



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

**Dear Reader —**

We're excited this week to tell you about an event (our first!) *Salish Current* has in the works — in addition to bringing you fresh news from our corner of the world.

We hope you'll join our online forum on March 17, on "Trust2022: Why Local Journalism is Important for a Strong Democracy," which is featured in Bill Dietrich's story this week.

The forum brings to you *Washington Post* media columnist Margaret Sullivan, Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, and journalist, author and documentarian Hedrick Smith. All three have advocated for the importance of local news as necessary for a healthy democracy, and I am honored and cheered by their willingness to participate in this discussion.

[Please register — it's free and required — and join us for this exciting and informative presentation.](#)

"Who do you trust?" looms more and more as a fundamental societal question; surveys show decline in the public's trust of the media, the government, elected officials and educators ... even when a court decision sustains the news media's protection against libel charges ("[Palin case a victory for press freedom, but not for trust in news](#)").

If a reader doesn't trust the information she reads or trusts the disinformation he reads, how can we have civil civic discussion? If we can't act together to beat COVID, how do we govern ourselves in a democracy? *Seattle Times* columnist Danny Westneat finds the trust issue goes beyond distrust of the government. It comes down to us; we can't trust each other ("[Capitalizing on skepticism: How the coronavirus has exposed us once again](#)").

The classic line from the "Pogo" comic strip reverberates: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

It's worth repeating, in this context, that *Salish Current* is guided by and adheres to the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics:

- We seek truth and report it accurately and fairly. We are honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
- We treat sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as fellow human beings deserving of respect.
- We act independently avoiding conflicts of interest, real or perceived, in pursuing our highest and primary obligation to serve the public
- We stand transparent and accountable to the public, and take responsibility for our work and our decisions.

[Please register for the March 17 forum](#) and, if you can, [donate](#) to strengthen independent, fact-based local news that free for all to read and free from advertising. Thank you!

And, if you'd like more news, here you are:

[Salish Sea News Week in Review 2/18/22](#): Pluto Friday!, Zim Kingston, crab season, Washington sewer discharge, Snohomish River recovery, Puget Sound no-discharge zone, Pacific Salmon Treaty, green crab eDNA, GasLink, methane bubbles

— 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 Feb. 18, 2022

### [Forum set on vital need of local journalism for strong democracy](#)



*Were he still alive, journalist Edward R. Murrow, whose reporting brought McCarthyism down, might well be advocating for local news in the Salish Sea area. Murrow, who grew up near Blanchard and graduated from Edison High School, was already a supporter of local news in college, reportedly gaining notice for urging his contemporaries to be more informed.*

**By William Dietrich** — The urgent issue of supporting local news to help ensure a strong democracy will be addressed by two leading journalists and Washington's attorney general in a free online forum next month organized by nonprofit local newsroom *Salish Current* in partnership with Village Books. ([Read more.](#))

### [Floods, fish and farming intersect in Nooksack Basin's challenge](#)



*With climate change bringing limited snowpack, receding glaciers and magnified atmospheric rivers, the issues around management of streamflow and water supply in the Nooksack Basin are intensifying; south of Kendall, the river winds calmly in February around shifting gravel banks and vegetation swept downstream.*

**By Clifford Heberden** — As Whatcom County works to prepare for the next major flooding events and to foster

community resilience, a discussion on long-term solutions and ways to promote salmon population and environmental preservation along the Nooksack River is taking shape. ([Read more.](#))

## [Moving from tragedy to hope — with clay](#)



*Potter Chris Moench creates prayer wheels in a studio surrounded by trees at the end of a long driveway just outside Bellingham.*

*Moench's work changed direction after the 1999 pipeline explosion in Bellingham that took the*

*lives of three boys and discharged a massive volume of gasoline into the watershed.*

**By Chris O'Neill** — In the hands of artisan potter Chris Moench, clay becomes "moving sanctuaries" that evoke remembrance of tragedy — and meditations on hope. ([Read more.](#))

## **News from around the region**

### **Health and Safety**

Indoor mask requirements, including at schools and child care facilities, will end March 21. On March 1, vaccine verification or proof of a negative COVID-19 test will no longer be required to attend large events.

