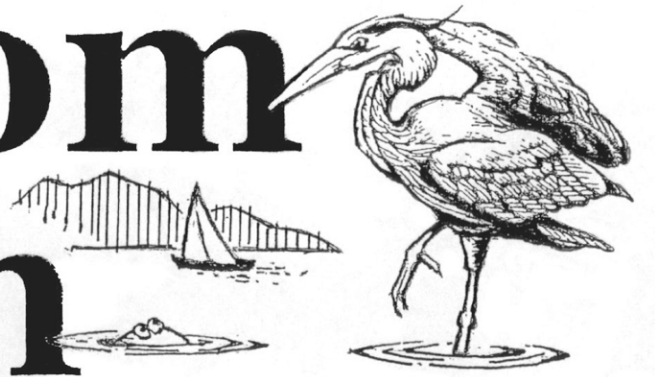




Whatcom Watch



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

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Local Fish Barrier Improvement Project Delayed

by Hope Rasa

The City of Bellingham (COB) has delayed until 2028 and possibly later a construction project that will benefit salmon and trout. The Squalicum Creek at Baker Creek Fish

Notice to Subscribers:

This year, the combined issue is being moved from the fall October/November paper to the spring April/May issue. The combined April/May paper will be mailed to subscribers on April 27.

Passage Improvement Project (EN059) will remove two pieces of infrastructure, one in Squalicum Creek and another in Baker Creek, to make it easier for fish to swim through both areas.

Additionally, the project will install native plants, floodplain benches and large woody material (branches and logs, which benefit the ecosystem) to enhance the stream habitat.

Stefanie Cilinceon, the communications

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.



Photographed from upstream, water in Squalicum Creek flows over the weir.

photo: Hope Rasa

and outreach coordinator for the COB's Public Works Department, said in an email that construction is delayed due to a funding shortfall caused by increased design and construction costs.

"Cost increases for fish passage projects have become a common experience for partners throughout the region due to a

variety of factors, including supply chain, complexities identified during design, and the need for extended construction periods to meet both access and in-stream fish protection windows," Cilinceon said over email.

The project at Squalicum Creek and Baker Creek was previously anticipated for

2027, with construction bidding expected to happen in late 2026. (1)

Cilinceon also said in an email that construction is now tentatively scheduled for 2028-2029. She said that the COB is actively applying for additional grant funds.

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Sumas Lake Restoration Story

by Liam Walsh

In 2024, nine authors and six organizations gether a study/paper arguing for the tion of Sumas Lake near Abbotsford,

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.

British Columbia. (<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/conservation-science/articles/10.3389/fcosc.2024.1380083/full>) The lake was drained in 1924, and researchers argue its restoration would bring a wide range of benefits.

In 2021, an atmospheric river flooded the Nooksack River in north Whatcom County. Floodwater swelled into the Sumas Lake bed, and the lake temporarily returned, causing

property damage and killing livestock. This event was the catalyst for the study. The Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance, UBC Conservation Decisions Lab, West Coast Environmental Law and the Raincoast Conservation Foundation worked together to create the study.

Dr. Tara Martin, a professor at the University of British Columbia, is in the department of Forests and Conservation Sciences, and she is one of the authors of the study. "We need to alleviate the risk to land holders that are living in the lakebed. There's no indication that we are able to stop the water from returning," Martin said. "That lake will provide habitat for five species of salmon and over 70 other species that are at risk of extinction, and giving that land back, or in this case a lake back, is a part of reconciliation with indigenous communities."

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