



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

Dear Reader —

Our "Trust 2022: Why Local Journalism is Important for a Strong Democracy" forum is but 20 days away so I'd like to encourage you to register [today](#). It's a great opportunity to join in an important conversation with national journalists **Margaret Sullivan** and **Hedrick Smith** and Washington's attorney general, **Bob Ferguson**.

Any help you can give us spreading the word and encouraging others to Zoom in would be most appreciated. One easy way for Facebook users is to find the [event on our Salish Current page](#) and share the invitation with friends.

The subject of local news, trust and democracy has been gaining more national attention. This Sunday, on *CBS 60 Minutes*, Report for America will report on how the national nonprofit is teaming up with local news organizations to help address reporting challenges.

Salish Current is committed to local news delivered free for all to read and free from advertising. As a not-for-profit, we believe our transparency and independence are foundational to the trust necessary in community journalism.

In another project, we're exploring trust via a research project on "Understanding Trust," in partnership with the University of Washington's Center for an Informed Public and international library cooperative OCLC. Our objective is to hear from some key information sources in our community — teachers, librarians and journalists — about how trust is gained and lost, and how it is maintained. That's vital information for us, as we work to bring light, not heat, to civic discussions that strengthen our community.

Edward R. Murrow 's observation from the 1950s still resonates today: "It has become more difficult than ever to distinguish ... good from evil, right from wrong."

Salish Current is here to help, by providing trustworthy, accountable local news.

[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 2/25/22](#): Skip the straw, pipeline expansion, bald eagles, toxic makeup, native bees, Washington legislative budget, wildfires, Alaska mine road, Dakota Access Pipeline appeal, ocean acid, GasLink attack

— 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. 25, 2022

[Streamside shade: fish and farm advocates struggle to find common ground](#)



An eagle surveys the Skagit Delta, possibly on the lookout for a salmon dinner. With salmon-spawning streams flowing through agricultural land, advocates for salmon recovery and for preserving farmlands have differing thoughts on proposed legislation related to streamside vegetation.

By Lauren Gallup — Salmon recovery is a priority for many in Washington who see vegetated streamside buffers as important to salmon-friendly habitat. But some in the state's agricultural community see the threat of loss of productive farmland from proposals such as the Lorraine Loomis Act discussed earlier in this year's legislative session. ([Read more.](#))

[‘Most special place’ for salmon, native culture gains protection with San Juan land bank purchase](#)



Acquisition of a property along the southeast corner of Lopez Island comes as "an incredible relief" to San Juan County Land Bank leaders. The conservation organization will take ownership of what has been known as the Higgins property, which affords this view of Watmough Bay, providing protection of a site valuable for salmon recovery as well rich in history.

By Gretchen K. Wing — A pristine site along the southeastern shore of Lopez Island with deep history for Coast Salish peoples has gained protection from development with approval of its purchase by the San Juan County Land Bank. ([Read more.](#))

[Letters to the Editor](#)

- **Tom Goetzl:** Real consequences when local reporting disappears
- **Ted Wolf:** Heeding the words of The Nooksack Plan
- **Chris Moench:** Note of appreciation

News from around the region

Health and Safety

An exploratory study by the nonprofit conservation laboratory Kwiagt has discovered that ticks are widespread in the San Juan Islands, but not yet a significant threat to human health or wildlife. ([Lopez Rocks](#))

Whatcom County 2/25/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Extremely High Risk**; 93.6/100K; 78.7% vaccinated

San Juan County 2/25/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Very High Risk**; 33.3/100K; 89.4% vaccinated

Skagit County 2/25/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Extremely High Risk**; 80.7/100K; 73.0% vaccinated

Education

Whatcom County public schools have seen drops in student enrollment in the last two years due to increased home schooling during the pandemic. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

The Port of Bellingham and Western Washington University last week agreed to dissolve the university's nonprofit Western Crossings Development Corporation and relinquish claim for the university to develop six acres of waterfront property. ([Cascadia Daily News](#)) See also: What's next for the waterfront after WWU, Port scrap development project? ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Government

San Juan County

The county council will meet again on March 8.

