



News of the week: April 7, 2023

Dear Reader —

One of the more puzzling questions is why doesn't everyone in this readership area, this state, this country, this world have sufficient food to eat?

I don't have enough knowledge or wisdom to try to answer that question, but we will continue to examine in our reporting where our food comes from, who our farmers are and, this week, who holds up the safety nets to feed our hungry.

[Kai Uyehara](#) gives a video look at our Bellingham Food Bank and Skagit's Helping Hands Food Bank and [Matt Benoit](#) dives deeper into what it takes to feed our hungry.

In the Artist's Corner, [Thomas Jones](#) shares a detail from his painting, "Skagit Fields" and reminds us that the season brings us new growth and textures.

Next Thursday we look forward to seeing many of you who have registered for our free lecture on Truth, Trust and the News at Whatcom Community College. As of press time, there are 196 folks registered. Get your [free ticket here](#) to join us in learning how to cut the BS.

One final note: It's no secret that nonprofit newsrooms like *Salish Current* exist only through reader support. Radio and television do marathons; online newsrooms take part in reader campaigns like [NewsMatch](#) which late last year, for the first time, drew more matching funds from local donors than from national and regional foundations. In early May, we will be asking for a spring donation during the statewide [GiveBIG](#) fundraising

campaign. Brothers and sisters, will you spare another dime?

Thank you for reading and thank you for supporting news that's free to read and free from advertising. Share *Salish Current* with others and let us know what you think.

—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 April 7, 2023](#): Beaver Friday, Snake River dams, disaster lessons, dissolved oxygen, bat fungus, plastic fish, green crabs, Willow drill, B.C. water levels, Washington water

News from the *Salish Current*

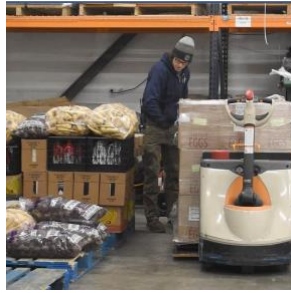
[Empty cupboards, new anxieties increase with rising food insecurity](#)



Supply and demand are out of balance for local food banks and their customers, as food prices rise and benefits drop.

By Matt Benoit: Inflationary food prices and end of pandemic-era benefits bring added strain on lower-income residents facing food insecurity. [Read more.](#)

[Food banks and visitors struggle during food and funding scarcity](#)



Food bank volunteers and employees are hard at work processing food for distribution, even as food insecurity continues high.

By Kai Uyehara: Food banks are traditionally food rescuers and distributors, but with stocks, funding and donations dwindling, resources are spread thin. [Take the video tour.](#)

[Spring Fields](#)



The changing season's light is cast over new green growth and fading winter stubble, in Spring Fields.

By Thomas William Jones: Spring in the Skagit Valley inspires an artist's vision. [Read more.](#)

[Letters to the Editor](#)

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 pill. Washington state will purchase and stockpile a three-year supply of abortion pills as a hedge against a possible federal ban. ([Crosscut](#))

Public safety. The City of Anacortes will pay for more police and fire services through Proposition 1 which would increase the tax levy to \$1.34 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a home valued at \$600,000, that would be about \$804 a year. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Hospital tax. The Southwestern Skagit County hospital district will ask voters on April 25 to approve a proposed tax of 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, or about \$200 a year on a \$400,000 home to pay for increased cost of operating Skagit Valley Hospital and regional clinics. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Education

Vaping. E-cigarette maker Juul will pay \$1.2 billion to Blaine and 1,600 school districts to settle a class-action suit for the company's role in the youth vaping epidemic. ([The Northern Light](#))

The Border

Border traffic. Whatcom Council of Governments reports that vehicle traffic from Canada thus far remains 30 to 40% below pre-pandemic levels. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Nature

Spring water. British Columbia and Washington are entering spring close to drought conditions, and lakes, rivers and snowpack are low. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#)) ([Vancouver Sun](#))

Lake water. Researchers report marginal improvement in Lake Whatcom water quality after monitoring for algae, dissolved oxygen and phosphorus levels. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Lummi fishing. Reef netting is part of Lummi culture taken away from them after the Point Elliott Treaty was signed in 1955, and they have spent more than 100 years trying to claw their way back to it. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Business

Water taxi. The Bay to Bay Charters water taxi service between Van Isle Marina to Roche Cove and Friday Harbor can resume after the Canada Border Services Agency agreed to send two officers to Van Isle Marina each time the water taxi arrives with passengers from the San Juan Islands, at a cost of \$430 per trip. ([Times Colonist](#))

Electrification. The Whatcom Business Alliance opposes [HB 1589](#) which requires transitioning from fossil fuels to electricity because, it claims, the bill would have major negative impact on homeowners, businesses, grocers and restaurants. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Kelp Farming. A free online April 11 forum on the promises and pitfalls of kelp farming features Rebecca Martone, marine ecologist and executive director of the Ocean Decade Collaborative Center for the Northeast Pacific. ([Hakai Magazine](#))

