



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

## News of the week: March 10, 2023

Dear Reader —

*Salish Current* is looking at some serious issues this week.

[Matt Benoit](#) reports what is happening with all-too-often-deadly fentanyl use in Whatcom County; and [Pete Granger and Norman Pillen](#) raise concerns about the potential effects on local businesses and families as a result of closure of a Southeast Alaska salmon fishery.

Intersecting with the problem of opioid abuse on our streets is the problem of how to provide safe shelter for those experiencing homelessness as well. Our local governments are looking at ways they can help, and volunteers have done what they're able to do in the face of crises.

*Salish Current* has covered what's happening in homelessness with more than a dozen articles since our inaugural publication three years ago. The issues are extremely complex, but it is vital to maintain focus on the humanity of others as we — as neighbors, voters, business owners, local officials, mental health providers; whatever our roles — continue to look for solutions.

As one source in this week's story on fentanyl addiction notes, while addicts have been stigmatized as "other," that trend is on the way out: "it's not going to be very long before opioid addiction is in all of our families."

Does homelessness lead to addiction? Or does addiction lead to homelessness? The answer is "yes" to both; there are as many stories about how people find themselves in homelessness or addicted as there are people.

Our role as journalists in our communities is to tell those stories, to provide context around which we can find solutions. *Salish Current* is here to do just that. Our content is always free to read, thanks to generous donors. Please keep reading, keep sharing our content

and keep the conversation — and the progress toward solutions — going.

—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 March 10, 2023:](#)**

Mario Day! ocean treaty, wave energy, Skagit lawsuit, hot-water fish, British Columbia reefs, plastic ban suit, British Columbia coal mines, salmon farm shutdown, Billy Frank Jr., climate threat.

## **News from the *Salish Current***

### **[No easy answers to Whatcom fentanyl health disaster](#)**



*Just 2 milligrams of fentanyl is a lethal dose in most people (compared here with a U.S. penny, about .75 of an inch in diameter). Whatcom County officials report they are seeing an increasing amount of fentanyl powder compared to pills coming into the area, as accidental deaths from use of the drug are also on the rise.*

**By Matt Benoit:** Fentanyl is involved in an increasing number of deadly overdoses and getting treatment for addiction to the synthetic opioid is a complex process — creating a local health disaster. [Read more.](#)

## Community Voices / Southeast Alaska troll fishery has deep local ties



*A troll fisher makes its way through Fair Weather Grounds off Southeast Alaska. Fishermen and related groups say a lawsuit aimed at shutting down the area and others in the region to small-boat, hook-and-line chinook troll fishing would negatively*

*impact Whatcom families and businesses, yet not meet its intended goal of saving the Southern Resident killer whales.*

**By Pete Granger and Norman Pillen:** Shutting down Southeast Alaska’s troll fishery will not stave off the decline of local orca and salmon populations — but it will have devastating effects on hundreds of fishing families and businesses. [Read more.](#)

## Truth, Trust and the News: ‘Calling Bullshit’



*So much information! What is true? How do YOU know?*

The authors of “Calling Bullshit: The Art of Skepticism in a Data-Driven World” tell how to sort it out. [Read more.](#)

## Letters to the Editor

- The San Juan Islands Advocacy Team: Calls for investing in peace
- Louise Dustrude: Chance at former Lovrić’s to link ferry terminal to Tommy Thompson Trail

*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**

**Dignity.** A bill, [ESSB5179](#), to increase access to the Death With Dignity Act has moved forward this current legislative session. [\(KUOW\)](#) See also: "Proposed changes to state's Death With Dignity Act spark debate" ([Salish Current, Feb. 16, 2023](#))

**Green water.** Testing showed no toxicity in the algae bloom that turned the waters of Bellingham's Lake Padden and Padden Creek green. (City of Bellingham email, March 7, 2023)

### **Education**

**School.** The Blaine school board has directed its district finance director to hire consultants to advise the district on the purchase of a school site in Birch Bay. ([The Northern Light](#))

### **The Border**

**Amtrak.** After service was interrupted by the pandemic for three years, the regular Amtrak Cascades route resumed two daily round-trip services March 6 between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. ([KGMI](#))

