



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

News of the week: Oct. 28, 2022

Dear Reader —

Next week we will begin our two-month fundraising campaign that will feature not one but two matching challenge grants that we will tell you about ... next week, when asking for your financial support.

But this week, let me briefly share with you where *Salish Current* came from, where we are today, and where I hope will be in a few years.

In 2018, I started workshoping what could be done about “the news problem”—that is, staffs on our local newspapers had shrunk to fractions of their former selves and with them the amount of direly needed local news. In talking with more than 200 people in Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties, it was clear that there was indeed support for the model of publicly funded news, similar to public radio. We convened a team, wrote a business plan, researched heavily, and kept moving forward.

Salish Current launched online in February 2020, the same week the first COVID death was announced in Washington ... not the timing anyone would build into a business plan. Nonetheless, readership grew, interest grew, and we organized as nonprofit in June and received our 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS in November.

This week, 34 months in, we published our 312th article. In that time, a few other longtime news publications have closed, a major new one has launched, some are still working with diminished newsrooms. *Salish Current* readership has continued to grow, and financial support from the community is strong. Our goal has always been to fill gaps in coverage, which we do with indepth stories with a heavy focus on the “why.”

Our growth has been strong enough that we're looking forward to a leap next year, in the form of adding a staff position to work along with our volunteer editors (our freelance writers are paid for their work). That's exciting—it's the cornerstone for longterm stability. It's an excellent adventure, and so good to have you along for the next phase. Thank you for your support!

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

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 10/28/22](#): Lemur Friday!, drought salmon, British Columbia island gems, Indigenous science, plastic recycling, British Columbia spotted owls, fossil fuel revolving door, endangered Fraser, 'forever chemicals,' timber sales

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

News from the *Salish Current*

[Vigilance! Security against cyberthreat is a 24/7 need](#)



A nationally recognized program in cybersecurity at Whatcom Community College gives students an opportunity to develop systems and applications to keep personal computers and organizational networks safe from cyberthreats.

Threats become all too real for some, and virtually everyone who works online—is at risk.

By Matt Benoit—While cybersecurity is a daily concern for individual users, it's an ever-growing threat to local municipalities and agencies that rely on increasing amounts of online information. [Read more.](#)

Who will farm to feed the people?



Grace Lemley, one of a new generation dedicated to learning the business, science and art of farming, inspects her crops on Viva Farms' incubation farmland. Lemley and Griffin Lehman operate their Dear Table Farm out of Viva Farms for almost a year.

By Kai Uyehara—Whatcom and Skagit farm centers equip and empower a new generation of farmers. As their predecessors age, farmland prices increase while affordability of land decreases. [Read more.](#)

What do 'community policing' and 'police reform' mean ... in the islands?



Ready to roll out when called, San Juan County Sheriff's Department vehicles wait outside the courthouse. Incumbent Sheriff Ron Krebs is facing a challenge from Sgt. Eric Peter, at a time of demographic shifts in the county and statewide

adjustment to police reform laws.

By Kathryn Wheeler

Island-style policing in the San Juans may be an embodiment of real police reform—or it may fall victim to changing times. [Read more.](#)

Letters to the Editor

- Davies: Universal child care more imaginative than Prop 5
- Akins: Ramel is an honest, hard-working and truthful person
- Bishop: Details matter in Lopez community pool plan
- Clarke: Making early childhood support available to all

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

Food insecurity. After a Western Washington University survey found that about 30% of students are food insecure, the campus's Outback Farm has helped stock free food pantries around campus with produce grown on campus. ([The Front](#)) See also: "Who will farm to feed the people?" ([Salish Current](#), Oct. 28, 2022)

Education

WWU. Total enrollment at Western Washington University is down for the third year in a row at just 14,748 students as a result of lower first-generation student enrollment, lower retention rates and increases in tuition. ([CDN/paywall](#))

The Border

Fraser River. The Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C. has identified the "Heart of the Fraser," a stretch of river located between Hope and Mission, as most endangered from industry and climate change, and called for its protection. ([Vancouver Sun](#))

Nature

Carbon. The Washington Department of Natural Resources has identified five state forest sites in Skagit County it proposes to set aside in its carbon project for conservation and carbon sequestration. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Business

Employed. Whatcom County unemployment rate was 4.8% for August, higher than July's 3.9% but on par with the average rate before the pandemic. ([KGMI](#))

Home buying. Interest rates a year ago at 2.8% made buying even a \$500,000 home manageable but interest rates today at 8% for a 30-year mortgage has made that \$500,000 home cost over \$1,000 more a month. ([The Northern Light](#))

Government

San Juan County

The council will meet on Oct. 31. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Discussion: Comprehensive Plan briefing

The council will meet on Nov. 1. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Discussion/Action: 2023 Budget Third Amendment
- Discussion/Action: 2023 Budget Mid-biennial Review

City of Bellingham

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

- Oct. 31 (Police, Planning, Museum)
- Nov. 7 (Mayor, Council, Municipal Court)

The council met on Oct. 24. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public hearings

- 2023 Revenue Projections. The council unanimously approved a request that staff bring forward on Nov. 7 a draft ordinance that includes a 1% increase to the regular property tax levy for the 2023 year.

Public Works and Natural Resources Committee

- Fairhaven parking management. The council voted 6-0 (Lilliquist abstained) to urge the administration to issue additional Fairhaven parking permits to clear current waitlist, continue with monitoring actions and report back to Council approximately in February 2023.

