

News of the week: Oct. 14, 2022

Dear Reader —

We'll pause for a moment and simply remark, as many have, about the strange extended summer and drought we are having in mid-October. There's not much to say about what we are going through but to echo what *The Narwhal's* editor noted earlier this week:

“In the depths of this record-breaking B.C. drought, pretty much everyone I know is tormented by two opposing sentiments: 1) Overwhelming joy at the endless summer we're having, and 2) A growing sense of anxiety about how nearly three months with no rain in much of B.C. is impacting, well, all other living things.”
[Emma Gilchrist writes.](#)

Back here at home, we want to thank the Whatcom County Council for voting to establish the long-sought after [Racial Equity Commission](#). Sure, the vote wasn't unanimous and honest differences may exist but that is exactly the reason for such a commission to now tackle its hard work.

We can feel the heat of the November election campaign season moving up a couple of notches as we enter the home stretch. Ballots are ready to be mailed and we're standing firmly with our election officials and the integrity of our election system. Register to vote and make sure to vote: we're the bosses of those elected, they work for us.

Along with ballots will come the flurry of campaign mailers flooding the mailbox. We'll be doing our fact-checking of these mailers in the weeks to come as well as any other campaign claims and counter-claims we can follow up on.

The positions pro and con are also heating up on Whatcom County's Proposition 5, the Healthy Child Initiative. Both the [League of Women Voters of](#)

[Bellingham-Whatcom County](#) and the [Bellingham City Club](#) have online discussion forums scheduled for Oct.18 and 26, respectively, which are well worth your time and attention. There's a larger issue beyond the important issue of available and affordable childcare and that's addressed in the Community Voices column penned by Mauri Ingram of the Whatcom Community Foundation, "[Economic mobility starts at birth.](#)"

And, finally, if you are not following the third game of the Seattle Mariners series this Saturday (or if you are able to multitask with discretion and ease), take part in the first day of [Whatcom Housing Week 2022](#) which kicks off with "[Build Community Day](#)" hosted by Habitat for Humanity in Whatcom County, Telegraph Townhome Community. The program begins at 8:30 a.m. Whatcom Housing Week continues Oct. 17, 18, 19, 20.

Thanks for reading *Salish Current*. Thanks for sharing *Salish Current* with a friend or neighbor. Thanks for [supporting](#) *Salish Current*.

— Mike Sato, Managing Editor

Want more environmental news? [Salish Sea News and Weather](#) is a weekday curated compilation of news from Salish Sea news sources; free via email or on the web.

[Salish Sea News Week in Review Oct. 14, 2022](#): Pooh Friday, Taylor Shellfish, BC drought, AK crab season, gray whales, Seattle summer, Blue Heron Slough restored, Augtober, sunken tires

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

News from the *Salish Current*

[Schools aim to lessen concussion damage on and off the field](#)



Schools around the state are observing new reporting rules aimed at learning more about concussion injuries and lowering the risks for athletes and other students.

By Matt Benoit: Athletes and other students are benefiting from new practices for school districts in assessing and dealing with concussions, although challenges still exist. [Read more.](#)

[Rising seas, surging storms put many low-lying areas at risk](#)



Sea levels are rising in the Salish Sea due to climate change, and the combination of high tides and storm surges bring the threat of erosion and flooding along low-lying shorelines.

By Kai Uyehara: Sea levels are expected to rise by 1.5 to nearly 2 feet by 2100 along low-lying shorelines around the Salish Sea—including many areas where people live and recreate. [Read more.](#)

[Community Voices / Council votes to create Racial Equity Commission: reflections of a post-modern revolutionary](#)



Following a Bring All the Bright celebration Oct. 12, Whatcom Racial Equity Commission leaders and others crossed the street to seek support from the Whatcom County Council.

Commentary by Vernon

Damani Johnson: A Whatcom County Council vote established a racial equity commission; now, the challenge for supporters is to engage others in the conversation, an organizer comments. [Read more.](#)

[Community Voices / Economic mobility starts at birth](#)



For many families, finding child care is a dilemma; finding affordable child care is an even greater challenge.

Commentary by Mauri

Ingram: Even though everyone wants to give their children more and better

opportunities than they had, the deck is stacked in favor of babies born to families steeped in “social capital.”

