



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

## News of the week: April 22, 2022

Dear Reader —

Happy Earth Day!

For those into history ... the first Earth Day was held in 1970 and brought 20 million people together to celebrate and act on behalf of our land, air and waters. Within three years, a bipartisan Congress and a Republican president enacted the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Somewhere along the way something went wrong. Even with a greater global disaster than the [Cuyahoga River catching on fire](#) we can't seem to act together on behalf of our land, air and water.

Our friend Terry Williams of Tulalip would ask his listeners to imagine what Puget Sound looked like 100 years ago, then look and see what it looks like now. What do we see it looking like 100 years from now?

We can try to imagine that. But for those of us who remember the first Earth Day, that's not our future. We will be gone. It is the future of the young, of the youth who today celebrate, act and speak out on behalf of our land, air and waters.

It's their future. Get out of the way if you can't lend a hand. As we've known but sometimes forgotten, our lifestyle isn't a right, it's a privilege earned from nature.

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

[Salish Sea News Week in Review 4/22/22](#): Earth Day!, retreating glaciers, intertidal Oregon, BC Hydro, salmon kill, cruise ship pollution, reversing Trump, hauling salmon, Biden's old growth, Vancouver barge

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

## News from the *Salish Current*

### [Voting for a District Court judge: does it matter?](#)



*District Court is "the people's court" — the one people most often come into contact with, via misdemeanor charges such as littering, trespassing, tagging, no-contact order violations and DUIs, and other charges.*

**By Matt Benoit** — This year's election for Whatcom County District Court judge will see a contest at the primary level for the first time in 24 years, with three candidates already vying for one position — prompting the question of why judicial positions are elected, and what to look for when voting. ([Read more.](#))

### [Mother Earth Day celebration will look to the future, through the vision of Indigenous youth](#)



*Youth speakers will share their insights and vision for climate change and environmental justice at a Mother Earth Day celebration April 22 on Bellingham's waterfront.*

**By Cifford Heberden** — Messages from Indigenous youth with eyes on environmental justice and the future will be featured at

a Mother Earth Day celebration presented by Children of the Setting Sun Productions at Bellingham's Maritime Heritage Park on April 22. ([Read more.](#))

**Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equity and healing for all people.  
#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter  
#NoJusticeNoPeace**

## **News from around the region**

### **Health and Safety**

The downtown Friday Harbor fire of April 7 fire has been declared an arson fire. Dwight Henline of Friday Harbor was arrested on April 16. He appeared in San Juan County Superior Court on April 20; bail was set at \$500,000 for a charge of first-degree arson with arraignment set for May 2. ([San Juan Islander](#))

State health officials are changing reporting of COVID-19's spread in communities by focusing on tracking severe illness, hospital capacity, deaths and new variants rather than infection rates. ([Seattle Times](#))

The change to what the CDC calls "COVID-19 Community Levels" reflects the decreased risk of severe illness and death due to vaccines and prioritizes reducing severe illness and the strain on healthcare systems. ([CovidActNow](#))

- [Whatcom County Community Level Health Risk](#): Low
- [San Juan County Community Level Health Risk](#): Low
- [Skagit County Community Level Health Risk](#): Low

### **Government**

#### **San Juan County**

The council met on April 19. See [here](#) for agenda items and taped proceedings.

The council will meet on April 25. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Presentation: Oil Spill Response Priorities and Capabilities in the Salish Sea
- Discussion: Meet with Representative Alex Ramel at Town Hall, Friday Harbor, to discuss the recent fire

#### City of Bellingham

The council will meet on April 25. [Agenda items](#) include:

##### Public Works and Natural Resources Committee

- Broadband Advisory Work Group Update #3. [Report.](#)
- Bid Award for Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity Overhead Door Repair Services, BID #5B-2022. [Staff report.](#)

##### Climate Action Committee

- Proposed Climate Action Fund: Part 3: Amount and Term. [Presentation.](#)

##### Committee of the Whole

- Annual Update on the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence. [Presentation.](#)
- Discussion of in-person council meetings.
- 2022-2023 Consolidated Action Plan for Housing and Services as it Relates to Families with Children. [Presentation.](#)
- Post Point Resource Recovery Project. [Staff report.](#) [Presentation.](#)
- Briefing on Existing Tree Regulations. [Staff memo.](#) [Presentation.](#)

The council will meet again on May 9.

#### Whatcom County

The council will meet on April 26. [Agenda items](#) include:

##### Consent Agenda:

- Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a grant agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Commerce for the Way Station in the amount of \$4,000,000. [Staff memo.](#)
- Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between

Whatcom County and City of Bellingham to provide funding for the Alternative Response Team pilot program, in an amount not to exceed \$167,917 in 2022 and \$259,210 in 2023. [Substitute Staff Memo](#).

The council will meet again on May 10.

### Port of Bellingham

The commission met on April 19. [Agenda items](#) included:

- The commission unanimously authorized the Executive Director to execute an Authorization to Proceed for Harcourt's proposed Projects No. 3 and 4 ([see details here](#)) within the Waterfront District Master Development Area. (YouTube [recording](#) at 1:50) See also: "Harcourt, Port moving forward with this residential construction on Bellingham's waterfront" ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))
- The commission postponed decision until its next meeting to allow for more public comment on a motion to approve [Resolution 1403](#) adopting an updated moorage model, and making changes to the Harbors' Rules, Regulations, and Rates Handbook as described in the Resolution. (YouTube [recording of presentation](#) at 2:19)
- The commission approved receipt of a grant of \$15,000 from the National League of Cities to fund a pilot program of outreach and education to businesses owned by Black, Indigenous and other people of color.

