



## CARES Act aid totals \$8 million for businesses, nonprofits in town

By LARRY PERSILY  
*Sentinel writer*

Wrangell businesses and nonprofits received more than \$8 million in federal and state CARES Act funds last year. "It absolutely made a difference, but it still wasn't enough," said Carol Rushmore, Wrangell's economic development director.

"It's not making them whole, by any means," Rushmore said Jan. 14. "There are some businesses really hurting."

For many businesses that rely on tourism, there is hope that visitor traffic will pick up this year. "We will see visitors coming to help," but short of pre-pandemic 2019 capacity, she said.

Of last year's \$8 million in assistance, about \$3.57 million went to 80 Wrangell businesses through the AK CARES program, managed by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority. The state allocated \$290 million to the business grant program from the \$1.25 billion in funds Alaska received under last year's federal CARES Act.

More than \$2.6 million of the AK CARES money in Wrangell went to commercial fisherman, said Robert Venables, executive director of the Southeast Conference, an organization of municipal governments and chambers of commerce from throughout the Panhandle.

The program was limited to businesses with no more than 50 employees.

Retail businesses in Wrangell received \$177,000 in AK CARES funds, and \$115,000 went to restaurants and accommodations, according to the Southeast Conference numbers.

Southeast-wide, businesses received \$62 million in AK CARES money, Venables said Jan. 14.

In addition to the money through the state program, direct federal funds totaled \$4.55 million to Wrangell businesses and nonprofits, said Jon Bitner, executive director of the Alaska Small Business Development Center, part of the University of Alaska Anchorage Business Enterprise Institute.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENN MILLER-YANCEY

### Evergreen Elementary lunch assistants

Evergreen Elementary students Sienna Kiesler (left) and Millie Howe (right) helped out with deliveries Monday in the school's new lunch assistant program. The program is a leadership opportunity for students, said Assistant Principal and Lead Teacher Jenn Miller-Yancey. To participate, students need to have a permission form from their parents, as well as a good behavior report when it is their turn to help out.

## City adopts monthly drawing for electric bill rebate

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

The borough will randomly select one resident each month for a one-month rebate of their residential electricity costs. The new program is called "2021: Wrangell's Year of Hope."

"We know this is going to be a hard year economically. This program offers a small amount of relief," Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga said in her write-up presenting the idea to the assembly.

Assembly members approved the program Jan. 12.

"Given the community's economic situation there is great value in the borough offering assistance where possible without placing undue hardship on municipal revenues," Von Barga wrote in her presentation.

This program could cost the borough about \$9,600, at most, based on the highest monthly residential electric bill of \$800. But most electric bills are far lower than that, and Von Barga said a more realistic cost is about \$5,000 for the year.

One person a month will be randomly selected to receive a rebate on the power portion of their utility bill. For the winner in January, the rebate

would apply to their February bill.

To be eligible, the residential customer must be current on their utility bills and have paid the previous month's bill on time. Nobody will be eligible to win twice.

Von Barga said in her summary statement that it might be considered a strange time for the city to be taking on programs that cost money, while the borough is facing increasing expenses and decreasing income. The city also has several delinquent utility and electric accounts totaling tens of thousands of dollars. However, she said, there were two compelling reasons to adopt the Year of Hope program.

"When the borough opened up CARES Act community grants to businesses with the requirement that all sales tax returns had to be current, there was a significant increase in businesses bringing sales tax returns current," the manager said. "(The) administration is hopeful the same pattern will be repeated with this program" as residents bring their utility accounts current to qualify for the monthly drawing.

A second reason, she said: "This is the right time to be generous in our community."

Of that, about \$2.2 million came through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which distributed forgivable loans intended to keep employees on the payroll during pandemic shutdowns and slowdowns. The program sent PPP funds to 115 Wrangell entities, Bitner said.

About \$2.3 million went to 100 Wrangell businesses and nonprofits through the federal Economic Injury Disaster Loans program, Bitner said. The long-term loans offered low interest rates and deferred payments.

Some organizations received funding through more than one of the CARES Act programs, he explained.

Early in the pandemic-induced closures, the borough estimated sales tax receipts could drop by as much as half for the fiscal year that started July 1, 2020, said Wrangell Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga. The borough in Fiscal Year 2020 collected \$1.65 million in sales taxes, comprising about 37% of municipal revenues.

But sales tax revenue for the July-September quarter was down only 20%, she said. Tax returns for the October-December quarter are due by the end of January.

The community may have fared in these two quarters "better than we expected," Von Barga said, but she is concerned that will not continue. She worries that spending slowed into the winter as federal relief checks and expanded unemployment benefits ran out.

"We are concerned that the impacts to the short-

Continued on page 2

# CARES Act aid

Continued from page 1

term and overall economy may be delayed," she said.

If more federal aid flows to the state and out to

municipalities, the borough manager would like to see additional grants to local businesses.

Separate from federal and

state assistance to businesses and nonprofits, the Wrangell Borough received \$3.85 million in CARES Act funds last year as its share of \$568 million in federal aid allocated by the state to cities and boroughs.

Wrangell used the money to

buy a new ambulance and protection equipment for crews, pay for COVID-19 testing for seafood processor workers, buy supplies for the schools, help cover police and fire payrolls, and provide marketing assistance to help the town's economy recover post-pan-

demic. The municipality also used CARES Act funding for a variety of community and business support grants.

Advocating for additional COVID-19 financial support is also part of the borough's legislative priorities for 2021-2022.

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

The Sentinel extends its best wishes to the following people listed on the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce Community Scholarship Birthday Calendar.

**Thursday, Jan. 21:** James Stough Jr., Joshua Davidson and Jessica Rice.

**Friday, Jan. 22:** Grace Williams, Todd Torvend, Riley Blatchley and Lisa Messmer.

**Saturday, Jan. 23:** Jean Petticrew, Madison M. Blackburn, Shawna Bunes, Chris Ottesen and Nicole Jamieson Feurerhelm; *Anniversary:* Steve and Terri Henson.

**Sunday, Jan. 24:** Keith Appleman.

**Monday, Jan 25:** Eric James, Erin Melton Anderson, Ruth Stough, Shannon Barnett and Jamison Houston.

**Tuesday, Jan. 26:** Savannah Smith, Ryker Shilts, Bryson Stough and Gina Simonek.

**Wednesday, Jan 27:** Dacee Gustafson, Mary Shilts and Devyn Johnson; *Anniversary:* Wayne and Marty Kaer.

**Thursday, Jan. 28:** Rebecca Mork.

If you would like to add a birthday or anniversary, call the Sentinel at 874-2301. There is no charge.

## Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

**Friday, Jan. 22**

Oven-fried cod, peas, sunshine salad, rice and vegetable pilaf.

**Monday, Jan. 25**

Hungarian goulash, corn and broccoli casserole, honey orange salad, oatmeal rolls.

**Tuesday, Jan. 26**

Turkey sandwich, split pea soup, potato salad, whole wheat bread.

**Wednesday, Jan. 27**

Crispy chicken, baked sweet potatoes and apples, Danish salad, cornbread.

**Thursday, Jan. 28**

French dip sandwich, peas and carrots, romaine and radish salad, cracked wheat roll.

Please call Wrangell Senior Center at 874-2066 by 10 a.m. for delivery.

Senior van also available to transport seniors to medical appointments reasonable errands like collecting mail, getting prescriptions at pharmacies or other essential need items.

## FERRY

## January Sailings No Ferries Scheduled

Call 874-2021 for information or call 874-3711 or Toll Free 800-642-0066 for recorded information.



## TIDES January 21 - January 27

	High Tides		Low Tides					
	AM Time	PM Ft	AM Time	PM Ft	AM Time	PM Ft		
Jan. 21	06:43	13.6	07:29	10.7	...	...	01:00	4.0
Jan. 22	07:42	13.7	08:47	10.8	00:44	4.9	02:12	3.5
Jan. 23	08:41	14.0	09:53	11.4	01:51	5.6	03:22	2.6
Jan. 24	09:35	14.6	10:48	12.3	03:02	5.7	04:19	1.4
Jan. 25	10:24	15.3	11:35	13.1	04:05	5.4	05:05	0.3
Jan. 26	11:09	16.0	...	...	04:56	4.8	05:45	-0.8
Jan. 27	00:16	13.9	11:50	16.7	05:39	4.2	06:21	-1.6

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**ELKS HOOP SHOOT:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the community center gym: 10 a.m. for 9-year-old boys and girls, 11:30 a.m. for 10 and 11-year-olds, and 1 p.m. for 12 and 13-year-olds. Arrive 15 minutes early to register and sign COVID-19 acknowledgement form.

