



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

News of the week: May 13, 2022

Dear Reader —

Our long-awaited spring has arrived and summer will soon be here. I see more people out and about, in stores and restaurants unmasked, no longer social distancing. Many of us tentatively test our comfort levels moving out of isolation; others appear to revel unfettered as if we were never gripped by a pandemic. How human: some cautious, some carefree.

I'm among the cautious, watching the infection rate rise in Whatcom and San Juan counties. I am masked, avoiding crowd situations, washing hands frequently. But I've always been on the cautious side even before COVID. I wonder if our behavior as we move out of COVID reveals anything more than who we've always been.

COVID revealed many of the deep fissures and inequalities in our social fabric—jobs, wages, medical care, housing, education.... As we move out of COVID, will we do more than go back to what was “normal” before COVID?

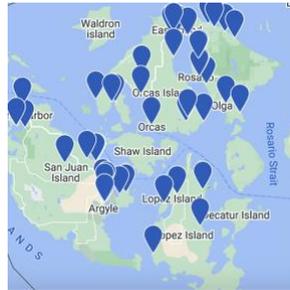
Let's not go back. Stand with *Salish Current*. We affirm our commitment to work for truth justice, equity and healing for all people. We'll provide the fact-based news and reasoned commentary with which to conduct civil discussions and make civic decisions. Stand with *Salish Current*, stand with community journalism.

Thank you for reading and thank you for [supporting *Salish Current*](#).

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

News from the *Salish Current*

[Managing paradise: San Juans eye vacation rental cap](#)



A VRBO search map shows a broad sprinkling of vacation rentals across the San Juan Islands. The county council is considering imposing a cap on the number of permits approved for such uses, as it faces the challenges of the effects of tourism and a tight

full-time rental housing inventory.

By Nancy DeVaux—How much tourism is too much? San Juan County is considering a cap on vacation rental permits. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices / Who are the homeless?](#)



Two critical questions—how do people actually fall into homelessness, and what can be done to remedy the underlying causes of homelessness—illuminate the complexity of the problem.

The wide range of answers reveals the need for the wide range of remedies and rehabilitation required to create solutions. (Image CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons)

By John Dunne—Our concept of the “deserving poor” needs to expand past attitudes mirroring 17th and 18th century mores that drive today’s ambivalent response to homelessness. ([Read more.](#))

[Old is new again with early music festival](#)



Early music—from the 15th through 19th century—becomes new again in the hands of Jeffrey Cohan and other players in the 10-year-old Salish Sea Early Music Festival each spring. Using instruments replicating those of the Baroque and

Renaissance eras, musicians from throughout the globe join the Anacortes-based flutist in the concert series. (Dmytro Lavrinenko photo ©)

By Kenneth Duncan—Salish Sea festival brings baroque music on period instruments out of the past for area audiences. ([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

Of the nearly 1 million COVID-19 deaths, nearly 319,000 deaths could have been averted if all adults had gotten vaccinated, according to a Brown University and Microsoft AI Health state-by-state calculation. ([NPR](#))

Community Health Levels:

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

Education

The former Western Washington University Womxn's Identity Resource Center is now the Gender Liberation Resource Center, a name it believes is more inclusive and better represents the organization's mission. ([The Front](#))

Government

San Juan County

The county commission will meet on May 17. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Consider adopting an ordinance establishing a cap on permits for vacation rental of residences or accessory dwelling units (ADUs) not to exceed 1,200 permits countywide;
- Consider removal of a planning commissioner pursuant to RCW 36.70.110

A public hearing has been scheduled for the removal of San Juan County Planning Commissioner Steve Smith of Orcas Island. The planning commission is made up of volunteers to serve as an advisory body to the San Juan County Planning Department. Smith's term is currently set to expire in the year 2024. ([San Juan Journal](#))