### **Nature**

**Forests.** Counteracting the region's previously unsustainable forestry habits, the Stewart Mountain Community Forest Initiative offers an approach to

revive hydrologic function in the South Fork Nooksack River watershed and restore salmon populations. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

**Eelgrass.** The Northwest Straits Foundation will begin a four-year project to restore eelgrass at Clayton Beach at Larrabee State Park using \$700,000 in funding from the Washington State Fish and Wildlife and Natural Resource departments. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

**Coho.** Coho returns are expected to increase this year above the 10-year average but the Skagit River run is estimated at about half of the 2022 estimate. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### **Business**

**Greenwash.** A state appeals court sent a Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe lawsuit accusing Seattle City Light of falsely advertising itself as environmentally friendly back to King County Superior Court after finding the local court ruled in error that the tribe did not have cause to challenge the utility. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

**Flaring.** For about 30 minutes Sunday night an "operational upset" in one of the units at the HF Sinclair refinery in Anacortes resulted in a rumbling noise and flames from the refinery's flare stacks lighting up the night sky. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

**Carbon.** Washington state's first auction of greenhouse-gas pollution allowances has generated an estimated \$300 million as companies, consumers and the Legislature get a glimpse of the cost of emitting greenhouse gases that are increasing climate catastrophes. ([Associated Press](#))

**Petrogas.** After years of unpermitted expansion and volatile organic compound discharges at Cherry Point, Petrogas has agreed with Whatcom County to obtain permits and to prepare and EIS. ([CDN/paywall](#))

**Public power.** A study commissioned by Whatcom County PUD No. 1 in the fall of 2022 for \$76,060 found that it was not financially feasible at this time to replace Puget Sound Energy as the main power provider in Whatcom County because of the limited availability of low-cost power. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

## **Community**

**Shelter.** The Lynden City Council approved an amendment to its municipal code to allow community residential facilities such as adult family and group homes to locate in the city. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

**GoFundMe.** Local activist Stoney Bird suffered a horrific fall in late November and a GoFundMe campaign has been established for his medical expenses and caregiving. For more information and to donate, [go here](#).

**Fishtown.** The former artist community on the Skagit River delta has changed local culture and estuary management. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

## **Commentary**

**Fish story.** Ross Anderson writes in "Managing Fishermen, Just for the Halibut" what it took to maintain a sustainable harvest of a very special fish. ([Rainshadow Journal](#))

## **Arts and Leisure**

**Baroque music.** Salish Sea Early Music Festival: Musica Alta Ripa Plays Baroque (1695-1740) • with Bernward Lohr (harpsichord, Hannover, Germany), Anna Röhrig (violin, Hannover, Germany) and Jeffrey Cohan (baroque flute) in a program of Italian, German and French 18th-century solos and trio sonatas by Johann Sebastian Bach, Archangelo Corelli, Andre Chéron, Louis-Antoine Dornel, Georg Philipp Telemann, Johann Christian Bach and Domenico Scarlatti. Bellingham First Congregational Church (March 10, 7 p.m.); Friday Harbor Brickworks (March 11, 12:30 p.m.) and Lopez Grace Church (March 11, 6 p.m.). Donations \$20, \$25. 18 and younger always free.

**Organ music.** The Whatcom Chorale celebrates its 50th anniversary with "Chants Celeste: Sacred French Masterpieces for Choir and Organ" featuring special guest Dongho Lee, organist. March 12, 3 p.m., St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bellingham. [Info and tickets](#).

**Poetry contest.** The Sue C. Boynton Poetry Contest is open to Whatcom County poets until the end of March. [Details here](#).

**Showtime.** The photography exhibit, "Vintage Vaudevillians," promoting early vaudeville acts in Bellingham, returns to the Lightcatcher in partnership with Whatcom READS. Through May 31. [Info.](#)

**Textile dyeing.** The Whatcom Museum presents Katazome Today, contemporary visions of a unique and historically significant Japanese textile-dyeing process. Through June 11. [Information.](#)

### **Jump in!**

**Parade.** Join in the Bellingham St. Patrick's Day parade March 11 beginning at noon at the Waterfront Granary Avenue and ending up at Depot Market Square on Railroad Avenue.

