



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

News of the week: Jan. 6, 2023

Dear Reader —

A joyful, sincere “Thank You” to the supporters of nonprofit community news who donated to our 2X NewsMatch local and national fundraising campaigns. We met both matches and enter 2023 with over \$64,000 raised from 238 donors, of whom 77 were new donors. In addition, we welcomed 85 new readers to these weekly newsletter pages.

Thank you for allowing community-supported local news to be free to read and free from advertising. We will be bolstering our newsroom to operate on a more sustainable basis to bring readers more news and views about Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties. And look forward to more relevant coverage about our northern cousins.

This week, [Kai Uyehara](#) examines the double edge of shoreline armoring, [Eric Scigliano](#) reports on wetland destruction in the Heart of the Fraser, [Riley Weeks](#) takes us inside the Whatcom County Jail issues, [Nancy DeVaux](#) profiles new San Juan County commissioner Jane Fuller and our 40th and 42nd [district legislators](#) share their top priorities for the upcoming legislative session. Read our letters page and scan the curated local news clippings, too. That’s *Salish Current*, your community-supported newsroom.

Share this newsletter with a friend— and if you can, support [Salish Current](#).

Here’s wishing us all a happy new year.

— *Amy Nelson, Publisher*

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

News from the *Salish Current*

[Bulkheads: protecting property at what cost to the environment?](#)



"You, me and the sea" has nuanced meanings for shoreside living, which now is increasingly challenged by flooding from rising sea levels.

By Kai Uyehara: Armoring the shoreline aims to protect property from high tides and

erosion — the same natural forces that nourish shorelines for forage fish spawning and juvenile salmon rearing. [Read more.](#)

[Tacoutche Tesse, the Northwest's great ghost river — Part 5: The bleeding Heart of the Fraser](#)



The low-lying chain of islands and seasonal sandbars that stretches for 50 miles in the Fraser River between Mission and Hope in British Columbia provides ideal habitat for salmon, sturgeon and nearly 30 other species of fish.

By Eric Scigliano: Gravel

beds in the Heart of the Fraser — called one of the "most productive stretches of river on the planet" for spawning fish — are threatened with large-scale wetland destruction. [Read more.](#)

[Jane Fuller readies to tackle county priorities](#)



Lopez Islander Jane Fuller has joined Orcasonian Cindy Wolfe and Christine Minney of San Juan Island to form San Juan County's first all-woman council.

By Nancy DeVaux: New San Juan council member sworn in, forming the county's first

all-woman governing body. [Read more.](#) [Read more.](#)

Local legislators set housing, public safety, education, climate as priority



You are ... here: 40th and 42nd District legislators serve residents of San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom counties.

By Salish Current Editors: All-Democrat delegation identifies top issues they will pursue when the legislative session begins on Jan. 9. [Read more.](#)

Jail needs to change, community agrees; but how?



A jail cell intended for one person now houses three, with bunks replacing a single bed and an additional plastic "boat" bed on the floor. Community conversations about whether and how to build a new county jail focus on space needs as well as

services, capacity and other issues.

By Riley Weeks: An advisory committee for the Justice Project aims to ensure that voters' priorities are considered in the next Whatcom County jail ballot measure. [Read more.](#)

Letters to the Editor

- Kelliher: **Address the needs of the nondrivers, too**

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

Abortion rights. [SJR 8202](#) has been pre-filed for the upcoming 2023 session and if passed would amend the state's constitution to protect under state law a person's right to choose abortion as well as obtain contraceptives.

Education

Human Rights. "From Divine Dissatisfaction to Joyful Liberation: How Do We Co-create a Beloved Whatcom County?" is the theme of the 25th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Human Rights Conference which begins with Poetry Night on Jan. 12, opening ceremonies and a keynote address on Jan. 13, and a full day of workshops on Jan. 14. ([Whatcom Human Rights Task Force](#))

The Border

Indigenous rights. Highest courts in Canada and the United States will decide child welfare cases this year that could affect who has the legal right to decide what's best for Indigenous children throughout the continent. ([CBC](#))

Nature

Tides. High tides exceeding 10 feet and low atmospheric pressure resulted in flooding of low-lying areas in Whatcom County the week after Christmas. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Bird count. Sixty-nine volunteers in 21 groups joined the Skagit Audubon Society's 46th annual Padilla Bay Christmas Bird Count last Friday. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

COASST. Dead birds don't move, according to Julia Parrish, UW ocean fisheries professor and leader of the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team, and are more easily counted and categorized in studying environmental impacts on their populations. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Steelhead. State fisheries managers forecast a return of 5,211 wild steelhead to the Skagit River this year and are planning a catch-and-release season after cancelling last year's season due to low estimated returns. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Business

Waterfront condos. Harcourt's Waterfront Living condos — three five-story buildings of 103 residential units with 33,000 square feet of commercial space on the Port of Bellingham GP site — are scheduled for completion and occupancy in 2023. Residential units start at around \$550,000; penthouse suites more than \$3 million. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Whatcom RE. The median price of a home sold in Whatcom County last year rose 9.2% to \$600,000. All areas of Whatcom County still saw growth last year, with Ferndale leading in both median and average price increases, while the Mount Baker area had the smallest increase. ([KGMI](#))

Community

Out of homelessness. Community Action of Skagit County's Recovery Navigator program will assign each client a case manager who is responsible for coordinating social service providers to get the client the help they need to find a way out of homelessness. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

