

News of the week: Dec. 9, 2022

Dear Reader —

So what?

That's really the question we have in mind when reading a news lead. If that's not answered right away, we're probably not apt to read any further.

The payoffs are those "I didn't know that" points that follow, particularly when that information hits home, when it points the way for action, when it gives you more understanding about the world we all share and the community we call home.

This week's articles provide plenty of those payoffs:

- It's all too easy to take wild salmon as a dinner option for granted in our area ... but you may no longer be able to do so after you read Eric Scigliano's article describing the challenges faced by Fraser River sockeye and other species as they head out for the ocean.
- Kai Uyehara looks a step higher up the food chain, at the declining population of iconic Southern Resident killer whales. Researchers are looking into DNA for answers on reversing the trend, in the face of a future Northwest without orcas.
- The younger generation continues to find ways to take action toward climate solutions, in a program for teens supported local organizations and schools. Target of the Skagit County group: household food waste. Yes, you too can compost, and probably should.

One more "so what?" question has to do with why we hope you'll consider donating during our dollar-for-dollar match fundraiser, if you've not done so already. The answer is multifaceted.

- In the recent election, Salish Current brought you not only a look at the candidates and what they stood for, but we fact-checked those claims as well.

- Our reporters continue to dig deep into questions about water supply, water rights, housing, crime trends, agricultural trends and challenges, what our area is doing about social justice, and more.
- Alongside those nonpartisan, trustworthy reports, we've brought in essays that tell the story from your perspectives via our Community Voices columns.

Coming off Thanksgiving, we continue to find plenty to be grateful about. Our peers in the nonprofit news world have recognized our coverage of the environment and of diversity, equity and inclusion issues with financial awards. Several generous local donors have given an additional \$17,000 in match grants. Our readership continues to grow. As a startup, launching from zero at the beginning of a pandemic, we're grateful to have come to a point where we can see a sustainable future.

Ultimately, community news belongs to the community it serves. We invite your support for your local news.

Thanks for reading. Share this newsletter with others and [support Salish Current](#).

— 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 Dec. 9, 2022](#): Llama Friday, orca buffer, Washington carbon rules, marine transport malaise, ocean acid, Southern Resident killer whale rights, Alaska crab collapse, murder kittens, Puget Sound wastewater, no crab

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

News from the *Salish Current*

[Tacoutche Tesse, the Northwest's great ghost river — Part 3: Saving wild salmon versus the net pen industry](#)



Grieg Seafood operates a salmon farm in Clio Channel in the Broughton Archipelago, in partnership with the Tlowitsis First Nation. Wild salmon pass near the net pens on their way out to the ocean and back to the Fraser River to spawn.

By Eric Scigliano: Scores of open-water farms raising nonnative salmon along British Columbia's west coast straits and channels are facing new challenges from wild-salmon advocates who say the farms endanger Fraser River native fish runs. [Read more.](#)

[How much of orca decline is in their DNA?](#)



A Southern Resident killer whale calf breaches alongside a pod-mate in the Puget Sound. These icons of the Northwest are endangered, their population is in decline and their chances of recovery are unsure.

By Kai Uyehara: Southern Resident killer whales are beset by the threats of diminished prey, chemical pollution, loss of habitat, and underwater noise. Can DNA research help toward their recovery? [Read more.](#)

[Community Voices / Composting as a climate solution](#)



What's in your compost? Whatever it is, if you're composting your household food waste, good for you, say Youth for the Environment and People (YEP!). Members of a Skagit County YEP! group are working to improve food composting practices at a

local high school as well as educating others about how important it is for the planet to reduce household food waste.

