

# The Northern Light

May 7 - 13, 2020

Community Newspaper of Blaine and Birch Bay

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## As re-opening begins, local infections rise

### County and state governments prepare for long road ahead

BY OLIVER LAZENBY

When the first phase of Washington state's four-phase re-opening plan began May 5, the number of new cases of Covid-19 in Whatcom County was already increasing.

In the week ending May 2, 29 people in Whatcom County tested positive for the coronavirus, up from 11 the previous week and 15 the week before. Many of the new Whatcom County cases are clusters of cases of people who came into contact with each other at small private gatherings or other specific places, county health officials said at a May 4 online media briefing. In total, 319 in Whatcom County have tested positive for the virus and 27 have died from it.

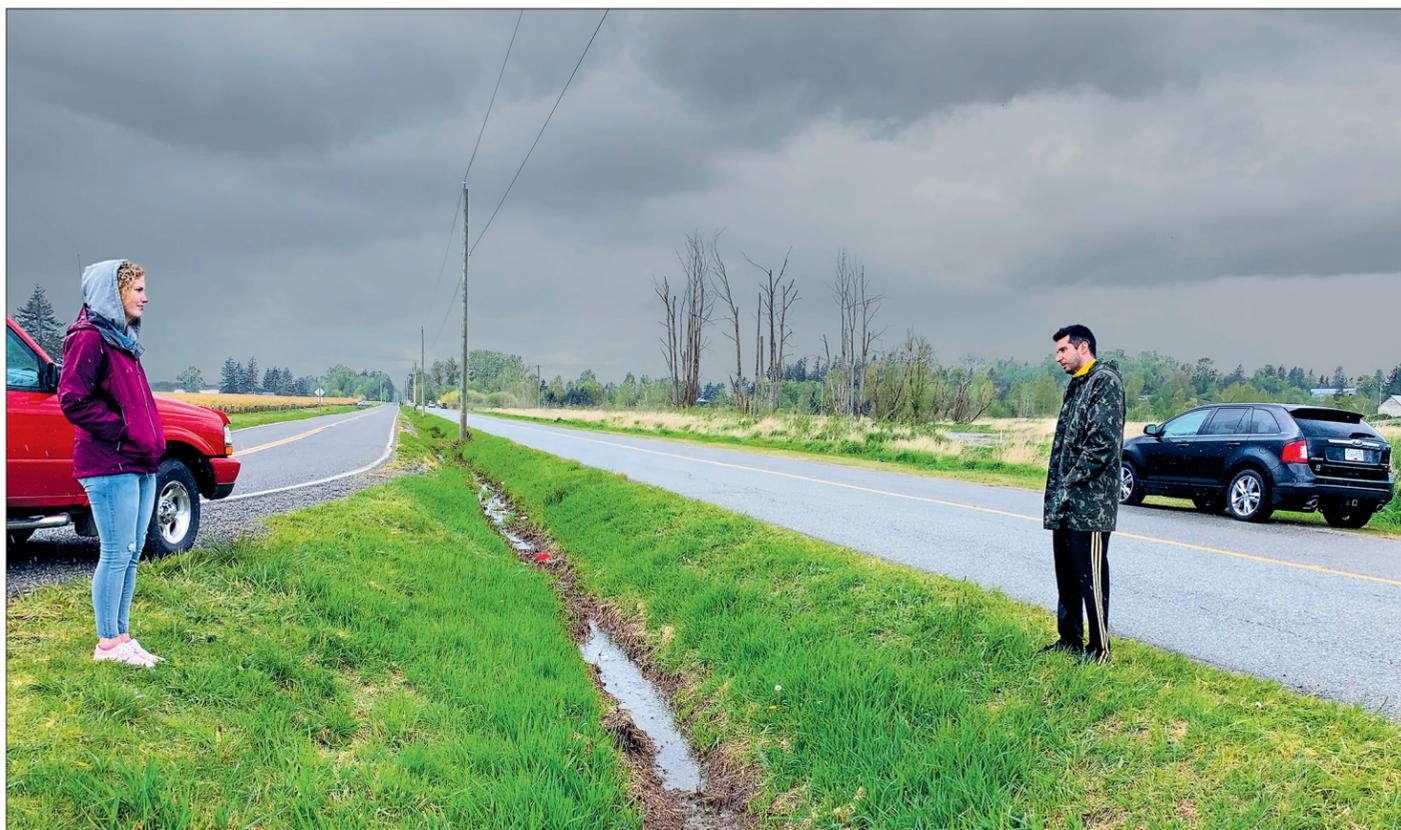
The increase could also be explained by more testing. Locally, the ability to test is improving and the Whatcom County Health Department broadened its recommendations for who should seek testing. The county now encourages all people with symptoms to seek testing. Previously, testing was limited to those with symptoms who also met additional criteria, such as being an essential worker, for example.

Of the 3,201 total test results tracked by the county health department as of May 5, 575 of those results came back since April 28.

On May 5, the percent of positive test results out of total tests in Whatcom County

(See Covid-19, page 6)

## Love in the Time of Coronavirus



▲ This couple, separated by a ditch and the border between Canada and the U.S., were scheduled to get married last weekend. Their wedding plans are now on hold until the border between the two countries opens up again.

Photo by Jack Kintner

## BPD continues to implement LEMAP recommendations

BY JAMI MAKAN

In an April 13 memo to city councilmembers, Blaine police chief Donnell Tanksley provided an update on his department's efforts to implement recommendations from an outside review of the department conducted in 2018.

On March 28, 2018, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

(WASPC) provided its report to the Blaine Police Department (BPD) identifying areas in need of improvement to align the department with best practices and standards in law enforcement. A month earlier, at the direction of interim police chief Michael Knapp, WASPC had conducted a Loaned Executive Management Assistance Program (LEMAM) assessment of BPD.

The goal of the LEMAM program is to

provide law enforcement administrators with an opportunity to undergo a critical review of their organization through the eyes of peer professionals. WASPC's report identified areas in need of strengthening, and BPD began implementing the report's recommendations right away, Chief Tanksley said in his memo. "Immediately after

(See BPD, page 3)

## WSDA plans to track and trap Asian giant hornets

BY JAMI MAKAN

As if the new coronavirus weren't bad enough, another scourge from Asia is likely to affect some Whatcom County residents this year.

After receiving reports of Asian giant hornets in the Blaine and Bellingham area earlier this year, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) now plans to track and trap this invasive species from Asia, which was not previously

found in Washington state prior to December. WSDA received over 80 calls about Asian giant hornets following the publication of its initial report in December, although most of the sightings could not be positively identified without photographs.

According to WSDA, invasive Asian giant hornets are typically almost an inch and a half long and are distinguished by their large yellow heads. They nest in the ground, and although they are typically not interested in humans, pets or large

animals, they can inflict a painful sting if threatened or if their nest is disturbed.

"Asian giant hornets do pose a threat to people because their venom is more toxic and they have more of it," said WSDA public engagement specialist Karla Salp. "However, they will not generally attack people unless they feel threatened. Your biggest risk is if you were to step into an Asian giant hornet nest."

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