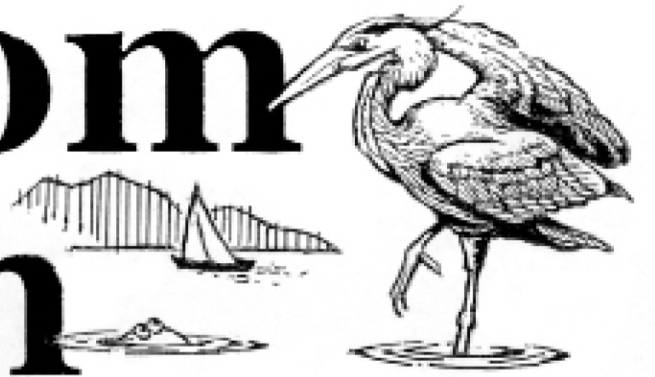




Whatcom Watch



a community forum on government, environmental issues and media • www.whatcomwatch.org

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Construction of Salish Landing Park

Part 1

by Hope Rasa

Two beautiful pieces of the Bellingham waterfront have been closed to the public for over 25 years. These overlapping properties are the RG Haley and Cornwall Avenue Landfill sites, situated between downtown Bellingham and Boulevard Park. Right now, they're sectioned off with chainlink fences, and huge white tarps blemish the rocky beach at the Cornwall Avenue Landfill site.

Lately, Bellingham residents may have noticed an increase in noise, construction equipment, and vehicle traffic in the area. Construction began in early January 2026 for the new Salish Landing Park, located at the RG Haley and Cornwall Avenue Landfill sites. Construction is expected to be completed in approximately three years. Salish Landing will be 17 acres, three times the size of Boulevard Park.

This is Phase 1 of the construction, which is taking place concurrently with the ongoing environmental cleanup of the RG Haley and Cornwall Avenue Landfill sites.

"It can be tricky, but generally, we kind of look at the construction and cleanup as being the same thing," Anthony Wenke, a site manager with the Washington State Department of Ecology's (DOE) Toxics Cleanup Program, said. Wenke said this isn't always the case, but near the end of a cleanup like this, when boots are on the ground for construction, it's like a milestone in the cleanup process. "Construction — we often say in ecology — is one of the most exciting times because it's years of hard work and effort finally coming to

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Hope Rasa is a journalism - news/editorial student at Western Washington University with a passion for environmental awareness. Her previous reporting for The Front covered local social issues such as public health, incarceration and education. Hope's interest in journalism began when she joined her high school newspaper. She wishes to continue reporting on pertinent and underreported topics in Bellingham and the rest of Whatcom County.



A postcard for Bellingham, dated 1953, pictures the RG Haley site in a former use.

photo: courtesy Whatcom Museum

Ranch Quarry Mine Expansion Story

A Quiet Valley Upended ...

by Liam Walsh

Since 2023, a Whatcom County community has been fighting a mine expansion that they say would create detrimental problems for the environment and their community. A 30-day comment period will open soon, during which members of the community can voice their concerns.

Andrew Clarke, the head of HOME-Whatcom (Homeowners Opposed to Mine Expansion), lives directly next to the proposed mine, called Ranch Quarry Mine. HOMEWhatcom is against the

Liam Walsh is a senior at Western studying Journalism with a news/editorial focus. In his free time, he plays on the Western rugby team and enjoys hiking and swimming.

creation of a 70-acre gravel pit, accessible from the South Pass and Frost roads in Sumas, Washington. They wish to protect their water quality, air quality, and prevent the ongoing pollution from surface mining. They're also fighting to maintain the rural character of their neighborhood. (1) (2)

"We really don't have any other options. If this went through, it would tank all of our property values, but it would also turn our quiet rural peaceful little valley into an industrial arterial," said Andrew Clarke. In 2023, *Whatcom Watch* covered the proposed expansion. (3)

According to the Whatcom County website, the proposal is to create a new approximately 70-acre open pit rock quarry. The proposed depth of mining activity will range from 50 feet to approximately 350 feet in depth. It is estimated that there will be approximately 13,743,113 cubic yards of excavation material associated with the quarry.

The company that submitted this proposal is Cowden Inc., which is now

owned by LafargeHolcim Company, a Swiss multinational corporation. [The Holcim Group, legally known as Holcim Limited, was formerly known as Lafarge-Holcim.] (4)

The local homeowners group, HOME-Whatcom (1), is vehemently opposed to the mine expansion and they have three central concerns: environmental impact, asbestos, and traffic.

Environmental Impact

The primary concern of the community is that the proposed mine will increase chemical contamination in the Saar Creek watershed. The Saar Creek watershed consists of 15 wetlands, 12 habitat conservation areas and multiple small seasonal streams. Saar Creek is 1,200 feet from the site. It ultimately feeds into the Sumas River.

Elli Harron is a member of HOME-Whatcom, and she expressed her hydro-

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