

# **Salish Current**

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

**Dear Reader —**

This week was the beginning of the Lunar New Year and the start of Black History Month.

There are cities where there are enough Chinese and Asians to feel like a new year was being celebrated. There are cities where Black people make their cultural influences felt. But not here in the cities and towns of our readership area.

I'm not thinking about race, a totally discredited concept, but about culture — the stories we tell about our ancestors, our growing up, our foods, our customs, our prejudices — all the things that make me different and maybe not so different than you.

When we get to listening to those stories and telling our stories and having them heard, we'll start building the trust that will allow us to make progress in housing the houseless and treating those suffering from behavioral illnesses. There's a cultural value there: nobody is left behind, nobody is nobody, everybody is somebody.

It's good to remind myself what we at *Salish Current* work towards every week with every issue: that *Salish Current* affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equality and healing for all people.

#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter #NoJusticeNoPeace

Good that you're along for the march. Thanks for reading. Support us. [Make a donation](#) today.

And for more news: [Salish Sea News Week in Review 2/4/22](#): Hemp Friday! fossil fuel bans, Canada carbon costs, Salish Sea ships, salmon mysteries, quiet ships, noise risks, Nooksack floods, B.C. wolf kill, Intalco, green crabs, tree seeds, saving forests.

— **Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

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News from the *Salish Current*, week of Feb. 4, 2022

## Skagit sheriff–social-worker partnership is a game-changer



*Sheriff's deputies and mental health professionals in Skagit County are partners in a program that sends specially trained first responders to mental health calls, to determine what resources folks may need and what roadblocks might be in the way of them getting care.*

*By Lauren Gallup — A different approach to how first responders in Skagit County address mental health crises is changing the outcome of behavioral health emergencies and helping people stay out of the hospital or jail. ([Read more.](#))*

## Winter shelter solutions lag behind need as unhoused number continues to grow



*Home is on four wheels for some houseless county residents such as these along Bellingham's Cornwall Avenue. As unhoused people cope with winter cold, housing insecurity and difficulty accessing the most basic of amenities, advocates and elected officials work on planning long-term solutions.*

*By Noah Harper — Whatcom County's unhoused population has seen a steady rise over the past decade, making it hard to plan how to meet shelter and housing needs. But planning — a year or more in advance — is an important part of finding long-term solutions. ([Read more.](#))*

## Blockbuster year for power outages pushes need to plan



*Trees heavy with snow and ice, tipped over in heavy winds when rain-soaked roots gave way, or uprooted in mudslides and shifted down hillsides took out power lines and caused significantly more hours of electrical outages last year than in 2020. (WA DOT photo)*

*By Kenneth Duncan — Electrical power was out due to severe weather almost three times more hours in 2021 than in 2020 for customers of one of the state's largest utilities, prompting some customers to look at fallback plans — and for insights as to how outages are managed. ([Read more.](#))*

## [Hope isn't a strategy: Bellingham again seeks a new police chief](#)



*When former police chief David Doll retired a little over a year ago after 40 years of law enforcement service, the City of Bellingham began a search for a permanent replacement. An earlier round of interviews did not result in a new hire, but a new slate of applicants will begin the review process next week. (Photo © Amy Nelson)*

By Mike Sato — The City of Bellingham has renewed its search for a new police chief, and aims to choose from a short list of finalists by this summer. ([Read more.](#))

## News from around the region

### Health and Safety

Hotelier and real estate developer Peter Paulsen has donated \$50 million to PeaceHealth to expand the hospital with the Peter H. Paulsen Pavilion. PeaceHealth had already collected \$15.5 million for its expansion plans. ([Health Leaders Media](#))

About 200 supporters of Canadian truckers protesting the government's vaccination mandate gathered last weekend at Peace Arch Park. ([The Northern Light](#))

Whatcom County 2/4/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Extremely High Risk**; 177.7/100K; 78.1% vaccinated  
San Juan County 2/4/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Extremely High Risk**; 103.2/100K; 88.8% vaccinated  
Skagit County 2/4/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Extremely High Risk**; 131.4/100K; 72.4% vaccinated

### Government

#### San Juan County

The county council met on Feb. 1. [Agenda items](#) included:

The council was briefed on people houselessness in the islands and possible use of non-camping county property which could be made available for temporary camping with sanitary toilet, water and policing.

#### City of Bellingham

The city council will meet on Feb. 7. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Public Hearing: Public Hearing to Consider an Ordinance Modifying the Process Used to Docket Proposed Amendments to the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. [Staff report.](#) [Ordinance.](#)

- Mayor's Report: Approve Mayor's Appointments of Mike McAuley and Russell Whidbee to the Planning and Development Commission.
- Public Works and Natural Resources Committee: Proposed Grant of Telecommunications Franchise to Wholesail Networks, LLC (ZiPLY) [Staff report](#). [Franchise ordinance](#).
- Climate Action Committee: Presentation on Issues and Policies for a Just Transition to a Clean Energy Workforce Draft ordinance. [Language Submitted by Todd Logastee, IAFF local 106](#).

The council will meet again on Feb. 21.