Hybrid bus. Whatcom Transit board of directors voted to apply for a grant to buy 11 hybrid buses rather than all-electric buses because the agency didn't have enough charging stations to add more electric buses. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Big Rock Plat. The Nooksack City Council unanimously approved the 48-parcel development after flooding concern were addressed. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Home sales. First quarter 2023 Whatcom County home sales totaled 423 homes, a 30% drop over a year ago, but with only a slight drop in median sales price to \$584,000. ([KGMI](#))

Community

Food mart. Twin Sisters Farmers Market has opened a farm stand in Deming where neighbors can get fruits and vegetables, because any small community should be able to consume healthy and local food, said Cat Sieh, market manager. Kenji Carskaddan reports. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

Cleanup. About 6,000 pounds of garbage and other items from the city right-of-way on T Avenue in Anacortes were removed last week by city staff after a recent increase in tents and garbage piled up on the right-of-way. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Dike disrepair. Samish Island is at risk because of many faulty dikes, and failure of the Alice Bay dike, on the northeast side of the isthmus, would flood Samish Island Road — the only way on and off the island. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Trail reopened. The City of Anacortes and the Samish Indian Nation last week formally reopened the Tommy Thompson Trail trestle portion which was damaged in a February arson. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Internet for all. Washington state kicked off its Internet for All in Washington Initiative by announcing plans to spend \$900 million in federal funds to expand internet infrastructure, make internet service more affordable, get people access to affordable devices and ensure people have the skills to use them. ([KNKX](#))

Earth Day Party. The RE Store will celebrate 30 years of local reuse with a free, all-ages outdoor party — and offer a storewide 30% off sale on Earth Day. April 22, 3–8 p.m. [RSVP](#).

Fix It. NW Free Repair volunteers will hold a drop-in repair workshop to fix your broken household item. Bellingham Public Library, April 11 and 18, 4:30–6:45 p.m.

Map It. Learn from a firefighter how to bring your neighbors together to share information and develop a plan for emergencies and disasters. Map Your Neighborhood at the Bellingham Public Library, April 25, 6–6:45 p.m.

Commentary

Real news. Jack Knox writes in the *Times Colonist*: "There's no substitute for real reporters doing real legwork, producing pieces that don't get published without passing the scrutiny of a real editor." ([Times Colonist](#))

Arts and Leisure

Territorial justice. Candace Wellman speaks about her book, "Man of Treacherous Charm," at the Whatcom County Historical Society program on April 13 at Whatcom Museum, 7:30 p.m. See "Who was Edmund C. Fitzhugh?" [Salish Current, Feb. 16, 2023](#).

Spring concerts. The Bellingham Community Chorus presents its Spring 2023 concerts on April 29 at 7 p.m. and April 30 at 3 p.m., St. James Presbyterian Church, Bellingham. [Information](#).

EOB. The 18th annual Essence of Bellingham photo competition is open to community member submittals that capture the essence of living, working and playing in Bellingham. May 1 deadline, [entry details here](#).

Whatcom Reads. "Red Paint: The Ancestral Autobiography of a Coast Salish Punk" by Sasha Lapointe is Whatcom READS' 2024 featured title. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

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!

Bee film. Friday Harbor Film Festival's FREE Best of the Fest series presents "The Pollinators" at the San Juan Island Library, April 14, 7 p.m. [Information](#).

Stream health. Join the City of Bellingham and Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association at Arroyo Park to remove invasive species and reduce erosion into this salmon-bearing stream. April 8, 9 a.m.–Noon. [Register here.](#)

Trails. More trail work at the Marblemount Conservation Area with Skagit Land Trust. April 14, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. [Info and registration.](#)

Million trees. Help transform Squalicum Creek Park by planting 70 more trees on the west slope above the playfields, April 15, 9 a.m.–Noon. [Info and registration.](#)

Food systems. The San Juan County Food System Team presents three forums discussing a shared roadmap of strategies to foster a local food culture and economy, in advance of publishing its plan this summer. April 16, 5 p.m. Oddfellows Hall, Eastsound; April 18, 5 p.m. Community Center, Lopez; April 20, 5 p.m. Brickworks, Friday Harbor. [Information.](#)

Plastic poison. "Toxic Relationship: Plastics and Your Health" is the topic of an online talk by Dr. Philip Landrigan, the Director of the Global Public Health Program and Adjunct Professor of Environmental Health at Boston College. April 19. 9:30 a.m. Bellingham/Whatcom County League of Women Voters Climate Team. [Information.](#)

Earth Day. Join Skagit Land Trust and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to plant trees and remove invasive species at the Utopia Conservation Area in Sedro-Woolley. [Info and registration.](#)

Earth Day. 900+ trees wait to be planted and numerous invasive plants to be removed at the WWU Miyawaki Forest Demo Site. Free pizza, too. April 22, 9 a.m.–Noon. [Info and registration.](#)