([Crosscut](#))

Estimating that about half of eligible Americans have received booster shots, that there have been nearly 80 million confirmed infections overall, and that many more infections have never been reported, models predict that 73% of Americans are, for now, immune to omicron, the dominant variant, and that could rise to 80% by mid-March. ([Associated Press](#))

Fully vaccinated travelers entering Canada from Feb. 28 will be allowed to take 24 hours before entry the rapid antigen test approved by their country of departure instead of the pre-arrival PCR test. ([CTV](#))

A three-day "Freedom Convoy" protest blocking the Pacific Highway border crossing into British Columbia last weekend was cleared this week by Royal Canadian Mounted Police. ([The Northern Light](#))

Whatcom County 2/18/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Very High Risk**; 69.0/100K; 78.5% vaccinated

San Juan County 2/18/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Very High Risk**; 47.9/100K; 89.1% vaccinated

Skagit County 2/18/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Very High Risk**; 50.4/100K; 72.8% vaccinated

## **Government**

### **San Juan County**

The San Juan County Council met on Feb. 15. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Action: The council unanimously approved (Stephens excused) scheduling a public hearing regarding the retirement of the sheriff's department's dog which is no longer needed in service. The dog is worth \$11,000 and, by law, retirement of any county asset worth more than \$2,500 requires a public hearing. The public hearing will be held on March 8, at which time the retirement of the department's boat will also be heard.

### **City of Bellingham**

The city council will meet again on Feb. 28.

### **Whatcom County**

The county council will meet on Feb. 22. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Public Hearing: Ordinance adopting amendments to the Whatcom County Code Title 20, Zoning, to provide additional affordable housing options, including allowing and regulating tiny homes and

allowing duplexes in planned unit developments.  
[Staff memo. Proposed ordinance.](#)

- Other Items: Ordinance establishing the Way Station Project Fund and establishing a project based budget for the Way Station Project. [Proposed Ordinance.](#)

The council will meet again on March 8.

### Port of Bellingham

The port commission met on Feb. 15. The meeting can viewed [here](#). Tap here for the [agenda](#).

The commission has postponed its meeting of March 1 due to a light agenda.

### For the people

The state legislature has reached mid-session. Here's a compilation of what our legislators voted on and bills they introduced:

- [Rep. Alicia Rule \[D-42\]](#)
- [Rep. Sharon Shewmake \[D-42\]](#)
- [Sen. Simon Sefzik \[R-42\]](#)
- [Rep. Debra Lekanoff \[D-40\]](#)
- [Rep. Alex Ramel \[D-40\]](#)
- [Sen. Liz Lovelett \[D-40\]](#)

Rep. Sharon Shewmake's [ESHB 1660](#) which would allow attached dwelling units (ADUs) to be built in areas governed by growth management plans is intended to increase available housing and passed the House on a 50-48 vote and moved to the Senate. Rep. Alicia Rule voted against the measure. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

### Elections

Jason Call will challenge Rep. Rick Larsen for the 2nd Congressional District U.S. House of Representative seat to represent Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan and Island counties, and part of Snohomish County. His issues include universal health care, labor, climate and corporate money in politics. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

## **Nature**

Whatcom Watersheds Information Network (WWIN) will host a free, virtual Whatcom Marine Research Symposium on Feb. 23 presenting talks on green crab monitoring, startling harbor seals, northern anchovies and natural resource management during climate change. [Register here.](#) (*[The Northern Light](#)*)

Washington's shorelines are at risk as scientists predict an average 4 to 6 inches of sea-level rise for the region over the next three decades, according to a [new government report](#) by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other agencies. (*[Bellingham Herald/paywall](#)*)

See also: [Whatcom County sea level rise](#) (NOAA) [Skagit County sea level rise](#) (NOAA) [San Juan County sea level rise](#) (NOAA)

The Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve will be reopening its doors to training sessions for Salish Sea Stewards from 1 to 5 p.m. Tuesdays, March 1 to May 24. [Register](#) before Feb. 23; space is limited to 26 participants. (*[Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)*)

