

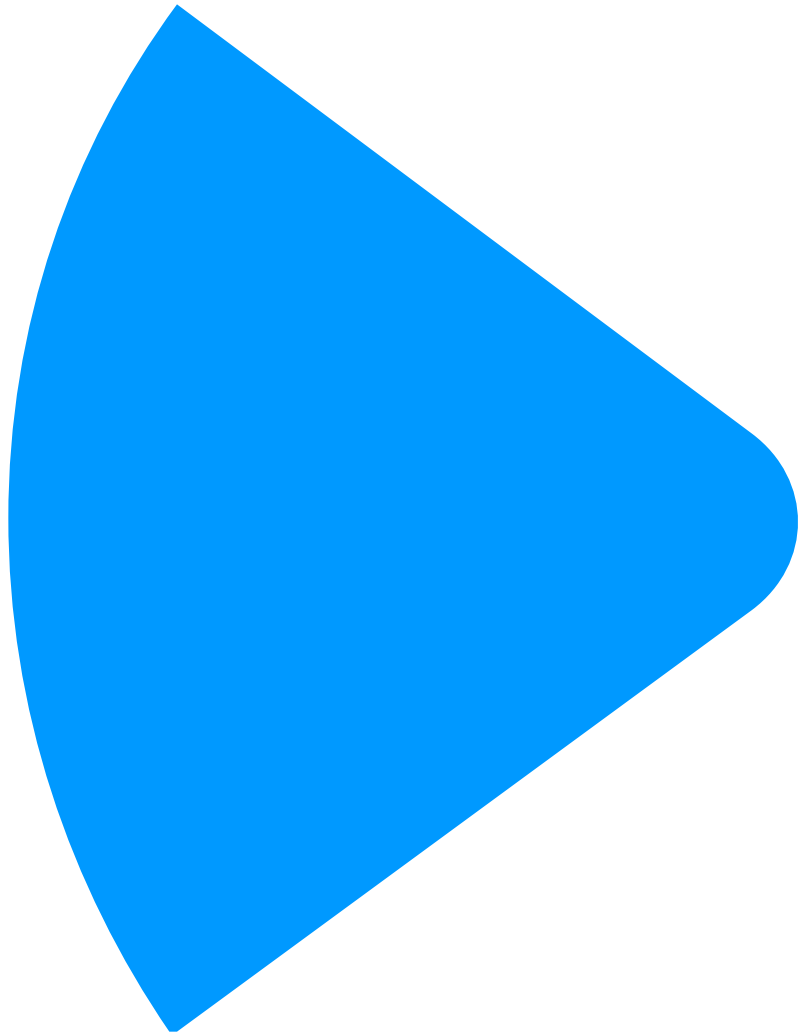


and elsewhere in north Puget Sound.

“There’s just no way they could be blowing the cover on some plan we don’t have,” Ballew said.

TOP ARTICLES





Northwest Jobs Alliance wrote to the Whatcom County Planning Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers last month, asking them to oppose a tribal takeover of Cherry Point.

“It has come to our attention that there are those who would de-industrialize the Cherry Point (industrial area), but this rather radical notion would not serve the public interest,” the Alliance wrote in an Aug. 12 [letter to the Planning Commission](#). The letter was signed by Chairman John Huntley and President Brad Owens.

Not named in the letter was Craig Cole, who is listed in the state’s corporations database as the director of the Northwest Jobs Alliance. Cole also was hired to do public relations for Gateway Pacific Terminal’s proponent, SSA Marine.

Cole said on Friday, Sept. 11, he is one of more than 100 members of the Alliance.

“I am one of the directors and support its focus on family-wage job growth and retention,” Cole said, along with “the continued viability of the Cherry Point industrial area.”

The Alliance delivered its message to the public in a [press release](#) on Thursday, Sept. 10.

The release refers to “a plan by the Lummi Nation to annex Cherry Point to its reservation.” The Alliance equivocates on just how much land it believes the tribe would take, but in some of its statements the group assumes the worst.

“It would decimate the job and tax base of the county, in particular the budgets of the Ferndale and Blaine school districts and Fire District 7, for which Cherry Point industries carry much of the tax load,” Huntley said in the release.

“While the Lummi people themselves and their treaty rights deserve great respect, this ploy to snatch nontribal land is just plain wrong,” the Alliance said in an Aug. 20 letter to the Corps.

The Alliance points to a [single page](#) that it claims is a “Lummi Nation planning document” from 2012. The page describes a strategy that includes defeating the coal terminal, acquiring Cherry Point and placing it in trust.

