by reinforcing the role of credible journalism.”

The operable word this week — and every week — is “trust.” It’s not only a matter of news media doing credible journalism, but all facets of our economic, social and political life earning our trust. Who do you trust? And why?

Trust is fundamental to not only the future of real news but goes to the heart of our community, our government and the future of our democracy.

Trust is something *Salish Current* will be exploring in this coming year. Stay with us, support us and tell others about us. Community news: free to read and free from advertising.

And for more news: [Salish Sea News Week in Review 1/28/22](#): Lego Friday!, firefighter toxins, Howe Sound fishery, stream tree planting, buying TM pipe, enviro justice, B.C. glaciers, B.C. fish farms, wetlands, Nooksack River, and sunscreen.

— 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 Jan. 28, 2022

[Anticipated Salish Sea vessel traffic increases spark calls for more environmental protections](#)



Ready to assist large vessels transiting the Strait of Juan de Fuca and outer coast, the tug Barbara Foss sits dockside at Neah Bay. As vessel traffic is expected to increase in the region, some are calling for additional safeguards against associated risks — such as devastating oil spills.

By Clifford Heberden — Fossil fuel and terminal expansion projects up and down the Salish Sea are estimated to boost annual shipping vessel traffic by at least 25% in the near future, and the projections raise concerns. ([Read more.](#))

[Keep walking, or keep off? Guemes beach-walking pushes question of private property versus public access](#)



Open beach, public access ... or not? The courts are the next step toward resolving some heated disagreement on Guemes Island about whether tradition and public domain principles or private property law take precedence on tidelands around the Salish Sea.

By Lauren Gallup — Disagreement between those who hold to a long-established practice on Guemes Island of public access to walking across privately owned tidelands and a property owner's opposition to what he sees as trespassing has evolved into a lawsuit. ([Read more.](#))

[Advocates for open government sue San Juan County to open public records](#)



A dispute dating back to April 2020 over information provided in a public records request made of San Juan County by the Washington Coalition for Open Government centers on what and how much may be redacted from outside legal counsel invoices included in public records requests. The issue has landed in court.

By Heather Spaulding — The public's right to access government documents and the government's power to keep certain information private are at loggerheads in San Juan County, with the Washington Coalition for Open Government bringing suit against the county for violating the Public Records Act. ([Read more.](#))

[Anna's hummingbirds in the cold: dead, alive ... or in torpor?](#)



A feeder suspended from a hanging indoor light fixture helped revive an Anna's hummingbird found motionless outside on a cold winter day. The species' winter range has shifted north over the past several decades, making it more common for wildlife rescue centers to be contacted about hummingbirds found grounded in the cold.

By Chris O'Neill — Is that lifeless-looking hummingbird lying on the frozen ground really dead ... or in torpor? Wildlife rescue professionals say it's not uncommon to see Anna's hummingbirds at their centers during the winter months, as the birds have moved farther north with climate change. Inert-seeming hummingbirds may in fact be alive but conserving energy, and experts advise contacting professionals to find out how to help. ([Read more.](#))

Letters to the Editor

- Micki Jackson: Two daily-news town needs opinion columns and reader feedback
- Jack Strauss: Bellingham Weekly was once part of the local news scene

News from around the region

Health and Safety

COVID-19 test kits are available at various Whatcom County locations like fire stations at no cost. ([KGMI](#))

Whatcom County 1/28/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Severe Risk**; 223.2/100K; 77.7% vaccinated

San Juan County 1/28/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Severe Risk**; 91.8/100K; 88.6% vaccinated

Skagit County 1/28/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Severe Risk**; 193.9/100K; 72.1% vaccinated

Flood-impacted residents can get assistance to apply for federal recovery aid at the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce, 2007 Cherry Street, from Monday through Saturday. Flood recovery aid is also available in Sumas at A.C. Church on Front Street. ([KGMI](#))

The City of Bellingham launched its new "Safety Patrol" Program for Downtown Bellingham today with unarmed, uniformed security officers to deter crime, assist those in need and to support other outreach. ([Whatcom News](#))

