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Borough assembly mulls purchase of 6-Mile mill property

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The borough is considering purchasing the 38.59 acres at the former sawmill site at 6-Mile Zimovia Highway for a possible tourism or other collaboration with Sealaska, the regional Native corporation for Southeast.

Finance Director Mason Villarma said the borough met with Sealaska CEO Anthony Mallott on Feb. 9.

Discussions, which are still in a very preliminary stage, included a potential partnership with Sealaska for the property as a deep-water port for tourism or a specialty mill for the corporation's wood

products division.

Sealaska officials had not responded to Sentinel requests for comment as of Monday.

The borough assembly has been discussing a potential land buy since Dec. 14, recessing into executive sessions closed to the public on Dec. 14 and Jan. 11 to talk about "the possible acquisition of land." Such private discussions involving financial matters are allowed under the state's open meetings law.

It wasn't until the public agenda for this Tuesday's assembly meeting that the specific topic, "Potential Mill Property Acquisition Update and Discussion," was disclosed.

The borough manager has been included in the executive sessions.

The waterfront development-zoned site was first listed on the market with Petersburg-based Anchor Properties in 2019 at \$2.7 million, said Bennett McGrath, owner and broker at the real estate firm. She has received soft inquiries, but no offers for the property.

The former sawmill land is "on a deep-water port with three existing warehouse-type buildings and one mechanic shop. Most of the land has existing concrete and a boat launch," according to its listing.

"I would love to sell the mill as a whole to somebody, but I am also tasked with break-

ing it down to 23 individual lots and selling them individually," McGrath said Monday. "I have had interest in the past from people who have wanted to buy the mill as a whole, but no one has tendered an offer."

In the meantime, the legal team for McGrath's client and property owner — Betty Buhler, former co-owner of Silver Bay Logging with husband Richard Buhler, who died in 2016 — is fulfilling the borough's request to remove the deteriorating dock from the borough-owned tidelands in front of the property, McGrath said.

The borough said her client could get out of the tidelands lease, for which the owners

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District eyes options for COVID-19 mitigation plan going into spring

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The Wrangell school board will continue to evaluate its COVID-19 mitigation plan at its next meeting, scheduled for Monday.

As case numbers continue to decline from the severe spike caused by the Omicron variant in December and January, some Alaska districts have voted for optional masking on school grounds.

Effective Feb. 28, the Anchorage School District will make face masks optional for students and staff, Superintendent Deena Bishop announced last Friday in a letter to families.

"As a career educator, I understand how critical it is to focus the district's energy on student learning," Bishop wrote. "I believe that continued mandatory mask wearing is count-

er-productive and negatively impacts our students' education, intellectual development, and emotional well-being."

Bishop also cited the steady decline in COVID-19 cases both statewide and in Anchorage.

As of Monday, the number of new infections in Wrangell the past three weeks was at 21, down from the record 185 cases reported from Dec. 30 to Jan. 30. Though case counts are declining across Alaska, the state remains on a "high" alert status.

"We are reviewing the mitigation plan specifically to the situation in Wrangell," said Bill Burr, superintendent of schools. "We will have updates to the mitigation plan in the same process we have at other school board meetings."

The district started the school year with mandatory face masks

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Aiming for excellence



PHOTO BY SARAH ASLAM/WRANGELL SENTINEL

10-year-old Quinn Davies pauses to tally his score during an archery session Feb. 15 at the community recreation center. The sessions run 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays, through March 29. See Page 8 for the story.

Documentary of Metlakatla's 2018 championship basketball season coming to Wrangell on March 5

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

An award-winning film chronicling the Metlakatla boys basketball team's run to the 2018 state championship will make its Wrangell screening debut next month.

"Alaskan Nets" plays at 6 p.m. Saturday, March 5, at the Nolan Center. Tickets are \$20.

Californian Jeff Harasimowicz, director and producer of the documentary film, said he got the idea in 2017 when he was scrolling sports stories, which he loves, on ESPN.com and came across a 2016 photo story by photojournalist Samuel Wilson about the Metlakatla Chiefs 2015-2016 season — their runs to basketball games on the state ferries or by plane, sleeping on air mattresses in churches and classrooms which doubled as locker rooms before away games.

"The fact that basketball is so big there caught me by surprise," he said. Finding out there were a lot of kids who were also commercial fishermen there, and that it was Alaska's only Native reserve, in a community settled by the Tsimshians, surprised him, too.

Together with his production partner Ryan Welch at AO Films, Harasimowicz followed the players on the road to their 2017-2018 season as they pursued a state championship 34



PHOTO COURTESY JEFF HARASIMOWICZ,
DIRECTOR OF "ALASKAN NETS"

The Metlakatla Chiefs boys basketball team played at Mt. Edgecumbe in February 2018, one of the scenes from the documentary film "Alaskan Nets" that is coming to Wrangell on March 5.

years since their last one, and only the second in school history.

Deciding to make the investment in chronicling their journey took a leap of faith, he said, because there was no guarantee they'd make it to the state championship. That's the risk of documentary filmmaking — the outcome is unscripted. In talking with Metlakatla coach

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State asks if anyone wants to buy the ferry Malaspina

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The Alaska Department of Transportation is asking anyone interested in taking ownership of the nearly 60-year-old Malaspina to speak up by March 7. The state has been spending about \$75,000 a month to keep the unused ferry moored and insured at Ward Cove in Ketchikan for more than two years.

The ship has not carried passengers or vehicles since late 2019, and requires tens of millions of dollars of repairs, steel replacement work and new engines to go back into service, according to the Transportation Department.

"Holy crap, why don't we sell it," Big Lake Rep. Kevin McCabe asked of department officials at a Feb. 15 House Transportation Committee

meeting. "Why are we hanging on to it?"

Katherine Keith, the department's recently hired change management director, answered, "We have been preparing it for disposal."

The department announced last Friday, three days after the committee hearing: "Due to recent interest from a U.S. buyer to purchase the Malaspina," the state is soliciting letters of interest from any other potential buyers who might want to own the 408-foot-long ferry, capable of hauling 450 passengers and about 85 cars.

The state "is limiting this request to U.S. buyers that intend to retain the ship in Alaska."

The state, however, is not giving prospective buyers much time to inspect the ship; letters of interest are due March 7.

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Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Thursday, Feb. 24: Shanda Barlow, Andrea Barlow Irvine, Sean Rooney, Lisa Schultz; Anniversary: Rob and Sharry Rooney.

Friday, Feb. 25: Samantha DeBoer, Sharry Rooney, Fiona Scambler.

Saturday, Feb. 26: Stella Bunes, Kathleen Harding, Roman A. Privett-Murphy.

Sunday, Feb. 27: Tina Draper, Elena Haines, Amber Hommel; Anniversary: Chuck and Ava Hay.

Monday, Feb. 28: Lou Rae Davidson, Howard McNeely, Tasha Massin, Felix Villarma, Frank Warfel.

Tuesday, March 1: Torin Davidson.

Wednesday, March 2: Ella Guggenbickler, Calleigh Miller, Genesis Reign; Anniversary: Jim and Juli Gillen.

Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining.
Must be fully vaccinated.

Thursday, Feb. 24

Country pork, onion, carrots, celery, cabbage, honey orange salad, biscuit

Friday, Feb. 25

Greek beef and beets with orange sauce, carrot raisin salad with noodles

Monday, Feb. 28

Clam chowder, cheese sandwich, tossed salad

Tuesday, March 1

Barbecue chicken, oven french fries, creamy coleslaw, biscuit

Wednesday, March 2

Pineapple lemon chicken, green beans, sukiyaki salad, rice veggie pilaf

Please call the senior center at 907-874-2066 24 hours in advance to reserve a seat at lunch at the center or to request delivery. The senior van also is available to transport seniors to medical appointments, reasonable errands such as collecting mail, getting prescriptions or other essential items.

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, Feb. 25

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, March 4

Matanuska, 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 8

Matanuska, 12:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 13

Matanuska, 6:15 a.m.

Southbound

Monday, Feb. 28

Matanuska, 4 a.m.

Monday, March 7

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, March 11

Matanuska, 5:45 a.m.

Friday, March 15

Matanuska, 2:45 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.

Call the terminal at 907-874-2021 for information or call 907-874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.

Tides

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Feb. 23	04:53	15.7	05:54	11.9	11:28	1.2	11:23	4.1
Feb. 24	05:57	15.1	07:29	11.3	12:42	1.4
Feb. 25	07:20	14.9	09:02	11.8	00:36	5.3	02:09	1.2
Feb. 26	08:44	15.3	10:14	13.1	02:07	5.7	03:33	0.2
Feb. 27	09:56	16.3	11:10	14.5	03:37	4.9	04:40	-1.1
Feb. 28	10:57	17.4	11:57	15.8	04:47	3.6	05:32	-2.1
March 1	11:50	18.2	05:40	2.1	06:15	-2.7

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

FREE TAX RETURN PREPARATION every Saturday through April 14 at the Nolan Center. Sponsored by the AARP TaxAide Foundation. Open to everyone, regardless of age. IRS-certified volunteers will prepare and e-file your return for you at no charge. Refunds can be direct-deposited into your bank account. By appointment only. Call Paula at 907-874-3824 or 907-305-0309.

ISLAND OF FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH, pastor Sue Bahleda, will distribute ashes for Ash Wednesday at the Front Street pavilion from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 5 to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 2, the start of Lent. All are welcome.

WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD will meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, via Zoom. Go to: bit.ly/3BC2NXL. The meeting ID is 868 5611 9233 and the passcode is 228752. Community members can submit their comments by emailing them to kpowell@wpsd.us, or can sign up under guests to be heard at the meeting by emailing the same address before 3:30 p.m. on the day of the meeting. The meeting agenda will be available online at <https://www.boarddocs.com/ak/wrangell/Board.nsf>.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER, no movie this weekend.

WRANGELL HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL TEAMS will host a viewing of "Alaska Nets" on Saturday, March 5, at the Nolan Center. The two-hour film is an award-winning documentary about the 2018 Metlakatla High School boys basketball team, which won the state championship in their division. Tickets are \$20 each, and seating is limited. Each ticket also gets you a chance to win two Alaska Airlines tickets. Drawing will be held that night at the Nolan Center. For more information, call 907-305-0576 or contact a high school basketball player or coach.

IRENE INGLE PUBLIC LIBRARY will hold Story Time every Friday at 11 a.m. via Zoom. Meeting ID: 935 4298 0052; passcode 8743535.

WRANGELL PARKS & REC is offering multiple activities to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities visit www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

- **ARCHERY** on Tuesdays from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the community center gym for those 14 years old and older. Participants should have a basic knowledge of archery, along with previous experience. Equipment is limited. Program runs through March 29. The fee is \$5 for 18 years and up and \$3 for 14-17 years.
- **JIU JITSU** on Tuesday and Thursdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m. and Saturdays 10 to 11:30 a.m. at the community center gym for 18 years and up.
- **KEEP MOVING** on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. for adults 18 years and up at the community center gym for low-impact cardio, body weight strength training with an emphasis on range of motion. Program runs through March 30. Must bring gym shoes. The fee is \$5, or \$3 for seniors, with punch passes available.
- **PICKLEBALL** on Wednesdays from noon to 2 p.m., Fridays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 2 p.m. for adults 18 and up. Program runs through March 30. Pickleball is a paddle sport for all skill levels. The game is easy for beginners to learn. \$5 drop-in fee or \$3 for seniors.
- **TOT GYM** on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to noon for children to 5 years of age. Program runs through March 3. A parent or guardian must provide supervision; staff are not responsible for child supervision. \$2 for the first child, \$1 for the second child, and the third child is free. Ten-punch passes available.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 907-874-2301. Or go to the Sentinel website, click on the Calendar tab, and submit your entry online.

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

Feb. 23, 1922

The Firemen's Annual Benefit Ball on the evening of Washington's Birthday was well attended and a huge success socially. Apparatus from the fire hall was used most effectively in the decorative scheme. Carl Carlson acted as floor manager. The net proceeds amounted to \$49.15. This increases the accident fund to \$435. The Parent-Teacher Association served lunch upstairs during the dance. The proceeds from the lunch, which amounted to about \$25, will be used by the

PTA to help defray the school's expenses of participating in the interscholastic meet in Juneau.

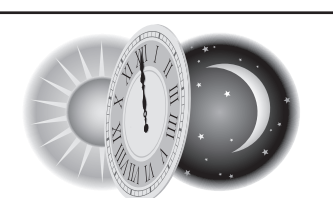
Feb. 21, 1947

The University of Alaska Mining Extension Course, which was scheduled to start this week, will begin next Monday at the high school. Leo H. Saarela, instructor, has been teaching the course in Ketchikan and arrived here Wednesday evening on the mailboat Dart. Mr. Saarela said he wanted it understood that the course is open to all persons without regard to previous training or academic qualifications. Anyone interested in the mineral industry should find the course informative, as this year's lectures will be illustrated with prepared films. There is no fee and a charge will be collected only for the books and material used. The latter half of the course will include mineral testing, and anyone having mineral or rock samples is invited to bring them to the class where they can work on them under the instructor's supervision.

discomfort by getting plenty of rest and taking aspirin. Girls, she said, should rest two days after swelling has gone down to prevent complications, and boys and men should rest for at least 10 days after swelling subsides. The mumps vaccine is not available through the health center. Persons interested in the vaccine should talk to their private physician and the complications such as orchitis and oophoritis should be discussed.

Feb. 27, 1997

The idea of a travel lift, which has been kicked around for several years, has emerged again recently for serious discussion. This time, port commissioners and boat owners alike are determined to either act on the idea soon or put it to rest forever. It is, as the saying goes, time to fish or cut bait. At a port commission workshop Feb. 19, an informal group led by Mark Robinson began discussing a possible co-op to run the facility if the city pays the initial cost of the lift, anywhere from \$160 to \$400. The idea also is likely to come up at a March 6 port commission workshop with the planning and zoning board over use of the old sawmill property downtown, which the city purchased last December. If the travel lift plan goes ahead, it almost certainly would involve city financial participation, although the co-op would manage the facility.