City of Bellingham

The council met on May 9. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Bid for construction of Little Squalicum Estuary was awarded to [Quilceda Excavation](#) at \$3,412,306.38. (See [City of Bellingham](#))
- Post Point Resource Recovery Project (Rates). [Presentation.](#)

Bellingham residents should expect to see unprecedented sewage rate hikes with a net effect of an increase of 228% in inflation-adjusted monthly rates over two decades, according to a consultant's report presented to the city council. Current monthly rates of around \$50 a month for individual households could quadruple. ([CDN](#))

- Crime statistics 2012-2020. [Presentation.](#)

Police statistics show rise in Bellingham crime. ([CDN](#))

Town Hall, May 16, 6 p.m.: The council will hold a public meeting on Zoom to hear your thoughts on public safety. [Link.](#)

The council will meet again on May 23.

Whatcom County

The council met on May 10. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Public Hearing: Council held an advisory public hearing to gather public comments on proposed amendments to Title 20 (Zoning) to regulate vacation (short-term) rentals. [Staff memo](#). [Media](#). (See "[Managing paradise: San Juan eyes vacation rental cap](#)" *Salish Current*, May 12, 2022.)
- Council authorized by unanimous consent the county executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Commerce to provide resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic among individuals and families who are homeless or receiving homeless assistance, in the amount of \$1,250,000 for a total amended amount of \$4,294,770. [Staff memo](#).
- Council voted (5-2, Byrd and Elenbaas opposed) to pass a [resolution](#) supporting the Snohomish, Whatcom, Island, San Juan and Skagit (SWISS) regional partnership with the Washington State Association of Counties.

The council will meet again on May 24.

Port of Bellingham

The commission will meet on May 17. [Agenda items](#) include:

Consent agenda:

- Authorize the Executive Director Rob Fix to execute the Settlement and Hold-Harmless [Agreement](#) for Whatcom County Case No. 19-2-01882-37 between the Port of Bellingham (Defendant) and Craig Kovacevich (Plaintiff). Without an admission of fault for the incident, the Port and its insurer will pay the Plaintiff a settlement amount of \$70K.
- Authorize the executive director to enter into a new Remedial Action Grant [agreement](#) with the Department of Ecology to provide \$565,000 in state funding toward site cleanup of the Harris Avenue Shipyard site.

Presentation: Blaine Marine Industry Update

Action item: Motion to approve [Resolution 1403](#) adopting an updated moorage model, superseding Resolution 1330, and making necessary language changes to the Harbors' Rules, Regulations, and Rates Handbook as described in the Resolution.

The commission will meet again on June 7.

Elections

Candidate filing week opens May 16 and closes May 20.
[\(Washington Secretary of State\)](#)

Nature

Targets. The Puget Sound Partnership is revising its four-year plan for restoring the Puget Sound ecosystem and developing a new set of recovery goals, known as targets. [\(Puget Sound Institute\)](#)

Estuary. The City of Bellingham is constructing an estuary in the lower part of Little Squalicum Park where Little Squalicum Creek meets Bellingham Bay. An open house about this and an adjacent project is scheduled for May 25, with project construction set to begin in June. [\(City of Bellingham\)](#)

Outdoor Ed. The Connections Program, a collaboration of Camp Saturna, Common Threads, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, North Cascades Institute and Wild Whatcom, will reach nearly all Blaine and Mount Baker District elementary students with outdoor education this school year and next. [\(Whatcom Watch\)](#)

Avian flu. State Department of Agriculture officials confirmed this week that a Canada goose found in Whatcom County tested positive for H5N1 avian influenza. [\(KGMJ\)](#)

Springer. The rescue of an orphaned whale 20 years ago is recounted at "Orca Rescue!" at The Forum at Town Hall Seattle, May 22, 2 p.m. Free. All ages are welcome. Attend in person or livestream the event. [Register here.](#)

Restoration. The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group has received \$40,377 from a state grant to restore about four acres of land in the Coal Creek and the Lake Samish watersheds. ([CDN](#))

