



THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

Large cranes at Bellingham’s waterfront? Here’s what we know

BY RACHEL SHOWALTER
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Some heavy lifting began this month along Bellingham’s waterfront as two large cranes arrived at the Shipping Terminal in December.

Nordholm Companies, a hydraulic equipment supplier based in Everett, brought the two cranes by barge from the Port of Tacoma to be unloaded and stored by the Port of Bellingham. A third crane may be arriving from the Port of Seattle in the coming weeks, according to Port of Bellingham Marine Terminals Manager Jon Olson.

Beginning in the new year, the cranes are expected to be disassembled and prepared for transport to a private buyer. Olson called the operation a “great example” of the types of projects that are possible at the Bellingham Shipping Terminal.

“We’re finishing up our terminal modernization area, and this was a good opportunity for us,” Olson told The Herald. “Nordholm Companies approached us, and we had the space available.”

The two-year, \$27.5 million modernization project began in early 2024 with the goal of job creation, dock restoration, increasing water depth and installing a new stormwater system.

The crane disassembly operation is expected to employ skilled maintenance laborers of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 7 and utilize the port’s new “heavy lift capabilities.” Noise, dust and community impact is expected to be minimal, according to a Port of Bellingham social media post.

Disassembly crews are expected to work normal daytime hours between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m., Olson said.

“This exciting activity showcases the capabilities of our heavy-lift area,” a Facebook post states.

Disassembly is expected to begin the second week of January. That process should take about six weeks per crane, with both cranes expected to be off port property in two to three months, according to Olson.

“It’s exactly the kind of maritime work our terminal modernization was designed to attract, and we couldn’t be happier to see it in action,” the Facebook post states.

By 2026 the Bellingham Shipping Terminal is projected to generate \$1 million in wages and 1,200 shifts for dockworkers, with growth expected to reach \$3.4 million in wages and 3,600 shifts by 2029, Port of Bellingham spokesperson Mike Hogan previously told The Herald.

Whatcom County’s maritime industry as a whole brings in \$1.6 billion in business revenue, 6,400 jobs and \$416 million in labor income, according to previous Herald reporting.

County officials continue flood damage assessments

BY RACHEL SHOWALTER
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Local and state officials continue to process damage reports related to the severe December flooding events that forced more than 100,000 people to evacuate across Washington.

In Whatcom County, residents in Nooksack, Sumas, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden and Lummi Nation were impacted by the rising floodwaters of the Nooksack River. Roads across the county closed due to high water levels, and the region saw widespread private

and public property damage.

Several weeks later, water levels have receded, and community members are picking up the pieces.

Amy Cloud at the Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office Division of Emergency Management told The Herald that the process of documenting damages is going “really fast” compared to the flood responses in 2020 and 2021.

Still, it’s deliberative. Officials are following up on every single submitted damage assessment form to verify needs and information, Cloud said.

As of Tuesday morning, the county had confirmed 550 households with

reported damage. At least a few hundred more still needed to be confirmed, according to Cloud.

Washington’s counties were asked to submit damage estimate assessment forms to the state by Dec. 28. The state Emergency Management Division was still working on the joint preliminary damage assessment for FEMA this week, according to Washington State Governor’s Office Communications Director Brionna Aho.

“We are now working with state and federal partners to perform a joint

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RACHEL SHOWALTER The Bellingham Herald

Thousands of people waded into the bay to attempt to break the world record for the largest polar bear dip on Thursday in Birch Bay.

Thousands try for world record in Birch Bay polar bear dip

BY JULIA HAWKINS
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It’s 11 a.m. on the first morning of 2026 in Birch Bay, Washington. There’s a sharp chill in the air.

Driving down Birch Bay Drive, sporadic groups of people wrapped in towels, robes and sweatshirt are all heading toward the bay.

They are all there for the same purpose — to make history.

In February 2025, the Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce announced it would hold a Guinness World Record attempt for the largest polar bear dip.

“Having the Guinness World Records brand associated with this event brings global recognition and credibility, emphasizing the significance of the attempt and the achievement itself. The organization is synonymous with extraordinary accomplishments, and its endorsement highlights the importance of this moment for Birch Bay, attracting attention from across the world,” a February 2025 Chamber of Commerce press release states.

As of December 2025, the world record for largest polar bear dip — 3,134 people — was held by Norway,



Bellingham

Thousands of people gathered Thursday in Birch Bay for an attempt to break the world record for the largest polar bear dip.

according to the Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce.

By 11:30 a.m. Thursday, the beach was full of people in swimsuits, most shivering but filled with anticipation.

The participants ranged in age from toddlers to seniors, brought together by a variety of motivations.

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