By YEP! of Skagit County: Proper disposal of food waste is something every household can do to limit climate change, advise teens engaged in climate action. [Read more.](#)

[Letters to the Editor](#)

- **Brook Meinhardt:** Art can inspire awareness of the environment
- **Tony Angell:** Credit Washington's long commitment to environmental education

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](#)

[Mask up.](#) Whatcom County Health Department recommends that everyone wear a high-quality, well-

fitting mask when around others in indoor spaces to protect against both acquiring and spreading respiratory infections to others. ([Whatcom County Health Dept.](#))

Water. Town of Concrete residents no longer have to boil their water after investigation showed no cases of illness from E. coli. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Education

Union. Student employees at Western Washington University voted to unionize after other university employees voted to unionize. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The Border

Immigration. China's zero-COVID lockdowns have been linked to a rare wave of protests across the country in recent weeks, and immigration industry experts say the strict pandemic rules are also fuelling a surge in requests to live in Canada. ([Canadian Press](#))

Nature

Estuarine reserve. Fifty years ago, Congress passed the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) and in 1972, the CZMA also established the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. The 11,000-acre Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve was created by the Washington Legislature and U.S. Congress in 1980. ([Dept. of Ecology](#))

Giant hornet. There have been no giant hornet sightings nor any found in traps in Whatcom County in 2022. ([KGMI](#))

Green Amendment. Rep. Debra Lekanoff [40-D] will again introduce legislation calling for a legal right dictated in the state constitution to protect air, water, environments and community health across the state. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Water violation. Lynden business Premier Packing was fined for discharging fish parts into the city sewer, the sixth time it has been penalized since 2017. ([KGMI](#))

Cascade Creek. A look at Sandy Taylor's efforts to bring salmon back to Cascade Creek on Orcas Island. ([San Juan Journal/paywall](#))

Bird flu. More than 700 sick or dead waterfowl, suspected of having died due to H5N1, a strain of bird flu, have been collected from the waters around Skagit Bay in recent days. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Habitat funding. Portions of state funds totaling \$27 million have been awarded to the Lummi Nation to restore salmon habitat on the Nooksack River middle fork and to the Nooksack Tribe to restore habitat on the south fork, and to the Swinomish Tribe. ([KGMI](#))

Business

Health loss. Island Health of Anacortes is using reserves to cover an annual loss of \$5 million and will close its sleep center and restructure management leadership. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Native food. The Lummi Nation is working to give its tribal members more control over food assistance by providing traditional and locally sourced food. ([Investigate West](#))

San Juan RE. Comparing real estate sales from Nov. 2021 to Nov. 2022, the number of sales declined but the median home price increased. ([San Juan Update](#))

Community

Our Sacred Obligation. A 24-minute film by Children of the Setting Sun Productions. [Watch here.](#)

Policing. Mount Vernon police have added two social workers to better respond to behavioral health crises such as homelessness, addiction and mental health issues. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Child care. An estimated \$10 million will be collected for child care, early learning programs and other services as a result of voter passage of Proposition 5 and the county's authorizing collection of property tax at a rate of 19 cents per \$1,000 valuation. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Pier rebuild. The city of Bellingham is set to begin building a quarter-mile walkway on the pier at Little Squalicum Park. ([KGMI](#))

Flood repairs. Colacurcio Brothers Construction Co. of Blaine has been contracted for \$456,000 to restore the building housing the Sumas library and the community center. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Flood action. Whatcom County has identified about 70 flood-prone properties as eligible to be either bought out or have buildings raised with FEMA funds. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Commentary

Weeping Willows. Jean Godden reflects and reminisces about Lummi Island's once-famous restaurant. ([Post Alley](#))

Arts and Leisure

Messiah. Whatcom Chorale and Sinfonia presents the seasonal favorite on Dec. 9, 7 p.m., Mount Baker Theatre. ([Info and tickets.](#))

Arts fest. Allied Arts 43rd Annual Holiday Festival of the Arts is held until Dec. 24 and features over 100 local artisans and craftspeople presenting their holiday goods. ([Info.](#))

Lowell Skoog. Skier, climber, writer and photographer Lowell Skoog talks about his latest book, "Written in the Snows," on Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m., at Backcountry Essentials, Bellingham. ([Info here.](#))

Jump in!

Beach cleanup. Join Surfrider Northwest Straits chapter to clean up Maritime Heritage Park, Dec. 10, 2–4 p.m. ([Info.](#))

North Fork towns. Local history author Michael Impero will share pictures and research from his new book about the towns, people and events of the North Fork: Kendall, Maple Falls, Glacier and Shuksan. Highlights include the history of the Nooksack Indians, local families like the Zenders and their semipro baseball team, famous murders, gold mines and the making of a

few motion pictures. [North Fork Library](#), Dec. 10, 1–3 p.m.