**MAP TESTING (Measure of Academic Progress),** Jan. 25-28 at the high school and middle school. Testing bell schedule will be in place. Juniors and seniors will not be part of the testing and do not need to arrive at school until their first scheduled period.

**BOROUGH ASSEMBLY WORK SESSION** at 6 p.m. Jan. 26 on 2021-2022 borough goals.

Is the attendance at your meeting or event low? Send information for Roundup to [wrgsent@gmail.com](mailto:wrgsent@gmail.com) or call 874-2301.

## Continuing Events

**AA Meetings: North Star Group Meeting** Tuesdays and Fridays 7 - 8 p.m at St. Philips Episcopal Church.

## The Way We Were In the Sentinel 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

**Jan. 20, 1921**

The Wrangell floating shrimp cannery of which Messrs. Tom Heckman and George Brown of Ketchikan are proprietors is now in operation off Shakes Point. Already there are between 20 and 30 pickers employed, and the indications are that within a very short time there will be at least 40 pickers regularly employed. The cannery is on a 120-foot scow, and there is a cold storage vault aboard. After being picked from the shell, the shrimp are put up in five-pound cans and placed in cold storage to await shipment. The cans are packed in ice and shipped to buyers in Seattle, where they are kept in cold storage until marketed. For the present, only fresh shrimp will be shipped, but it is probable that later in the year regular canning will be done. Picking shrimp is easy work and a profitable occupation for young people. It is piece work, and at first the pickers are necessarily slow, but they soon get on the knack of extracting shrimp from the shell with dispatch. The pickers have a comfortable place to work where even in the cold weather there is no exposure. There is every indication that Wrangell's new industry is a sound business proposition and one that will be a valuable asset to the town.

**Jan. 25, 1946**

The Wrangell Chamber of Commerce at its regular meeting yesterday noon went on the record protesting a new proposal from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to extend the closed fishing area around the mouth of streams from 500 to 1,000 yards. After

considerable discussion it was brought out that, in opinion of chamber members, such extension would serve no purpose toward preservation of pinks and chums and, as one put it, "would only increase the number of illegal fish caught and give the fisheries agent a longer run in which to catch an offender."

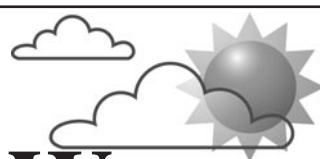
**Jan. 21, 1971**

The frozen Stikine River has lured some adventurers from Wrangell who plan to use the river as a freeway - sort of - for their snowmobiles. John Ellis, Rich Kaer, Bernie Hunter, John and Judy Baker and Earl Shilts went by tug, the Alaska 4, on Thursday to the river mouth and plan to zip upriver on the little machines, which have a track and a ski arrangement and can skim over the ice like little cars. They put their snowmobiles in small boats and towed the small boats across the strait to the river, where they went ashore and got their machines running. The snow machines

are becoming popular in Wrangell. Watch for Chuck and Yvonne Traylor to be whizzing around on them, too.

**Jan. 18, 1996**

Front Street's Wrangell Drug is now Stikine Drug. On Jan. 1, pharmacist Stephen Dahn and his wife Martha bought the store from Bob and Kathleen Fisher. The Fishers moved to Wrangell from Petersburg in 1954 to open the store. Then in 1976, they went into partnership with James and Elsie Nolan. Both Nolans are now deceased. The Dahns and their three boys - John, 8; Mark, 6; and Luke, 4 - moved here from Libby, Mont., in October. They are not new to Alaska. From 1990 to 1993, the family lived in Anchorage. They also spent several years in Saudi Arabia. Dahn said they moved from Libby, population 10,000, to get back to small-town living. Dahn likes Wrangell. "The people are just awesome here," he said. The Fishers plan to stay in Wrangell.



## Wrangell Weather

Date	High	Low
Jan. 11	43	39
Jan. 12	45	34
Jan. 13	39	34
Jan. 14	47	38
Jan. 15	43	41
Jan. 16	45	41
Jan. 17	44	39
Jan. 18	45	37



## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Jan. 21	8:04a	3:58p	07:57h
Jan. 22	8:02a	4:00p	08:02h
Jan. 23	8:01a	4:02p	08:05h
Jan. 24	7:59a	4:04p	08:09h
Jan. 25	7:57a	4:06p	08:13h
Jan. 26	7:56a	4:08p	08:16h
Jan. 27	7:54a	4:10p	08:20h
Jan. 28	7:52a	4:13p	08:24h

# Assembly accepts Decker resignation

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

The borough assembly accepted the resignation of member Julie Decker at its Jan. 11 meeting. Decker has served on the assembly for seven years. Her letter of resignation explained she is stepping away from the position to grieve the loss of her two children.

Sig and Helen Decker, 21-years-old and 19-years-old, died in a car accident in Petersburg last July. The tragedy shocked the community, which came together to support the Deckers, to mourn, and to remember Sig and Helen. Decker said that she is stepping away from the assembly to spend more time with her husband and to focus on healing.

"During our darkest hour, Wrangell and others in our Alaska Fishing Family immediately stepped forward to help us survive what is the hardest challenge of our lives," Decker wrote. "For this, we will be eternally grateful. ... I am resigning from all of my volunteer board and committee positions in order to focus on the hard work of grieving in the coming years. Gig and I are different people now. We need time to heal as well as to better understand what our lives hold for us now."

Decker thanked the assembly and borough staff for the positive experience working alongside them. In her letter, she also encouraged assembly members to continue to be respectful of one another, even



"I know the assembly still has difficult decisions ahead of it. I appreciate your service at this difficult period, and that you are willing to put in the time to understand the facts and try to make the best decisions for us all. Good luck to you."

- Julie Decker

when disagreeing. Having a governing body that shows respectful discourse and honest effort to represent the commu-

nity is not something to be taken for granted, she said.

"I know the assembly still has difficult decisions ahead of it," Decker wrote. "I appreciate your service at this difficult period, and that you are willing to put in the time to understand the facts and try to make the best decisions for us all. Good luck to you."

The assembly will appoint a resident to fill Decker's term until October. Letters of interest are due by 4 p.m. Monday, Jan. 26, and may be emailed to the borough clerk at clerk@wrangell.com.

In a heartfelt thank you for Decker's service, Mayor Steve Prysunka said he was sad to see her leave. She has been an asset in many areas of public service, he said, both on the assembly and the economic development committee. He also praised her for continuing to work and volunteer even after her family's tragedy.

"While she was going through everything she was still thinking about her community. Our heart collectively breaks for them, for Julie and Gig, and we'll always be there for them for sure. We just appreciate everything that she's given us over these years, and the time and commitment she's made not just to our community, but to the fishing community in an incredible way. Thank you, Julie."

Prysunka teared up and called for a five-minute recess before continuing the meeting.

## City says water quality continues to improve

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Levels of a disinfectant byproduct in Wrangell's water supply are still a little above federal standards, the municipality reported Jan. 11, but are in decline.

The presence of haloacetic acids (HAA5) were announced in late September. The levels were triple federal Environmental Protection Agency standards in the regular quarterly test in August, then down to double the standard in a special test in October, the city reported.

November's test sample for HAA5 came in at 70 parts per billion (ppb), just above the EPA standard of 60 ppb.

In response to the presence of HAA5, the city's water department took several steps to lower the amount of organic material in the water. This included slowing down the water treatment process to allow more contact time between the water and the ozonation and filtration systems. The city will also be conducting more regular testing for the first few months of 2021.

