

News of the week: Jan. 13, 2023

Dear Reader —

This week's stories follow up on Nooksack flooding at Marietta; how a recent court decision is impacting the lives of refugee immigrants in our community; and friction between neighbors and the Port of Bellingham as the Port revs up its "working waterfront" industrial activity.

The Marietta story's a sad story of being poor then losing one's home and possessions and not being able to get enough help because of being poor. Kai Uyehara, who'd come to know the people in the area, reports on the Christmas flood.

There's a bit more hopefulness in Matt Benoit's story about how Ukrainian and Afghan refugee immigrants are receiving language and job training here, and have some opportunity to remake their lives in another culture, another country.

Very early on when *Salish Current* was launched a few readers said to keep an eye on the Port of Bellingham and we've tried to keep that eye on their big waterfront development plans for condominiums, hotels, convention center, affordable housing and a food hub—as well as being a working waterfront for marine trades. Regular tracking of port commission agendas and meetings in our government section is important; reporter Riley Weeks gives a more detailed account of how the port handled recent noise complaints from neighbors.

This was the first week of our state legislature's 120-day session and one of the first pieces of legislation that came our way was a bill promoted by the state attorney general to help save local newspapers. It would exempt newspapers, printers and online news publications from the state's Business and Occupation Tax. The bill, [HB 1206](#) Providing tax relief for newspaper publishers, if enacted would save for-profit publications 0.471% of gross receipts, or \$4,710 for every \$1 million in revenue.

The legislation wouldn't affect nonprofit news organizations like *Salish Current*, *Crosscut*, *Investigate West*, KNKX or KUOW because nonprofits don't pay state B&O tax. Our business model isn't based on a return on investment by selling advertising and charging for subscriptions (nonprofit, get it?) but by providing news supported by its readers and listeners. As nonprofits, we are also required to be nonpartisan and cannot endorse political candidates like news organizations paying state B&O taxes.

Aside from not being much financial help, the attorney general's proposal doesn't help for-profit news organizations because the traditional revenue model is moribund. The real issue facing news organizations is the same as that facing elected and government officials: how do we regain the trust of the people we serve to return our communities to civil discourse.

Thank you for reading Salish Current. Tell others about us. And if you can, please [donate](#) and support us.

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

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

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 Jan. 13, 2023](#): MLK Day, glacier melt, hot Earth, Cooke fish farms, gas stove ban, climate cost, Strait weapons training, whale sightings, toilet paper toxins, Exxon climate

News from the *Salish Current*

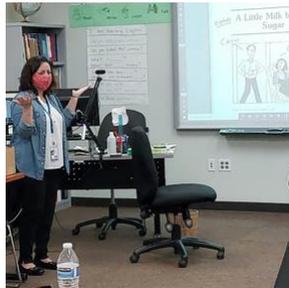
[Ice jams, snow melt, king tide combine in Marietta flood deluge](#)



Marietta resident Tim Sivo paddles through freezing floodwater as it recedes from its six-foot depth, to move his belongings to safety.

By Kai Uyehara: A small community along Marine Drive living mostly in RVs has braved seasonal inundation, ready to move at a moment's notice — until caught by surprise. [Read more.](#)

[Permission to work boosts local refugees in resettlement](#)



English language classes are just one important step for many refugees aspiring to secure jobs and integrate into a new home.

By Matt Benoit: Court decision accelerates process of securing work for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. [Read more.](#)

[Ship-loading noise tests Bellingham port's neighborliness](#)



The Blue Everton, being loaded last October with thousands of tons of scrap metal at the Port of Bellingham, represented good-paying work to some but a noise nuisance to others.

By Riley Weeks: Nighttime scrap metal activity at Port of Bellingham draws noise complaints from hillside residents. [Read more.](#)

Letters to the Editor

- Dyvan Havens: **Island living on Guemes**

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!)

Education

MLK 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: Opening ceremonies and a keynote address on Jan. 13, and a full day of workshops on Jan. 14. ([Whatcom Human Rights Task Force](#))

School budget. The Anacortes School District faces about a \$3.2 million budget deficit due to shrinking enrollment, loss of special COVID-19 funds and tax collection restrictions. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Reassigned. Former Bellingham High School assistant principal Maude Chimere Hackney and former Squalicum High School assistant principals Meghan V. Dunham and Jeremy Gilbert Louzao, who were criminally cited last month for failing to report a student's sexual assaults, were reassigned to the school district's Department of Teaching and Learning, effective Jan. 3. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Denied. Bellingham Public Schools in its response to a federal civil rights lawsuit denies that it mishandled a student's sexual assault reports brought to the attention of three high school administrators nearly a

year ago and [says] that the school district took reasonable steps to stop the reported harassment. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The Border

Open fire. The Canadian military plans to resume training in the firing range known as Whiskey Hotel, a 30-kilometre-long and 11-kilometre-wide swath of water between Sooke and Port Renfrew, about a kilometre off land, an area where the Canadian and U.S. navies and coast guards practise using sea surface and aerial machine-guns and other small weaponry. ([Times Colonist](#))

Nature

Record year. A record number of Bigg's killer whales and humpback whales were spotted in the Salish Sea during 2022. There were 1,221 unique sightings of Bigg's killer whales and 396 individual humpback whales were photographed in the Salish Sea, the largest number of humpbacks recorded in over a century. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Plant center. The 60-acre Washington Association of Conservation Districts Plant Materials Center in Bow sells more than 80 native species such as Nootka rose, Douglas fir, western larch and black cottonwood, and sends more than two million plants each year throughout the Pacific Northwest to be used in restoration projects. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Business