Tribes can ask the federal government to acquire properties and hold them in trust for tribal use, even land outside a tribe’s reservation.

Lummi Chairman Ballew reviewed the document and said it did not come from the tribe.

“What they presented definitely has not been produced by the Nation,” he said.

Owens didn’t answer directly when asked by a reporter if the Alliance believed Lummi Nation wanted to tear down existing industries at Cherry Point.

“The indicators are that they’re in opposition to growth at Cherry Point, and that their goal is to acquire Cherry Point property and have it placed in trust,” Owens said.

Cole said the documented evidence of the tribe’s intentions said “in an unambiguous way” that the tribe is intent on taking Cherry Point land.

“Some of it is pretty direct,” he said.

Documents used by the Alliance to support its claim include a 2012 resolution by the Lummi Indian Business Council to acquire Cherry Point “in order to prevent any further projects” and protect the cultural value of the area “in perpetuity.”

The only property specifically mentioned by the tribe for acquisition was the terminal site, and only after the coal terminal project was defeated. The documents say any acquisition of the terminal site would happen through negotiations with its owner, SSA Marine — not through a forceful snatching of the land, as the Alliance stated.

Ballew, who was not chairman when the 2012 ordinance was approved but sat on the council, acknowledged that acquiring a portion of Cherry Point was “a part of the operative part of the resolution.”

“But the more significant policy statement in that resolution is to protect the site,” Ballew said. “That doesn’t mean necessarily that the tribe acquires the land.”

“As far as I know the property isn’t for sale, and we haven’t taken that into consideration,” he said.

Ballew emphasized the importance of protecting the tribe’s cultural heritage at the coal terminal

location, which he said was the site of an ancestral village. For now, he said, the tribe is focused on protecting its fishing rights through its request to the Corps to stop Gateway Pacific Terminal.

“They’re fabricating a false conspiracy,” Ballew said. “This is a distraction to our request to the Corps to protect our treaty rights.”

The tribe says the terminal pier and up to 487 ships per year traveling to and from the port would do irreparable harm to tribal fishing. At full capacity, Gateway Pacific Terminal would export 48 million metric tons of coal a year to overseas markets.

In its letter, the Alliance asked the Corps to “publicly disassociate” itself from the tribe’s takeover plans and reject its request to halt the terminal project.

Corps spokeswoman Patricia Graesser said the agency continues to consider the tribe’s request.

“The Army Corps of Engineers is focused on evaluating the actual proposal we have in hand for the Gateway Pacific Terminal and not on speculation regarding what may or may not happen with regard to future property ownership at Cherry Point,” she said.

Reach Ralph Schwartz at 360-715-2289 or ralph.schwartz@bellinghamherald.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@BhamPolitics](https://twitter.com/BhamPolitics).

COMMENTS ▾

0 Comments

Sort by **Newest** ↕



Add a comment...

 Facebook Comments Plugin



Fighting discrimination associated with coronavirus



When is it legal and safe to make a U-turn?

[VIEW MORE VIDEO →](#)

TRENDING STORIES

Second Whatcom County resident is being tested for new coronavirus

MARCH 03, 2020 11:48 AM

If you're sick and wondering if it's coronavirus, here's what to do in Whatcom County

MARCH 02, 2020 12:25 PM

Thanks to social media, North Cascades National Park's no longer our well-kept secret

MARCH 02, 2020 5:00 AM

Bellingham police ask for help in finding suspect following Monday's bank robbery