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Feb. 23	6:56a	5:10p	10:14h
Feb. 24	6:53a	5:12p	10:18h
Feb. 25	6:51a	5:14p	10:23h
Feb. 26	6:48a	5:16p	10:28h
Feb. 27	6:46a	5:19p	10:33h
Feb. 28	6:43a	5:21p	10:37h
March 1	6:41a	5:23p	10:42h

Feb. 25, 1972

Nearly 30 cases of mumps have struck Wrangell residents in the past month, according to local health officials. Public Health Nurse Gail Pollock provided the Sentinel with a description of the disease, which can strike adults as well as children. Dr. Harriet Schirmer recommended that sufferers from mumps can ease their

Ottesen's now the place for Ace Hardware

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

What has been talked about for months has finally happened: Ottesen's True Value is now Ottesen's Ace Hardware.

The sale was finalized on Feb. 15 to David Roemhildt, of Cordova, who has big changes in store for the business, but some things will stay exactly the same.

"The thing I kept hearing from everyone was, 'Oh, that's a good store. It's got a lot of history,'" Roemhildt said. "There's a lot of goodwill and customer loyalty to this location and this family. It's going to remain Ottesen's, but it will be Ottesen's Ace Hardware instead of Ottesen's True Value."

He added that in towns like Wrangell and Cordova, it wouldn't matter if the name was changed, "people are still going to refer to it the next 30 years as Ottesen's."

Longtime staff members Danette Grover, Marlin Benedict and Karl Altepeter will stay with the store and about five more positions will be added in the next few months. Grover has been with the store for nearly 11 years, Benedict has been there 18 years,



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

From left: Chris Blanchett, Danette Grover, Marlin Benedict, David Roemhildt and Karl Altepeter stand inside Ottesen's Ace Hardware. Cordova resident Roemhildt bought the store on Feb. 15.

and Altepeter has been there 30.

"That's necessitated by the fact that we're bringing in so many new items that we're probably going to end up being a 30,000 (item) store, which is enormous for a hardware store," Roemhildt said. "With that comes the need for people to happily help and assist and check people out and stock shelves."

Brands like Milwaukee, De-

Walt, Toro and Craftsman, among others will be carried, and four brands of paint — a basic Ace line, an upscale Ace line, Benjamin Moore and Magnolia Home — will be available. Roemhildt said they will "pack the store," and be fully stocked by mid-May.

"There's going to be a lot of changes, but there's still continuity," he said. "People are still

going to be able to ask Danette, ask Marlin, 'Hey, where's this new stuff,' or, 'What's this versus this?' People are going to be impressed with the change. But, the staff, I couldn't find a better staff. We don't even really need a manager. They can manage the store themselves."

Roemhildt isn't a novice when it comes to owning such a store. The full-time general contractor also owns an Ace Hardware in Cordova, along with a plumbing and electrical warehouse and marine supply in the same city. He also owns a welding and fabrication shop in Kodiak.

"I kept going to locations that had better hardware stores than I had (in Cordova)," Roemhildt said. "Wrangell is one. Going to Sitka, they blow you away with their hardware store. Go to Yakutat and they have a pretty good hardware store for a tiny little town. So, we decided that's something we wanted to look at."

He said being a contractor aids in owning a hardware store since he's familiar with the products. "It's kind of fun. You can still talk shop and be connected to the industry whether you're actually building something or not."

That background in construction will help in one major noticeable change at the store: He will remodel to bring back stairs in the middle of the first floor, so that customers can better see what's upstairs.

The process to purchase the store has taken some time. It began 18 months ago when Roemhildt approached owner Brian Ottesen about buying it. Then came COVID-19 with its myriad of interruptions; there were signature delays for paperwork. "Then product and logistical delays that happened with the big freeze-up in Texas," Roemhildt said. "So, all the sudden you can't get plastic. Then the ports on the West Coast (slowed up), and now the truckers. The orders have been placed, we just have to be patient."

The transition has taken some time, but Chris Blanchett, the transition manager and manager of the Cordova Ace Hardware, said it's coming along.

"It's going pretty good," he said. "We're checking off boxes and moving right along. We're doing everything we can."

Forest Service seeks community help to clean up Roosevelt Harbor

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The Wrangell Ranger District wants to restore a parking area at Roosevelt Harbor. The problem is about 70 vehicles in various stages of decay on top of it, going back a couple of decades at the site on Zarembo Island, about 12 miles southwest of the Wrangell City Dock.

Roosevelt Harbor is vulnerable to pollutants and sediment from runoff at the parking lot, said District Ranger Clint Kolarich, of the Wrangell Ranger District last Tuesday.

The harbor is a popular spot for hunters and campers, offering miles of old logging roads for access into the interior of the island.

The estimated \$175,000 restoration project will be paid for with Forest Service receipts from the Frenchie Stewardship timber sale several years ago

on Wrangell Island and will be done in partnership with the borough and Forest Service, he said.

The plan is to add surface material to the existing grade to create drainage of the parking area away from the harbor, restore and improve existing drainage ditches and the culvert to prevent deterioration and erosion of the parking area, and restore the deteriorated catchment pond.

An environmental review has been completed, the project is entering the U.S. Department of Agriculture's procurement process, and Kolarich said the Forest Service has "had a 50% to 60% response rate" in identifying ownership of the vehicles.

Kolarich was adamant in stressing the Forest Service will not unilaterally start chucking cars and trucks off the parking area, but has been and is trying to contact

vehicle owners. Identified vehicles will be inventoried and marked with a physical tag. When the process comes to an end, the Forest Service will issue a final announcement of which vehicles remain unidentified and are subject to impoundment and removal.

Kolarich wanted to be clear that no one will face punishment or punitive consequences. "The big ask is asking folks to help us inventory," Kolarich said.

People in Wrangell with information about any of the vehicles at Roosevelt can contact Lynda.nore@usda.gov or call 907-305-0842.

The Forest Service hopes to have the project under contract by June or July, but there is no guarantee on the timing, or that contractors will bid on it, he said.

It hopes to have an alternative site at Deep Bay set up for temporary storage of operational vehicles by April, and hopes

all the operational vehicles will be inventoried with the Forest Service and relocated by May 31 to Deep Bay, just north of Roosevelt Harbor on Zarembo.

If this all comes together as hoped, the contractor or contractors will remove what is left at Roosevelt Harbor on Zarembo Island and complete the drainage restoration work at the parking area before the beginning of deer hunting season on Aug. 1.

After that, vehicles may be returned to Roosevelt Harbor and placed there in an orderly and organized manner while the Forest Service, borough and the community work out a long-term management plan for the site, Kolarich said. The details of that plan need to be worked out, but for now the focus is on getting those ailing vehicles off the grade so the restoration work can take place.

Southeast scrap barge accepting metal through Saturday — at no charge

Sentinel staff

Residents have until Saturday afternoon to get rid of scrap metal, free of charge, including vehicles.

Juneau-based Channel Construction will have its barge at the former sawmill site at 6.3-Mile Zimovia Highway and is accepting any type of scrap metal, as long as any oil, gasoline or other fuels and fluids have been drained, the borough announced last week.

The company collects scrap metal throughout Southeast, hauling it south for proper disposal or recycling. In late 2018, Channel Construction picked up an estimated 50 tons of scrap on one run in Haines.

The borough last Friday issued a reminder to residents that Channel Construction will be open at the mill site 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. through Saturday. The company has been accepting scrap all week.

For more information, contact Channel Construction — not City Hall — at 907-209-9393 or 907-723-7551.

While in Wrangell, Channel

Construction picked up the steel from the abandoned 60-foot tug, the Bee, which sank at Shoemaker Harbor in early January amid heavy snow and freezing temperatures. The borough paid a contractor about \$21,000 to raise the vessel so that it could be taken apart and removed from the harbor.

"Channel Construction has removed all the steel, so all we have left is wood that will be hauled to the dump and burned," Harbormaster Steve Miller reported to the port commission last week.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

No beef with Prime, but it takes a choice cut

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Look at the post office package shelves, the boxes left at people's doors and the empties stuffed into the trash and it's clear that Wrangell — just like the rest of the country — is primed to shop from Amazon.

Free shipping is the biggest incentive to sign up for Amazon Prime. That, and the website sells everything anyone could ever want or need, plus millions of items we never knew we wanted or needed. And maybe don't need, but free shipping is such an enticement.

No minimum purchase, no hassles, just click and wait for delivery. Let Amazon, or the many vendors that sell on the website, pay the FedEx, UPS or post office charges.

Sort of. Amazon is not a charity, and Prime is big business.

Some analysts estimate that Amazon has more than 153 million Prime accounts in the United States — the company does not report the actual number. That's the equivalent of almost half the U.S. population, though many of those accounts are businesses or government agencies.

Amazon recently raised its annual subscription price for Prime to \$139 — more if you pay monthly, and less if you are a student or receive public assistance such as Medicaid.

Roughing it out on the back of the largest envelope available from Amazon, making several uninformed assumptions about how many Prime subscribers pay annually or monthly and how many students and Medicaid recipients take the discount, and it adds up that Prime membership fees could pump maybe \$20 billion into Amazon's bank account this year.

That's almost as much money as ExxonMobil earned in all of last year, when it enjoyed rising oil prices.

That's almost as much money as Alaska Air Group, the parent company of Alaska Airlines

and Horizon Air, generated in operating revenues in all of last year, when Alaska was the fifth largest airline in the country.

That's about how much Taco Bell hopes to collect this year from sales at its 7,500 restaurants around the world.

Nothing against Amazon for priming its own pump with the super-selling idea in 2005. It has turned out to be a brilliant marketing tool, driving tens of millions of people to spend an average of \$30 billion on the site every month last year, according to analyst estimates (Amazon does not say).

“Some analysts estimate that Amazon has more than 153 million Prime accounts in the United States — the company does not report the actual number.”

It's interesting to note that the revenues from Prime membership fees were equal to most of Amazon's net income from all of its operations last year. Take away those Prime fees, and the company would be a lot less profitable. Take away free shipping, and the company would ring up a lot less in sales — proof that Prime is the biggest thing in retail shopping since more U.S. stores started opening on Sundays half a

century ago.

What it all means for Alaska — and for Wrangell, where about 10% of the community's retail spending was online last year — is that Lower 48 Prime members unknowingly subsidize our orders. All that free air shipping costs Amazon a lot more to the 49th state than elsewhere, but we pay the same Prime membership fee as anyone in Detroit, Des Moines, Denver or Disney World (which is sort of like a city unto itself).

So, a big thank you to Lower 48 Prime members for helping to send dog food, diapers, 10-pound bags of nuts and printer ink cartridges to our door. Their membership fees help make life more affordable in Alaska.

It's just too bad all that free shipping helps send 10% of Wrangell's retail spending out of town.

EDITORIAL

The forest is not a personal junkyard

The U.S. Forest Service wants to clean up and resurface the parking area at Roosevelt Harbor. Not because the abandoned vehicles are unsightly, though many are getting wrapped around the axle with plant life. It's because the oil, gasoline and fluids that leak from the cars, trucks or ATVs can seep into and through the soil and into the waters at Zarembo Island.

The first task is to identify all the owners so that the agency can hire a contractor to move the 70 or so vehicles off the lot, clean it up, regrade it, restore and improve drainage and culverts, returning to the lot only those cars and trucks with owners who raise their hands.

The harbor, just a dozen miles from Wrangell's City Dock, is a popular spot for deer hunters and recreational campers, offering many miles of old logging roads for drivable access into the interior of the island. And because it's popular, keeping it clean and pollution-free is especially important — and healthy.

Wrangell District Ranger Clint Kolarich said the agency isn't looking to seize, impound, ticket or sink any of the working vehicles with identified owners. It's OK to park your working pickup at the lot. It just wants to know which are unclaimed — likely inoperable — so that they can remove them as part of the cleanup and resurfacing project. Knowing the owners will help in putting together that list.

Kolarich last week said the Forest Service has “had a 50% to 60% response rate” in identifying ownership of the vehicles. The agency wants to get the work done this summer — before the start of deer hunting season.

The agency should not have to ask and wait for people to claim ownership of vehicles left at the site to rust, leak and become entangled with the forest floor. Owners should do it because it's the right thing.

Sadly, this is not a new problem. It has lingered for years. In 2018, the Forest Service reported there were 33 registered vehicles on the island, but staff counted 73 vehicles in assorted states from working order to decay near Roosevelt Harbor. “Some of them haven't moved in years,” a Forest Service official said in 2018. “Some of them have vegetation or are completely blocked in.”

The parking area is not designated as a dumping site for abandoned vehicles, nor is parking space unlimited. Give the underbrush and runoff waters a break, call the Forest Service, report your vehicle and help the agency's effort to clean up the site.

If the forest could talk, it would thank you.

Wrangell Sentinel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Democracy does not mean everyone must agree

Referring to Larry Persily's opinion piece, “It's time more Republicans stood up to Trump” (Feb. 9 Sentinel), I am shocked how a Democrat can sound so undemocratic, intolerant, self-righteous and self-contradictory.

While you stress that you do not want to take away Trump's phone, internet access or deny him his First Amendment rights, you urge Republicans to muzzle him, to “check him into a room at a budget hotel that only has basic cable” as you put it. In other words, you are asking Republicans to do the highly undemocratic deeds for you while you present yourself as the defender of democracy.

Well, I have news for you: There is no such thing as partial or modified democracy. So far, we do not have an Orwellian Ministry of Truth deciding how much democracy is allowed. Democracy should apply to everybody equally, either we have it or we do not. When everybody is forced to agree, it is not democracy but dictatorship.

After having experienced 20 long years of miserable life in

socialism under the communist government of Czechoslovakia, I was thrilled when a hole appeared in the Iron Curtain 54 years ago giving me an opportunity to defect and to see what U.S. democracy was all about.

For the first time in my life I could speak freely, nobody was forcing me to follow mandates, the stores were fully stocked, no long lines to buy a single egg, nobody was fighting over the last package of toilet paper, gasoline was cheaper than distilled water, no envy existed because people were nice to each other, etc. (unfortunately some of these do not apply anymore).