## **Business**

Chicken processor Draper Valley Farm, owned by Purdue Foods, will pay \$2 million to Skagit River restoration projects after admitting to water quality violations in a suit brought by the Waste Action Project. (*[Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)*)

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard conducted a five-day raid last week in Boundary Bay, retrieving 312 illegal crab traps and some abandoned traps. (*[Vancouver Sun](#)*)

Harcourt Development is building on the former Georgia-Pacific waterfront site over 90 condominium units in three buildings with ground-level retail businesses like coffee shops and restaurants. Real estate broker Chris Erdmann says demand exceeds supply and units sell as fast as they are offered. (*[The Front](#)*)

Two large chemical storage tanks at the Petrogas plant at Cherry Point were threatened by a landslide triggered by water that overwhelmed a stormwater management system in early December. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

### **Community**

Bellingham city council member Dan Hammill says that for-profit healthcare is always going to be a barrier for those without money, but he said the sort of national dialogue that is needed to change such a system is still at least a generation away. These sorts of changes take a lot of time, and the parties sit firmly divided on the matter of government run healthcare. ([The Front](#))

While no decision has been made about whether there will be ferry service between Anacortes and Sidney, B.C., next month or this year, Washington State Ferries spokesperson Ian Sterling said a lot would have to go right for service to resume. ([Times Colonist](#))

Hunters shooting harlequin, bufflehead and scoter ducks near the southern end of San Juan Island are disturbing the peace for residents and are accused in some cases of trespassing on private and government property. ([San Juan Journal/paywall](#))

More than just promoting gardening as a hobby, a seed library — where people can get seeds known to grow well locally and bring their own seeds to share — can be also be a survival strategy in troubled times. ([Anacortes American](#))

### **Arts and Leisure**

[Whatcom Artist Studio Tour](#) call for entries is now open. The 2022 Studio Tour is scheduled for Oct. 1-2 and 8-9.

“Nancy Holt, Between Heaven and Earth” opened at [the Western Gallery](#) on Thursday, Jan. 13. The exhibition features the work of artist Nancy Holt, who built the sculpture “Stone Enclosure: Rock Rings.”

Register now to meet "Greenwood" author Michael Christie at four [Whatcom READS](#) in-person and online events March 3–5. Registration required.

### **Jump in!**

Register now for "Trust 2022: Why Independent Local News is Important to a Strong Democracy," a March 17 online public forum featuring Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, *Washington Post* media columnist Margaret Sullivan, and journalist and documentarian Hedrick Smith speaking and taking questions. Presented by *Salish Current* and Village Books. [Register here.](#)

Introduction to Forest Bathing. Feb. 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-register here.](#)

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 is at 7–8 p.m. on [Feb. 23.](#)

Youth Mental Health in the Age of Anxiety...And Why it Matters to Everyone. Online Feb. 23, Noon, City Club. Sislana Ledbetter, a clinical psychologist and Western Washington University's Vice President of Counseling and Wellness, will look at some of the root causes and talk about ways adults can help address these mental health issues so that society as a whole will be healthier in the future. [Register by Feb. 21.](#)

The Woodstock Farm Story — and its Fruitful Future. Feb. 24 online 6:30–7:30 p.m. Discover the storied history of this wonderful 16-acre City of Bellingham waterfront park along Chuckanut Drive, and its orchard planting in progress that will enhance local food resiliency while keeping the character of this special site. [Register here.](#)

Orcas Christian High School clothing and household textile drive, through March 14. The students ask your help by dropping off goods in clean and salable condition at the high school. They will use the goods to raise funds for their upcoming Mission Trip to Belize. Kami Griffin coordinates, [kgriffin@oics.org](mailto:kgriffin@oics.org)

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be shared and you can unsubscribe at any time. —  
Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

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Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Founded in  
2020, *Salish Current* exists to protect and improve  
democratic governance by reporting and curating local  
news — freely accessible to all — with independence  
and strict journalistic integrity.

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