More housing. Consultants to the city of Anacortes recommended hiring a housing coordinator and reducing the lot size required for duplex and triplex development, in their draft Housing Action Plan to the city. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Transitional housing. A new chapter of city code covering Community Residential Facilities — people living together in a congregate setting — was approved by the Lynden Planning Commission last month and forwarded for review to the state Department of Commerce before adoption by the city council. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Trestle repair. Repair of the Tommy Thompson Trail trestle which burned last summer in Anacortes will be financed through a \$750,000 federal grant secured by the Samish Nation. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Levee repair. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is repairing the 200-foot breach in the levee on the Nooksack River near Ferndale which caused the flooding of the Marietta area on Christmas Day. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Crisis center. Whatcom County's Crisis Stabilization Center has been renamed the Anne Deacon Center for Hope to commemorate Deacon's work towards mental health care in the community as the Human Services Manager for the Whatcom County Health Department. ([KGMI](#))

Commentary

Critical Mass. Reporter Ross Anderson noted reader objections to his recent column about climate change and rising seas ("[Puget Sound This Weekend: King Tides and Climate Change](#)") with a meditation on the difference between the brains of scientists and those of journalists: Scientists are specialists who know a lot about a few things. Journalists are generalists who know a little about a lot of things. ([Post Alley](#))

Arts and Leisure

Homecoming. The Bellingham Festival's 12th Annual Welcome Home Concert on Jan. 7 at 7 p.m. at Bellingham's First Congregational Church features "A Night With The Nakatanis," a night of song with the three Nakatani siblings, Christopher, Danielle and Lindsey, who have graduated with majors in voice (opera). Free to all students. \$15 suggested donation for adults. [Info here.](#)

Jump in!

Eagles! The Skagit River Bald Eagle Interpretive Center in Rockport is now open on weekends until mid-February, as well as Monday, Jan. 16. Guided walks leave at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. from the Interpretive Center and last 1 1/2 to 2 hours. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Work party. Join Skagit Land Trust at the Day Creek Kosbab Work Party on Jan. 7, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., on the south shore of the Skagit River to remove plant protectors from trees that have become established and no longer need the extra protection from wildlife. [Register here.](#)

MLK Day of Service. Help clean up and restore the area around Bellingham's Little Squalicum Park. Jan. 14, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. [Register here.](#)

Whales! The Way of Whales Workshop will be held on Jan. 14 beginning at 9:30 a.m. at Coupeville High School and online. Keynote speaker is Dr. John Ford with a panel discussion featuring Deborah Giles, Monika Weiland Shields, Michael Weiss, Joe Gaydos, Kim Parsons and Linda Rhodes. There will also be an update on the campaign to return Tokitae to local waters. \$40, or \$30 senior/student; lunch \$20. [Registration required.](#)

Swanrise. Skagit Land Trust invites you to birdwatch at Barney Lake Conservation Area on Jan. 15, 7 to 9:30 a.m. Bring your binoculars to watch hundreds of trumpeter swans take off for the day from their overnighting spot at Barney Lake. While you're there you will also learn about what makes these swans so special, and why Barney Lake is such an important conservation area for birds. [Register here.](#)

MLK Day. "Now is the Time" will feature an MLK breakfast and commemoration with keynote speaker LaTosha Brown, an award-winning organizer, philanthropic consultant, political strategist and jazz singer; Jan. 16, 8 to 11:30 a.m., Western Washington University. The event is free and also offered online. Registration required for free breakfast. [More information here.](#)

Day of Service. The Skagit Land Trust celebrates an MLK Jr. Day of Service on Jan. 16, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Cumberland Creek Conservation Area. Help maintain trails and remove invasive species on this National Day of Service. [Register here.](#)

Storming the Sound. The annual conference for environmental educators in the north Puget Sound region will be held on Jan. 19 at Maple Hall in LaConner — in person! [Register here.](#)

Island Ag. The Agricultural Resource Committee (ARC) of San Juan County will hold presentations by local organizations supporting agriculture in the islands and invite discussion related to agricultural economic viability and the local regulatory environment. Jan. 26, 1:30 - 3 p.m, Orcas Library Community Room.

Government

For the people

The Washington state legislature will first convene in regular session on Jan. 9 and end on April 24.

([Washington Legislature](#))

San Juan County

Observer Corps. Links to reports on the Public Hospital District Dec. 14 meeting and the Friday Harbor Town Council Dec. 15 meeting can be [found here](#).

City of Bellingham

The council will meet on Jan. 9. Agenda items can be [viewed here](#).

Whatcom County

The council will meet on Jan. 10. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Discussion and approval of letter regarding Whatcom County's response to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources regarding Phase II of the Carbon Project. [Draft letter](#).
- Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Hunt Forensics for increased costs of services in the amount of \$893,449.13 for the total amount of \$3,356,602. [Memo](#).
- Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group to provide housing assistance to those impacted by the November 2021 floods, in the amount of \$2,050,000. [Memo](#).
- Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an Interlocal Amendment Between Whatcom County, City of Bellingham and Fire Protection District No 7 to pay in accordance with the 2023 portion of the 2023-2028 Levy Plan which includes a 5th Medic Unit, in the amount of \$13,837,716. [Memo](#).

Port of Bellingham

The commission will meet on Jan. 10. [Agenda items](#) include:

Consent Agenda:

- Authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with the Economic Revitalization Board (CERB)

for the purpose of accepting broadband grant funding.

[Staff memo.](#)

Presentations:

- Legislative update
- Waterfront District update

Action items:

- Approval of settlement agreement in I&J Waterway cleanup between Port of Bellingham, Bornstein Seafoods, Inc. and City of Bellingham. [Staff memo.](#)
- Authorize application for certification to the Green Marine program for the port. [Staff memo.](#)

**Like this newsletter? Share it. And it's easy to subscribe by reply mail. Your email address will never be shared and you can unsubscribe at any time. —
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.

Follow and engage with *Salish Current* on social media:

Facebook — [Salish Current](#)

LinkedIn — [Salish Current](#)

Write to us: SalishCurrent@gmail.com

Check out what's new: [Salish Current](#)