I fell in love with American democracy/capitalism and realized it was not perfect but still the best way to go. On the other hand, socialism/communism was a bad/evil system denying citizens their basic human rights under the shroud of equity — everybody had to finish last except those in power.

So I am very allergic to anybody/anything threatening the U.S. democracy and can't ignore the fact that our democracy is in peril, hanging on a single thread

of a filibuster. I respect your opinion as long as you respect mine or Trump's, and definitely object to anybody being muzzled or forced to inhabit a room with Yukon TV.

The democracy is not just for the most equal among equals, democracy is not yours or mine but ours. You cannot castrate it, cancel, de-platform, censor, etc. those who have a different opinion than those in power.

In my previous life, I saw persecution of people who had a different political opinion. I was arrested by the Czech secret police and accused of being a CIA agent just because I had a Wrangellite for a pen-friend. Inconveniently opinionated people were sent by kangaroo courts to jails, gulags and execution chambers. Fortunately, America is not that far yet, or are we getting every day closer?

Those preaching democracy and tolerance should act accordingly. Otherwise, as the saying goes, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

Ivan Simonek

Property owner cleaning up Johnny Mountain Mine site

In October 2021, Wrangell Mayor Steve Prysunka spoke about the abandoned Johnny Mountain Mine before the Wrangell borough assembly to highlight irresponsible mining practices in British Columbia.

As the new owner of Iskut property which includes the abandoned mine, through this letter we would like to share with the residents of Wrangell the multiyear and multimillion-dollar voluntary reclamation activities Seabridge Gold is undertaking to reclaim the Johnny Mountain Mine site back to its original pre-mine condition.

When Seabridge Gold acquired the Iskut property in 2016, the former mine, which closed in 1993, was in a state of disrepair, with numerous reclamation activities necessary to meet the reclamation objectives of the British Columbia government and the Tahltan Nation, on whose territory the mine is located.

The incomplete reclamation on the site is not how Seabridge

Gold views responsible mining. When we purchased the Iskut property, we immediately reached out to the Tahltan Nation's leadership to inform them about the project acquisition and reaffirm Seabridge's commitment to reclaim the abandoned mine in cooperation with the Nation.

In 2017, Seabridge in collaboration with Tahltan Nation Development Corp. and Tahltan Heritage Resources Environmental Assessment Team developed a Johnny Mountain Mine project execution plan, a forward-looking plan of reclamation activities for the next five years.

Seabridge Gold has invested more than C\$8 million to date on restoring the Johnny Mountain Mine site, with additional funds earmarked for 2022. Remediation work at the site includes:

Dam safety review, aquatic characterization study, detailed site investigation of groundwater and soil conditions, and implemented proper and detailed

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Malaspina

Continued from page 1

"The state will consider all letters of interest ... and determine whether or not to further pursue any of the proposals," according to the department's prepared statement.

A sale of the state ferry requires approval from the Federal Highway Administration, as the federal agency helped pay for work on the vessel over the years.

The state's request for letters of interest asks for "a detailed description of your company's intentions" for the vessel, where the ship would reside, and "documentation demonstrating that you are technically and financially capable of relocating, refurbishing, operating and maintaining the vessel."

The notice also said, "Letters of interest that propose scuttling the vessel are not being considered at this time."

Almost a year ago, a Transportation Department official told legislators the agency had considered turning the Malaspina into an artificial reef. Sinking the ship as a reef could cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million, but could make long-term financial sense, Department of Transportation Deputy Commissioner Rob Carpenter told a legislative committee last March.

The ship would have to be drained of all oils and other pollutants and stripped of all toxins before it could be sunk.

The department has been paring down the fleet to cut costs, getting rid of ships it no longer uses. The state about a year ago sold its two fast ferries, the Chenega and

Fairweather, built at a combined cost of \$68 million less than 20 years earlier, for just over \$5 million to a Mediterranean-based catamaran operator.

The Spanish firm was the only bidder for the 235-foot-long vessels, which had been tied up at Ward Cove in Ketchikan the past few years, at an estimated holding cost of more than \$1.1 million until they were sold.

Though the ships, each powered by four diesel engines, were faster than other boats in the Alaska Marine Highway System fleet, they burned through about 600 gallons of fuel an hour, according to the state — double the consumption rate of the Matanuska, which can carry more than twice as many passengers and vehicles as the smaller ferries.

Last summer, Gov. Mike Dunleavy offered to give away the Malaspina in a letter to the Philippines consul general in San Francisco, public radio network CoastAlaska reported.

"This vessel is surplus to our fleet, is in need of some repairs, but does have some service life left," according to Dunleavy's letter dated May 20 and obtained by the radio network in a public records request for the governor's correspondence.

"We would be willing to provide the vessel to the Philippine government or to a private ferry company in the Philippines free of charge," the letter said.

Nothing came from the governor's offer, and the Malaspina continues to sit idle in Ketchikan.

Mill property

Continued from page 1

have been paying \$14,000 a year, if they return the tidelands to its original state, McGrath said.

The dock "is in extremely poor condition and it's falling apart," Carol Rushmore, the borough's planning and zoning administrator, said last year.

Buhler has contracted with Tim Heller, of Heller High Water, to remove the dock, who has been out there with his work barge and is about a third of the way done with removing the pilings, said McGrath. When he's 80% of the way there, Anchor Properties will come back to Rushmore to report that the owner is almost done fulfilling the borough's stipulation.

Until that time, the property surveyor, Juneau-based PDC Engineers, can't stamp the property map for recording. "Once it's recorded, we have legal definitions, legal addresses and assignments of

legal names to the lots," McGrath said.

Buhler has been talking with the borough since 2019 about possibly subdividing the land for industrial use. The proposed subdivision would include about two dozen lots, ranging in size from 0.36 to 2.36 acres. Utilities would be installed for the subdivision.

The property is surfaced with asphalt, concrete and gravel pads, and is mostly cleared of buildings and debris. A sawmill started operations at the site in 1962. The Alaska Pulp Corp. closed the mill in 1995. Silver Bay Logging later purchased the property and operated the mill intermittently until 2008, according to a history written by former Alaska Pulp executive Frank Roppel.

"Demolition of the mill was essentially completed in 2011," Roppel wrote.

School masks

Continued from page 1

in all buildings, the same as the past school year, and has been reviewing the policy at its monthly board meetings.

Burr said he has been working with district administration to look at the options available heading into spring and how they will affect students and staff. He said they hope to have information out for review soon.

Many in the community have decried the school mask mandate, calling on the district to either end it or at least make it optional. About 14 elementary and middle school students left classes on Jan. 21 to hold a mask-burning protest. In October, 13 coaches and assistant coaches signed a letter to the district requesting the mask mandate be lifted for student athletes during competition.

"If you make kids mask during play, you will lose players, and we already have lost kids due to the (masking) policy," the letter read. "In Wrangell, if you lose a couple players, you may not have a team; this is true for ladies basketball. When you lose teams, you obviously lose even more kids."

The district amended the mitigation policy in October to allow optional masking during sporting competitions. Despite weekly testing and masking while not playing, several games were canceled or postponed in January due to athletes throughout Southeast testing positive for COVID.

The Sitka School District recently voted to update its mitigation plan to make masking optional as of March 22, when the city ordinance requiring masking in public places sunsets. Frank Hauser, the

district's superintendent, told the Sitka Sentinel they are ending the mandate due to COVID-19 projections made by the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

"I believe the data, projections, vaccine coverage and availability of vaccines and boosters for those who choose, more widely available COVID treatments, Sitka's robust optional rapid-testing program, and the continuation of Sitka's other mitigations support this timeline, which also coincides with the end of the face-covering ordinance in Sitka," Hauser said, adding he would consider ending the mandate earlier if risks were greatly reduced.

Petersburg's school board on Feb. 8 voted to make masking optional for students and staff in classrooms depending on case counts and risk levels, though masking will still be mandatory in hallways and common areas. Classrooms in the elementary school will be required to return to masking for 10 days if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and was infectious while at school. If four or more classrooms have a positive case, the entire school will be required to return to masking.

At the high school and middle school level, masking will be optional in Petersburg's classrooms if the students are at least three feet apart. If there are three positive cases in those schools, they will need to return to masking.

"Each community has its own unique aspects to their educational mitigation, and we will continue to work and adjust ours," Burr said.

The next Wrangell school board meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday via Zoom.

Mine site

Continued from page 4

environmental permit compliance programs.

Removed hazardous materials from the mill building and transported materials offsite to a licensed hazardous waste disposal facility.

Cleaned and dismantled 23, 7,000-gallon hydrocarbon storage tanks and one 100,000-gallon tank abandoned at the site.

Closed and reclaimed three portals and five vent raises associated with the underground mine.

Revegetated disturbed areas, using locally sourced native grass seed mix, willow, alder and heather/heath transplants.

You can also watch a YouTube video of the reclamation work.

While it's true, the Johnny Mountain Mine is an example of irresponsible mining and should

not have occurred, it's important to note the mine closed approximately 28 years ago and such historical mining practices cannot and will not occur in today's regulatory and social environment.

In closing, we would like to suggest that mining and exploration companies advancing projects in the transboundary region are not irresponsible as claimed by Mayor Prysunka, and the reclamation activities Seabridge is voluntarily undertaking at the mine are a great example of how mining companies operate responsibly within the transboundary region.

*R. Brent Murphy
senior vice president,
environmental affairs
Seabridge Gold
Toronto*

Did you know?

Tobacco use can lead to type 2 diabetes.

1 in 3 U.S. Adults
Has Prediabetes
yet 90% don't even know it



Smokers are
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For free and confidential support to quit tobacco, call Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW**, visit alaskaquitline.com, or text **READY** to **200-400** today!

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Port commission approves rate hikes; issue goes to assembly

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The port commission has voted to increase most of Wrangell's port and harbors rates, generally about 2% per year for the next five years, sending the new fee schedule to the borough assembly for consideration.

The new rates would take effect this July and apply to most port and harbors services, including long- and short-term storage and haul-out rates at the Marine Service Center, transient and reserved moorage in the harbors, electricity hookups, use of the grid-iron and hoists.

The borough had generally been raising port and harbor rates about 2% a year until the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a slowdown in economic activity and a pause in the fee increases.

The suggested rate hikes follow a study prepared for the borough by Rain Coast Data, which looked at the long-term viability of the Marine Service Center and the port and harbors fee structure. For every dollar spent, the port and harbors department is only getting about three-quarters of a dollar back, the study concluded, with the rate of return further decreased in future projections without fee increases.

Under the rate hikes forwarded by the port commission Feb. 17 to the assembly for consideration, daily transient moorage fees in the harbors would increase in the first year from 49 cents to 50 cents per linear feet for vessels up to 30 feet long; vessels in the 31- to 55-foot length would go from 59 cents to 60 cents; and vessels in the 56- to 100-foot category would

go up 2 cents from 69 cents to 71 cents.

Similar increases would be implemented for 2023 through 2026.

Monthly reserved moorage rates for 56- to 100-foot vessels would go up 11 cents from \$5.40 to \$5.51 per foot in the first year, with a rate hike from \$4.87 to \$4.97 for boats 31 to 55 feet long.

The \$85 a month liveaboard fee would go up by \$1.70 to \$86.70 in July, and a similar amount in subsequent years.

The proposed rate hikes for the travel lift haul-out range from a 28-cent increase from \$13.64 to \$13.92 per foot for vessels up to 40 feet in length, to a 52-cent increase for vessels 141 feet and longer, which would go from \$25.91 to \$26.43 per foot.

Use of hoists (billed in 10-minute intervals) would increase from \$30 to \$30.60 per hour.

Other increases affect seaplane float billing (per day, month or year), electric utility service, impoundment fees, hydraulic trailer fees at the Marine Service Center, and port security personnel for cruise ships.

If approved by the assembly in March, the updated fee schedule would kick in on July 1, 2022, coinciding with the start of the borough's fiscal year.

In explaining the rate increase, Port Director Steve Miller said the increases are not intended to "run anyone out of business."

Port commission member John Martin added, "We don't want to run ourselves out of business."

No members of the public attended the Feb. 17 port commission meeting where the fees were discussed.

House speaker questions hiring expectations of the ferry system

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

State Transportation Department officials last week told legislators the ferry system needed to quickly hire at least 166 new crew in order to meet minimum staffing levels for this summer's schedule starting in May.

"Staffing goals for the summer season will not be met at current recruitment rates," the department reported in its presentation to the House Transportation Committee on Feb. 15. Insufficient staffing could result in scaling back ferry service plans.

About 350 new hires would be even better, covering vacancies due to sick leave and vacations and allowing the system to reduce its extensive use of overtime and back-to-back shifts to keep the vessels crewed, Katherine Keith, the department's change management director, told the committee.

"We lost a lot of staff when our service level was reduced in 2019," Keith told lawmakers.

In 2019, in his first year in office, Gov. Mike Dunleavy imposed substantial cuts to the ferry system budget, part of his effort to reduce state spending. About 130 ferry system employees resigned or retired in 2019, the department reported.

As of early January, the Alaska Marine Highway System counted 357 vacancies, about half its budgeted number of positions, according to the department's presentation to the committee. The system is operating with lots of overtime and vacation denials, Keith said.

The department's plan to bring the flagship Columbia back to service after it has sat unused the past two summers is dependent on hiring at least 125 new crew members by March 1, to allow time for Coast Guard licensing and other requirements before they can start work. The ship is "penciled in" to start service May 1.

House Speaker Louise Stutes was doubt-

ful of the tight timeline for so many hires this month, and of the new hires making it through required licensing. She called the plan to put the Columbia back to work "disingenuous."

The speaker, a 42-year resident of Kodiak, which relies heavily on state ferry service, said unmet expectations have been a frequent problem with the marine highway.

"That is not a good way to carry out your business," she told Keith at the committee meeting.

The department knows it has "some very big reaches to make that happen," Keith said of getting the Columbia staffed and back at work by May 1.

The department has been advertising nationwide since last fall to recruit new hires. The maritime industry, like many other employers, is finding it hard to attract job applicants.

Stutes also questioned the department's assumptions of how much revenue it would raise this next year from passenger, vehicle and stateroom tickets.