Bike lights. Ride at 4:30 p.m. on Dec 10 to Boulevard Park from either Depot Market Square in downtown Bellingham or from Hillcrest Church in Fairhaven then ride back to whence you came. [Info](#).

Samish party. Join Skagit Land Trust at Samish Miles Conservation Area to remove invasive species. This work party will be an opportunity for folks to see the Samish Miles Conservation Area which is not open to general public access. Dec. 16, 9 a.m.–Noon. [Register here](#).

Vegan eats. Check out the Bellingham Vegan Winter Market on Dec. 18 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at V Go's Grocery, 1215 Cornwall Ave. [More info](#).

Elections

Sheriff race. Blaine police chief Donnell Tanksley is running for Whatcom County sheriff. Four-term incumbent Bill Elfo has not indicated whether he will run for reelection. ([The Northern Light](#))

For the People

Legislature. Sen. Liz Lovelett [D-40] will chair the newly formed Senate Local Government, Land Use and Tribal Affairs Committee in the upcoming legislative session. ([Orcsonian](#))

Government

San Juan County

League of Women Voters of San Juan County observer corps reports on San Juan school board and town of Friday Harbor meetings. ([San Juan Journal/paywall](#))

The council met on Dec. 6, Agenda items and video [here](#).

City of Bellingham

The council met on Dec. 5. [Agenda items](#) included:

Community and Economic Development Committee:

- The council unanimously approved an Interlocal Agreement with Whatcom County for Ground-level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) Services.
- The council approved 6-0 (Hamill abstained) the Bellingham-Whatcom County Tourism's 2023 Tourism Promotion Area Budget.
- The council approved 5-0 (Huthman, Hamill abstained) the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee's 2023 Budget Recommendations.

The council will meet again on Dec. 12.

The council will hold a public hearing on Dec. 12 at 7 p.m. on the 2022–2026 [Greenways Strategic Plan](#). This plan will guide spending of Greenways Levy funds.

Whatcom County

The council met on Dec. 6. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public hearing:

- The council adopted 4-2 (Byrd, Elenbaas opposed; Kershner excused) a substitute ordinance authorizing the levy of taxes for Whatcom County children and families for 2023.

Other items:

- The council authorized (4-2, Brad, Elenbaas opposed; Kershner excused) the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Northwest Youth Services to support the Positive Adolescent Development Program in the amount of \$115,000 with the added condition of having an update at the first meeting in April as well as a presentation on a community engagement plan.
- The council authorized (4-2, Brad, Elenbaas opposed; Kershner excused) the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to provide housing case management services in the amount of \$607,235 for a total amended contract amount of \$1,456,130.
- The council authorized (4-2, Brad, Elenbaas opposed; Kershner excused) the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Northwest Youth Services to provide housing case management services in the amount of \$482,572 for a total amended contract amount of \$1,053,814 with the added condition of having an update at the first meeting in

April as well as a presentation on a community engagement plan.

The council will meet again on Dec. 20.

Port of Bellingham

The commission met on Dec. 6. [Agenda items](#) included:

Consent agenda (approved 3-0):

- Authorized entering into a non-binding [Memorandum of Understanding](#) for a Public Private Partnership to revitalize the Squalicum Way Corridor.
- Reaffirmed the utilization of Chmelik, Sitkin, and Davis, P.S., Attorneys at Law, as the Port's general legal counsel with an [increased rate](#) effective January 1, 2023.
- Approved setting the Executive Director's annual base salary effective January 1, 2023.
- Motion to approve an adjustment to the severance agreement from six (6) months to twelve (12) months' [salary](#).

Public hearing:

2023 Bellingham Airport Tariff and Fee Schedule [[Video 29:57 - 36:52](#)]

Action item:

Approved (3-0) 2023 Bellingham Airport Tariff and Fee Schedule.

Other items:

Commissioner Shepard reported on meeting with the South Hills Neighborhood Association regarding noise and noise abatement at the Port. Port staff will meet with neighbors next month. [[Video 1:12:00 - 1:14:41](#)]

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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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