Port award. The state Department of Commerce has awarded \$416,000 to the Port of Skagit to pay for engineering design, permitting and site plans at the Port's 123-acre Watershed Business Park. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Farm award. The Skagit Valley Food Co-op has donated \$100,000 to Viva Farms to support making healthy food more accessible by playing a larger role in local agriculture and food resiliency. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

San Juan RE. Year-end results for 2022 show the sales dollar volume for the real estate market in San Juan County per the Northwest Multiple Listing Service was

\$380,610,000 which reflects a decrease in volume of 33% as compared to 2021 when the volume was \$567,862,152. The county closed 375 transactions which is a 43.5% decrease from last year. The average number of transactions per month was 31 compared to 55 last year. ([San Juan Islands Lifestyle](#))

Community

Lynden park. The four acres bounded by Edson, Glenning, Sixth and Eighth streets have been named Schoolyard Park. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Trestle repair. Damaged materials have been removed from the Tommy Thompson Trail trestle burned by arson last August and materials will next be ordered to rebuild the structure. ([Skaagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Indigenous remains. A national report on U.S. museums and universities by *Pro Publica* reports that Western Washington University holds some 89 sets of Indigenous people's remains despite the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Park work. The city of Blaine will complete work by mid-February on its Marine Park Reconstruction Project by removing broken concrete and debris and adding rock materials to 600 feet of shoreline from the end of the park on Marine Drive to the Lighthouse Point Water Reclamation Facility. The project will improve shoreline access and safety, while controlling erosion and improving the habitat for fish and waterfowl. ([The Northern Light](#))

Arts and Leisure

Allied Arts. "Earth to Atmosphere" features work by artists from Baker Creek Ceramics and watercolor paintings by Michael Heath, Janine Hazebrouck and Tom McCalla. Allied Arts Gallery, through Jan. 28. [Info.](#)

Tour. Take a History Tour of Bellingham's Old City Hall building and basement with a docent and see the historic jail rooms, including a padded cell from the days of prohibition, and learn about the architecture of the venerable building, as well as the history of the early days of Bellingham. Sundays, 1-2 p.m. [Info.](#)

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](#))

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.](#)

Swans and Snow Geese. Martha Jordan, well-known swan biologist, shares all she knows about the changing landscape our swans and snow geese now face in migration and on their wintering grounds. Jan. 14, in person, 7 p.m., Whatcom Museum Old City Hall Rotunda Room. [Info.](#)

Mary Jane. City Club of Bellingham's first program of the year on Jan. 25 is an online discussion at 1 p.m. about the first 10 years of the legalization of marijuana, and how it has affected our state. Speakers will be Dr. Josh Kaplan, Assistant Professor, Western Washington University's Behavioral Neuroscience Program, and Danielle Rosellison, cofounder of Trail Blazin' Productions, a retailer of medical marijuana. [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 to 3 p.m, Orcas Library Community Room.

NW Owls. Join Paul Bannick for a program featuring video, sound, stories from the field and several dozen new images from his award-winning and best-selling bird book: *Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls*. Jan. 26, online, \$10, North Cascades Institute. [Info and registration.](#)

Stewardship. Become a Salish Sea Steward by taking 40 hours of free community science training taught by local experts beginning Feb. 7, then pledge to commit 40 hours of volunteer service in one year to teach others. Jan. 31 registration deadline, [Skagit Marine Resources Committee.](#)

Government

For the people

Climate change. Including climate resiliency in the Growth Management Act. [SB 5203](#) Improving the state's response to climate change by updating the state's planning framework. [Lovelett D-40]

B&O Tax. Eliminate the state business and occupation tax on newspaper, printers and online publications, [HB 1206](#) Providing tax relief for newspaper publishers.
[Ramel D-40]

San Juan County

The council met on Jan. 9 and 10. Agenda items and video recording are [found here](#).

Observer Corps. Reports on meetings of the Friday Harbor Town Council (Jan. 5) and San Juan County Council (Jan. 9 and 10) may be found here: [San Juan County LWV](#).

City of Bellingham

The council met on Jan. 9. [Agenda items](#) included:
Committee of the Whole

- The council unanimously approved recommending the mayor's reappointment of Susan Rice as the city's hearing examiner.

Executive Session

- The council unanimously authorized the mayor to enter into settlement agreements with Bornstein Seafood and the Port of Bellingham, including a \$325,000 payment to Bornstein Seafood.

Whatcom County

The council met on Jan. 10. [Agenda items](#) included:

- The council approved 5-2 [Byrd, Elenbaas opposed] [a letter](#) responding to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources regarding Phase II of the Carbon Project.
- The council authorized 5-2 [Byrd, Elenbaas opposed] the county executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Northwest Youth Services to operate the Ground Floor Day Use Center in the amount of \$160,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$576,770.
- The council unanimously authorized 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.
- The council unanimously authorized 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.

- The council unanimously authorized 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 Fifth Medic Unit in the amount of \$13,837,716.

Port of Bellingham

The commission met on Jan. 10. [Agenda items](#) included:

Consent Agenda

- Approved unanimously.

Presentations

- Legislative update [[YouTube](#) 13:22-45:01]
- Waterfront District update [[YouTube](#) 45:17-1:39:48]

Action items

- Approved unanimously settlement agreement in I&J Waterway cleanup between Port of Bellingham, Bornstein Seafoods, Inc. and City of Bellingham. [[YouTube](#) 1:54:52-2:09-56]
- Approved unanimously to authorize application for certification to the Green Marine program for the port.

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](#)