MARCH 02, 2020 11:48 AM

SPONSORED CONTENT

SPONSORED CONTENT

you b

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

SPONSORED CONTENT

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

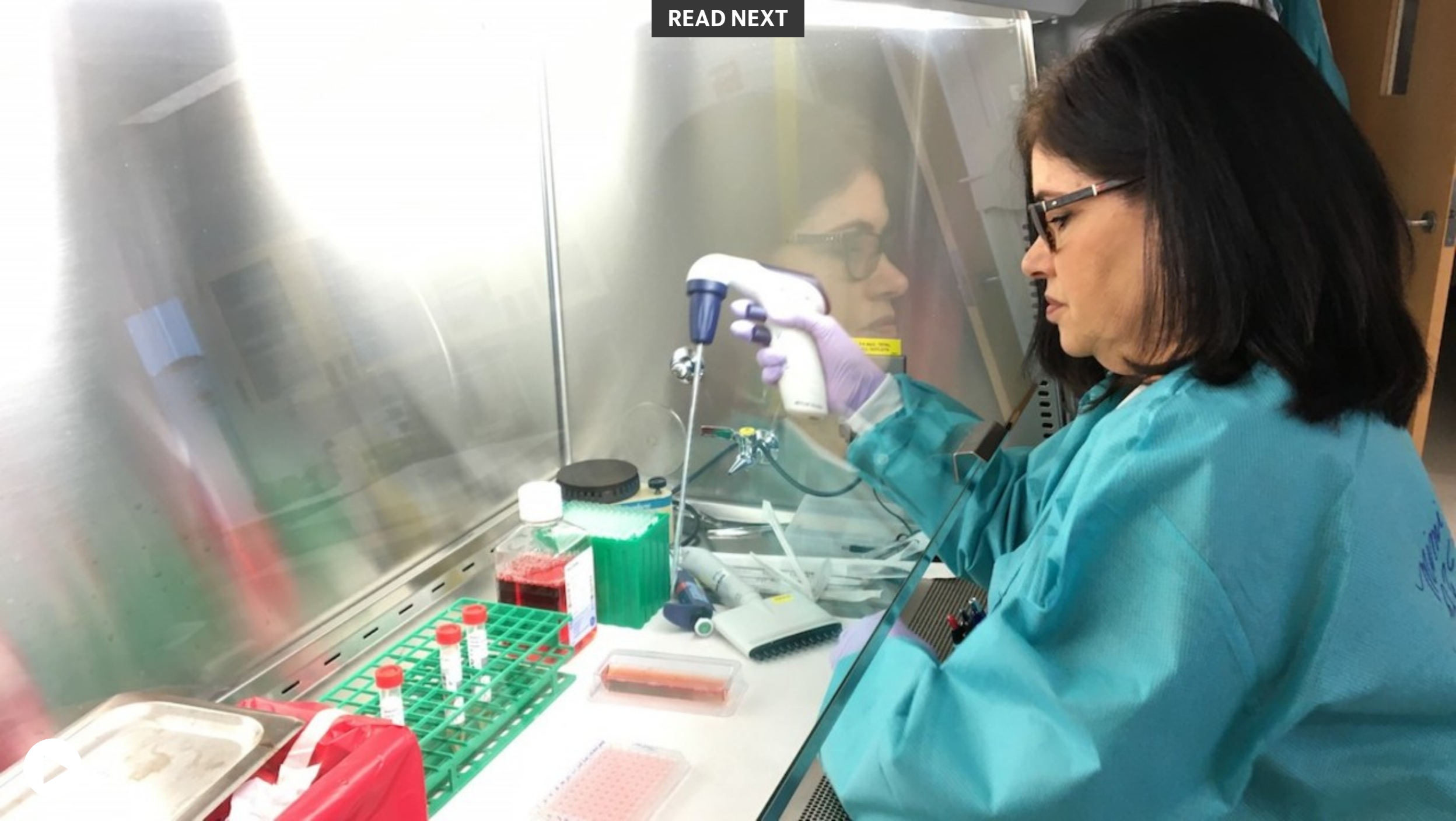
After a busy shopping weekend, masks and other products in short supply in



Whatcom Community College students can now apply
to live on-campus for fall quarter

ent to you b





LOCAL

Should you be tested for COVID-19? Here's what's happening in Washington state

BY DAVID RASBACH

MARCH 03, 2020 12:52 PM



How do you know if your symptoms actually are the coronavirus or is just suffering from another cold or flu? The CDC says call your doctor and they will decide if you need to be tested for COVID-19.

KEEP READING →

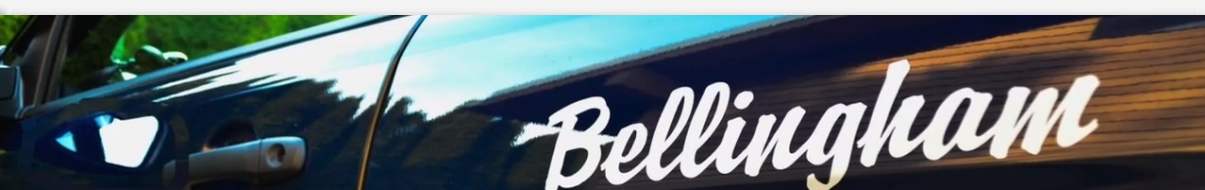
Local News at Your Fingertips

#ReadLocal

Get unlimited digital access for just \$3.99 a month to #ReadLocal anytime, on any device.