The USGS ShakeAlert™ Earthquake Early Warning system is now available for all smartphones in Washington to provide important seconds of warning before earthquake shaking arrives at your location. ([Whatcom News](#))

Government

San Juan County

The San Juan County council met on Jan. 25. [Agenda items](#) included:

The council unanimously approved sending a joint County/Islands Trust letter to Canada regarding an emergency response towing vessel in the Salish Sea. (See "Anticipated Salish Sea vessel traffic increases spark calls for more environmental protections" [Salish Current](#), Jan. 28, 2022)

The council unanimously approved OPAL's request for supplemental Home Fund funding of \$253,340 in addition to initial funding of \$850,000 to purchase the 12-unit apartment in the Northern Heights Affordable Housing project in Eastsound.

The council unanimously accepted the deed for the Higgins property on Lopez which will allow the Land Bank to complete purchase of the property for \$2,255,000. The property includes one-third of a mile of shoreline on Watmough Bay and the Rosario Strait and the oldest house on Lopez, and has great significance to the Coast Salish peoples.

The council will meet again on Feb. 1.

City of Bellingham

The city council met on Jan. 24. [Agenda items](#) included:

An Ordinance Regarding Public Parking; Amending Bellingham Municipal Code: The council approved 6-0-1, Hammill abstained) an ordinance amending city public parking code with the following amendments: reduce to \$30 instead of \$41 for parking infractions and increased to 30 days the time allowed to respond to a parking citation before a late penalty.

Resolution Amending City Parking Rates: The council approved (4-2-1, Stone and Williams opposed, Hammill abstain) increase of flat parking meter rates to \$1 instead of \$1.50. The council approved (6-0-1, Hammill abstain) Resolution #2022-22. ["It's not a matter of making money," Lilliquist said, reiterating the city often loses money on these endeavors and the goal is to instead stimulate the economy of local businesses. ([Cascade Daily News](#))]

Proposed Climate Action Fund Discussion: Staff will develop a property tax levy proposal to place a Climate Action Fund measure on the November 2022 ballot. The proposal will come forward in March 2022.

Amendments to BMC Chapter 17.10 and the Washington State Energy Code - Commercial, Requiring Electrification and Efficiency Standards for Certain Multi-Family and Commercial Buildings: The council voted unanimously to adopt the amendments.

Lake Whatcom watershed timber sale: Lisa Anderson proposed sending a letter to the Public Lands Commission, including Director Hilary Franz, to reconsider, or possibly postpone, the sale by DNR of over 100 acres of timberland located in the Lake Whatcom Watershed. A motion to send the letter failed (3-4, Huthman, Hammill, Williams, Stone opposed)

The city council will meet again on Feb. 7.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council met on Jan. 25. [Agenda items](#) included:

The council unanimously authorized the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and the Washington State Office of Public Defense for the enhancement of Public Defense in the amount of \$209,111. [Staff Memo](#).

The council unanimously authorized the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Lydia Place to provide emergency housing for families experiencing unsheltered

homelessness in the amount of \$107,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$600,074. [Staff Memo.](#)

The council unanimously authorized the County Executive to enter into a collective bargaining agreement between Whatcom County and the Fraternal Order of Police for the period of Jan. 1, 2022 – Dec. 31, 2024. [Staff memo.](#)

The council authorized (5-2, Byrd and Elenbaas opposed) the County Executive to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding for the Way Station. [Staff memo.](#) [Way Station presentation.](#)

The council approved (6-0, Elenbaas abstain) a substitute resolution regarding permanent affordability of childcare in Whatcom County. [Substitute resolution 1/25/22.](#)

The council will meet again on Feb. 8.

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham commission will meet on Feb 1. [Agenda items](#) include:

Consent Agenda: Authorize the Executive Director to enter into a [personal service contract](#) with Jennifer Noveck to provide Research and Communications Manager services in support up to a total of \$100,710.60. The Port's Executive Director has decided that the Port's policy and RCW 53.19.020 provide an exemption from the competitive solicitation process.

Presentation: 2021 Financial Report.

Action Item: Approve updates to [Resolution No.1401](#) for the Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvement Plan.

The commission will meet again on Feb. 18.