The governor's proposed budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1 assumes the ferries will take in more revenue than any year back to 2015. Not just significantly more passenger and vehicle revenue than the past two pandemic-hampered travel years, but 10% to 15% more than 2016-2019.

The department's optimistic fare revenue estimate is based on running more ships and making more port calls than the last pre-pandemic year of 2019. However, that requires hiring a lot more staff to crew all the ships, prompting Stutes to question the reality of the two connected assumptions.

Though the ferry system operates mostly on state and federal dollars, passenger and vehicle revenues pre-pandemic covered about 35% to 40% of its operating expenses in recent years.

Investigation continues after police seize \$3,600 in meth in Wrangell

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

A Southeast drug enforcement task force seized 24 grams of methamphetamine valued at \$3,600, along with \$11,440 in cash Feb. 15 after searching three homes in Wrangell.

A man and a woman were detained but not arrested, pending further investigation, Police Chief Tom Radke said.

The investigation, which has been underway for a couple of months, revolved around a package mailed to Wrangell, believed to come from north in the state, Radke said.

The task force — Southeast Alaska Cities Against Drugs, or SEACAD — consists

of police departments from Wrangell, Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, Haines, Skagway, Petersburg, Hoonah, Craig and Yakutat; the state troopers; FBI; U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration; U.S. Postal Inspection Service; and the Coast Guard.

Sitka police arrested three people on felony drug charges the same night as the Wrangell seizure.

The investigation in Wrangell was a separate incident from Sitka, Lt. Krag Campbell, at the Juneau Police Department and initiative commander at SEACAD, said last Thursday.

"One of the reasons it seems they are coordinated, our drug unit, SEACAD ... they'll get cases that come in from all different regions in Southeast and act on

them. Towns don't have all the resources. Our task force will try to go in and help each other out as needed."

The task force had time-sensitive information in Sitka and Wrangell, Campbell said.

Around the same time earlier this month as the Sitka investigation, "I'm thinking it was Thursday (Feb. 10) or Friday (Feb. 11), the end of the week, we started learning about the Wrangell stuff, and we got people over there," he said.

Campbell said officers are looking further into drug sales in Wrangell, as well as drugs being brought in to Wrangell. The task force is trying to gather more information to submit to the district attorney's office for possible prosecution.

Not making an arrest can be strategic. "The only timeline I run into is if we make an arrest, it gets that timeline going — we have to get a case to the grand jury. Sometimes cases, the size and scope investigation, could take several months, if not longer," he said.

"We were happy to go in there (to Wrangell) recently, because typically we have less of a presence," Campbell said. "It's nice to be able to get there, be aware that there is drug activity in Wrangell, any time you can get people in to support the local agencies. ... We can help to investigate drug cases, shake things up there. Hopefully stop some of the flow of drugs coming in and encourage people not to do it if at all possible."

Nets movie

Continued from page 1

TJ Scott, he learned Unalaska was their most formidable rival, and sure enough, the team went up against Unalaska for the championship.

Alaska Airlines and GCI are sponsoring a nationwide high school screening tour of the film, where any high school can host a screening for free through March, before the film is released. Schools can sell tickets, school merchandise, concessions or raffle tickets, and 100% of the money they raise goes to the school's athletic department.

The proceeds from the March 5 screening will be split between the Wrangell boys and girls basketball teams, Trisa Rooney, Wrangell high school and middle school activities director, said Feb. 15. Everyone who buys a ticket will be entered into a drawing for two Alaska Airlines' tickets, Rooney said. Tickets are available from any

basketball player or coach, or by calling 907-305-0576.

More than 30 communities in Alaska are screening the movie, according to the film's website.

The film is "exciting for Alaska and the schools that play Metlakatla yearly," Rooney said. There were a couple of Wrangell seniors who graduated last year that played against Metlakatla for the season chronicled in the documentary, she said.

Harasimowicz, who founded the production company Raised by Wolves and made his directing debut with the basketball film, said he was "woefully unprepared" for the toll traveling across Southeast with the team would take on his adult body. He wanted to travel light, so he brought a small sleeping pad and few clothes. The boys ended up taking him to the general store in Petersburg to show him what to get. His wife mailed him an air mattress.

Wherever the kids traveled, he went too, sleeping on the

floor of schools and churches that put them up during the season. "I got really sick when we were traveling to Craig for an away game," he said. The boys were fine, though. "I was still on death's door sleeping on the floor of the library," he said, while classes were going on around him. "It was humbling, as a filmmaker."

The film won the 2021 Audience Choice Award at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, the festival's top overall award.

After the film was cut and edited, Harasimowicz started sending it out to people at United Talent Agency, his very first job in entertainment. "That is where I got my start in the film industry," he said. "I got a call from an agent who showed the film to Chris Pratt, who was also represented by the same agency."

Pratt, who spent a few years of his childhood in Kenai when his dad was in mining, was

taken with the film, and decided his company, Indivisible Productions — homage to the Pledge of Allegiance — would pick it up. He served as executive producer.

"Like the basketball players in our doc, I know what it's like to live in a small town defined by high school sports and supported by local blue-collar industry. ... This wonderful doc examines how small town expectations can (put) the weight of the whole world on a young man's shoulders," Pratt wrote on Instagram March 23, 2021, ahead of the premiere at the Santa Barbara Film Festival.

For Wilson, the then-Ketchikan photojournalist who pitched the story to ESPN, it was a full circle moment, because it was his hope when covering the Chiefs for the 2015-2016 season that they would win. Wilson said he's pleased the filmmakers were inspired to tell the story in a respectful and collaborative way, and that the community

wasn't being mined for their stories. "People are actually interested in them for who they are and what they're doing."

Any art, said Wilson, who now works as a photographer at the Boseman Daily Chronicle in Montana, is inspired by something else. "To have introduced this community and way of life to a larger group of people, and given other people questions they wanted to answer as well is really important."

Harasimowicz said he hopes at schools all over, and for many of the kids in Wrangell, "Alaskan Nets" will strike close to home. "I imagine many of the adults in the movie, or their kids, will be friends with the kids in this film, and have experienced similar triumph. It's the story of many schools, in Wrangell and Alaska. I hope they enjoy it and see similarities in their own experience."

Two tackle tomatoes and tubers for combined senior project

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Last Thursday morning, seniors Jamie Early and Kendra Meissner lugged a crab pot filled with their books through the halls of Wrangell High School. It was part of Spirit Week and "Anything but a backpack" day.

It was a combined effort between the cousins, much like many other things they do, including their senior project.

Early, 18, and Meissner, 17, decided in October to tackle the Evergreen Agricultural Testing Site (EATS) garden for their project, cleaning up weeds, preparing soil beds, building grow towers and even building a larger-volume composter for the elementary school.

According to Evergreen's assistant principal Jenn Miller-Yancey, the garden was meant to be part of the educational process.

"The founding group (30 years ago) wanted it seen as an educational site where anything could be tried out and students could dig," Miller-Yancey said. "EATS' focus is creating a space that kids can dig in and fall in love with growing."

That's exactly what Early and Meissner had in mind when taking on the site for their senior project.

"One of our main goals in this is to get other kids interested in it, too, just making it interesting for elementary students," Early said. "We usually stick to fourth and fifth graders."

Meissner added, "We had some second graders, too. I think they look up to older kids a lot. They look at us as role models, so anything they can do with us I think they just enjoy it, being around older kids."

The project including cleaning up the site to prepare it for spring planting, building seed towers, composting boxes and soil beds, and growing seedlings to transplant to the beds. They've be-

gun growing peas, radishes, lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli and peppers. Some things, however, have not turned out as they'd hoped.

"The herbs were not growing well at all," Early said. "We put together this grow tower that supposed to water everything for you. The lights turn on and off at a certain time, and we'd get everything sprouted. I don't know if we transplanted soon enough. It was a really great idea to use in theory, but it never worked for us."

"We had to replant it three different times, and it didn't help that we were using expired seeds," Meissner said. "It just caused a lot of issues."

But it was issues like that which served as an education for Meissner and Early.

"We've had to come from a million different viewpoints, try different projects, grow different plants, just to see what works," Meissner said. She said her interest in science, which she gained from teacher Heather Howe's class, aided her in research to help solve whatever problems — like proper pH and nutrient levels — came up.

"And if you don't succeed, try again and again and again," Early said. "And try to tweak it every time you try something new, and not just trying the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome."

Both teens admit they are independent and stubborn but, thankfully, they have always worked well together, which makes the process of the project much easier.

"Initially, we knew we were probably going to do (our senior project) together, and we wanted to do the Parks and Rec basketball, but that just wasn't possible with our schedule — we're both busy athletes," Early said. "We heard that Jenn (Miller-Yancey) needed help, and we took the opportunity and ran with it."



High school seniors Kendra Meissner, left, and Jamie Early build a seed tower as part of their senior project. The tower, which helps to sprout seeds before transplanting them into the soil, is part of the Evergreen Elementary School garden.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JENN MILLER-YANCEY

Meissner said they've almost always teamed up where they could. Even though senior projects are meant to focus on what an individual student has learned by contributing to the community, high school assistant principal Bob Davis said the partnership isn't against the rules.

"If they team up, the project basically needs to be twice as much as a single student," Davis said. "It's roughly 30 hours' worth of work, so between them, it has to be about 60. I think that's a great skill. Most jobs nowadays are collaborative. I think they're learning to work together."

Though they're working on the project together and they'll give an oral report that includes a sideshow and discussion, Meissner and Early will have to turn in individual written reports to complete the assignment. And even if they don't get to see the outcome of their work, it will have lasting results.

"The ladies may not realize it, but everything they've worked on this year has helped keep students' hands in soil over the winter months and has kept them motivated on the topic of gardening," Miller-Yancey said. "Ms. Early and Ms. Meissner are simply great humans. They are fun, smart and motivated, which are great qualities for people who are going to spend time in an elementary school with students."

After graduation, Early and Meissner will continue doing things together, including going to Idaho for college. Early will attend Idaho State University in Pocatello to study physical therapy, and Meissner will attend Boise State University to study radiology.

Both agreed, however, that they'd probably return to Wrangell after graduating from college.

"I think we'll be too broke to go anywhere else," Early said with a laugh.

Master Gardeners answer questions on 'Weedy Wednesdays'

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Got a question about getting started in gardening? Need to know about potatoes? Southeast Master Gardeners can help you plow ahead with answers.

A new program called "Weedy Wednesdays," offered by the Southeast Alaska Master Gardeners Association, will offer four one-hour online question-and-answer sessions with various areas of focus.

On March 16, gardening experts will answer previously submitted questions on potato growing in a session "Spuds 101." March 23 will cover seed starting; March 30 will be about preparing a new garden for use; and April 6 will cover transplanting. Each Weedy Wednesday will be held from noon to 1 p.m.

"In the past, (we) held bag lunches. They were really popular. When I joined the association and the board, I talked about it, but they said it was a lot of work to set up and take down," said Corinne Conlon, president of the association. "Because we can do things online, I thought we could do it again."

Conlon said there will usually be four master gardeners in attendance, including herself, to answer questions sent in by attendees.

"There's a lot of gardening experience in Southeast, so I think we'll be able to answer most questions, but you always get those questions where you're not completely sure," she said. Members of the association will endeavor to find answers to the questions that stump them. Conlon herself wrote a gardening book about growing in Alaska called "Growing Near Glaciers."

Transcripts of each Weedy Wednesday session will be available afterward on the association's website for reference and follow-up.

Questions should be emailed to info@seak-mastergardeners.org before the sessions are held. A short presentation on the day's topic will be held before a panel of master gardeners answer the submitted questions, whether in regard to the topic or on gardening in general. Those wanting to attend can sign up at seak-mastergardeners.org.

Beyond answering questions, Conlon is hoping the sessions create a place for networking gardeners of all skill levels throughout Southeast.

"I'm hoping to have a chat function to get a sense of where gardeners are from in areas of Southeast and get names and contact," she said. Though there aren't any plans to hold Weedy Wednesdays beyond April 6, Conlon said she hopes it at least becomes an annual event or more often depending on popularity and requests for information.

Governor proposes new program to replace onboard cruise ship monitors

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Almost three years after pulling pollution monitors — called Ocean Rangers — from large cruise ships, Gov. Mike Dunleavy has proposed legislation to replace the onboard state personnel with regular inspections by shoreside staff while ships are in port and underway.

The Ocean Rangers program was written into state law when voters approved a citizen's initiative in 2006 to step up oversight of the cruise ship industry.

However, start-of-season and random inspections during the summer "are a more effective use of available funds," Emma Pokon, deputy commissioner at the Department of Environmental Conservation, told the Senate Resources Committee on Feb. 14.

Relying on shoreside personnel to inspect vessels while in port or underway avoids having to pay for living quarters for Ocean Rangers aboard multiple ships the entire summer, Randy Bates, the DEC Water Division director, told senators.

The 2006 initiative required "state-employed marine engineers (Ocean Rangers) licensed by the Coast Guard to observe health, safety and wastewater treatment and discharge operations." Passenger fees collected by the cruise lines and turned over to the state paid the entire cost of the program.

Pokon called the 2006 vote "a pretty clear message from Alaskans to take water quality seriously."

Dunleavy, in his first year in office in 2019, dropped the \$3.4 million Ocean Rangers program from the state budget. Subsequent legislative attempts to restore the funding have failed.

Although the governor had said he would propose an alter-

native program to specifically monitor cruise industry compliance with environmental laws, he did not offer legislation until earlier this month. The department has been using existing staff to check for compliance with environmental rules.

The Senate Resources Committee heard and held the bill, intending to "take it up another day," said the chairman, Sen. Josh Revak, of Anchorage. The measure (Senate Bill 180) would also need to clear the Finance Committee before going to the full Senate for a vote. The same measure was assigned to three committees in the House, with the Legislature just past the one-third mark in its 121-day session.

Bates called the Ocean Rangers "writers and observers," who provided oversight but lacked enforcement powers. "We feel at this point that the Ocean Rangers served a purpose."

In lieu of onboard monitors, "DEC marine engineers and inspectors will perform initial and annual inspections on ships operating in Alaska as early in the season as possible, (and) will perform both scheduled and unscheduled inspections in port and while vessels are underway," according to the department's presentation at

Senate Resources. "Small vessels will be subject to the same inspection requirements."