### Whatcom County

The county council will meet on Feb. 8. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Consent Agenda: Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Washington State Health Care Authority to provide funding to accomplish activities under the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program during the grant period 10/01/21 - 06/30/23 in the amount of \$1,175,834.00. [Staff memo](#).
- Other: Ordinance adopting amendments to WCC Title 20 (Zoning) regulating the production, processing, and retail sales of recreational marijuana in Whatcom County and repealing Ordinance No. 2021-066 [Staff memo](#). [Ordinance](#).

The council will meet again on Feb. 22.

### Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham commission met on Feb 1. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Action Item: The commission unanimously approved updates to [Resolution No.1401](#) for the Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvement Plan.
- Other: The Port issued a [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) for the redevelopment of the historic Boardmill Building located within the Waterfront District. Proposal deadline 4/29/22.

The commission will meet again on Feb. 15.

### For the people

Rep. Debra Lekanoff [D-40] has withdrawn [HB 1828](#) ("Lorraine Loomis Act") which included a controversial requirement to create streamside buffers to restore salmon populations. Its companion bill [SB 5727](#) has not had a hearing or vote.

[SB 5936](#) (Sens. Simon Sefzik [R-42] and Liz Lovelett [D-40]) and [HB 2051](#) (Reps. Alicia Rule [D-42], Sharon Shewmake [D-42], Alex Ramel [D-40]) have been introduced to provide short-term disaster recovery financial assistance to agricultural producers.

[SB 5966](#) (Sen. Simon Sefzik [R-42]) would require the Department of Ecology to identify the number of water rights, claims, or exempt uses of water that would be included in the water right adjudication prior to the filing of an adjudication and to include the total annual cost of adjudication in its annual budget.

## **Nature**

Homes and businesses in the Nooksack River valley are still recovering from November floods but February rains may bring more flooding. ([KUOW](#))

Whatcom County executive Satpal Sidhu said the county "does not and has no plans to 'send' Nooksack floodwaters to Canada." ([Whatcom County](#))

Whatcom County small-town mayors wrote a letter to state agencies urging immediate actions to deal with water issues in the Nooksack basin. ([Whatcom News](#))

Who's who in the debates on flood management in the Nooksack floodplain: Indigenous tribes, community leaders, gravel-extracting firms, and agricultural landowners, whose interests, such as protecting fish habitat, commercial business, and private property, often come into direct conflict with flood prevention measures. ([Columbia Climate School](#))

Rep. Sharon Shewmake [D-42] convened a meeting on Jan. 17 that featured a presentation by Karin Boyd on the geomorphology and hydrology of the Nooksack River floodplain and discussion of flood issues. Boyd's presentation begins at about the five-minute mark. [View here.](#)

## **Business**

Puget Sound Energy has requested a rate increase over the course of three years which would increase a typical residential customer's monthly electricity bill by \$12 and a typical natural gas customer's bill by \$9 monthly. ([Puget Sound Energy](#))

Whatcom-based Kulshan Carbon Trust plans to demonstrate how a type of charcoal called biochar can both absorb greenhouse gases and boost crop yields when spread on fields. ([Western Today](#))

Blaine-based Bosphorus Properties has purchased from the City of Blaine waterfront property on Peace Portal Drive for \$300,000. ([The Northern Light](#))

The federal incident period for flood and storm damage claims has been extended from Nov. 13-15 to Dec. 2. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

## **Community**

United Nations human rights representatives are asking the federal government to stop the evictions of disenrolled members of the Nooksack Tribe, saying many of the 63 people being evicted are elderly, disabled, or suffer from chronic illness. ([KGMI](#))

The Navy has released technical reports of its jet noise study which provide more information on where and when live noise data was collected near Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and near a base in California between December 2020 and August 2021. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Skagit Transit currently employs 71 drivers with five drivers in training. It has 82 drivers when it is fully staffed. SKAT will add routes to Sedro-Woolley and Burlington in the fall. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

San Juan County has launched its Sustainable Tourism Management Plan process to be guided by a local committee of community interests and three consultant firms. ([The Orcasonian](#))

The Anacortes City Council's Housing Affordability and Community Services Committee has issued its report on what needs are currently unmet in mental health care, housing and other services in Anacortes. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### **Jump in!**

Intersectional Environmentalism: The Key to Fighting Racism and Climate Change, Feb. 10, 7-8 p.m. online. Scientist Emily Pinkney shares how to combat the racism embedded within the environmental movement, resulting in more impactful solutions for the planet. [Register here.](#)

Introduction to Forest Bathing, Feb. 12 and 19, 10 a.m. - Noon. Join April Claxton, Among the Trees PNW, for an introduction to Forest Bathing. This is a slow walk with guided exercises using our senses to connect to the forest. Most of our time together will be spent in silence at a local park. Space is limited. [Pre-registration for Feb. 12](#); [pre-registration for Feb. 19](#).

Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee. San Juan County seeks county residents to become members of its newly established Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee. [Apply here by Feb. 15](#). (*San Juan Update*)

Climate Action Fund The city of Bellingham will host two virtual public [forums to discuss its Climate Action Fund](#) to finance its Climate Action Plan. The forums are at 7-8 p.m. on [Feb. 17](#) and on [Feb. 23](#).

A Million More Trees for Whatcom County? YES! Feb. 17, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. online. Learn the why, who, what, and where and how of Whatcom Million Trees Project's exciting initiatives to plant one million trees in Whatcom County over the next five years. [Register here.](#)

"The Bengali," Feb. 4-13, 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](#).

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