GET OFFER

MORE LOCAL





CRIME

Bellingham police find couple with car parts they allegedly cut off other vehicles

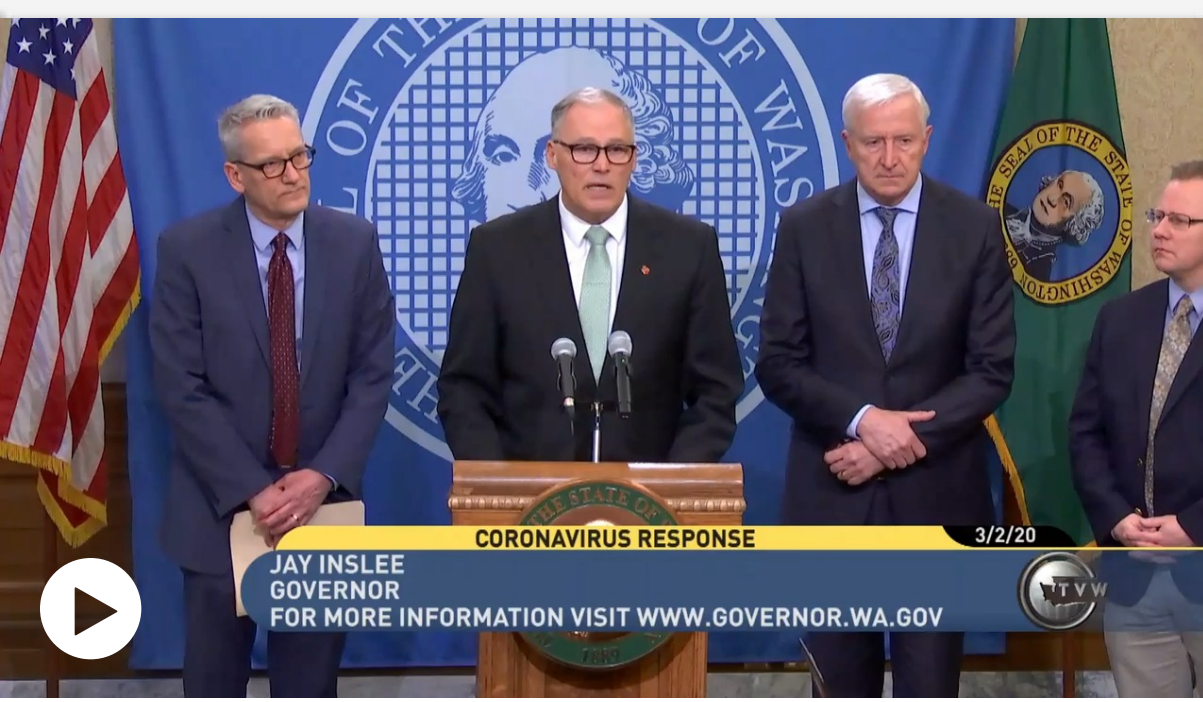
MARCH 03, 2020 12:32 PM



LOCAL

As coronavirus concerns grow, here's what Whatcom schools, colleges plan

MARCH 03, 2020 11:08 AM



LOCAL

Second Whatcom County resident is being tested for new coronavirus

MARCH 03, 2020 11:48 AM



BUSINESS

Whatcom Community College students can now apply to live on-campus for fall quarter

MARCH 03, 2020 5:00 AM



LOCAL

Thanks to social media, North Cascades National Park's no longer our well-kept secret

MARCH 02, 2020 5:00 AM



BUSINESS

After a busy shopping weekend, masks and other products in short supply in Bellingham

MARCH 02, 2020 1:43 PM

Take Us With You

Real-time updates and all local stories you want right in the palm of your hand.



[BELLINGHAM HERALD APP →](#)



[VIEW NEWSLETTERS →](#)



SUBSCRIPTIONS

[Start a Subscription](#)

[Customer Service](#)

[eEdition](#)

[Vacation Hold](#)

[Pay Your Bill](#)

LEARN MORE

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[News in Education](#)

[Archives](#)

ADVERTISING

[Place a Classified](#)

[Place an Obituary](#)

[Place a Celebration](#)

COPYRIGHT

PRIVACY POLICY

TERMS OF SERVICE

We may use cookies, beacons (also known as pixels), and other similar technologies (together "cookies") to offer you a better experience, serve you more relevant ads, and analyze usage. By continuing to use this application, you consent to the use of cookies in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#).

[ACCEPT COOKIES](#)