The department plans to hire additional marine engineers to cover the workload, Bates said.

Juneau Sen. Jesse Kiehl sees it differently. "The Ocean Rangers are a deterrent more than an enforcement mechanism," he said a day after the committee hearing. He also was critical of the governor's delay between pulling the monitors off the ships in 2019 and proposing an alternative in 2022. "He's been three years not following the law."

The governor's bill proposes using some of the savings from ending the Ocean Rangers program to create a small grant program "to assist port municipalities to upgrade wastewater treatment facilities serving vessel passengers."

Kiehl called the possible grant program "a sweetener" for communities, though he noted the funding of maybe a couple million dollars a year would fall far short of the tens of millions of dollars or more that it would cost to improve wastewater treatment plants.

Any grant funding would be subject to annual legislative appropriation in the state budget.

Policy for Letters to the Editor

- Letters should be typed or clearly written and no longer than 400 words.
- All letters must be signed by the writer and include a phone number and any affiliation with a group which pertains to the letter.

The Sentinel reserves the right to edit any submissions.

The deadline for submissions is Monday at 5 p.m. for Thursday publication.

Letters are run on a space-available basis.

WRANGELL SENTINEL

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Archery sessions at parks and rec gym run through March



PHOTO BY SARAH ASLAM/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Nancy Delpero lines up for her shot at the target on Feb. 15.

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

Archery is on target at the community gym through March 25 to keep the blues from the winter cold and the winter rain at bay.

Instructor Winston Davies oversees the activity, and has a few bows, arrows and sheaths to clip to your belt or waistband on hand if you don't have one of your own. It's not an instructional class per se, but Davies is happy to give a few pointers to people who've been removed from the sport for a while, even if it's been nearly a decade.

Davies taught math and science for 17 years in the middle school, and switched to teaching shop class last year. He commercial fishes in the summer. He's married to sixth grade teacher Laura Davies. Their son, 10-year-old Quinn Davies, and 12-year-old daughter Madelyn Davies both enjoy archery, he said. Quinn was in attendance Feb. 15 at the first meet of the archery open gym session.

Interest waxes and wanes

over the years, Davies said. It's been challenging getting gym time with all the other recreation going on, but Lucy Robinson, recreation director, thought it was important to get the activity in before the winter was out, he said.

Participants shoot five arrows at their targets, arranged at varying distances inside the gym according to the archer's skill and comfort level, then after Davies gives the all-clear the archers advance forward to tally their scores (if they're keeping personal score, like Quinn was) and pull their arrows from the target, or fish errant arrows from a strung-up cloth backdrop. Shooting five arrows at a time keeps the participants fresher than shooting all of them at a time, Davies said.

Davies, born and raised in Wrangell, enjoys rifle hunting as an adult, but didn't take to archery immediately.

"My dad bought me a bow when I was Quinn's age," he said. "It wasn't until college that I got into it." That was at Fort

Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. Davies studied biology, and had initially wanted to be a fisheries biologist. He liked the subject "because I was always out in the woods."

Davies said being a "bad bow hunter" made him a better rifle hunter because hunting with a bow and arrow means you have to get closer, and be more quiet, around prey — also qualities which lend to being better at rifle hunting wild game. "When you're bow hunting, you have to really pay attention."

The winter sessions offer Davies and anyone else who stops by — attendees such as parks and recreation board member Nancy Delpero and Adam Sprehe, airport manager — a chance to sharpen their skills and offer something to do in the winter.

"I find shooting my bow relaxing," Davies said. "It's a challenge."

Archery is available at the community center gym every Tuesday night from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. until March 25.

State will provide financial aid for homeowners hurt by pandemic

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Alaska's state housing agency has distributed more than \$243 million in financial aid the past year to help renters hurt economically by the pandemic and will soon embark on a \$50 million federally funded program to help homeowners, too.

The aid can go toward eligible homeowners' monthly mortgage payments, and may also be applied to current and past-due property taxes, insurance premiums and utility bills, the Alaska Housing Finance Corp. announced Friday.

Preregistration for Alaska Housing Homeowner Assistance opens Monday at AlaskaHousingRelief.org. Applications will be accepted March 14 through April 4.

The Alaska Housing Finance Corp., which is administering the homeowner

relief program, said there are income eligibility limits for the assistance, based on each community's average median income. Households at the lower end of eligibility standards will be given priority for the limited funds.

The program website will automatically calculate an applicant's income eligibility based on their home address.

"Once registered, applicants will be automatically connected to an online eligibility checker to quickly verify if they meet program requirements," the agency said in its announcement.

The financial aid is available only for residents whose Alaska home is their primary residence, and applicants must be able to demonstrate that their financial hardships are directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as a loss or reduction in income.

Residents in mobile homes and manufactured homes are eligible, same as any

other house.

Applicants will be asked to submit 2020 or 2021 tax returns and a mortgage statement and other verification, the agency said.

The \$50 million allocation is Alaska's share of \$9.9 billion that Congress appropriated for homeowner relief in last year's American Rescue Plan Act.

Homeowners will be able to apply and submit eligibility documentation "through a dedicated and secure online web portal," the Alaska housing agency said, explaining that it will send payments on behalf of approved applicants to their mortgage servicer, lender, municipal tax office, utilities — wherever the money is owed — rather than to homeowners directly.

AHFC reported there are about 163,000 owner-occupied houses in Alaska, with homeowners owing on almost 100,000 mortgages.

The federally funded renter assistance program, which has been underway about a year, has helped almost 40,000 Alaska households with rent and utility payments totaling more than \$243 million as of last week, according to the housing agency.

Of that total, 80 renters in Wrangell — about one in 13 households in the community, according to U.S. Census numbers — have benefited from more than \$500,000 paid toward past-due and future rent and utilities.

Renters in Ketchikan over the past year have received more than \$9.3 million in assistance under the program, with about \$4.3 million going to Sitka renters, \$1 million in Petersburg, \$635,000 in Haines and \$617,000 in Skagway.

Congress allocated almost \$47 billion in renter assistance in aid packages in 2020 and 2021.

Sport Shorts

Wrangell wrestlers win top spots in Ketchikan

Sentinel staff

Stikine Middle School wrestlers traveled to Ketchikan last weekend to compete in the Schoenbar Regional Championships. The squad came away with 19 top placements.

There were nine first place wins, six second place wins and four third place wins by Wrangell wrestlers. The team placed first with the most pins in the least time. Overall, the team placed second behind Juneau's Floyd Dryden Middle School in points.

The wrestlers who took first place in their weight classes were Katelyn Gillen, Christina Johnson, Kourtney Barnes, Hailey Cook, Amira Roher, Cody Barnes, Ian Nelson and Jackson Carney.

Second place winners were Sophia Martinsen, Everett Meissner, Jackson Powers, Ben Hauser, Boomchain Loucks and Amira Roher.

Third place winners were Clara Carney, Katelyn Gillen, Michael Cook and Cooper Powers.

The squad is scheduled to compete in Fairbanks this weekend at the Tanana State Invitational.

KSTK art auction sets goal of raising \$5,000

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Art lovers and artists can help sustain public radio station KSTK with their contributions.

The station recently kicked off a fundraising effort that will culminate in an art auction and hopefully \$5,000.

The art auction March 18 at the Nolan Center will allow the public to bid on sculptures, paintings, jewelry or any other donated art.

"We're on this balancing blade. Our business model is based on local donations and contributions and special events and raffles," Station Manager Cindy Sweat said. "Without our ability to have in-person events, it's been really tough."

The indoor, in-person event is the first one the station has been able to hold since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We want to be as safe as we possibly can, but we also need to make some money," she said. "It seems like things are getting better. It seems like there's a decline (in cases) locally and nationally."

Sweat said the auction will open the doors at 6 p.m., with bidding to start at 7 p.m. People can come in, socialize, have savory or sweet hors d'oeuvres provided by Sweet Tides and treats created by radio station board members, have beer, wine or a non-alcoholic beverage and peruse the available art.

Before the auction, patrons will have the chance to purchase a golden raffle ticket for \$50. The winner will be able to pick whichever piece of art he or she would like to take home before anyone has a chance to bid on it.

With the auction is a little under a month away, Sweat and Chris Kamal, the station's development director, are seeking art donations. They are seeking paintings, sculptures, photo prints, quilts, woodwork, ceramics, jewelry, and even food.

"If your specialty is a beautiful cake (we'll take it)," Sweat said. "If you make homemade bath



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

A colorful poster of a moose is among the items available at KSTK's fundraising art auction planned for next month.

oils, I would consider that art."

The station will also take artwork that people own and would like to part with, even if they're not the creator. So far, only about a dozen pieces have been collected.

Those who would like to donate art can contact Sweat or Kamal at the station by calling 907-874-2345 or email chrisk@kstk.org. Donations need to be received by March 16.

"We'll have a little bit of a Wrangell-style fancy night out," Sweat said.

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SENTINEL SPORTS

Home royal court advantage

High school students, staff celebrate homecoming week with pep, spirit and wins

BY MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Homecoming at Wrangell High School began with Spirit Week and ended in three hard-fought wins and one loss for the varsity basketball teams.

Petersburg's varsity and junior varsity teams came to town to compete against the Wolves amid pep rallies, retirement ceremonies and the crowning of Wrangell's royal homecoming court.

A taco lunch and pep rally kicked off the run-up to last Friday's and Saturday's games by enlivening students and staff. Sophomore Mia Wiederspohn organized the Friday pep rally, starting it off by presenting high schoolers and middle schoolers with gift certificates for free hamburgers from Zak's Café and J&W's — made possible through her and junior Rylee Chelette's grant writing efforts and a donation from the high school's BASE program.

That led into fun and games such as musical chairs, with 15 boys and Wolfie, the school's mascot, vying for the last chair left by the end of the often-raucous game. Senior Rowen Wiederspohn dropped into the lone chair as the band abruptly stopped playing.

"Are you guys ready to make some noise," Mia Wiederspohn asked the students in the stands as the afternoon's festivities continued.

Both Wrangell and Petersburg had enough players to hold a boys junior varsity game before the boys and girls varsity basketball games. A one-period, 20-minute JV game was held each night in front of a packed crowd in the gym.

The JV Wolves scored within the first two minutes of play on Friday, with Petersburg finally getting points on the board at almost five minutes into play. The younger Wrangell team held its visiting competitors at bay, winning the first night's game 22-4. Saturday night's game had similar results with the addition of an exciting three-point basket made from junior Carter Hammer from downtown, landing nothing but net and firing up the crowd.

"We're pretty short in size, but the guys make up for it in talent and giving 100% effort all the time," said JV head coach Robbie Marshall. "As coaches we just try to do our best to get them to do what we're asking. They were definitely doing that, they were playing the passing lane, they were running their plays. You just got to let them loose and play basketball. We got the W in the end."

Between the JV and varsity games on Friday, longtime referees Jeff Jabusch and Fred Angerman Jr. were honored for their years of officiating. Their colleagues Keith Perkins and Bill Steinbach came to town to laud the two retiring refs.

"That's 70 years worth of officiating (between the two)," Perkins said. "There's a lot of years on the court at the state tournament from these guys because that's how well respected they were throughout Southeast Alaska, not just here in Wrangell."

The excitement of the games continued throughout the



weekend between the varsity teams, with the boys showing a cohesive effort. Despite Petersburg's height advantage, the Wolves kept up a strong defense while plowing ahead with their offensive play on Friday. At first it seemed the Vikings would be able to put their height to good use by scoring first, but Wrangell answered with a three-pointer. They kept the buckets coming and won the game 48-31.

The girls varsity had a tougher time of Friday night's game, struggling to keep up with the Lady Vikings. A bevy of missed shots and struggling defense led to a 37-28 Petersburg victory.

Saturday's games brought more energy and roof-raising noise between the court, band, cheerleaders and onlooking crowd, at times making it hard to hear.

The girls took to the hardwood first with the Lady Wolves presenting a stronger front than the previous night. Senior Liana Carney scored the first point of the night at 2:30 into the first period. It would be another 90 seconds before Petersburg scored due to Wrangell's stepped-up defense. The first half ended with Wrangell ahead 21-15.

In the second half, the Lady Vikings started coming from behind, closing the deficit. It was tight in the last 10 seconds with the visitors only two points behind. Wrangell was able to hold them off, winning 35-33.



PHOTOS BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Clockwise from left: The tip-off of the boys varsity basketball game last Friday was just the beginning of intense play between the Wolves and Petersburg Vikings at the Wrangell gym as senior Daniel Harrison vies for the ball against an opponent. The Wolves won both weekend games. Girls basketball team head coach Christina Good (kneeling) talks with her team during a timeout last Saturday in the game's final minutes. The Lady Wolves went on to win the game against Petersburg by two points. Referee Kaelene Harrison is ready with the whistle even during a break in the action last Saturday, while the Wrangell High School cheerleaders go to work. The Lady Wolves jostle inside to attempt a layup during the homecoming game against Petersburg last Saturday.



"I know our girls can do much better," head coach Christina Good said. "We seem to be a little bit flat on defense still. Defense, in my opinion is the key to winning games. Friday night we missed 40 shots, which hurt us offensively, and we had 20 turnovers. Tonight was better, but we still missed a lot of shots, and a lot of that is because we get going so fast. We just need to slow it down ... and let the game come to us."

The homecoming royal court was chosen between the final

two games. Daniel Harrison and Aubrey Wynne were chosen and the prince and princess of the freshman class. Cody Eastaugh and Mia Wiederspohn were chosen as prince and princess for the sophomore class. Devlyn Campbell and Brodie Gardner were selected as prince and princess of the junior class.

The senior class royal court was comprised of Jake Eastaugh, Liana Carney, Ryan Rooney, Kendra Meissner, Rowen Wiederspohn and Jamie Early. Rooney and Meis-

sner were chosen king and queen of the class.

Varsity boys continued their power-packed play on Saturday, scoring first in just over two minutes of play. The tension between the two teams was on display, with fouls piling up on both sides. In the third period, senior Ryan Rooney fouled out. Strong play kept Wrangell ahead of the visiting team, leading to a 30-23 victory.