**Birds.** The Wings Over Water Northwest Birding Festival comes to Blaine, Birch Bay and Semiahmoo for its 20th annual event. March 17–19. ([The Northern Light](#))

**Work party.** Skagit Land Trust invites you to the Skagit River Kahn Conservation Area work party to plant native trees in areas that were former pasture lands and not a restored creek. March 17, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. [Info and registration.](#)

### **Government**

#### **For the people**

March 8 was the deadline for bills to cross over from their house of origin to the other chamber to be considered in this session. Here are the winners and losers so far. ([Crosscut](#)) See also: Legislative Bill Tracker ([Crosscut](#))

[Washington State Legislature Bill information.](#)

#### [HB 1389](#)

[Did not cross over] Concerning residential rent increases under the residential landlord-tenant act and the manufactured/mobile home landlord-tenant act. [Ramel, Lekanoff]

#### [HB 1363 did not reach the House floor. Rule\]](#)

[\[SB 5352](#) crossed over] Concerning vehicular pursuits.

### [HB1340](#)

[Passed out of the House; in Senate Health and Long Term Care.] Concerning actions by health professions disciplining authorities against license applicants and license holders. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

### [HB 1337](#)

[Passed House; forwarded to Senate.] Expanding housing options by easing barriers to the construction and use of accessory dwelling units. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

### [HB 1110](#)

[Crossed over to Senate.] Increasing middle housing in areas traditionally dedicated to single-family detached housing. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

### [SB 5371](#)

[Passed Senate; in House Agriculture and Natural Resources.] Protecting Southern Resident orcas from vessels. [Lovelett, Shewmake]

## **San Juan County**

The council met on March 7. Agenda items and video link [are here](#).

### Public comment:

Argyle Lots affordable housing project public comments (33:49-58:00)

Observer Corps. League of Women Voters San Juan meeting reports. [County Council March 6–7](#)

## **City of Bellingham**

The council will meet on March 13. [Agenda items](#) include:

### Parks and Recreation Committee:

- Hundred Acre Wood Project Update. [Conservation Easement](#).
- Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition 2022 Galbraith Annual Report. [Report](#).

### Planning Committee:

- Work Session on ordinance amending accessory dwelling unit regulations and process. [Staff memo](#).

Committee of the Whole:

- Ordinance prohibiting use of controlled substances in public places. [Ordinance.](#)

The council will meet again on March 27.

**Whatcom County**

The council met on March 7. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public Hearing:

- The council unanimously approved continuing the public hearing until March 21. Resolution adopting the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan. [Memo and resolutions.](#)

Consent Agenda:

- The council approved 5-2 (Byrd, Elenbaas opposed) authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to support the Housing and Essential Needs Program in the amount of \$157,120 for a total amended contract amount of \$2,811,264. [Staff memo.](#)
- The council approved 5-2 (Byrd, Elenbaas opposed) authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to operate the Whatcom Homeless Service Center in the amount of \$1,344,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$9,033,021. [Staff memo.](#)

Other Items:

- The council approved 6-1 (Elenbaas opposed) sending a letter in support of Ejidos Community Farm's 2023 Local Community Projects Capital Budget request. [Draft letter.](#)
- The council unanimously approved authorization for the County Executive to sign the Washington State Allocation Agreement Governing the Allocation of Funds Paid by Certain Settling Opioid Manufacturers and Pharmacies and the attached Subdivision Settlement Participation forms. [Allocation Agreement II.](#)
- The council unanimously approved an ordinance suspending Whatcom County Code 1.28 to update the Correctional Facilities Operational Standards. [Proposed ordinance.](#)

The council will meet again on March 21

## Port of Bellingham

The commission met on March 7.

### Public Comment:

Three residents provided comments regarding the noise and dust issues associated with the port's recycled material loading operations. Commissioner Bell defended the port's operations. [[YouTube 3:05-19:00](#)]

### Presentation:

- Aviation Lead Fuel Update [[YouTube 20:11-50:30](#)] See also: "Leaded aviation fuel fires decades-long complaint" ([Salish Current, July 26, 2022.](#))

The commission will meet again on March 21.

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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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