Business

Farmland. Skagit County's Farmland Legacy Program, a county-funded initiative, has protected almost 14,000 acres of agricultural land in the past 25 years. ([KGMJ](#))

WTA. High gas prices the past two months have not yet had a significant impact on bus ridership within Whatcom County, said WTA Planning Director Tim Wilder this week. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Pot. Several Whatcom County cannabis store owners have taken enhanced security measures, ranging from extra or armed security guards to personal escorts for employees, in the wake of a local pot-store crime spree that has lasted at least four years, leaving store employees shaken. ([CDN](#)) (See "[Recent robberies prompt renewed look at security for cannabis retailers](#)," *Salish Current*, Feb. 11, 2022; also "[Growth in local cannabis business amplifies challenges as well as revenues](#)," *Salish Current*, Dec. 16, 2021)

Net pens. State agencies have issued new guidances for commercial marine fish net pens. ([Dept. of Ecology](#))

Community

Harney Channel, named from Gen. William Harney who once tried to defend the San Juan Islands from British rule but also was responsible for the murders of Indigenous people and an enslaved woman, is proposed to be renamed to honor Henry Cayou, an Indigenous San Juan County commissioner and commercial fisherman who lived in the San Juan Islands. The proposal has been approved by the Washington State Committee on Geographic Names and is now under consideration by the Washington Board on Geographic Names and, if approved, the proposal will go to the federal Board on Geographic Names for a final decision. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Affordable apartments. American Legion Post 91 in Burlington will be replaced with 42 units of affordable apartments for veterans and low-income residents. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Skagit planning. On items proposed for the county's planning docket, staff has recommended against stricter rules to monitor saltwater intrusion in wells because amending the health code is not a planning issue. Staff also recommend against approving a proposal that would allow for complete replacement of residential buildings without requiring a new critical areas review and also recommended deferring a proposal from land developer Bill Sygitowicz to add provisions to county policy for fully contained communities—urban-style communities in rural areas. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) The proposals go before the county commissioners May 24 at 10 a.m. (See "[Housing and growth issues surround Skagit County consideration of 'fully contained community' proposal](#)," Salish Current, Nov. 18, 2021)

Arts and Leisure

[Salish Sea Early Music Festival](#) presents "Baroque quartets by Marin Marais, Georg Philipp Telemann, Johann Sebastian Bach and others" performed by Greenberg & Cohan & Wright & Napper
May 6, 7 p.m.: St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bellingham
May 7, 12 noon: Grace Church, Lopez Island
May 7, 7 p.m.: Brickworks, Friday Harbor
May 10, 6 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

Jazz. The Anacortes Public Library, supported by an endowment made in honor of clarinetist and saxophonist Dom Manieri, features a [collection](#) showcasing the American art of jazz and swing music. This month's Jazz Lecture series on May 19, 7-8:30 p.m., features Steven Dolmatt taking us on "[A Country Blues Roadtrip](#)." ([KNKX](#))

Film. In "[Daughter of a Lost Bird](#)" Kendra Mylnechuk Potter, an adult Indigenous adoptee, reconnects with her birth family, discovers her Lummi heritage and

confronts issues of her identity (May 14, 6:45 p.m.). The film is part of the [2022 CASCADIA International Women's Film Festival](#) May 12 through May 15 at the Pickford Film Center in downtown Bellingham.

[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. [Watch on-demand](#) May 6-18 for \$1.95 "Pandora's Promise."

Jump in!

Invasion. "Can Ukraine Survive the Russian Invasion? A Diplomat's Perspective" with John Koenig, retired Foreign Service officer and lecturer at University of Washington. City Club, May 26, 12 noon, virtual. [Register here.](#)

The Race to Alaska—a motor-free ocean race—with vessels ranging from paddleboards to pedal-assist sailboats—is less about how fast you can go and more about whether you get there at all. ([Hakai Magazine](#))

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