[Read more.](#)

[Letters to the Editor](#)

- Bunis: Ramel is one of the stars
- Knutson: Clark Point beach walking restored on Guemes Island
- Sonker: Favors Rands for integrity—and animal love
- LeDonne: Checking your drug death figures

Our policy: Salish Current welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address and daytime phone number. Those accepted for publication will focus on issues addressed in news articles or commentaries in Salish Current and be factual. No snark or put-downs will be acceptable; general nastiness will be rejected. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be edited for length and clarity. Salish Current will publish letters sent to the editor at its sole discretion.

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

Pandemic winner, losers. At 11.2 deaths per 100,000 population, San Juan County has by far the best record for handling the COVID disease in the pandemic to date. Ferry County has 413.8 deaths per 100,000. "For the first two years, we had the lowest case rate in the United States," says San Juan's health director, Dr. Frank James, and explains why. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Airplane lead. The EPA said last Friday that it was proposing to declare that emissions from piston-engine aircraft operating on leaded fuel pose a danger to public health. ([Washington Post](#)) See: "Leaded aviation fuel fires decades-long complaint" ([Salish Current, Jul. 26, 2022](#))

Behavioral health. Compass Health announced yesterday a \$14 million capital campaign to fund a state-of-the-art facility designed to meet the intensive mental health needs of people of all ages throughout Snohomish, Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom counties. ([BusinessWire](#))

Education

WWU enrollment. Western Washington University's first-year class enrollment is 3,225 new students, the largest in school history. ([KGMI](#))

The Border

NEXUS. Canada is mightily displeased with the U.S. over closure of its NEXUS program offices in Canada as it presses for changes in the program. ([CBC](#))

Sing out. When the government took his passport, civil rights activist Paul Robeson sang for thousands atop a truck at Blaine's Peace Arch. ([Crosscut](#))

Government

San Juan County

The council will meet on Oct. 18. [Here are agenda items and video link.](#)

City of Bellingham

The council's 2022 Budget Work Session meetings will take place from 1–3 p.m. at City Hall and are open to the public to listen:

- Oct. 17 (Public Works, Parks, Capital)
- Oct. 24 (HR, Finance, Legal, IT)
- Oct. 31 (Police, Planning, Museum)
- Nov. 7 (Mayor, Council, Municipal Court)

The council will meet again on Oct. 24 and hold its first budget hearing.

Whatcom County

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

Public Hearing

- The council adopted 4–3 (Elenbaas, Kershner, Byrd opposed) an ordinance adding a new Chapter 2.107 to the Whatcom County Code to create a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission.

Boards, Commissions and Committees

- The council appointed Derek Gremlin 4-3 (Frazey, Galloway and Buchanan opposed) to the Climate Impact Advisory Committee.

The council will meet again on Oct 25.

Port of Bellingham

The commission will meet on Oct. 18. [Agenda items](#) include:

Consent Agenda

- A motion authorizing the Port to enter into a [Modification of Exclusive Negotiating Agreement](#) between The BoardMill Group, LLC, and the Port of Bellingham for a 3.42 acre parcel in the Waterfront District.

Presentations

- Budget status report and Q3 financials
- Capital project update

The Port's 2023 Preliminary Strategic Budget will be available Oct. 24 online. [Presentations and public hearings](#) are scheduled for Nov. 1 and 15, with adoption scheduled for Nov. 15.

The commission will meet again on Nov. 1.

Elections

Forum. League of Women Voters of Bellingham-Whatcom County hosts an online forum discussion on Whatcom County Proposition 5, Healthy Children Initiative, Oct. 18, 6 p.m. Whatcom County Proposition 5, Healthy Children Initiative. [Zoom link.](#)

Forum. Bellingham City Club hosts an online forum discussion on Child Care in Whatcom County, Oct. 26, Noon. [Info and register.](#)

Child care. See "Child care shortfall frustrates families, hampers local economy," ([Salish Current, Sept. 2, 2022](#)) and "Voters asked to approve child care support as demand exceeds supply" ([Salish Current, Sept. 29, 2022](#))

Nature

Community forest. Whatcom County and community forest partners will receive \$5.517 million to purchase land around Stewart Mountain as part of plans to convert 5,500 acres into a restored forest. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Commentary

RCV. Western Washington University political science professor and Whatcom County Council member Todd Donovan writes about ranked choice voting: "Ranked choice voting won't solve all the problems in our dysfunctional democracy, but allowing voters to rank multiple candidates certainly offers an upgrade ... I've studied ranked choice voting in Australia and in many American cities and have found it has a lot to offer. I've also run into many misconceptions about RCV. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Community

