

POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Monday, January 31

10:44 a.m.: Broken windshield – Caller reported their windshield broke while driving. It is unknown if something was thrown at the vehicle or not. Bay View Edison Rd, Edison.

Tuesday, February 1

10:12 a.m.: Wine thief – Caller reported someone had rummaged through her vehicle over the weekend. The only item missing was a case of wine. Center St., La Conner.

11:02 a.m.: No visibility – Complaint of semi trailers being parked at the intersection of Rainier St. and Maple Ave., blocking visibility. Rainier St. / Maple Ave., La Conner.

Wednesday, February 2

7:58 a.m.: Theft – Pay box was broken into. 1st St., La Conner.

1:23 p.m.: Graffiti – Report of graffiti at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center. Bay View Edison Rd., Bay View.

Thursday, February 3

5:44 p.m.: Coffee shop argument – Caller reported a verbal domestic. Deputies responded and the other party had already left. Beaver Tales Coffee, La Conner.

11:03 p.m.: Window smasher – Deputies responded to a report of windows being smashed out of a vehicle in parking lot. Caller witnessed a male standing near their vehicle and yelled at him. The male left the area in a dark colored SUV prior to deputies' arrival. Deputies checked the city and surrounding area for a matching vehicle but were unable to locate. No other vehicles in the

parking area were damaged. Park St., La Conner.

Friday, February 4

10:48 a.m.: Money scam – Caller requested a case number from the Skagit County Sheriff's Office to document a scam where official State Department letterhead was being used to solicit money. Morris St., La Conner.

12:43 p.m.: Purse thief – Deputies reviewing video of a male attempting to steal a purse from the business. Investigation continuing. S. 1st St., La Conner.

Saturday, February 5

8:25 a.m.: Cows block road again – Report of cows in the roadway. Deputies checked the area and were unable to locate. Farm to Market / Rector Rds., Bay View.

11:34 a.m.: Padilla Bay prowlers – Caller reported, while walking on Padilla Bay Trail, two males wearing COVID-19 masks broke her window and rummaged through the vehicle. The males were driving Toyota sedans, one of the sedans was black and the other was silver or grey with tinted windows. Bay View Edison Rd., Bay View.

11:38 a.m.: Chuckanut vehicle prowler – Report of a broken window on the caller's vehicle and the interior rummaged through. Chuckanut Dr., Bow.

2:23 p.m.: Snack thief – Caller reported a broken window on their vehicle. Purse and bag of snacks taken. Padilla Bay Interpretive Center parking lot. Bay View Edison Rd., Bay View.

Farmers faced with farmland tree planting as way to save salmon

By Anne Basye

For farmers evaluating Governor Inslee's Salmon Recovery bill, the devil is in the details.

Details like what exactly constitutes a Riparian Management Zone and whether the riparian buffers proposed in the now withdrawn HB 1838 will not just target salmon-bearing streams and side channels but encompass delta farmland behind Skagit River dikes.

The million-dollar question: Inside those buffers, is farming permitted?

The bill is clear about the need to maintain and enhance natural resource industries like agriculture and to encourage the conservation of productive agricultural lands.

Its language about buffers is problematic, according to lobbyist Heather Hansen, executive director of Washington Friends of Farms and Forests.

"As written, absolutely it would apply to the main stem and every tributary, every stream, every wetland and pond that flows into something that flows into something else," said Hansen. "Also, the way it's written implies that measurement for buffers would start at the edge of the flood plain.

"In places like Skagit and Chehalis, where the whole valley is flood plain, it would take out a massive amount of land."

In a Jan. 25 letter to the House Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources Committee, the Skagit County Drainage and Ditch Consortium stated that if passed as written, HB 1838 would take over 11,000 acres of Skagit farmland out of productive use, damaging Skagit County's agricultural economy and land base.

The bill provides \$8.4 million to create 24 new positions in the state's Department of Fish and Wildlife to set and enforce riparian buffers by mapping and identifying RMZs along salmon- and steelhead-bearing streams and rivers. Watersheds needing RMZs for salmon recovery and protection are prioritized.