The commission will meet again on May 3.

### Nature

Day Creek. Day Creek landowners, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and R2 Resource Consultants settled a lawsuit over property damage that followed a restoration project. Skagit Fisheries and R2 Resource Consultants agreed to pay the landowners of Day Creek a settlement and in return will be relieved of all responsibility associated with the project. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Orca whales. Dr. Deborah Giles sees killer whales as better versions of us. The orca researcher has spent decades learning about the highly endangered Southern Resident population of whales from San Juan Island in the middle of the Salish Sea. ([Crosscut](#))

Native plants. Leslie Eastwood of the Samish Indian Nation collects native plants to eat, and to make homemade medicines and dyeing products. Plants she collects include salmonberry, thimbleberry, maple flowers and cottonwood flowers. She harvests less than a tenth of what is there and says "thank you." ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### **Business**

Solar panels. Local rooftop solar installations are backlogged due to supply issues and worker shortages, and installations are scheduled out to next January. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Jobs. Whatcom County added about 700 jobs in March and had an unemployment rate of 5.53% compared to a rate of 7.1% in March 2021 when there were about 7,000 fewer people working. ([KGMI](#))

Home prices. Whatcom County's median price for home sales in 2022 is \$600,000, an increase of 20% over a year ago. Every community's median home sale price increased in double digits, led by Ferndale's 29.6% increase to \$659,500 and Bellingham's 13.9% rise to \$689,500. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Island living. If you have \$5.5 million and are ready to live the island life, there's a [home on Clark Point](#) at the northern end of Guemes Island less than a mile offshore from Anacortes. ([Seattle Met](#))

### **Community**

New police chief. Rebecca Mertzig was selected as the next Chief of Police for the City of Bellingham. She currently serves as Police Chief for the Stanwood Police Department by contract with the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office. She is expected to begin on June 1, 2022, at a salary of \$196,884. ([City of Bellingham](#))

Ku Klux Klan. Bellingham is an increasingly diverse, liberally inclined community. So, it's hard to imagine a time when an organization like the Ku Klux Klan could march through its downtown streets, hundreds of members strong. It's perhaps even harder to imagine Bellingham's mayor giving a "grand wizard" the ceremonial key to the city. But, almost a century ago, these things did happen. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Sumas Library. The Whatcom County Library System will rebuild the Sumas Library which suffered thousands of dollars in damages from last November's floods. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Clayton Beach. Visitors to Larrabee State Park's Clayton Beach will benefit from the construction of a new pedestrian path and overpass from its trailhead, improving decades-long safety concerns of people crossing the railroad to access the beach. ([The Front](#))

### **Arts and Leisure**

[Salish Sea Early Music Festival](#) presents "Concerti: Frederick the Great" performed by Schrader & Cohan & Phelps & Kuroda & Strand-Polyak & Shirley  
April 22, 7 p.m.; St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bellingham  
April 23, 12 noon; Grace Church, Lopez Island  
April 23, 7 p.m.; Brickworks, Friday Harbor  
April 26, 7 p.m.; Orcas Adventist Fellowship Church/Orcas Christian School Gym  
Masks and vaccination required • \$20 or \$25 suggested donation • youth 18 and under always free

[Friday Harbor Film Festival's 2022 Director Series](#) continues through Oct. 5 and features films with the themes of Explorers & Adventures, Things to Consider, and Tales from the Heart.

RARE: Recycled Arts Resource Expo. Opening April 1, 6-9 p.m., 1418 Cornwall Ave. RARE highlights creative reuse in the form of art through an exhibit at the Allied Arts Gallery and at its [virtual gallery](#) April 1-30.

## **Jump in!**

[Mother Earth Day](#), April 22, 4 p.m. at Bellingham's Maritime Heritage Park presents booths, youth speakers and music by a Lummi song and dance group. Hosted by Children of the Setting Sun Productions. [See "[Mother Earth Day celebration will look to the future, through the vision of Indigenous youth](#)" *Salish Current*, April 20, 2022.]

The Great Islands Clean-up will begin on San Juan Island on April 23, 10 a.m. at San Juan Island Brewing Co. parking lot and on Lopez Island at 10 a.m. at Lopez Village Park.

Bellingham's "[Invest In Our Planet](#)" Earth Day event on April 23 begins at 9 a.m. to improve habitat throughout Padden Creek and Fairhaven Park.

[Skagit Earth Day](#) is at the [Utopia Conservation Area](#) near Sedro-Woolley, April 25, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Join Skagit Land Trust and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group in restoring riparian habitat.

The [Whatcom Farm Expo](#) is on April 23 at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission free.

[Bellingham City Club](#) presents Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood and Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu in discussion at the halfway points in their current administrations April 27, 12 noon. [Register by April 25.](#)

San Juan County's [Sustainable Tourism Management Plan \(STMP\) workshops](#) begin April 28 to gather the shared community vision, goals, and implementation measures to drive sustainable tourism in the county.

[Josh VanderYacht Park Blackberry Abatement Bash](#) will be held on April 30, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. to remove invasive plants and replace them with native ground cover. (South Fork Valley Community Association)

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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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