For the people

Whatcom County councilmember Ben Elenbaas announced he will run for the 42nd District senate seat as a Republican. Democrat Sharon Shewmake and Russ Dzialo, who noted affiliation of "Other," filed earlier their as candidates for the top-two primary race. Republican Simon Sefzik is the current sitting senator. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

Need help keeping track of where legislation is in the short 60-day session? Take a look at the Legislative tracker 2022. ([Crosscut](#))

Nature

Proposed state legislation to require trees to be planted along streams to help salmon (HB 1838, the "Lorraine Loomis Act") has drawn opposition from landowners, farmers and legislators. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The first phase of restoring the former hatchery site at Barnaby Reach has been completed near Rockport on the Skagit River. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The Million Tree project plans to plant trees in Ferndale's Hovander Park and Julianna Park in Bellingham, and the Whatcom Land Trust is in the process of identifying trees that can be planted on its 7,000 acres of Trust-owned land. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

Business

According to Port of Bellingham staff, a New York City-based private-equity firm is negotiating with Alcoa and the Bonneville Power Administration as part of its consideration of buying Alcoa's idled Ferndale smelter. The state legislature is also working on providing \$10 million to help reopen the smelter while reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. ([The Northern Light](#))

The Whatcom County Flood Control Zone Advisory Committee was asked by Whatcom County staff to support a request for federal funding to buy out homes in an area between the Nooksack River and the Canadian border as a way to mitigate future flooding by allowing the U.S. river to overflow its banks near Everson and run north into Abbotsford, protecting downstream cities such as Lynden, Ferndale and Bellingham, as well as Interstate 5. ([Vancouver Sun](#))

The Washington state Department of Commerce awarded 19 Blaine and Birch Bay businesses grants through the Working Washington Border Business Relief Program to alleviate the financial hit of the U.S./Canada border closure. Blaine and Birch Bay businesses received \$226,639; Whatcom County received \$1.47 million in grants. ([The Northern Light](#))

Community

In working to adapt to climate change, the Samish tribe is adding solar power at its facilities. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The first two phases of expanded parking for Galbraith Mountain bikers has been completed, providing much-improved safety. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

The roots of homelessness and Bellingham's responses to it are examined in a powerful and compassionate Lighthouse Mission Ministries documentary released this month. "Hope for Bellingham: Response to Homelessness," a 42-minute documentary, includes interviews with Lighthouse Mission guests, staff and volunteers. [Watch here.](#)

The Northwest Maritime Academy, which offers training courses for those who are or plan to be in maritime professions, is relocating from Seattle to Anacortes. ([Anacortes American](#))

Kristina Michele Martens is Bellingham's first Black woman council member. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

Arts and Leisure

Washington State Poet Laureate Rena Priest reads and discusses her poetry. Feb. 3, 7 p.m.; [online registration](#) (WCLS)

Jump in!

James Webb Telescope Launch Party, Jan. 29, 2 p.m., Burlington Public Library. Watch footage of the launch and make your own galaxy pinwheel and star lifecycle bookmark. This event is free and a library card is not required to attend. Masks will be required for all attendees ages 5 and up and recommended for ages 3-4. This event is made possible by NASA @ My Library and the American Library Association.

Tapping Bigleaf Maples for Syrup: How the Impossible Became Possible, Jan. 29, 11 a.m., Whatcom County Library System. Some of the rarest and tastiest maple syrup is tapped right here in Whatcom County — sustainably! Hear this Acme farm's history — and future plans — from owner Neil McLeod and others during an intriguing on-site tour. [Space is limited; pre-registration is required.](#)

Jackson Beach, San Juan Island, beach cleanup. Jan. 29, 10 a.m. Meet at the pavilion; trash bags provide. [\(San Juan Update\)](#)

"The Bengali," Feb. 4, a documentary film by Kavery Kaul, follows African-American writer Fatima Shaik across deep divides of culture to India where her grandfather came from and where she searches for the truth in the stories she grew up with. A CASCADIA International Women's Film Festival celebration of Black History Month. Feb. 4, virtual screening, [tickets.](#)

2022 Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference will take place virtually April 26-28. Early registration deadline has been extended to Feb. 7. [Info and register here.](#)

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

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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