The city's Jan. 11 press release explained that HAA5 is a type of disinfection byproduct. It is formed when any remaining organic material in water combines with a disinfectant like chlorine. The presence of excessive HAA5 in the water is not an emergency, the city said, adding that the EPA has indicated it takes years of drinking water with HAA5 to experience symptoms, such as an increased risk of cancer or problems with the central nervous system, liver or kidneys.

Anyone with concerns is encouraged to use charcoal filters for their drinking water, or to drink bottled water. The press release also encourages the elderly, pregnant women or people with compromised immune systems to seek advice from their health care providers.

"Wrangell's 'official' HAA5 level is based on an annual running average called the Locational Running Annual Average (LRAA)," the city's press release said. "The November 2020 sample is averaged with the results from August 2020, and the previous two quarterly samples from May and February 2020 to determine the LRAA. The new LRAA including the November sample results is 79.9 ppb."

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# Letter to the Editor

## Run for office is the answer, not a recall

To the editor:

The Jan. 14 Sentinel had an article stating that a group of people in Wrangell want to recall Mayor Steve Prysunka because of the mask mandate. The mask mandate was approved by the borough assembly and the mayor, so Prysunka was not solely responsible for the decision.

Perhaps the non-mask group would like to recall the borough assembly and the mayor. In that case, I would expect to see members of the recall group run for assembly and mayor in the

next election. If they dislike the politics of the present assembly and mayor, the way to change it is to run for office in the next election.

As for not wearing a mask, my non-existent medical degree does not compare to the education and knowledge of the U.S. Surgeon General and thousands who recommend wearing a mask to protect oneself and others from the COVID-19 virus. If my wearing a mask prevents one person from getting the virus, then the hassle is well worth it.

Lastly, members of the assembly and the mayor devote hours and hours of their own time on city business, without any pay except the gratitude of Wrangell's citizens. I greatly appreciate their service.

Ron Merritt

# City acknowledges little chance of state funding for projects

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Acknowledging Alaska's shortage of money, the Wrangell Borough Assembly has put together a list of priority projects for state funding "should the fiscal climate change."

Until then, "(the city) understands there is little to no availability of funding for local capital needs," said the backup material for the assembly workshop Jan. 12 to compile state and federal legislative priorities for 2021-2022.

In putting together the list — just in case money becomes available — the assembly considered some much-needed work at the schools, in particular life and health safety improvements.

But given the state's budget deficit, the city administration is considering the compilation of community needs more of a "wish list" than a "to-do" list.

The most expensive capital improvement project listed is rehabilitation of the water reservoir dam system, at \$50 million. Rehabilitation or replacement of the Public Safety Building is estimated at \$2 million to \$10 million. Other capital improvement projects on the list include upgrades to the solid waste transfer station, replacement of the diesel generation power plant, and water main replacements under Ash Street and Zimovia Highway.

After further discussion at the workshop, the assembly agreed that life and health upgrades at the schools should be prioritized as well. High school and middle school fire alarm upgrades are needed, Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga said.

The fire alarm upgrades have been submitted for funding for

several years under the state Education Department capital projects program, "and it never moved up because it didn't score high enough, because there wasn't any work done at the local level to bump it up," she said. "By that I mean there wasn't any engineering or design work done to make it shovel-ready."

Assembly Member Patty Gilbert, who also serves on the school board, suggested the assembly add renovations to the high school elevator, as well. The elevator's hydraulic ram lost its fluid and can no longer operate, Josh Blatchley, school district maintenance director, reported late last summer. The district has been considering options for repairing or replacing the elevator. "Josh's hope was that we could find a way to reduce the expense of getting that elevator replaced or repaired," Amber Al-Haddad, the city's capital facilities director, said at the assembly workshop. "I think it's going to come down to us having to use the full \$210,000 that we have budgeted, or a full replacement. ... It's critical that we return that elevator to operation as soon as possible."

Ryan Howe, teacher and assembly member, said he was glad to see that the school projects getting attention. Von Barga proposed the assembly amend its draft priority list to

combine the projects under life and health safety upgrades for the middle school and high school.

Mayor Steve Prysunka said he liked the idea, and said he wanted these projects moved higher on the priority list if possible.

"We need to make sure those projects are getting on that list," Prysunka said. "You just can't mess around with our kids, and a fire alarm system is just crucial. ... You also need a darn elevator there for kids that are handicapped, or the public, or teachers to move up and down."

Beyond construction and repair projects, Wrangell's other state legislative priorities for the near future include supporting reforms to the Alaska Marine Highway System, calling for sustainable management of the sea otter and shellfish populations, and supporting the adoption of a sustainable budget plan at the state level, including the Permanent Fund dividend.

Federal legislative priorities include calling on Congress to pass an additional COVID-19 relief bill, seeking more funding for dam rehabilitation at the federal level, and advocating continued support for federal payments to communities in lieu of taxes on Forest Service land and for the Secure Rural Schools funding program.



**WRANGELL SENTINEL**  
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wrgsent@gmail.com

# Editorial

## Have a list ready, just in case

It's no secret that the state of Alaska is short of enough revenues to provide the services its communities need. And until the legislature, the governor and members of the public make hard decisions about taxes and the size of the Permanent Fund dividend, there will not be much state money available to flow to cities and boroughs for construction and repair projects.

However, there is always a chance of political compromise that could create opportunities for dealing with backlogged maintenance projects and repairs statewide.

The Wrangell Borough Assembly was realistic last week at its work session on legislative priorities, where they heard from the borough administration that "there is little to no availability of funding for local capital needs." Still, the administration and assembly put together a list of priority projects for state funding "should the fiscal climate change."

Sadly, the list is long: Wrangell's water reservoir needs rehab at an estimated \$50 million. Repairing or replacing the public safety building could cost as much as \$10 million. The schools need several life and health upgrades, such as the fire alarm systems and high school elevator.

Maybe additional federal funding will come to the state and municipalities from COVID-19 relief legislation. Or maybe the Alaska Legislature will act on Gov. Mike Dunleavy's proposal for a statewide bond issue of as much as \$350 million to put people to work on projects as soon as later this year.

Whatever hope there is, Wrangell officials were smart on two counts last week: Don't expect any financial help from the state, but keep a list ready just in case.

— Wrangell Sentinel

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# Recall Dunleavy group goes after more signatures

By Sentinel staff

The social-distancing protocols of the pandemic severely cut into their petition signature gathering efforts last year, but now the Recall Dunleavy group wants to reengage Alaskans and win a spot on the ballot.

The group, which started its

effort in July 2019, held a virtual press conference Jan. 19 to start a renewed push to reach the 71,252 signatures of registered voters to force a statewide special election to recall Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

The group already has close to 50,000 signatures, and wants to exceed the legal minimum of 71,252 as a cushion for signatures that are rejected by the state Division of Elections.

Dunleavy's term will expire in December 2022.

The group said at the Zoom

press event that organizers hope to gather enough signatures "within the next several weeks, paving the way for a special election later this year."

The signature drive has been mostly dormant since last fall, hampered by the inability to collect signatures at in-person events.

The recall effort comes down to accountability, recall volunteer Pat Race, of Juneau, said in the group's Jan. 19 announcement. "If we don't do something about this pattern of illegal activity and bad faith governance, if we don't hold [the governor] accountable, no one will."

Recall supporters cite Dunleavy's proposed deep budget cuts to state services in his first

year in office in 2019, along with other executive actions they say violate his constitutional responsibilities.

Information about signing the

recall petition is available at the Recall Dunleavy website [www.recalldunleavy.org](http://www.recalldunleavy.org), or to request a petition to sign, call 866-744-6425.

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## Fisherman fined for crabbing violation

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

A Wrangell fisherman has been fined \$250 for a commercial fishing violation, according to state trooper and court documents. According to the state trooper report, Steven Gile was issued a summons Dec. 28 for unlawful storage of commercial Dungeness crab gear. Gile had failed to remove his gear from the water after the season closed, the report alleged.

Gile was arraigned in the Wrangell state court on Jan. 6 for the non-criminal violation. He pled guilty, according to a judgment provided by the court. Deputy Magistrate Leanna Nash said the violation carries a maximum fine of \$3,000, though because of Gile's lack of violations the court assessed a \$250 fine plus a \$20 police training surcharge. An additional consideration, Nash said, was that Sgt. Cody Litster, state wildlife trooper from Petersburg, proposed a lesser fine.