Racial equity. The Whatcom County Council approved by a vote of the 4–3 the formation of a Racial Equity Commission, a panel to promote diversity and advise elected officials on policy to address disparities that affect people of color. Council members Elenbaas, Byrd and Kershner opposed. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))
See: "Council votes to create Racial Equity Commission: reflections of a post-modern revolutionary" ([Salish Current, Oct. 12, 2022](#))

Repurposed hate. Bellingham's WinkWink Boutique and artist Kevin Coleman have repurposed rocks used in WinkWink vandalism into a symbol of strength and resilience to raise funds for LGBTQ+ youth. ([The Front](#))

New building. Lighthouse Mission Ministries next year will tear down its Holly Street building in Bellingham to build in its place a facility twice as large to house and serve unhoused people. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Cop recruiting. Bellingham police are offering \$2,000 hiring bonuses for candidates proficient in qualified second languages and relaxing a requirement that candidates have at least a two-year degree. ([City of Bellingham](#))

Cop gear. The Blaine City Council approved spending \$41,000 of federal COVID-19 stimulus funds to purchase the police department's request for two ballistic shields and six ballistic helmets. ([The Northern Light](#))

Freedge. A community fridge packed with nutritious food is available to the community, Tuesday–Saturday,

11 a.m.–6 p.m., behind the RE Store in Bellingham. Brought to you by Sustainable Connections with the aim of breaking down barriers to food access.

([WhatcomTalk](#))

Flood prep. Whatcom County has a 72-hour action plan and is promoting the WhatcomReady.org website with links to information about road closings, river gauge height, available shelter, and other disaster resources when severe weather is imminent. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#)) Skagit County officials this week had flood training to evaluate and analyze forecast data, review evacuation policies and protocols, identify the process and timing to request mutual aid, and identify and prioritize risks. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Internet for All. The Lummi Nation has received a \$16 million federal grant to provide broadband access to Native homes, businesses and institutions. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Arts and Leisure

Friday Harbor Film Fest. The Friday Harbor Film Festival will feature in-theater films Oct. 21–23 and on-demand films Oct. 24–30. [Information and tickets.](#)

Jump in!

Housing week. Join in the discussion and demonstrations during Whatcom Housing Week 2022, Oct. 15–20, featuring events that build awareness and support for innovative housing solutions. [Info.](#)

Clean water. Help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act at a trash pickup at Lake Padden, Oct. 15, Noon–2 p.m. (East entrance, meet at picnic shelters by basketball court) [Register here.](#)

Ferry meeting. San Juan County's Ferry Advisory Committee will hold outreach sessions on Oct. 15 (9 a.m.) and Oct. 18 (6 p.m.). The committee will review its advocacy efforts, answer questions and engage in open discussions related to ferry service. [Zoom link.](#)

Foothills learning. Come share what you know and what you want to learn at "Learning Together in the Cascade

Foothills," Oct. 22, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. at the Deming Public Library. [RSVP by Oct. 19.](#)

Make a difference. Celebrate Make a Difference Day and Arbor Day by volunteering to plant trees and remove invasive plants at Bellingham's Whatcom Falls Park on Oct. 22, 9 a.m.–Noon. [Info.](#)

Urban birding. North Cascades Audubon will take you on a trip exploring Whatcom Creek, starting at Waypoint Park and walking up the creek along the Whatcom Creek Trail. Oct. 23, 9:30 a.m. at the Waypoint Park parking lot. [Register here.](#)

Beach cleanup. Clean up trash near All American Marine by the ASB Pond Trail in Bellingham and sort the trash using the "Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol" to understand what types of garbage pose the biggest threats to waterway. Oct. 23, Noon–2 p.m. [Info and register.](#)

Read and share. Whatcom County Library System's annual Read and Share program of online author events from Oct. 8 to Nov. 10 features Bellingham author Clyde Ford's memoir, "Think Black." Borrow the book or the eAudiobook from the library and register for the book discussion and writing workshop events. [WCLS Read and Share.](#)

Monument MAC. San Juan National Monument Advisory Committee nominations are open for a wildlife and ecological interests representative and two public-at-large representatives. Complete the [application form](#) by Nov. 4.

Habitat squeeze. Scott Andrews of Audubon Washington describes how armoring of shorelines blocks natural shoreline functions and how rising seas will increase negative impacts by reducing habitat. Oct. 25, 7 p.m. [Zoom link.](#)

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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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