



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

News of the week: July 15, 2022

Dear Reader —

We Earthlings have been dazzled this week by the [James Webb telescope's amazing images](#) from sectors of outer space more distant than any we've ever seen before.

These are not just beautiful pictures, but packages of information about the universe in which we live: information that we can use to understand more about the powerful forces that created and continue to influence our world.

Sounds like journalism, right?

Our goal at Salish Current is to provide information about what's happening and who's influencing life in our corner of the universe— information you can trust. Our not-for-profit online newsroom's essential reason for being, as [commentator Derek Moscato](#) phrased it, is to provide "necessary depth and perspective to high-priority social and ecological issues."

As we have been from the beginning, we remain committed to making that information universally accessible online to everyone, without charge.

We're also committed to encouraging readers — you — to be part of the flow of information.

Your voice comes through in [letters to the editor](#) and through [Community Voices essays](#). Our very business model — supported by [donations](#) from those who can afford to give, enabling free access to news for all — is an expression of your voice as well.

In choosing the nonprofit, public media model, we chose independence, transparency and accountability to you, our reader. Your donations pay only for capable, professional journalists to report the news. There are

no stockholders looking for return on investment, no financial overseers to influence our operations or mission.

We've been gratified and excited to watch our readership grow over the two years we've been publishing, and are [deeply grateful for your support](#) and advocacy (remember to share links with your friends via email, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn!).

Like the James Webb images, continuing to provide needed and trusted information for this place we call home is a dazzling vision. Thank you for making it possible!

—Amy Nelson, Publisher

Wait! There's more: [Salish Sea News Week in Review 7/15/22](#): Orange chicken, First Foods, K45, green crab whiskey, B.C. sea life, SCOTUS tribal ruling, Snake River dams, big-tree hunter, B.C. prosecution

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

News from the *Salish Current*

[From the Editor's Desk: Fact-checking the candidates](#)



Candidates for 42nd Legislative District offices who participated in a forum presented by the League of Women Voters of Bellingham-Whatcom County this week had plenty to say about how legislative action affects crime rates, cost of living, etc.

By Mike Sato and Salish Current Staff — A 42nd District forum presented by the League of Women Voters of

Bellingham-Whatcom County offered an opportunity for fact-checking candidate statements. [Read more ...](#)

[Still rising: Planners assess sea level, storm surge risks](#)



Closer to the edge: Planning for erosion control and repair at Bellingham's Boulevard Park will be worked into other future project designs in shoreline areas vulnerable to inundation by rising sea levels and damage from powerful storm surges.

By Kai Uyehara — Rising sea levels combined with storm surges threaten to inundate shoreline sites such as Bellingham's Boulevard Park. [Read more ...](#)

[Letters to the Editor](#)

- Nancy Kelley Sheng: Extinguish gun violence from our culture
- Michael Karp: Ramel stands up to big oil and gas

News from around the region

(The links found here may have limited access for those who don't subscribe to the source publication. Sorry for any inconvenience!)

Health and Safety

Skagit County's 911 Center will not ask voters for a sales tax increase this fall to make technology and communications improvements because Burlington's mayor and council do not approve of the measure. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

COVID-19 Community Health Levels:

- [Whatcom County Community Level Health Risk:](#)
Medium

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

Education

Fox News Network's false characterization of Bellingham's WinkWink youth sex education classes as part of the Bellingham School District brought threats and abuse from outside agitators on business owner and school board member Jenn Mason. ([CDN](#)) See: "Law into action: teaching sexual inclusivity in school sexual education," ([Salish Current, May 26, 2022](#))

Government

San Juan County

The council met on July 12 on Waldron Island.

City of Bellingham

The council met on July 11. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Silver Beach. The council approved (6-0, Huthmann on leave) an emergency ordinance to implement a moratorium on permit processing for residential multifamily designations in the Silver Beach neighborhood for one year, while the department conducts research on the impact of development on the Lake Whatcom watershed. A public hearing will be held within 60 days.

Public Works and Natural Resources:

- Post Point. The council unanimously approved the Post Point Resource Recovery Project Facilities Plan to be forwarded to the state Department of Ecology without its biosolids disposal options. See: "Post Point project moves forward without biosolids plan" ([CDN](#))

Committee of the Whole:

- Climate action labor concerns. The council unanimously approved referring to the Public Works Committee further discussion of the City of Bellingham's and State's existing apprenticeship requirements and how they may or may not be applied to future climate action work.

- Climate action labor concerns. The council unanimously approved referring to the Climate Action Committee further discussion of the issue of displaced workers and displaced industries in relation to the City's Climate Action Plan.

New Business:

- Facility safety. The council unanimously approved inviting NW Youth Services and Opportunity Council to provide an update on steps they are taking to address the safety inside and outside of their facility to the Public Health, Safety, and Justice Committee at the Aug. 1 meeting or as soon as can be arranged.

The council will meet again on July 25.

Whatcom County

The council met on July 12. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Public health. The council approved (5-2, Elenbaas and Kershner opposed) authorizing the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Health for the delivery and funding of various public health services in the amount of \$819,759, for a total amended agreement amount of \$6,779,654.
- Property transfer. The council approved (4-3, Elenbaas, Kershner, Byrd opposed) authorizing the County Executive to enter into a Purchase and Sale agreement between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council for the transfer of property at 1000 N. Forest St. at no cost for public benefit purposes consistent with RCW 39.33.015.
- EMS levy. The council approved (4-3, Elenbaas, Kershner, Byrd opposed) an ordinance providing for submission to the qualified voters of Whatcom County a proposition renewing the levy of a regular property tax at a rate of \$.295 or less per \$1000 assessed valuation to continue to provide emergency medical services. [Substitute Levy Plan \(Frazey\) for July 12.](#)

The council will meet again on July 26.