Girls and boys varsity are scheduled to travel to Petersburg next week for another cross-water rivalry.

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WRANGELL SENTINEL



WADE PAYNE VIA AP IMAGES

A bald eagle takes flight from the forest floor with material as it and its mate build a nest for the first-time ever at Radnor Lake State Park on Jan. 30 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Toxic lead found in 46% of bald eagles sampled in Lower 48

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's national bird is more beleaguered than previously believed, with nearly half of bald eagles tested across the Lower 48 states showing signs of chronic lead exposure, according to a study published Feb. 17.

While the bald eagle population has rebounded from the brink of extinction since the U.S. banned the pesticide DDT in 1972, harmful levels of toxic lead were found in the bones of 46% of bald eagles sampled in 38 states from California to Florida, researchers reported in the journal *Science*.

Similar rates of lead exposure were found in golden eagles, which scientists say means the raptors likely consumed carrion or prey contaminated by lead from ammunition or fishing tackle.

The blood, bones, feathers and liver tissue of 1,210 eagles sampled from 2010 to 2018 were examined to assess chronic and acute lead exposure.

The study included data from golden eagles in Alaska, but not bald eagles.

There are more than 315,000 bald eagles in the Lower 48 states, according to federal estimates. The Alaska population is above 30,000, more than any other state in the country, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

"This is the first time for any wildlife species that we've been able to evaluate lead exposure and population level consequences at a continental scale," said study co-author Todd Katzner, a wildlife biologist at U.S. Geological Survey in Boise, Idaho. "It's sort of stunning that

nearly 50% of them are getting repeatedly exposed to lead."

Lead is a neurotoxin that even in low doses impairs an eagle's balance and stamina, reducing its ability to fly, hunt and reproduce. In high doses, lead causes seizures, breathing difficulty and death.

The study estimated that lead exposure reduced the annual population growth of bald eagles by 4% and golden eagles by 1%.

Bald eagles are one of America's most celebrated conservation success stories, and the birds were removed from the U.S. Endangered Species List in 2007.

But scientists say that high lead levels are still a concern. Besides suppressing eagle population growth, lead exposure reduces their resilience in facing future challenges, such as climate change or infectious diseases.

"When we talk about recovery, it's not really the end of the story — there are still threats to bald eagles," said Krysten Schuler, a wildlife disease ecologist at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, who was not involved in the study.

Previous studies have shown high lead exposure in specific regions, but not across the country. The blood samples from live eagles in the new study were taken from birds trapped and studied for other reasons; the bone, feather and liver samples came from eagles killed by collisions with vehicles or powerlines, or other misfortunes.

"Lead is present on the landscape and available to these birds more than we pre-

viously thought," said co-author Vince Slabe, a research wildlife biologist at the nonprofit Conservation Science Global. "A lead fragment the size of the end of a pin is large enough to cause mortality in an eagle."

The researchers also found elevated levels of lead exposure in fall and winter, coinciding with hunting season in many states.

During these months, eagles scavenge on carcasses and gut piles left by hunters, which are often riddled with shards of lead shot or bullet fragments.

Slabe said the upshot of the research was not to disparage hunters. "Hunters are one of the best conservation groups in this country," he said, noting that fees and taxes paid by hunters help fund state wildlife agencies.

However, Slabe said he hopes the findings provide an opportunity to "talk to hunters about this issue in a clear manner" and that more hunters will voluntarily switch to non-lead ammunition such as copper bullets.

Lead ammunition for waterfowl hunting was banned in 1991, due to concerns about contamination of waterways, and wildlife authorities encouraged the use of nontoxic steel shot. However, lead ammunition is still common for upland bird hunting and big game hunting.

The amount of lead exposure varies regionally, with highest levels found in the Central Flyway, the new study found.

At the University of Minnesota's Raptor Center, veterinarian and executive director Victoria Hall said that "85 to 90%

of the eagles that come into our hospital have some level of lead in their blood," and X-rays often show fragments of lead bullets in their stomachs.

Eagles with relatively low levels can be treated, she said, but those with high exposure can't be saved.

Laura Hale, board president at nonprofit Badger Run Wildlife Rehab in Klamath County, Oregon, said she'll never forget the first eagle she encountered with acute lead poisoning, in 2018. She had answered a resident's call about an eagle that seemed immobile in underbrush and brought it to the clinic.

The young bald eagle was wrapped in a blanket, unable to breathe properly, let alone stand or fly.

"There is something hideous when you watch an eagle struggling to breathe because of lead poisoning — it's really, really harsh," she said, her voice shaking. That eagle went into convulsions, and died within 48 hours.

Lead on the landscape affects not only eagles, but also many other birds — including hawks, vultures, ravens, swans and geese, said Jennifer Cedarleaf, avian director at Alaska Raptor Center, a nonprofit wildlife rescue in Sitka.

Because eagles are very sensitive to lead, are so well-studied and attract so much public interest, "bald eagles are like the canary in the coal mine," she said. "They are the species that tells us: We have a bit of a problem."

Judge finds fault with redistricting map, board's 'secretive procedures'

BY JAMES BROOKS
Anchorage Daily News

An Alaska judge upheld most of the state's newly redistricted legislative district map on Feb. 15 but overturned a decision that created two East Anchorage Senate seats linked with more politically conservative Eagle River.

The judge also ruled in favor of Skagway, which wants to share a House district with the more cruise ship tourism-oriented downtown Juneau than with the Mendenhall Valley portion of the community.

A day after the judge's ruling, the Alaska Redistricting Board met in executive session and later voted 3-2 to appeal the ruling to the Alaska Supreme Court, with

the three conservative members of the board voting to appeal.

Anchorage Superior Court Judge Thomas Matthews heard five legal challenges to the maps drawn last year by the redistricting board. He ordered the board to redraw the Senate pairings in Anchorage/Eagle River and the boundaries of the two Juneau-centered House districts, or offer a legal explanation as to why it is impossible to do so.

The board linked Skagway and Haines in the same House district as Juneau's Mendenhall Valley, not downtown. The two Lynn Canal communities have been paired with the Juneau downtown district for several years.

In his decision, Matthews faulted the board's handling of

public testimony on the House boundaries between Skagway and Juneau, and he faulted board members for failing to properly address testimony from East Anchorage residents who objected to getting lumped into a Senate district with Eagle River.

He said there was evidence indicating the three Republican-appointed members of the redistricting board worked in secret to give Eagle River greater representation in the Senate, illegally diluting the representation of East Anchorage.

"While the court does not make this finding lightly, it does find evidence of secretive procedures evident in the board's consideration and deliberation of the Anchorage Senate seat

pairings," the judge wrote.

Matthews declined to say definitively that there was a secret deal, but said, "the court does see ample evidence of secretive process at play."

Concluding his writing, he said, "This court finds that the board's refusal to consider and make a good-faith effort to incorporate public feedback relating to the placement of Skagway and the dividing line in Juneau was arbitrary and capricious, and thus unreasonable. The same holds true for the East Anchorage senate pairings."

The judge ruled against legal challenges from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the city of Valdez and Calista Corp., the regional Native corporation for the Yukon-Kuskokwim re-

gion of Southwest Alaska. Each of those plaintiffs had sought changes in the state House map, but Matthews found that the decisions made by the board could be justified by the state constitution, law or prior legal rulings.

Under court rules, the Supreme Court has until April 1 to make a decision on the appeal. The compressed timeline is necessary because June 1 is the deadline for candidates to register for the 2022 election. Several candidates have previously said they are deferring decisions until after court rulings on redistricting.

Alaska, like other states, is required to redraw legislative boundaries after every U.S. Census in order to account for changes in population.

Jury rules against Palin's claim she was libeled

NEW YORK (AP) - Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin lost her libel lawsuit against The New York Times on Feb. 15 when a jury rejected her claim that the newspaper maliciously damaged her reputation by erroneously linking her campaign rhetoric to a mass shooting.

A judge had already declared that if the jury sided with Palin, he would set aside its verdict on the grounds that she hadn't proven the paper acted maliciously, something required in libel suits involving public figures.

"Of course we're disappointed," Palin said as she left the Manhattan courthouse after the jury verdict was announced. She said she hoped there would be an appeal.

In a statement, the Times called the verdict a "reaffirmation of a fundamental tenet of American law: Public figures should not be permitted to use libel suits to punish or intimidate news organizations that make, acknowledge and swiftly correct unintentional errors."

Palin, a onetime Republican vice presidential nominee, sued the newspaper in 2017 claiming it had damaged her career as a political commentator and consultant with an editorial about gun control published after a man opened fire on a Congressional baseball team practice in Washington.

U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise, a Louisiana Republican, was wounded in the shooting, committed by a man with a history of anti-GOP activity.

In the editorial, the Times blamed overheated political rhetoric. It likened the shooting to a 2011 massacre in Arizona that left six dead and former U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords severely wounded, and said Palin's political action committee had contributed to an atmosphere of violence at the time by circulating a map of electoral districts that put Giffords and 19 other Democrats under stylized crosshairs.

In a correction shortly after the editorial was published, The Times said it had "incorrectly stated that a link existed between political rhetoric and the 2011 shooting" and that it had "incorrectly described" the map; a tweet read, "We got an important fact wrong."

At the trial, Palin cast herself as a victim of biased journalism by a left-leaning, elitist media institution eager to embarrass a pro-gun rights politician.

"It was devastating to read a false accusation that I had anything to do with



AP PHOTO/SETH WENIG

Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin speaks briefly to reporters as she leaves a courthouse in New York City on Feb. 14. Jurors on Feb. 15 rejected her libel claim against The New York Times.

murder," Palin said. "I felt powerless - that I was up against Goliath. ... I was David."

In closing arguments, Palin lawyer Kenneth Turkel called the editorial an example of how The Times "treated people on the right they don't agree with. ... They don't care. She's just one of 'them.'"

In his closing, Times attorney David Axelrod called the case "incredibly important because it's about freedom of the press." The First Amendment protects journalists "who make an honest mistake when they write about a person like Sarah Palin. That's all this was about - an honest mistake," Axelrod said.

It was an uphill battle for Palin: The

jury had to decide whether former Times editorial page editor James Bennet acted with "actual malice" against a public figure or with "reckless disregard" for the truth when he inserted the disputed wording into the piece.

U.S. District Judge Jed Rakoff had informed lawyers on Feb. 14 with the jury outside of the courtroom that Palin had failed to show that The Times had acted out of malice. Rakoff had said he would wait to formally enter the judgment when the trial ends.

"This is the kind of case that inevitably goes up on appeal," Rakoff said in an explanation from the bench.

At trial, Bennet testified that he botched

the edit, but meant no harm. "I've regretted it pretty much every day since," he said.

He and other New York Times staffers testified about the great lengths taken to correct the error the morning after the piece was published. He also said he wanted to apologize to Palin, but was prohibited by a Times policy against making personal apologies.

The defense also has asserted the editorial only made a passing reference to Palin's political committee, which by law is an entity that's separate from her. Palin pushed back, saying, the PAC "is me."

"My name, my voice, my face," she said.

Judge upholds Dunleavy decision to sweep scholarship money into state general fund

By JAMES BROOKS
Anchorage Daily News

A group of four Alaska college students has appealed a state court ruling that upheld a decision by Gov. Mike Dunleavy to drain the state's \$410 million higher-education investment fund. The decision made scholarship programs subject to annual legislative appropriation of state general fund dollars.

The students last Friday filed their appeal of the ruling handed down a day earlier by Superior Court Judge Adolf Zeman.

Unless reversed on appeal to the Alaska Supreme Court, the Alaska Performance Scholarship program and WWAMI, which helps pay the costs for Alaska students who attend medical schools out of state, do not have a dedicated funding source and must compete with other programs in the state's annual budget process.

More than 5,000 students a year receive scholarships under the programs.

Lawmakers and the governor last year agreed to use general funds dollars to cover the scholarship programs through the end of the current fiscal year on June 30, and Dunleavy has requested that the programs remain funded in next year's budget.

In his order, Zeman said the administration correctly clas-

sified the higher-education fund as part of the state's general fund in 2019. That made it subject to a clause in the Alaska Constitution that requires left-over general fund money to be automatically swept into the Constitutional Budget Reserve, a special savings account that requires a three-quarters legislative majority for withdrawals.

The Alaska Legislature regularly votes to reverse that sweep into the savings, reinstating the scholarship fund each year, but it failed to do so in 2021 because of opposition by Republican legislators in the state House. That failure, combined with the administration's 2019 decision to remove protection from the scholarship fund, drained the account into the harder-to-reach savings, prompting the switch to using general fund dollars since then.

Attorney Scott Kendall, who is representing the students, said Friday he expected the Alaska Supreme Court to move in an expedited fashion in the case and he hopes for a better result with the higher court.

The suit stems from a decision by former Attorney General Kevin Clarkson and former Office of Management and Budget Director Donna Arduin to subject the scholarship fund to the sweep, a position never taken

by previous governors.

A similar lawsuit rejected the Dunleavy administration's decision to sweep the Power Cost Equalization Fund into savings. The fund provides about \$32 million a year in subsidies to high electricity costs for more than 82,000 rural residents.

The judge noted that the scholarship fund case differs from the 2021 lawsuit in which the Alaska Federation of Natives challenged the draining of the Power Cost Equalization account.

AFN won that case, in part because the law creating the power subsidy fund said it was created outside the general fund. The law creating the higher-education fund specifically says that it is part of the general fund, Zeman said, and therefore subject to the annual sweep into savings.

"If the Legislature believes these programs should be funded, it possesses the power to establish the (higher education fund) as a separate fund outside the general fund or to appropriate money from other sources ... to fund the programs in the future. However, this is not within the court's power. The power of appropriation belongs solely to the legislative branch," he said.

Reporting by the Juneau Empire and Wrangell Sentinel contributed to this story.

Salmon returns decline to 561 last year in Maine river

ORONO, Maine (AP)- Salmon counters found fewer of the endangered fish in Maine's Penobscot River last year than in any year since 2016.