City of Bellingham

The council will meet on Feb. 28. [Agenda items](#) include:

Public Works and Natural Resources Committee:

- Post Point Resource Recovery Updates and Biosolids Beneficial Use Request for Proposals (RFP) Results

Public Health, Safety and Justice Committee:

- Presentation on Street Drugs Encountered by Fire Department Personnel and Fire Department 2021 Review

Community and Economic Development Committee:

- 2023-27 Consolidated Plan - Community Engagement

Parks and Recreation Committee:

- An Ordinance Amending Bellingham Municipal Code Chapters 7.04.030 and 8.04.070 Regarding Keeping Dogs and Animals Under Control in Parks

Climate Action Committee:

- 2022 Climate Implementation Plan

Committee of the Whole:

- Return to City Facilities
- Update on the Besse Sorts Timber Sale
- Establish a Sanitation and Solid Waste Division in the Public Works Department
- 2022 Town Hall Meetings

The council will meet again on March 14.

Whatcom County

The county council met on Feb. 22. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public Hearing:

- Council unanimously adopted an 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 [Ordinance. Substitute Exhibit A.](#)

Other Items:

- Council adopted 5-2 (Byrd and Elenbaas opposed) an [ordinance](#) establishing the Way Station Project Fund and establishing a project based budget for the Way Station Project.

- The council appointed Peter Frazier and RB Tewksbury to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee for the Justice Project.
- The council discussed a [motion to recommend rescinding](#) a previous action of the council that temporarily closed Gulf Road to motorized vehicular traffic. See: Whatcom Council reconsiders Gulf Road closure permit ([Cascadia Daily News](#)) and Road closure limits public access, environmental research at this Whatcom County beach ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The council will meet again on March 8.

Port of Bellingham

The commission has postponed its meeting of March 1 due to a light agenda. The commission will meet again on March 15.

For the people

The state Senate will allow a limited number of visitors who show a same-day negative COVID-19 test to its galleries beginning today. The 2022 60-day legislative session ends of March 10. ([Associated Press](#))

Nature

The public can comment on the draft shoreline management plans for [Skagit County](#) and the [City of Anacortes](#). Skagit County is accepting comments until 4:30 p.m. March 1 and will hold an online public hearing at 10:30 a.m. that day on Zoom. Anacortes is accepting comments until 5 p.m. March 9. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Business

Among the 16 Washington state nominees for the 2022 James Beard Award were only three from outside the Seattle area, and two of the three were from the San Juans: Matia Kitchen and Bar, Orcas Island — best new restaurant; and Nick Coffey, Ursa Minor, Lopez Island — best chef: Northwest and Pacific. ([Seattle Eater](#))

Chris Heimgartner, a specialist in clean energy and broadband, has been hired as the new general manager of the Whatcom Public Utility District 1. ([Cascadia Daily News](#))

James McCubbin has joined Friends of the San Juans as its Legal Director and Staff Attorney (Friends of the San Juans)

The Skagit County Planning Commission forwarded to the county commission 11 proposed changes to the county's comprehensive plan, one of which would allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in rural areas. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Birch Bay resident Matt Skaletsky joined Semiahmoo Resort, Golf and Spa as the new general manager. ([The Northern Light](#))

Blake Lyon will begin work March 1 as the City of Bellingham's director of Planning and Community Development Department. (City of Bellingham)

The federal government will spend an estimated \$200 million to expand and improve border crossings in Whatcom County as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Commentary

Joel Connelly in *Post Alley* analyzes the where's, when's and why's of the so-called "Freedom Convoy" Canadian trucker's protest and the political fallout in its aftermath. ([Post Alley](#)) See also: Canadian mask protesters returned last weekend to the Pacific Highway border crossing, threatening news media who had to be protected by the RCMP. ([The Northern Light](#))

Community

Candidates for Bellingham Police Chief will be introduced to the public at a virtual meeting on March 17 and will answer questions provided by the public. ([City of Bellingham](#))

In other police chief news: Wendell Shirley, who has been Bellevue's interim chief since last July, has been named chief. Adrian Diaz, who has been Seattle's interim chief for a year and a half, is that city's only contender for the job right now. ([KUOW](#)) Down in Tacoma, new police chief Avery Moore takes over the department, after the city saw violent crime increase in 2021 by more than 17% compared to the year before. ([KNKX](#)) In Anacortes, Dave Floyd has worked for the department 22 years and became chief last August, never having envisioned himself as a police chief. ([Anacortes American](#))

The Blaine City Council is considering new affordable housing sites at its old city hall site downtown and in planned development in east Blaine that would provide a total of 20 housing units. ([The Northern Light](#))

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.

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](#).

The Islands' Oil Spill Association (IOSA) is offering free [oil spill response training](#) for interested islanders in March, April, and May. Sessions will be held on Lopez, Orcas, and San Juan Island. IOSA is non-profit, volunteer-based oil spill response program and has been protecting the San Juan Islands since 1985.

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Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

Salish Current is a nonprofit online newsroom serving 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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