Earth Day. RE Sources and the Endangered Species Coalition presents "From Tree to Sea," a special Earth Day screening of films highlighting the ways in which the fates of the Northwest's iconic salmon, rivers, forests, and communities are inextricably linked. April 22, 11:30 a.m. Pickford Film Center. [Details.](#)

Earth Day. Meet RE Sources at Bellingham's Marine Heritage Park, grab a trash grabber and combat plastic pollution. April 22, Noon–2 p.m. [Sign up.](#)

Earth Day. Bellingham's MakersMart is down at the waterfront Granary Building with 30 local makers selling eco-friendly goods, with 10% of proceeds donated to the Whatcom Million Trees Project. April 22, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. [Information.](#)

Government

For the people. The final day of the 2023 legislative session is April 23.

B&O break. On a bipartisan vote the state Senate last week voted to pass [SB 5199](#) to extend a preferential business and occupation tax rate for news publishers, reducing it to zero for a decade. The bill is in the House Finance Committee.

Washington State Legislature Bill information.

SB 5352

[Passed Senate; in House Rules.] Concerning vehicular pursuits.

HB1340

[Passed House; on Senate floor calendar.] Concerning actions by health professions disciplining authorities against license applicants and license holders. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

HB 1337

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

HB 1110

[Passed House; on Senate floor calendar.] Increasing middle housing in areas traditionally dedicated to single-family detached housing. [Lekanoff, Ramel]

SB 5371

[Passed Senate; in House Rules.] Protecting Southern Resident orcas from vessels. [Lovelett, Shewmake]

Crosscut's Washington Bill Tracker

Crosscut will update their bill tracker throughout the rest of the session, which is scheduled to end on April 23.

San Juan County

The council met on April 4. [Agenda items and video.](#)

- Unanimously approved appointment of Barbara LaBrash to the regional Opioid Settlement Program
- Unanimously approved funding recommendation from the Housing Advisory Committee for the 2023 Senior and Disabled Rental Subsidy Program in the amount of \$100,156.80.
- The council heard project proponent presentations on Argyle Lots (57:20-2:19:18). Council will return to discussion of the project on April 18.

City of Bellingham

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

Community and Economic Development Committee:

- An Information Session on Financing, Constructing and Operating Permanently Affordable Housing Developments. [Mercy Housing Presentation.](#) [Housing Authority Presentation.](#)

Public Health, Safety, and Justice Committee:

- Enforcement of Ordinance Prohibiting Use of Controlled Substances in Public. [Staff memo.](#)
- A Brief Review of Community Courts. [Presentation.](#)

The council will meet again on April 24.

Whatcom County

The council will meet on April 11. [Agenda items](#) include:

Public hearing:

- Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code Section 1.14 Election Precinct Boundaries. [Documents.](#)

Consent agenda:

- Authorize the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization to acknowledge and fund Whatcom County's participation in the North Sound Integrated Care Network, in the amount of \$449,191. [Staff memo.](#)
- Authorize the County Executive to enter into a grant agreement between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Commerce to provide

funding to improve the Nooksack River gaging network, conduct a water storage study, and purchase and demolish up to four properties located in areas that are subject to inundation during flooding, in the amount of \$1,950,000. [Memo.](#)

- Authorize the County Executive to award bid #23-23 and enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Lake Union DryDock Company for the drydocking, repair, and maintenance of the Whatcom Chief in the amount of \$863,381. [Memo.](#)
- Authorize the County Executive to enter into a collective bargaining agreement between Whatcom County and Teamsters Local 231 Corrections Deputies and Sergeants for the period of January 2023 – December 2025. [Staff memo.](#)

Other items:

- Request approval to send a letter regarding the Brokedown Palace timber sale. [Proposed letter.](#)
- Presentation of the Whatcom County Food System Plan and request for Council approval. [Presentation.](#)

The council will meet again on April 25.

Port of Bellingham

The commission will meet on April 11. [Agenda items](#) include:

Consent agenda:

- Authorize Port of Bellingham Executive Director to execute an updated 2022–2024 [Interlocal Agreement](#) between the Port of Bellingham (Port), the Public Utility District of Whatcom County (PUD), and Whatcom County (County) for the purpose of joint collaboration in the continued development and implementation of the Whatcom County Broadband Fiber Network.
- Authorize the Executive Director to execute an Option to Purchase Real Property between the BoardMill Group LLC and the Port of Bellingham for approximately 5.3 acres in the Waterfront District. Due to the size of the file, please click on the following attachments to get complete document. [L#1](#), [L#2](#), & [L#3](#).

Action items:

- Approval of Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements, [Resolution No.1408](#).

- Authorize the Executive Director to execute an Authorization to Proceed for Millworks LLC's [proposed Phase 2 project](#) within the Waterfront District.

The commission will meet again on April 24.
Commission meetings are streamed on [YouTube](#).

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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.

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