Gile is the permit holder for the Defiant, according to the trooper report.

## COVID slowed down shipyard hauls in 2020

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

"Wrangell has become a center for vessel repair and services with the help of local investment and community support," said the United Fishermen of Alaska's 2020 annual report "Commercial Fishing Facts."

The Wrangell boatyard is in its 15th year, and though the pandemic's economic hit to the fishing industry slowed down its business, the community facility continues to get noticed.

"We've got a really diverse bunch of skills out there," said Wrangell Harbormaster Steve Miller.

In addition to seven marine businesses that lease space at the borough-owned property, at least a couple dozen more work at the waterfront site. The lifts at the yard had been pulling as many as 400 boats a year before the pandemic put an economic strain on fishing boat owners, Miller said Jan. 15. Pull-outs dropped to 347 in 2020.

"It was all going up until COVID hit," he said. "That slowed things down a little bit."

However, that's still almost 30% better than 270 hauls in 2016, the 10th year of operations at the reclaimed site of the former downtown sawmill.

The yard added a 300-ton lift about six year ago to its 150-ton lift, expanding the market by accommodating larger boats.

The annual UFA report, released last month, said Wrangell is homeport for 228 fishing vessels, of which 212 are locally owned. The statistics in the report are from 2018. The report did not break down the size of the boats.

There were more than 210 permit holders in Wrangell in 2018, of which 148 fished that year, with an additional 205 crew licenses issued to residents, the UFA report said. Those Wrangell-based permit holders landed \$12 million worth of seafood, with more than 85% of the catch offloaded in Wrangell where two processing plants in town paid out about \$2 million in wages, according to Alaska Department of Labor records.

A little more than half the catch by Wrangell boats was salmon, the UFA report said.

The Wrangell Borough received \$307,000 as the municipality's share of the state's raw fisheries business tax in Fiscal Year 2019, which included the summer 2018 fishing season.

Statewide, the 2018 commercial fishing industry brought in \$2 billion, shared between 8,699 permit holders who fished in 2018. The state issued more than 21,300 crew member licenses. Processors paid about \$450 million in wages to 27,000 workers, about 70% from out of state in the annual draw for summer jobs.

## SEARHC urges registration as more vaccine on the way

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

The Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium is encouraging the public to register for their COVID-19 vaccination shot, as the latest allotment of doses has arrived and more will be on the way.

SEARHC is providing vaccines first to people at least 65 years old and to frontline essential workers, according to a Jan. 19 press release. However, anyone can register regardless of where they fit in the availability sequence for their community, and they will be notified when their turn comes up.

More than 720 people had registered in Wrangell as of Tuesday afternoon, said Aaron Angerman of SEARHC.

"SEARHC has made registering for the vaccination quick and easy," the press release said. "A valid email address is required to sign up. Registration can be completed in approximately three minutes

using a laptop, tablet or smartphone."

The registration form asks for name and age, contact information, and whether the person is a SEARHC patient or beneficiary. It also asks about any factors such as asthma, diabetes or heart conditions.

Once registered, the information is sent to their community's local clinic, Angerman said. As the next rounds of vaccine supplies arrive, those registered will receive an email to schedule an appointment to get their shots.

"Getting vaccinated is an important step in protecting the health and well-being of your family and your community," Dr. Elliot Bruhl, SEARHC senior vice president and chief medical officer, said in the press release. "With a list of registered patients, our providers will work to administer vaccines as quickly as we receive them."

To register, visit [covid19.searhc.org](http://covid19.searhc.org).

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# Schools work to fix internet problems

By Sentinel staff

Wrangell schools were continuing to experience internet connection problems as of Tuesday afternoon, after first alerting the public to the trouble in a Facebook post last Friday.

Internet and phone systems were affected, according to the post, as was Monday's school board meeting, which endured connection issues at several points through the meeting between board members.

According to information on the district's website, a router died. "The primary router for Wrangell Public Schools died Friday and has left the district without Internet Service," a pop-up notice on the district's website said. "Currently, the technology department, along with its community partners are working to restore service."

# Tribal groups oppose state split of social services department

JUNEAU (AP) - A proposal to split the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services into two organizations has been criticized by health care workers, social service organizations and tribal governments.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy announced the reorganization plan last month, saying the department had become too large and its administration too burdensome to operate as a single entity, the Juneau Empire reported Jan. 14.

Dunleavy issued an executive order to establish the Department of Health and the Department of Family and Community Services.

The order will be submitted in the legislative session and must be approved by a majority vote in a joint session of the Legislature to go into effect.

Richard Chalvey Eesh Peterson, president of Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, expressed concern the reorganization would complicate providing services for child welfare programs, particularly because the majority of children under state care are Alaska Native.

During testimony Jan. 13 to the state House Health and Social Services Committee, Peterson said Tlingit and Haida traditionally partnered with the state in social services administration. "It is hard to discuss the bifurcation of DHSS without talking about negative impacts," Peterson said.

The state and certain tribal governments reached a 2017 agreement to work together to-

ward better child welfare programs, but Peterson said there was no outreach from the state to Tlingit and Haida, which represents about 32,000 tribal citizens.

Health department spokesperson Clinton Bennett said in an email Jan. 13 that the reorganization plan fulfills the

# Annual Hoop Shoot this Saturday

By Sentinel staff

The event is a month later than most years and COVID-19 safety rules will make it different too, but the goal is the same: Wrangell youth trying to score in the annual Elks Hoop Shoot on Saturday.

The competition is set to start at the community center gym at 10 a.m. for 9-year-old boys and girls, 11:30 a.m. for 10 and 11-year-olds, and 1 p.m. for 12 and 13-year-olds. Event organizers are asking kids to arrive 15 minutes early to register.

Every participant will be given his or her own basketball to shoot and to keep, said organizer Jeff Jabusch. Not sharing basketballs during the event is one of the many accommodations to keep people COVID safe, said Jabusch, now in his 40th year coordinating the Hoop Shoot.

The event usually is held in December, but it seemed better to delay it past the holidays and hold it during the normally slower month of January, he said. "We're trying to do something" for the community's youngsters.

In addition to everyone taking home a free basketball, winners in each category will

be awarded trophies immediately after their age group is finished shooting. Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, there will be no national Hoop Shoot this year.

All participants, spectators and volunteers will be required to wear masks and sanitize their hands before entering the gym. They will also be required to remain 6 feet apart. Competitors will be required to keep their masks on at all times except when they are shooting.

Spectators will be limited to two per shooter, and will need to register when they enter the gym, Jabusch said.

A parent or guardian will be required to sign an Elks Hoop Shoot COVID-19 acknowledgement form for each competitor as well as for themselves. The form will be available at the gym. If a parent or guardian cannot attend, the form is available on the Wrangell Parks and Recreation website, or by calling Jabusch at 874-2083.

The Stikine Sportsmen Association and Wrangell Elks Lodge contributed toward the basketballs, which were provided by Angerman's, Jabusch said.

conditions of the 2017 agreement.

"There is no substantive change or impact to the compact with the departmental split," Bennett said. "All rights and responsibilities as outlined

in the Compact remain unchanged."

Tanana Chiefs Conference Chairman P.J. Simon said the organization was willing to work with the administration on an alternative to reduce bu-

reaucracry, but the current proposal would negatively affect social services.

The proposed split would produce "worse outcomes than the status quo," Simon said.

# Wrangell Medical Center Emergency Department Opening February 12, 2021



SEARHC is committed to providing high-quality healthcare for our friends and neighbors in Wrangell by offering improved and expanding services in a brand-new facility.

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- Rehabilitation services including physical, occupational and speech therapies
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## New address

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## Phone number

907.874.7000



**Classifieds  
deadline is  
Tuesday at  
noon**

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F: 907-874-2303

Email:

wrgsent@gmail.com

# Lady Wolves preparing for unique season

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Lady Wolves are preparing for a truly unique basketball season this year.

Not only has COVID-19 required the high school to create mitigation plans to keep players safe, but the team has had to get creative to find enough players to even form a team. However, after decisions by the state school

sports association and the school board to ease the eligibility rules, the season will move forward for the girls' team.