Committee of the Whole

- 2023 Bike/pedestrian projects - Parking removal. The council approved 6-0 (Lilliquist abstained) approval of the removal of on-street parking along sections of W. Illinois Street from Sunset to Lynn, Meridian Street from E. Victor to W. Illinois, Girard Street from Broadway to Young, and Cornwall Avenue from Laurel to Pine with Eldridge Avenue from Broadway to Nequalicum as a one-year pilot.
- Manufactured home park. The council voted 6-0 (Lilliquist abstained) to approve amendments to the Bellingham Municipal Code to establish a Manufactured Home Park (MHP) Overlay and Regulations related to the change of use, ownership, and closure of a MHP.

The council will meet again on Nov. 7.

Whatcom County

The council met on Oct 25. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public hearings

- The council approved 4-3 (Byrd, Elenbaas, Kershner opposed) a system of rates and charges for the Whatcom Conservation District.

Consent agenda

- The council authorized by consent (Elenbaas opposed) the county executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Health Care Authority to establish an alternative response team to respond to 911 calls that do not require law enforcement, in the amount of \$2,213,000.
- The council authorized by consent (Elenbaas opposed) the county executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham for design and construction costs associated with the Meridian Birchwood Roundabout project in the amount of \$2,625,000.

Other items

- The council authorized 5-2 (Byrd, Elenbaas opposed) the county executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide funding to support childcare stabilization in the amount of \$1,489,509.

The council will meet again on Nov. 8.

Port of Bellingham

The port's 2023 Preliminary Strategic Budget is online ([76mb](#)). Presentations and public hearings are scheduled for Nov. 1 and 15, with adoption scheduled for Nov. 15.

The commission will meet on Nov. 1. [Agenda items](#) include:

Consent agenda

- Authorized the executive director to enter into a new remedial action grant [agreement](#) with the Department of Ecology for the Sea K Fish site to provide \$3,360,000 in state funding toward site cleanup.

Public hearing on the 2023 Preliminary Strategic Budget.

The commission will meet again on Nov. 15.

Elections

Prop 5. The Bellingham City Club forum held on Oct. 26 discussing Proposition 5, Child Care in Whatcom County, is available for viewing [here](#).

Commentary

Dining out. Food writer Alicia Vermillion in "Can We Ever Go Back to Junebaby and the Willows Inn? writes: "Last year, a pair of newspaper investigations 86'd the reputations of two of the state's most decorated chefs. But both of these restaurants are still open." ([Seattle Met](#))

Dead pig. Knute Berger in Mossback's Northwest writes: "The San Juan Islands in Washington are a wooded paradise in the Salish Sea, popular with tourists, boaters, summer folk and orca pods. But the peaceful beauty of these islands was once broken when two nations loudly rattled their sabers. Over what you ask? An argument over a dead pig." ([Crosscut](#))

Community

Bikes not parking. The Bellingham City Council voted to create bike lanes by removing parking along several city

streets, including a section of Cornwall Avenue near the waterfront used by homeless campers. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

New jail. The [Whatcom County Justice Project](#) is seeking community comment on a needs assessment around behavioral health and public safety, which will be used to design a new Whatcom County jail. Respond by Nov. 18 by taking a [survey](#).

County lands. The 2022 Whatcom County Buildable Lands Report shows that the county's unincorporated areas fell behind projected residential density, population growth and single family housing capacity as did the Birch Bay area but Blaine met its planned density. ([The Northern Light](#))

FlixBus. A one-way ticket to Vancouver from Bellingham via FlixBus is \$12.99, with prices increasing by \$2–3 for weekends and last-minute tickets. A one-way ticket to Seattle varies between \$15.99 and \$29.99, with the addition of a \$3.99 tax per purchase. [Info and tickets.](#) ([The Front](#))

Beach trail. The trail to Bellingham's Clayton Beach in Larrabee State Park will be closed until construction of a foot bridge over the railroad tracks is completed in spring or summer 2023. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Arts and Leisure

Bleedingham. There are 101 short horror films featured in the 11th year of the Pickford Theater's festival Oct. 28-30. [Info and tickets.](#)

Friday Harbor Film Fest. The Friday Harbor Film Festival continues with on-demand films Oct. 24-30. [Information and tickets.](#)

Of the Land, From the Land. Join [Allied Arts of Whatcom County](#) at the art walk and opening reception on Nov. 4, 5–9 p.m. for the exhibit "Of the Land, From the Land" featuring pieces by John Hoyte, Lori Hill Sterling Rung, Belinda Botzong, and Liz Cunningham. The exhibit continues through Nov. 26.

Skyviewing. The Western Gallery brings 41 of Noguchi's skyviewing works together for the first time. Through Nov 26. [Information and registration.](#)

Jump in!

Mehler easement. Join Skagit Land Trust's work party Oct. 29, 9 a.m. to Noon to remove invasive plants and plant trees at the Anacortes Mehler Conservation Easement. [Information and registration here.](#)

Cherry Point. RE Sources brings you via Zoom the 10th annual Cherry Point Science Forum, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Oct. 29 when local scientists talk about their work on oil spills, microplastics, and eelgrass and kelp restoration. [Register here.](#)

Hallowe'en treat. Skagit Land Trust hosts a Hallowe'en work party Oct. 30 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Grand Creek Conservation Area to seed an open pasture and remove invasive plants. [Information and registration here.](#)

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

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.](#)

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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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