Counties and cities are to include restoration and protection of RMZs in their comprehensive and capital facilities plans and development regulations.

Landowners of property adjacent to affected water bodies must establish, maintain and protect buffers or face a \$10,000 a day penalty. DFW is to provide grant funding and cost-sharing offers to help landowners in priority watersheds cover 70% of their cost to establish and maintain riparian buffers for five years.

The offer must include part of the cost of removing the land from production.

Section 204 of the bill lists the kinds of properties adjacent to water that would be exempted from buffers. None of the exceptions applies to farmland near La Conner.

"For me, the problem is the combination of the term 'flood plain' and 'waterways,'" said local

dairy farmer Jason Vander Kooy. The Dike District 1 commissioner worries that buffers might be required along ditches that drain winter surface water and deliver irrigation water during the summer, if Skagit River flow is available.

Those ditches are not salmon-bearing and section 603 (32)(b) of the bill says that "fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas" do not include irrigation or drainage ditches maintained by an irrigation district or company.

Still, Vander Kooy worries that "the door is wide open to any kind of interpretation."

"Every piece of legislation has one or two unintended consequences and 30 to 40 unintended consequences," said La Conner farmer Dave Hedlin.

"There's always a fair bit of nervousness that you're going to get swept up in those unintended consequences. On the other hand, this is a complex natural problem and it's important to focus on moving in the right direction."

Farming on the banks of Sullivan Slough east of La Conner was one reason the Hedlin family transitioned to organic farming. They manage their farm to protect the slough's salmon-rearing habitat.

The Hedlins leave willows and cottonwoods on the toe of the water side of the dike. That's good for salmon, but not so good for dike management. Beavers and muskrats working around tree roots create burrows that if connected can weaken the dike. A dike can "blow" if high winds push over a large tree and its rootball.

"We have to maintain our dike structures and keep the town of La Conner dry, while still being aware of the whole picture," said Hedlin.

Farming advocates cite two other concerns about HB 1838. First, agriculture interests and, specifically, the Department of Agriculture, was not included in developing the bill. Second, the bill appears to replace existing voluntary habitat programs.

Programs like the Skagit County Voluntary Stewardship Program, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and the Clean Samish Initiative have implemented many riparian and stream restoration projects and prompted the planting of miles of hedgerows on farms, without regulation.

"It's frustrating that ag has put so much effort into this process and now the state just wants to sweep it under the rug and act like it never happened," said Vander Kooy, who spent many hours getting the Skagit VSP off the ground and is the lone farmer on the Puget Sound Partnership's Salmon Recovery Council.

"There isn't a farmer in the valley who doesn't remember when there were a lot of salmon in the river and wouldn't want that back," said Hedlin. "But I get very nervous whenever there is a one-size-fits-all idea."

"I'm supportive, but my biggest fear is just that we're gonna lose part of our farm and my grandkids still won't have fish."



1. **Spider-Man: No Way Home** (PG-13)
Tom Holland, Zendaya
2. **Scream** (R)
Neve Campbell, Courteney Cox
3. **Sing 2** (PG) animated
4. **Redeeming Love** (PG-13)
Abigail Cowen, Tom Lewis
5. **The King's Man** (R)
Ralph Fiennes, Gemma Arterton
6. **The 355** (PG-13)
Jessica Chastain, Fan Bingbing
7. **American Underdog** (PG)
Zachary Levi, Anna Paquin
8. **Ghostbusters: Afterlife** (PG-13)
Carrie Coon, Paul Rudd
9. **Licorice Pizza** (R)
Alana Haim, Cooper Hoffman
10. **West Side Story** (PG-13)
Ansel Elgort, Rachel Zegler

Source: *Box Office Mojo*

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To schedule your appointment:
skagitcounty.net/COVIDvaccine

Need assistance?
Call Skagit County Public Health:
(360) 416-1500