Christy Good is head coach for the Lady Wolves this year, her first season in the position. She said Wrangell has never

had a situation like this before. The high school only has a few girls willing and able to play this year, she said. In an email to school district leadership, and

discussed at Monday night's school board meeting, High School Activities Director Trisa Rooney went into more detail.

"We have 4 high school girls," she wrote. "5 if you count one that is injured and we are unsure if she will be able to play at all during the season."

Bob Davis, lead teacher and assistant principal for Wrangell's secondary schools, explained that three other high school girls who would normally be interested in playing

**"Only 2 eighth grade girls want to play. That leaves us with 6 to 7 girls. We are asking for an exception to this policy for this year."**

- Trisa Rooney  
High School Activities Director



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Jamie Early readies to catch the ball during the Lady Wolves' practice on Monday.

were out with leg injuries.

Rooney said they petitioned the region and the Alaska School Activities Association for a waiver to allow eighth grade girls join the Lady Wolves. The waiver has been granted, Rooney said, but some issues still remain for Wrangell hosting a girls' basketball team.

"The problem we now have is the school board policy states

that we have to have 8 in order to have the school sponsor a team," Rooney wrote. "Only 2 eighth grade girls want to play. That leaves us with 6 to 7 girls. We are asking for an exception to this policy for this year."

Upon some further discussion, a one-time exception to school policy was unani-

mously approved for the Lady Wolves. This will allow the team to be sponsored by the district, even with less than eight players.

"It looks like we're going to get a season, which is good," the coach said. "It's going to be a strange season. We're living in strange times."



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Adeline Andrews warms up both dribbling arms at practice Monday evening.

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**WRANGELL SENTINEL**

# Siri saves Haines man trapped under icy woodpile

By KYLE CLAYTON  
Chilkat Valley News

HAINES - Mark Kelly, 50, manager of the Funny Farm lodge north of Haines relied on a weak Wi-Fi signal and his iPhone's Siri voice command app to call for help after he was buried and pinned underneath a pile of snow, ice and firewood on Jan. 4.

Kelly was listening to a podcast and collecting firewood to feed the boiler of the lodge on Mosquito Lake Road, 30 miles north of Haines, at around 11:30 p.m. Several feet of ice and snow had collected on the woodpile to the point that a cornice had developed. Kelly, a former heliski guide who has been buried in avalanches several times, recognized it as a hazard, but said he ignored his better judgment.

"It was late and I just needed one more log," Kelly said. "There were a couple of loose logs under the dangerous snow overhang that I had been up to now, purposely avoiding.

"The pile suddenly collapsed and I was smashed flat, pinned under a blue tarp with several feet of snow, ice and wood on top of me. It was nearly midnight, quite cold, and I was completely trapped and unable to move the slightest bit."

He said he tried his best to remain calm and think about how he could unbury himself, searching for a "key to the room," a difficult task despite his previous experiences of being buried alive.

"It's an entirely different mindset when you're going through this turbulent ride in an avalanche. You know there's a plan set in motion to come and get you," Kelly said. "But with this, in an instant, I was just trapped. I fly solo out here. There's no reason anyone would be looking for me."

Kelly was wearing indoor clothes and said he remained buried for nearly 45 minutes before he remembered his phone was in the breast pocket of his flannel shirt. He was unable to reach it with his hands, which were stuck at his sides as he lay in the fetal position. His firewood was stacked on pallets, which allowed air to flow into the space he was buried.

"It was hard to breathe because I was on my side and my shoulder

Continued on page 9

# COVID-19 Vaccination Update



### Keeping you and your families safe during the COVID-19 pandemic is our top priority.

We want you to know that SEARHC is working closely with our state's leaders and public health officials to secure COVID-19 vaccines for every person in Southeast Alaska. Vaccinating everyone will take time and be dependent on vaccine availability.

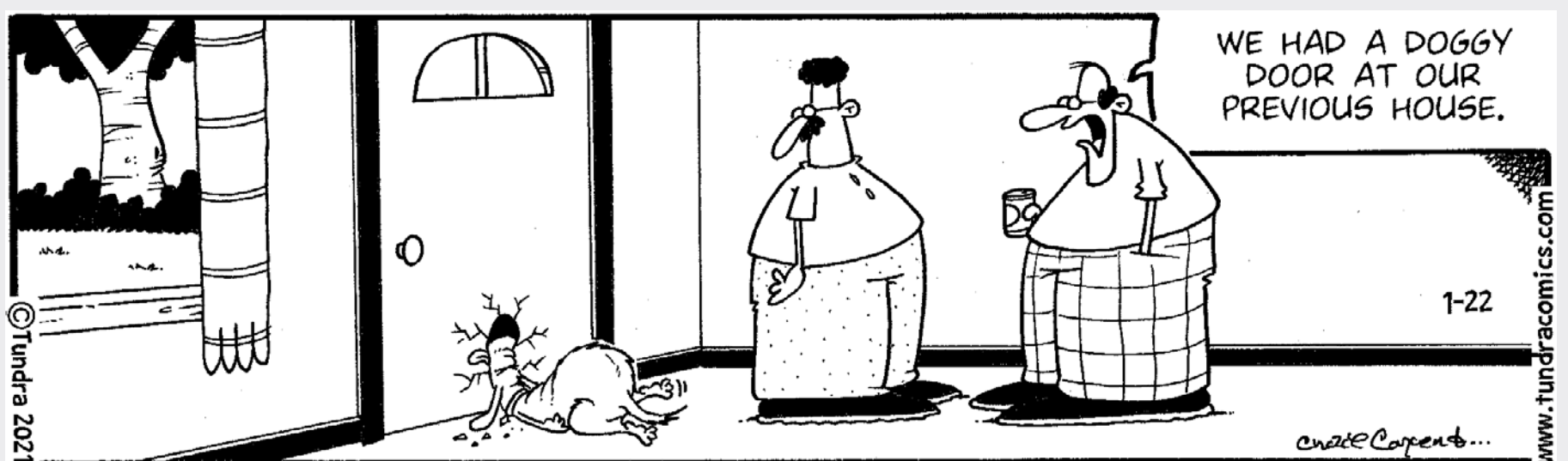
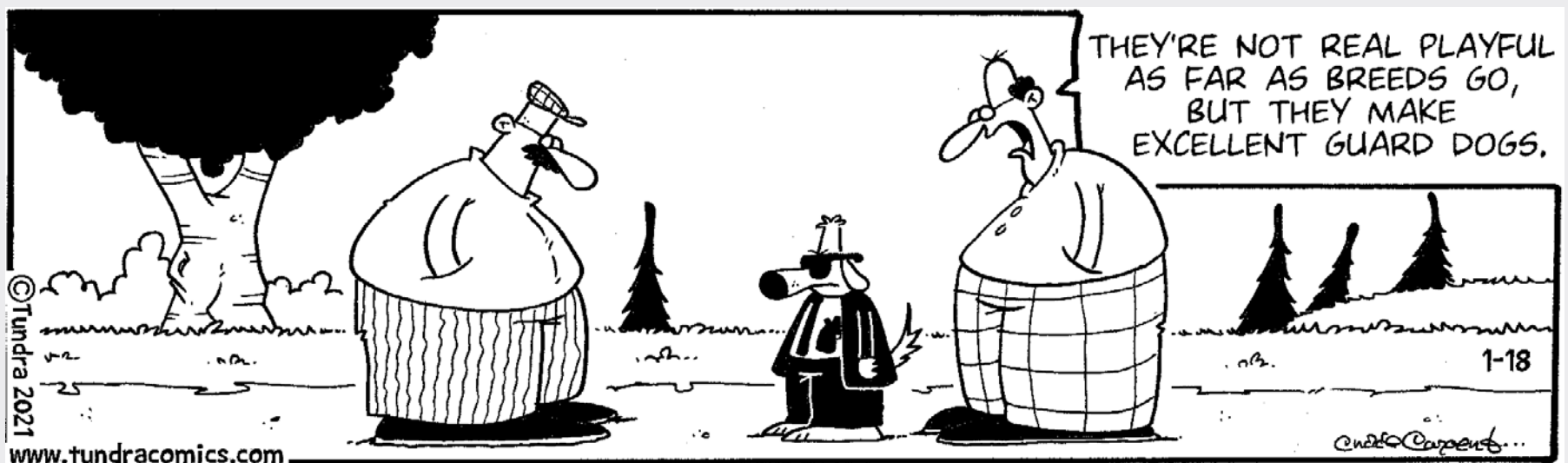
The COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed based on sequencing guidelines developed by state, national and global vaccination specialists and approved by SEARHC's medical directors. For more information on sequencing, visit [covid19.searhc.org](https://covid19.searhc.org).