Atlantic salmon are listed under the Endangered Species Act in the U.S., as the country's only remaining wild populations of the fish are found in a few Maine rivers. The Penobscot is vitally important to the future of the fish, and salmon returns there are watched closely.

Only 561 salmon were counted in the Penobscot last year. That was the lowest number since 2016, when 503 fish were found, the Bangor Daily News reported. The count was even lower in 2014, at 218 salmon.

"(The) numbers are just a fraction of what they used to be - 75,000 to 100,000 Atlantic salmon used to return to the river to spawn," according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Division.

Last year's number was a disappointment after more than 1,400 salmon were counted in 2020. That was the highest return since 2011.

The low numbers likely reflect factors such as low survival at sea, the impact of drought during the time the salmon are in the river, and mortality from hydropower projects, said Sean Ledwin, sea run fisheries and habitat director for the Maine Department of Marine Resources.

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Charter operator thinks squid may be eating salmon

BY KYLE CLAYTON
Chilkat Valley News, Haines

A Juneau-based fishing charter and lodge owner has a hunch that a viable commercial squid fishery could exist in Southeast.

Richard Yamada, who's been operating fishing charters for 40 years, has been looking for ways to reduce the damage to his business as king salmon numbers decline. He speculates that an influx of magister squid in the northern Inside Passage might be one factor affecting salmon survival.

About 15 years ago, while fishing for rockfish, he and his clients caught a magister squid.

"We didn't even know what the species was," Yamada said. "We never caught any more so we didn't really have any interest in catching them. About five or six years ago, we went on an evening trip and threw some squid jigs over the side of the boat. We caught over 100 squid in about two or three hours. We did it another couple times in different spots and were just as successful."

He soon added squid to his list of charter fishing options. Also known as the "red squid," they can average five pounds.

He contacted a retired Alaska Department of Fish and Game coho researcher based out of Juneau, Leon Shaul, and the pair wondered if the squid could be eating juvenile salmon that are rearing in Southeast waters. Shaul said salmon declines also coincided with adult herring declines that other biologists were tracking.

"It's pointing to a predator," Shaul said. "Increased mortality of adult herring in inside waters across all age classes, even while their body condition factor remains high, is consistent with a predator. Across the board these inside stocks have dropped off. Two herring stocks that were still doing well were in Sitka and Craig/Klawock, which are both on the outer coast, not in (the magister squids') primary area."

Shaul said the warm waters associated with "the blob," warming Pacific Ocean waters, could be a factor for an increased population of magister squid, which were already native to the region, but more evident farther south near Ketchikan, where a commercial fishery was attempted in 2011.

"The initial warming phase started in the summer of 2014," Shaul said. "It's just a hypothesis, but it was within a year of the beginning of the blob that survival of both coho and chinook salmon smolts declined for inside stocks, similar to inside herring, and I started hearing more and more about squid, more and more people catching them up here. I suspect that the marine heat wave may have caused a jump in the squid population."

In 2019, a dead sperm whale washed up in Lynn Canal. A necropsy found that the whale, uncommon in inside waters, had been foraging on magister squid.

Yamada said if their hypothesis is correct, a commercial fishery would not only benefit fishermen hoping to diversify, but also potentially cut back on the decline in salmon.

"We see low king salmon returns in our area," Yamada said. "Solving that issue would help our sport fishery. I



Juneau charter operator Richard Yamada caught a magister squid in southern Lynn Canal on Aug. 29, 2020, using a jig, which he displayed in his other hand.

PHOTO COURTESY CHILKAT VALLEY NEWS, HAINES

have no interest in commercially harvesting the squid. The long-term effect is it would help my king salmon access."

Yamada, also president of the Alaska Charter Association and a member of the International Pacific Halibut Commission, wrote a proposal to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association to determine the feasibility of establishing a squid fishery. It was turned down this month, but he said he will continue his quest. He plans to apply for a special state permit that would allow him to catch 1,500 pounds of squid. Before he can do that, he needs more data about the animals that most biologists know little about.

"These species have been in Alaska waters for a long time. We just don't have any record of their appearance in the inside waters," Yamada said. "We're seeing them in our halibut and in black cod. There's something happening and I'm curious. I've always been a scientist at heart."

Among the goals of the research, which if approved wouldn't begin until summer 2023, is to determine what volume of squid needs to be harvested and at what price to create a viable fishery; what equipment could best be used to find schools of squid; and to field test

commercial squid gear.

He's also taken the squid to Juneau chefs to gauge interest in their marketability as a high-end seafood product.

Yamada is also seeking funding and research assistance from the University of Alaska to learn more about the squids' life cycle, along with a grant to complete DNA studies that will help researchers understand what the squid are eating.

Shaul said very little is known about the squid other than they have a short life cycle, probably two years, and the populations can shift very quickly.

The recent La Nina pattern has brought a cooling trend and Shaul said the ephemeral nature of squid in general is such they could decrease again by the time biologists learn more about them.

"We could get a fishery going and get it all approved and then have the squid disappear. That's just the way they are," Shaul said. "They have a short life cycle, a high reproductive rate and a strong response to environmental conditions. But, last I've heard, people were still catching quite a few and have been for quite some time."

Senate bill would extend tribal court jurisdiction in Alaska

ANCHORAGE (AP) — A provision of a U.S. Senate bill would expand tribal court jurisdiction for up to 30 Alaska tribes as part of a pilot program aimed at addressing high rates of domestic or sexual violence.

Tribes that choose to participate in the pilot program — and are selected — would be able to try and sentence anyone who commits domestic violence, rape or related crimes in their villages, even if the offender is non-Native.

The provision added by Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski is part of a bipartisan measure that would renew the 1994 Violence Against Women Act. The law

lapsed in 2018.

A bipartisan group of senators on Feb. 9 announced that they had reached an agreement on the measure after months of negotiations in the chamber, though the bill still requires Senate and House approval. The legislation offers resources for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The last time the act was renewed, it allowed for tribes in the Lower 48 to prosecute domestic violence cases on their reservations, regardless of defendants' race or tribal membership.

More than two dozen tribes exercise those powers, with the U.S. Justice Department providing grants and techni-

cal assistance.

Murkowski said the change the compromise measure would make in Alaska is limited. "It is just a recognition that in order to provide for a level of safety in our communities, we had to look to some alternatives," she said.

Tribes across Alaska have courts that decide child protection, adoption cases, bootlegging and other cases, but their power over non-members is limited. Just one of Alaska's 229 tribes is on a reserve — the community of Metlakatla, on Annette Island.

The Senate reauthorization would leave it up to the Justice Department to

decide if a tribe meets eligibility criteria for the pilot program.

A renewal bill with a similar Alaska-focused provision added by U.S. Rep. Don Young passed the House last year.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy said his staff was reviewing the bills. "We're going to make sure that everybody's constitutional rights are protected," he said.

"At the same time," the governor said, "we're determined to work with any and all groups in the state of Alaska — to protect victims, to protect individual Alaskans, regardless of whether in urban Alaska, rural Alaska, Native, non-Native, and tribal, non tribal."

Federal grant funds development of warning systems in Southeast

BY SHANNON HAUGLAND
Sitka Sentinel staff writer

The Sitka Sound Science Center and several regional and national partners have received a five-year, \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to develop natural hazard monitoring and warning systems in tribal communities throughout Southeast.

Project KUTÍ — the Tlingit word for weather — builds on the center's community process used in Sitka to build a landslide warning system.

Sitka will serve as a hub for the project, but the goal is to "develop a co-produced regional system for warning residents

of events that might lead to flooding, avalanches and landslides," according to a news release from the science center.

The project team includes the communities and tribal representatives from Sitka, Yakutat, Haines, Skagway, Hoonah, Craig and Kasaan; along with the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, a couple of universities, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, U.S. Forest Service, National Weather Service, Alaska Division of Geology and Geophysical Services, and the U.S. Geologic Survey.

"We'll be sending scientists to the communities to work

with people," said Ron Heintz, research director at the Sitka Sound Science Center. "You hear about problems associated with climate change, and here's an opportunity where we can do something in response to climate change."

The science center and scientists will work to develop hazard monitoring and warning systems in the participating communities based on what each community wants, he said. Some want a landslide warning system similar to Sitka's, and others may be interested in flood and avalanche programs, Heintz said.

The project is "based on dis-

tributed sensors and predictive models of the impacts of extreme weather events in Southeast Alaska," the announcement said. "Already one of the rainiest regions on the planet, the 30 rural communities of Southeast Alaska, spanning 18,000 miles of coastline, are experiencing extreme weather events with more frequency, as a result of climate change. These weather events put the safety of people and the stability of infrastructure at risk."

Lisa Busch, the science center director, described the program as "researchers working to help answer questions that communities want the answers to. ...

That's the cool part of it." One of the goals is to show how "traditional knowledge can work together with geoscience to help us understand the world better."

The news release noted the impact of climate change not only on natural disaster risk but on subsistence as well, which Busch said highlights the potential of the project.

"Traditionally, Indigenous people planned subsistence food gathering according to astute observations of the weather. But changes in climate are interfering with traditional gathering," the news release said.

Indigenous hockey players excel at Olympics

By MILES MORRISSEAU
Special to Indian Country Today

It was déjà vu all over again at the Olympic gold medal finals in women's hockey in Beijing. The final score was 3-2 just as it was four years ago in PyeongChang, South Korea, but this time Team Canada came out on top.

And when it mattered most, three Indigenous women players were on the ice — Abby Roque, Ojibway from Wahnapitae First Nation who grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, for the Americans; and Jocelyne Larocque and Jamie Lee Rattray, both of the Métis Nation, for the Canadians.

The women in the hockey tournament represented the largest contingent of Indigenous athletes in the Olympic games.

A handful of other Indigenous athletes competed at the Winter Games in Beijing this year. Liam Gill, Dene, competed for Canada in snowboarding, and Inuk athlete Ukaleq Slettmarm of Greenland competed for the Danish commonwealth in the biathlon.

The U.S. and Canadian hockey teams geared up for the decades-long rivalry in a game late Feb. 16 (early Feb. 17 in Beijing).

Team Canada opened the scoring at just under seven minutes of the first period, when Natalie Spooner picked up a rebound in front of the U.S. net and scored. But the coaches for Team USA felt the play might have been offside and called for a video review. A few

minutes after reviewing the play, officials ruled the play was offside, and the goal was taken off the board.

Just over a minute later, Canadian Sarah Nurse scored with a deflection off the point shot from Claire Thompson. Canada took a two-goal lead when captain Marie-Philip Poulin stole the puck and flipped a soft shot that somehow found its way past American goaltender Alex Cavallini.

Canada took a three-goal lead when Poulin scored her second of the night midway through the second period.

Larocque took the first Canadian penalty of the game, though an earlier penalty for delay of game had been called against the Americans for shooting the puck over the glass. Up until then, the referees pretty much kept their whistles in their pockets, despite bodies slamming in front and back of both nets and up against the boards.

As the teams scrambled for control of the puck at the Canadian blue line, Larocque knocked the American captain Kendall Coyne Schofield to the ice. The referees called it "holding" and Larocque went to the penalty box.

A sign of her quick rise on Team USA, first-time Olympian Roque started on the power play. The Canadians would successfully kill off the penalty.

American Hilary Knight scored short-handed, picking up her own rebound and putting the puck past Canadian goaltender Ann-Renée Desmiens, who had been playing lights out against an American team that was once again

dominating in possession and shots but not in goals.

With less than a minute to go in the second, Larocque hit Rattray with a breakaway pass that set her towards the U.S. net, but she was hauled down before she could get a shot. The CBC-TV analyst noted the energy that Rattray brings to hockey, saying, "Jamie Lee Rattray has only played 4 minutes and 47 seconds but every time she steps foot on the ice she has an impact shift."

With just under a minute and a half left in the game, Poulin took out American Cayla Barnes with a knee-on-knee, and was sent to the penalty box.

Team USA pulled the goalie and sent out an extra player. With the game and the gold medal on the line once again, Roque was on the ice when it mattered, and it paid off.

The Americans controlled the pack in the Canadian zone with Roque having a couple of good shots on net. With 13 seconds on the clock, the Canadian goalie couldn't handle Roque's shot and her teammate Amanda Kessel pounced on the rebound and scored.

It would not be enough, and Canada won 3-2 for the gold.

In her first Olympics, Rattray finished in the top 10 among scoring leaders with five goals and four assists. In her rookie campaign, Roque, with a goal and two assists.

For Larocque continued, this was her third Olympic medal, to go with the gold and silver she already won.



The Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to clear, trim, and cut 44.60 acres of transmission line right-of-way on Mitkof Island in Southeast Alaska. Bids are due March 22, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. AKDT. For a complete set of the bid documents with additional details, please navigate to:

www.seapahydro.org/opportunities/bids-projects

or interested respondents may call the SEAPA office at (907) 228-2281 for a copy.

Publish: Wednesday, February 23, 2022



The Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to clear, trim, and cut 52.05 acres of transmission line right-of-way on Revillagigedo Island in Southeast Alaska. Bids are due March 22, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. AKDT. For a complete set of the bid documents with additional details, please navigate to:

www.seapahydro.org/opportunities/bids-projects

or interested respondents may call the SEAPA office at (907) 228-2281 for a copy.