Port of Bellingham

The commission met on July 12. Links to agenda items, video recording and written minutes are [found here](#).

Consent agenda:

- The commission approved (Briscoe excused) all consent agenda items.

Presentations:

- Q2 Financials/Audit Results: The 2021 audit performed by the State Auditor's Office gave the Port a clean audit in all four categories of financial statements, accountability, passenger facility charges, and federal grants.
- Alaska Ferry Railroad Crossing Project Update: Project status update on the Fairhaven Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements. Regarding the Waterfront quiet zones, the City is currently working on the F Street crossing (half way completed), C Street and Laurel Street have been completed. The Shipping Terminal, the Wharf and Central have not been completed.
- House of Tears Carving Dedication: A dedication will be scheduled for August or September for installation of the Double Thunderbird art work located on Bellweather Plaza along with plaques telling the story of Thunderbird, Raven & Salmon, and Bear & Steelhead.

Action items:

- Insurance. The commission approved authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an [insurance contract](#) for the Port's Property, Cyber and Crime insurance.
- Brownfields. The commission approved authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an [Interagency Agreement](#) with the Dept. of Ecology for \$90,000 for the Port to complete a Brownfield Affordable Housing Inventory. The inventory will establish a county wide property inventory for a variety of different purposes, including identifying contaminated sites that can be cleaned up and turned into affordable housing.

Other business:

- Plastic mandate. Commissioner Bell raised concerns that the city's plastic mandate imposes a burden on small food industry businesses. Port staff will reach out to the City of Bellingham, Sustainable Connections, Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Development Center and report back.

- NW Tune-Up. Executive Director Rob Fix said the event had less attendees that anticipated, but for a first year event it went fairly well.

The commission will meet again on Aug. 9.

Nature

Green booze. Tamworth Distilling's Crab Trapper whiskey in New Hampshire gets some of its flavor from green crabs caught off the Atlantic coast. ([NPR](#))

Business

Paywall. Local millionaire David Syre's publication *Cascade Daily News* will join the *Bellingham Herald* in putting its news content after July 19 behind a digital paywall accessible only by paying an annual subscription of \$144.

Bellis Fair Mall. An Oct. 28 auction is scheduled for sale of the mall property by Beacon Default Management, successor trustee after the mall's owner Brookfield Property Partners defaulted on about \$77 million remaining on a \$93 million commercial mortgage-backed securities loan in February. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Commentary

Deranged Gourmet. Karen Sullivan in *Rainshadow Journal* writes: "Inflation is here and food prices are so crazy it's almost cheaper to eat money! Today, in the first of a short series attempting to bring back those good old economical recipes of the 1950s, we explore the wonderful world of frozen salads. Get ready for a taste-tacular extravaganza!" ([Rainshadow Journal](#))

Community

Indigenous history. In June the San Juan Island National Historical Park opened a new American Camp Visitor Center offering the first comprehensive look at the

island's Indigenous peoples in the park's 50-year history. ([Indian Country Today](#))

Police. Skagit County police departments are experiencing staffing shortages in part due to the increased complexity of duties caused by police reform legislation and the shortages result in longer response times and have affected the number of deputies who can respond to each call. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) See: "Local policing at recruitment crossroads," July 7, 2022 ([Salish Current](#))

Library. Repeated rejection by voters to fund a new Birch Bay library has led Whatcom County Library System trustees to consider using their \$2 million state funding by renovating the interior of the Vogt family home. ([The Northern Light](#))

Sylvia Center. Insurmountable financial problems and a lawsuit from its landlord have forced Bellingham's Sylvia Center for the Arts to close permanently after its last show on September 10. ([CDN](#)) See: "Sylvia Center closure clouds future for local theater," July 7, 2022 ([Salish Current](#))

Telegraph Townhomes. State and local officials celebrated this week at an affordable, energy-efficient housing development that will total 52 dwelling units in Bellingham when completed. The homes were built through a partnership between the Kulshan Community Land Trust, Habitat for Humanity in Whatcom County, the Whatcom Community Foundation, the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County and other organizations. ([CDN](#))

Arts and Leisure

Salmon films. The Friday Harbor Director's Film Series presents "The Breach" and "The Wild," two films about saving wild salmon and saving Bristol Bay. July 14-27, \$1.95. [To watch.](#)

Pump Boys & Dinettes July 15 (Fri-Sun, through July 31), Zuanich Point Park Fisherman's Pavilion, 7:30 p.m. A playful country-western musical set in a dock-side diner. A family-fun show with foot-stomping music and a piece of pie at intermission! [Tickets.](#)

Jump in!

Tenant rights. Bellingham tenant Rebecca Quirke and lawyer Daniel Hornal host a Community Conversation Potluck to talk about [rental ills and tenant rights](#) on Hornal's back patio, at 615 E. Chestnut St., Bellingham, from 5-7 p.m., July 16.

Wildflowers. Sauk Mountain Wildflower Vistas, July 20, 8 a.m to 4:30 p.m. Join the Komo Kulshan Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society on this trail walk. [Registration and directions here.](#)

Indigenous Justice. "Seeking Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People" is the topic addressed by 40th District Representative Debra Lekanoff at the Bellingham City Club's virtual program on July 27, 12 p.m. Rep. Lekanoff spearheaded the drafting and passage of a bill to address the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous people in Washington State. [Register in advance by July 25.](#)

Tourism. Got some tourism and cultural activities in mind and need funding? City of Ferndale's hotel-motel [grant program](#) is taking applications until Aug. 1. City of Bellingham's [grant program](#) application deadline is Aug. 19.

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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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