People interested in receiving the vaccines are strongly encouraged to sign up online.

After registration, an email will be sent to schedule a COVID vaccine appointment, based on sequence designation. Please watch for announcements on the vaccine availability.

**SEARHC** | healthy is here.





The Chilkat was built for the territory and went into service less than two years before statehood. The photo shows the ferry at sea in May 1957.

PHOTO COURTESY OF  
THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM



## First Alaska state ferry sinks at Anacortes dock

By Sentinel staff

The first ship built for what would become Alaska's state ferry system sank Jan. 13 in a wind-storm and dock collapse in Anacortes, Washington, where the decommissioned Chilkat had been moored to a concrete floating pier.

The ship sank about 85 miles north of Tacoma, where it was built in 1957 at a cost of about \$300,000 to provide daily service between Juneau, Haines and Skagway.

When Alaska entered the union on Jan. 3, 1959, the Chilkat became the first Alaska state ferry, later joined by four larger vessels that were built after voters later that year approved a bond issue to pay for construction of the fleet, according to the Alaska Department of Transportation website.

The Alaska Marine Highway System sold the 99-foot-long vessel in 1988 to a seafood company that used the ship as a scallop fishery tender.

The Chilkat capsized shortly after 55 mph winds

and strong tidal forces sank the pier, the U.S. Coast Guard said, as reported by KOMO TV news in Seattle. No injuries were reported, and two other vessels tied at the dock were saved from sinking. The Chilkat is under 40 feet of water, the station reported.

The ferry could carry 59 passengers and 15 vehicles, and was built with a bow ramp that allowed passengers and vehicles to offload on an unimproved beach as well as a dock.

## Siri saves Haines man

Continued from page 8

ders were pushed together and my chest was compressed," Kelly said. "Fortunately, after a while I realized that my phone was in the chest pocket of my flannel shirt and eventually, I was able to voice dial a couple of neighbors for help."

Kelly said he misdialled a few times, but after several tries he reached neighbor Linda Huber who missed his first call because she was showering.

"He called up (late) at night. I thought, 'That's kind of strange.' I called him right back and he said this is Mark. I said, 'Mark who?' His voice sounded very, very different."

Huber called 911 and by the time she arrived, neighbors Shelby Flemming and Charles Peep had also responded after receiving Kelly's call.

Flemming said she initially thought Kelly had been buried under snow that had fallen from the roof, but couldn't see any obvious berm. She said Kelly's dog, Dude, was frantically running around and howling. Kelly heard Flemming trying to calm his dog and began shouting to alert them to his location. Flemming said once they realized where Kelly was buried and removed the snow, she knew they

would need a knife to cut through the tarp.

"I had to run inside to get a knife because he was pressed under a tarp and there was three or four feet of snow on the tarp. There was no way of digging out all the snow. He was cocooned in the fetal position under the tarp, totally pressed down by it," Flemming said. "He had no way of moving. It was pretty scary. I don't think anybody would know where he was if he didn't have his cell phone on him."

Kelly said he emerged pretty banged up with few scrapes and bruises, and what he thinks are a couple cracked ribs.

When he was initially trapped, he said he not only assessed his situation, but also his life and day's events, which to him reinforced the idea that helping others is essential to living a good life. Earlier that day, he housed and fed a homeless person who had been camping in the area.

"He showed up at the (Funny Farm's) coffee shop. He was wearing cotton that was all wet and had chunks of ice stuck to him. He was cold and was having a little bit of a hard time breathing. I made him some food and got him warm. I gave

## Police report

### Monday, Jan. 11

Vacation check requested.  
Domestic violence order papers granted.  
Dog complaint.  
Failure to stop for a school bus.

### Tuesday, Jan. 12

Power outage.  
Citizen assist.  
Courtesy transport.  
Bear complaint.  
Disturbance.  
Minor in possession charge.  
Summons service.  
Citizen assist.  
Welfare check.

### Wednesday, Jan. 13

Disturbance.  
Subpoena service.  
Agency assist: Court.

### Thursday, Jan. 14

Citizen assist.

### Friday, Jan. 15

Theft of a firearm.  
Courtesy transport.  
Theft of services.  
Agency assist: Adult Protective Services.  
Fireworks complaint.

### Saturday, Jan. 16

Noise complaint.  
Motor vehicle accident: Hit deer.  
Agency assist: Wrangell Medical Center.

### Sunday, Jan. 17

Driving under the influence arrest.  
Agency assist: Wrangell Medical Center.  
Harrassment.  
Traffic.  
Civil paper service.  
Agency assist: Forest Service officer.  
Traffic: Verbal warning for no tail lights.

During this reporting period there were five agency assists to the Hoonah Police Department and two EMT calls.

him a room with a bed, washed his clothes."

Kelly said as he was buried, he wondered what he would be thinking, in what could have

been his last moments, if he had turned the man away.

"As I lay there trapped and hurting, my mind was free of guilt and regret which enabled

me to sort out a solution," Kelly said. "Be helpful. Be kind. The rewards may not be immediate or apparent until a moment like this, but they are there."

## Sealaska will get out of logging business

JUNEAU (AP) - Sealaska Corp. has announced plans to get out of the logging business after more than 40 years.

The Juneau-based Alaska Native corporation announced the change Jan. 11 in a sign of Southeast Alaska's economic transition away from logging, CoastAlaska public radio reported.

The transition is not expected to affect future profits or dividends, but is part of a long-term strategy to generate "sustainable value" for shareholders, the corporation said.

Sealaska CEO Anthony Mallott said in a statement that logging created value for the corporation's shareholders. "But we've now built an organization that can thrive well into the future, and that means engaging in activities with more enduring benefits for our communities," Mallott said.

The corporation was created by the Alaska

Native Claims Settlement Act and has about 22,000 shareholders, most living in or holding historic ties to Southeast Alaska.

Sealaska has been a major player in the region's timber economy with more than 562 square miles in its portfolio. In 2015, the corporation began logging lands received through a transfer approved by Congress of more than 109 square miles of Tongass National Forest, largely around Prince of Wales Island.

Environmentalists opposed to logging in old-growth forests welcomed the company's decision.

Meredith Trainor, executive director of the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, lauded Mallott and board Chair Joe Nelson for "visionary leadership of moving Sealaska away from logging and toward other ways of creating benefit for their people."



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# Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH  
Fisheries columnist

## Survey finds 98% of Alaska, West Coast fishermen hurt by pandemic economy

The single biggest hit to fishermen from the COVID-19 virus is lower dock prices, according to Alaska and West Coast harvesters, and 98% said their businesses have been badly bashed by the pandemic.

That's based on survey results compiled by Ocean Strategies, a public relations firm that focuses on fisheries that helped profile the Pacific region for a larger federal study.

Nearly 400 fishermen responded to the short, confidential survey launched last November, said senior consultant Hannah Heimbuch of Kodiak.

"NOAA uses any information they collect on economics to report to Congress on how the industry is being impacted, the major trends they are seeing, and then that informs the decisions that Congress or other government agencies might make in response to those trends," she said.

In the survey, 82% said fishing is their primary source of income and 91% said their revenues have decreased by 15% to 100% since last January. A whopping 70% said they stopped fishing last year; 65% stopped for three months or less.

Just 18% reported being back to full fishing activity compared to 2019, and 63% said they did not see any change in the number of crew they employed.

The Alaska/West Coast responses are included in a comprehensive report released last week titled "Updated Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Crisis on the U.S. Commercial Seafood and Recreational For-Hire/Charter Industries January-July 2020," intended to help businesses and communities "assess losses and inform long-term resilience strategies."

The easy-to-read report states that global COVID-19 protection measures that began last March contributed to an "almost-immediate" hit to seafood sales. The year started strongly with a 3% increase in fish landing revenues; however, they declined each month showing a 19% decrease in March and then a 45% decrease by July.

"This translates to a 29% decrease (in revenues) across those seven months, as compared to five-year averages and adjusted for inflation," the re-

Continued on page 11

## CLASSIFIED/LEGALS

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3-BEDROOM, 1 1/2 -bath townhouse in Wrangell, quiet neighborhood. \$1,200 per month plus tax, 1-year lease. Call 907-738-6639. (3X1-28p22)

### HELP WANTED

OFFICE MANAGER FOR WRANGELL SENTINEL: Advertising sales, circulation management, bookkeeping, customer service, and writing Wrangell Sentinel weekly history feature. Job is three-quarters to full time. Salary dependent on experience and skills. Start date in February or early March. Contact Larry Persily, paper@alaskan.com, 907-351-8276. (tfnhdh)

### HELP WANTED

JOHNSON'S BUILDING SUPPLY is looking for a part-time yard employee to help with customers, freight and deliveries. Work schedule: Tuesday through Saturday. Pay DOE. Applications can be picked up at Johnson's Building Supply. (2x1-28b36)

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### LEGAL

Pursuant to the City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, Borough Charter, Sec. 4, public notice is hereby given that the following ordinance listed by title only has been adopted by the Borough Assembly. Such ordinances are currently on file in the office of the Borough Clerk and may be inspected upon request.

**ORDINANCE No. 982 OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, AMENDING THE ZONING MAP TO EFFECT A CHANGE TO LOTS 1A, 1B AND 1C, ETOLIN-SPRUCE SUBDIVISION FROM MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL TO SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

**EMERGENCY ORDINANCE No. 985 OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA EXTENDING THE BOROUGH'S DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY RELATED TO THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND GRANTING AUTHORIZATION TO TAKE ACTIONS NECESSARY TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH DURING THE EMERGENCY THROUGH MARCH 31, 2021.**

Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk  
City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish: January 21, 2021

### City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska PUBLIC NOTICE Vacancy on the Borough Assembly

The City and Borough of Wrangell is accepting *letters of interest* from citizens who wish to serve on the Borough Assembly.

There is ONE (1) Borough Assembly Member seat available with the term expiring October 2021

Any interested person is eligible to apply. Letters of interest should be submitted to:

Mayor Stephen Prysunka  
PO Box 531  
Wrangell, AK 99929

or you can email your *letter of interest* to the Borough Clerk at: clerk@wrangell.com on or before **Tuesday, January 26, 2021, at 4:00 p.m.**

Information on the powers and duties of the Borough Assembly are contained in Wrangell Municipal Code, Chapter 3.04. A copy of the code chapter can be obtained at the Borough Clerk's Office or viewed at the City's website at www.wrangell.com

Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk  
City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish: January 21, 2021

We're **HIRING!**

## Office manager

for Wrangell Sentinel

Advertising sales, circulation management, bookkeeping, customer service, and writing Wrangell Sentinel weekly history feature

Job is three-quarters to full time  
Salary dependent on experience and skills  
Start date in February or early March

Contact **Larry Persily** -  
paper@alaskan.com - 907-351-8276



**WRANGELL SENTINEL**

### PUBLIC HEARING & WORK SESSION PUBLIC NOTICE for Tuesday, January 26, 2021 CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

Prior to the Regular Assembly meeting on **January 26, 2021**, there will be a **Work Session** that will begin at **6:00 p.m.** on the following item(s):

#### 2021/2022 Borough Goals

The Regular Assembly meeting will follow the Work Session and begin at **7:00 p.m.**

During the Regular Borough Assembly meeting, there will be a **PUBLIC HEARING** on the following item(s):

**a. ORDINANCE No. 984 OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, AMENDING SECTION 14.01.030(DD) TITLED "LIVE ABOARD" AND ADDING SECTION 14.01.030(MM) TITLED "RESIDENTIAL USER FEE" IN THE WRANGELL MUNICIPAL CODE.**

**b. Request to modify contract zone agreement between the Wrangell Cooperative Association and the City and Borough of Wrangell, modifying buffer requirements and properties listed as part of the Contract Zone Agreement, for Lot A and Lot A1-A Torgransen-Prunella Subdivision, zoned Light Industrial per the Contract Zone Agreement, requested by the Wrangell Cooperative Association.**

If you would like to call into the Public Hearing, please call Kim Lane, Borough Clerk at 907-874-2381 no later than Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. to request the call-in information and to be added to the list of Persons to be Heard.

Written comments received prior 12:00 PM January 21, 2021 will be published in the Regular Assembly meeting packet. Written comments received after 12:00 p.m., January 21, 2021 will be emailed directly to all Borough Assembly members and published in the next Regular Assembly meeting packet.

The meeting will be broadcasted over the local radio station (Stikine Radio, KSTK)

Kim Lane, MMC  
City & Borough of Wrangell

Publish: January 21, 2021

# Fish Factor

Continued from page 10  
port said.

The damages are broken out by U.S. regions. A six-page snapshot for Alaska shows that total landings from January through August 2020 were 15% below 2019 levels, a drop of 695 million pounds from 4.74 billion pounds to 4.03 billion pounds.

The reductions were due to a 71% decline in harvest volume for herring, 45% for salmon, a decline of 18% for halibut, and 29% for Pacific cod compared to 2019 levels.

In contrast, crab, flatfish and rockfish harvests were up 3%, 4%, and 11%, respectively, compared with the 2015-2019 period.

The combination of lower catches and decreased fish prices from January through August pushed down the value of Alaska's catches by 30% from 2019 levels (a decline of \$436 million, from \$1.48 billion to \$1.04 billion).

The largest decreases in value from 2019 included a 67% drop for herring, a 61% reduction in salmon, a 37% drop in halibut revenues, down 30% for cod, and a 17% decrease in the value of flatfish.

The two bright spots compared with the five year baseline were a 17% increase in crab revenues and a 6% increase for rockfish.

For the sports charter sector, "reports from the field suggest fishing was 'well below normal levels' throughout Alaska, with some in industry estimating between 30% to 50% losses for the season."

"In the coming months and years, scientists and economists will work to obtain a more complete picture of COVID-19's im-

pact on U.S. seafood and the Blue Economy," said NOAA Fisheries' Chris Oliver. "It is our hope that this initial analysis provides a foundation that the industry researchers and planners can draw upon as they plan for the future."

### HATCHERY AT RISK

A push to close the Tutka Bay Hatchery in Kachemak Bay has drawn the ire of fishermen and residents far beyond that region. It is one of four hatcheries operated by the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association, which produces primarily sockeye and pink salmon to enhance commercial, sport, subsistence and personal-use fisheries.

The draft of a review of the Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park Management Plan finds that the Tutka Bay Hatchery, which has been in operation since the late 1970s, is an "incompatible use" in the park. "The plan addresses appropriate management for state parks. We understand the financial concerns, but there are just several legal concerns that exist," said Monica Alvarez with the state Department of Natural Resources at a public hearing in December.

"The fact that it's kind of authorized through a 20-year operating agreement; that is very long term, and the only thing that can be authorized in state parks are short-term permits. So, a 20-year term is a concern. The fact that the hatchery is operated primarily under cost-recovery is a concern," Alvarez told KBBI public radio in Homer.

The fact that within DNR the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation will be tasked with

adopting a new plan has raised eyebrows. Ricky Gease, appointed by Gov. Mike Dunleavy as head of Alaska State Parks, was a former longtime director of the Kenai River Sportfishing Association and advocated strongly for the removal of the region's hatcheries, including Tutka Bay.

"Concerns related to the hatchery have nothing to do with Ricky Gease," Alvarez insisted. "They're largely legal in nature. They're concerns we've had for quite some time. Additionally, Ricky Gease is kind of recused from this process. And so he has not been part of any of the meetings associated with this management plan. He really has nothing to do with this effort."

However, Gease's comments and testimony from when he led the sportfishing group were incorporated into the new draft plan, KBBI pointed out.

State figures show that about 42,000 hatchery-produced salmon were caught in the Cook Inlet commercial fisheries in 2019, worth an estimated \$331,000 to fishermen, or 1.6% of the total dockside value for the region.

According to the group Salmon Hatcheries for Alaska, closure of the Tutka Bay hatchery would eliminate 25 jobs, close the popular China Poot dipnet fishery, end sockeye stocking at several locations and starve both sockeye and pink salmon fisheries from Kachemak Bay to Resurrection Bay.

Meanwhile, Rep. Sarah Vance, R-Homer, has pre-filed a bill that would declare the Tutka Bay hatchery an allowed activity within the state park.

FISHING UPDATES



PHOTO COURTESY COOK INLET AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

The Tutka Bay Hatchery in Kachemak Bay is one of four hatcheries operated by the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association. It produces primarily sockeye and pink salmon.

Jan. 1 was the start of cod and other groundfish fisheries and the nation's biggest catch — Alaska pollock — gets underway on Jan. 20. Over three billion pounds of pollock will come out of the Bering Sea.

Gulf fishermen, however, have chosen to delay their pollock start to Feb. 4 in hopes of hauling in higher-quality, schooled-up fish. That will add another 250 million pounds to Alaska's pollock harvest.

A pollock fishery opens at Prince William Sound on Jan. 20 with a nearly 5 million pound harvest

Trollers at Southeast are still fishing for Chinook salmon. That winter fishery ends March 15.

Divers are still tapping on a 1.7 million pound sea cucumber harvest; divers also continue fishing for over half a million pounds of giant geoduck clams.

A ling cod fishery also is underway in the Panhandle with an 856,000 pound catch limit.

Kodiak divers are still going down for sea cucumbers with a 130,000 pound harvest limit.

Crabbing continues in the Bering Sea for snow crab (40.5 million pounds), dairdi Tanners (2.1 million pounds) and golden king crab (6 million pounds).

Looking ahead: fisheries for golden king crab and Tanners will open in Southeast Alaska in mid-February. At Sitka Sound, a spring roe herring harvest of 33,304 tons is projected, although managers expect the catch will not top 20,000 tons.

At Alaska's largest roe herring fishery at Togiak in Bristol Bay, the catch in May is pegged at a whopping 42,639 tons. It remains to be seen if there will be any buyers for a roe product that has lost favor by Alaska's single customer, Japan.

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# Rule change weakens migratory bird protections

WASHINGTON (AP) — Companies in the oil and gas and other industries will not be held legally responsible for killing migratory birds as long as they did not mean to do it, the Trump administration said, drawing swift condemnation from animal welfare and conservation groups.

The Interior Department rule

change is a plus for oil and gas companies that sought weakened protections of birds in the administration's waning days. The rule change came just two weeks before President-elect Joe Biden assumes the presidency, and on the heels of a new bipartisan conservation law protecting wetlands and waterfowl. The waterfowl-protection law

that President Donald Trump signed Oct. 30 protects birds and bird habitats.

The Interior Department rule change on Jan. 5 coincides with a sharp decline in the overall population of birds in North America. The number of birds on the continent has dropped by 3 billion, about 30%, since the 1970s, according to a survey published in the journal *Science* in September 2019.

Under the new rule, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service "will not prosecute landowners, industry and other individuals for accidentally killing a migratory bird," Interior Secretary David Bernhardt said. The agency said the change would not apply to the Endangered Species Act or the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

The change shifts how the federal government interprets

and enforces the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Fish and Wildlife will no longer fine or prosecute companies that cause birds' death as long as they did not intend to kill the animals.

While the Interior Department can unwind the change under the Biden administration, that process will take time and require a new public comment period.

Underpinning the Trump administration's move is a legal opinion by the Interior solicitor, Daniel Jorjani, who argued the law should only apply to birds killed deliberately rather than through "incidental" activities that kill millions of birds annually, such as oil spills and oil pits, as well as electric power lines and pesticides.

The American Petroleum Institute, the lead lobby for oil and gas in Washington, supported

the law's changes.

The Migratory Bird Protection Act protects more than 1,000 bird species such as eagles, cranes and geese. Misdemeanor violations can result in as many as six months in prison and fines of up to \$15,000.

Environmental advocates say the pre-Trump interpretation of the law served to nudge oil companies to take preventative steps to protect birds, such as covering exposed oil pits and wastewater facilities.

"This brazen effort will most certainly be in vain as the administration already found out in court that it can't unilaterally gut the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and its obligation to protect and conserve bird," Sarah Greenberger, senior vice president for conservation policy at the National Audubon Society, said of the announcement.

## Tribes, states sue to block sale of National Archives building in Seattle

SEATTLE (AP) — More than two dozen Native American and Alaska Native tribes and cultural groups from the Northwest, along with the states of Washington and Oregon, are suing the federal government to stop the sale of the National Archives building in Seattle, a plan that would force the relocation of millions of invaluable historical records to California and Missouri.

The Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska is among the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, as is the Tanana Chiefs Conference from Interior Alaska.

The government is planning to sell the vast archives warehouse under a law aimed at unloading excess federal property, but the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court on Jan. 4 says the building is anything but "excess." It contains irreplaceable documents dating to the 1840s and is used all the time for research about everything from tribal history to Japanese internment during World War II and fur seal hunts on remote Alaska islands.

"This is the DNA of our region," Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson told an online news conference Jan. 4. "These are documents that are not digitized. Moving them a thousand miles away essentially and effectively eliminates public access to these critical documents."

The National Archives building is one of a dozen properties around the country, collectively valued at \$500 million to \$750 million, identified for sale by the federal Public Buildings Reform Board. The board initially intended to sell the properties individually, but has announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on the commercial real estate market, it will offer the buildings early this year for an expedited sale as a single portfolio.

The records would be moved to National Archives facilities in Kansas City and Riverside, California.

The Seattle building has a reported \$2.4 million maintenance backlog and costs more than \$350,000 a year to operate, but sits on land that would be prime for residential development, with views of the Cascade Mountains and Lake Washington.

The sale is opposed by all eight U.S. senators and many U.S. House members from Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

The lawsuit says the Seattle archives is not eligible for sale under a federal law that exempts buildings used for research in connection with federal agricultural, recreational or conservation programs. Among other things, the lawsuit noted, the archives are used for research under federal historical preservation programs and to litigate land use, water rights and conservation issues.

Talmage Hocker, a Kentucky commercial real-estate developer appointed to the Public Buildings Reform Board by President Donald Trump, claimed the building doesn't get a lot of visitors. "It can become a part of the community, as opposed to what it is today," he said.

Documents at the building include old property, military service and marriage records, court cases, pre-statehood census records from Alaska villages, tribal rolls and treaties, and records of timber sales. There are 50,000 files related to the Chinese Exclusion Act, which limited the presence of Chinese laborers in the U.S. from 1882 until 1943, including photos and interrogations of Chinese immigrants.

Native American tribes have used the archives to win federal recognition, to establish their right to hunt and fish in their traditional lands, and to verify their oral traditions. The government's failure to consult with the tribes before deciding to sell the building violated federal policies, the lawsuit said.

The files also include key records from the internment of Japanese-Americans during World II — including documents that showed the National Archives building itself sits on land owned for decades by a family of Japanese American farmers, the Uyejis, who were sent to concentration camps in California in 1942. The Navy eventually took over the land and built warehouses on the property, which was never returned to the Uyejis.

## U.S. fishing industry revenues down 29%

By The Associated Press

The coronavirus pandemic has taken away about a third of the nation's commercial fishing industry's revenue, according to a federal report released Jan. 15.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said revenues from catch brought to the docks by commercial fishermen fell 29% over the course of the first seven months of 2020. Revenues declined every month from March to July, including a 45% decrease in July, the report said.

The NOAA report said the seafood industry at large has been hit hard by restaurant closures, social-distancing protocols and the need for safety measures. NOAA's findings back up earlier reports from independent scientists that said seafood harvesting and consumption were both down.

NOAA's report also said 74% of aquaculture and related businesses experienced lost sales by the second quarter of 2020. International markets were also hurt by disruptions to seafood harvesting, shipping and processes, the report said.

**Questions about COVID vaccines?**

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