Publish: Wednesday, February 23, 2022



The Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to clear, trim, and cut 42.71 acres of transmission line right-of-way on Wrangell Island in Southeast Alaska. Bids are due March 22, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. AKDT. For a complete set of the bid documents with additional details, please navigate to:

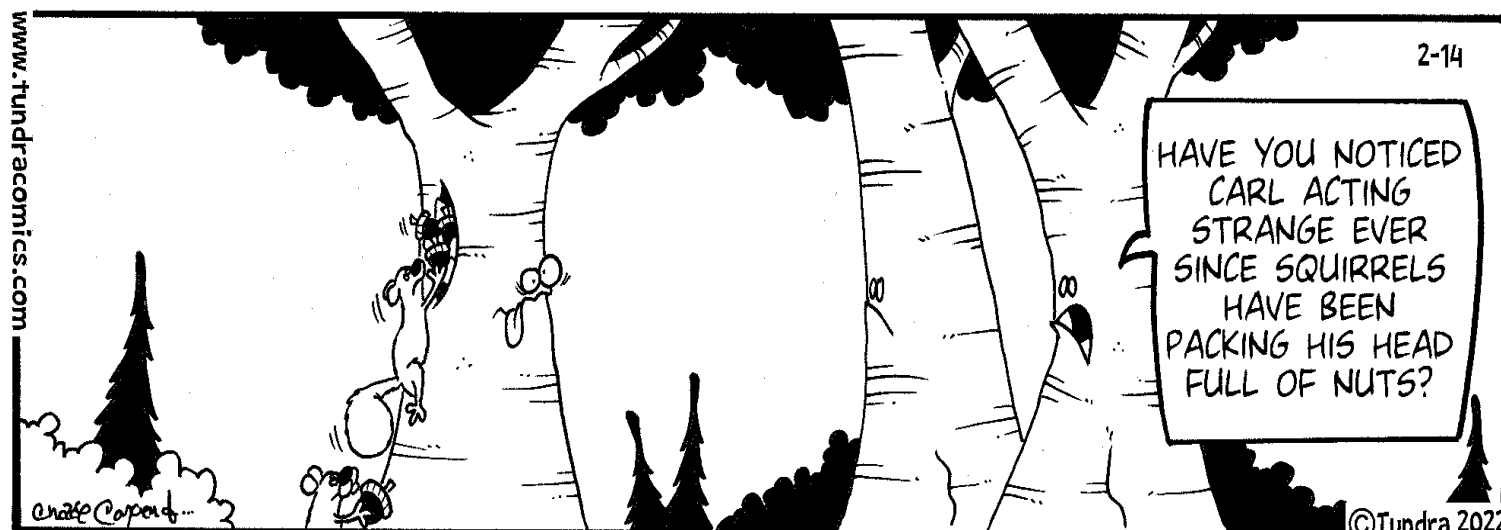
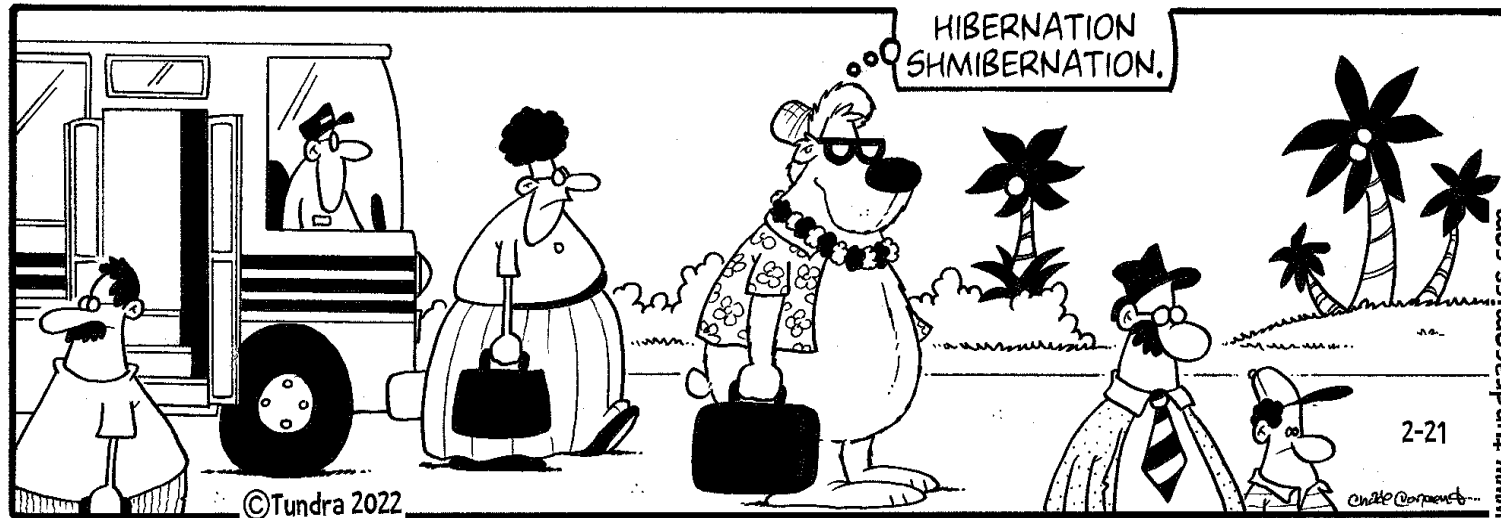
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Publish: Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Anchorage Democrat announces run against Republican Don Young

JUNEAU (AP) — An Anchorage Assembly member on Feb. 17 announced plans to run as a Democrat for the U.S. House seat for Alaska that has been held by Republican Don Young since 1973.

Christopher Constant made the announcement on social media.

Under a voter-approved elections system that will be used for the first time in Alaska this year, the top four vote-getters in the August primary, regardless of party affiliation, will advance to the November general election, where ranked-choice voting will be used to count ballots until a candidate achieves support from a majority of voters.

Conservative Republican Nick Begich III has been the highest-profile contender to announce plans to challenge Young so far. The deadline to file is June 1.

Constant, in an interview with The Associated Press, said in discussions about politics in the U.S. and Alaska, "people seem to have lost focus on what's important, our communities, our neighbors and the future." He said he wants the debate during the campaign to be focused on Alaska's future.

Constant said he is similar to Young "in the fact that I speak plainly and tell people what I think. But the fact is, the difference is, I am going to run not bound by the baggage of, 'Am I

Mr. Trump's person or am I not Mr. Trump's person?'"

Former President Donald Trump has been a major figure in national Republican politics. He has endorsed Republican Kelly Tshibaka in Alaska's U.S. Senate race against incumbent Sen. Lisa Murkowski. Trump also said Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, who is seeking re-election, has his endorsement so long as Dunleavy does not endorse Murkowski.

Lindsay Kavanaugh, executive director of the Alaska Democratic Party, in a statement said, "Alaska desperately needs (Constant's) fresh energy and community-minded perspective in D.C. to build a sustainable future for Alaska."



NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) will hold a regular board meeting on February 28, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. AKST in Ketchikan, Alaska. Due to recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and its social distancing guidelines the board meeting will be held electronically. For additional information, please call 907.228.2281.

Publish: 02/23/2022

WRANGELL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC NOTICE

Wrangell Cooperative Association Transportation (WCAT) is updating its Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The draft LRTP is available for questions and comments at the WCAT office at 1002 Zimovia Highway, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The deadline for comments is March 1, 2022, at 1 p.m. Call Lizzy Romane at 907-874-3077 for more information.

Publish Feb 2, 9, 16 and 23, 2022

OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT TO THE WRANGELL-PETERSBURG INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT PROJECT

The Wrangell-Petersburg Invasive Plant Management Project Draft Decision Notice (DN), Environmental Assessment (EA), Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and additional information regarding the proposed project are available, prior to the final decision, for public review at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59576>. Notification of the availability of the Draft DN was sent by email or letter to those who previously requested to be included on the project mailing list or submitted specific written comments related to the project.

The Wrangell-Petersburg Invasive Plant Management project proposes: 1) a variety of invasive plant treatment methods (herbicide, manual and mechanical) on both NFS (including wilderness) and non-NFS lands, 2) no annual or long-term treatment acreage limit, 3) treatment of emergent vegetation, 4) the use of aminopyralid and the aquatic formulations of glyphosate and imazapyr, and 5) the Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) management strategy. The Responsible Officials for this project are Eric LaPrice, Petersburg District Ranger, and Clint Kolarich, Wrangell District Ranger. Additional information regarding this proposed project can be obtained from: Carey Case, Project Leader, PO Box 1328, Petersburg, AK 99833, 907-419-6158 (phone), 907-772-5995 (fax), carey.case@usda.gov.

This proposed project is subject to a pre-decisional administrative review (objection) pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subpart B.

Objections will be accepted only from those who previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project either during scoping or other designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with 36 CFR 218.5(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after designated public comment opportunities.

Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to be eligible to object; objections received on behalf of an organization are considered those of the organization only. If an objection is submitted on behalf of a number of individuals or organizations, each individual or organization listed must meet the eligibility requirements (36 CFR 218.5(d)). Names and addresses of objectors will become part of the public record.

Incorporation of documents by reference in an objection is permitted only as provided for at 36 CFR 218.8(b). Minimum content requirements of an objection are identified in 36 CFR 218.8(d) and include: objector's name and address with a telephone number if available (signature or other verification of authorship must be supplied upon request); identification of the lead objector when multiple names are listed, along with verification upon request; name of project, name and title of the responsible official, national forest/ranger district of project; sufficient narrative description of those aspects of the proposed project objected to, specific issues related to the project, how environmental law, regulation, or policy would be violated, and suggested remedies which would resolve the objection; and statement demonstrating the connection between prior specific written comments on this project and the content of the objection, unless the objection issue arose after the designated opportunity for comment.

The Reviewing Officer is M. Earl Stewart, Tongass Forest Supervisor. Send objections to: M. Earl Stewart, Reviewing Officer, Tongass National Forest, Federal Building, 648 Mission Street, Ketchikan, AK 99901-6591, 907-225-3101 (phone), 907-228-6301 (fax), or email to objections-alaska-tongass@usda.gov.

Written objections, including any attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Reviewing Officer within 45 days following the publication date of this legal notice in the newspaper of record. Hand-delivered objections are being accepted by appointment only; to schedule hand-delivery contact Frank Sherman at 907-617-3222. Electronic objections must be submitted in a format compatible with the current version of MS Word. It is the responsibility of objectors to ensure their objection is received in a timely manner (36 CFR 218.9).

The publication date in the Wrangell Sentinel, the newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection of this project. Those wishing to object to this proposed project should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Publish Feb. 23, 2022

NOTICE OF ABANDONED VEHICLE

To the owner and/or lien holder of the abandoned 1982 Ford van in Shoemaker Harbor, Wrangell, AK 99929. This vehicle has been abandoned for more than six months. Kim Peterson intends to claim the vehicle on March 16, 2022, unless he hears from you. If the vehicle is yours, please contact:

Kim Peterson
PO Box 967
Wrangell, AK 99929

Publish Feb. 16, 23, March 2 and 9, 2022

EBI CONSULTING PUBLIC NOTICE

Vertical Bridge Development, LLC is proposing to construct a 150-foot monopole telecommunications tower at 3 Evergreen Ave., Wrangell, AK 99929 (56 29 06.5 N / 132 23 17.7 W). The tower is anticipated to have no lights.

Interested persons may review the application for this project at www.fcc.gov/asr/applications and enter Antenna Structure Registration (ASR) Form 854 File Number A1195994, and may raise environmental concerns about the project by filing a Request for Environmental Review with the Federal Communications Commission.

Requests for Environmental Review must be filed within 30 days of the date that notice of the project is published on the FCC website.

The FCC strongly encourages interested parties to file Requests for Environmental Review online at www.fcc.gov/asr/environmentalrequest. Parties wishing to submit a request by mail may do so by addressing the request to:

FCC Requests for Environmental Review
Attn: Ramon Williams, 45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554.

Publish Feb. 23, 2022

STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF FORESTRY SOUTHERN SOUTHEAST AREA OFFICE PUBLIC NOTICE

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, gives formal notice under AS 38.05.945 that the Division has made a preliminary decision under AS 38.05.035(e) regarding the sale of the following commercial timber sale: Whale Pass Timber Sale (SSE-1378-K).

Before this sale may be held, the Director of the Division of Forestry will make a written final decision that the sale is in the best interest of the State. This decision will set out the facts and applicable policies upon which the Director bases his determination that the proposed timber sale will or will not best serve the interest of the State. The final decision is expected to be available to the public after March 22, 2022.

The timber sale area is found within Sections 13, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27, Township 66 South, Range 79 East, Copper River Meridian (CRM). The sale area is found within the Petersburg A-4 USGS quadrangle. The project area is within the boundary of the City of Whale Pass. The main access for this sale area is from the existing Prince of Wales Road System, specifically off the 3000 Road.

The harvest units total approximately 290 acres and contain approximately 7,100 MBF of timber. This volume will be negotiated and sold under provisions of AS 38.05.115 or AS 38.05.118, in the form of one or multiple sales. The sale(s) will require in-state manufacture and will be a negotiated contract.

The public is invited to comment on any aspect of the preliminary decision. Comments should be mailed to the Alaska Division of Forestry, 2417 Tongass Avenue, Suite 213, Ketchikan, AK 99901. Comments must be received at the Division of Forestry office no later than March 22, 2022, in order to be considered in the final best interest finding decision of whether or not this sale will be held in whole or in part. To be eligible to appeal the final decision a person must have provided written comment by March 22, 2022.

For more information or to submit comments, contact Greg Staunton, Alaska Division of Forestry, 2417 Tongass Ave., Suite 213, Ketchikan, AK 99901, or email gregstaunton@alaska.gov, or call 907-225-3070.

Copies of the preliminary decision are available for review at the Division of Forestry at the above address and at the Ketchikan, Craig, Petersburg and Wrangell Public Libraries and the State Online Public Notice System at <http://notice.alaska.gov/205477>.

The State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who may need auxiliary aids, services or special modifications to participate in this review may contact the number above.

Greg Staunton, Southeast Area Forester
Department of Natural Resources

Publish Feb. 23 and March 2, 2022

Australian 5-pound opal sells at Alaska auction for \$143,750

JUNEAU (AP) — A gemstone, billed as one of the largest gem-quality opals in existence, was sold for \$143,750 at auction in Alaska on Sunday.

The opal, dubbed the “Americus Australis,” weighs more than five pounds, according to the Anchorage auction house Alaska Premier Auctions & Appraisals. It also has a long history.

Most recently, it was kept in a linen closet in a home in Big Lake, north of Anchorage, by Fred von Brandt, who mines for gold in Alaska and whose family has deep roots in the gem and rock business.

The opal is larger than a brick and is broken into two pieces, which von Brandt said was a practice used decades ago to prove gem quality.

Von Brandt said the stone has been in his family since the late 1950s, when his grandfather bought it from an Australian opal dealer named John Altmann.

Von Brandt said the opal for decades was in the care of his father, Guy von Brandt, who decided it had been “locked up long enough, that it’s time to put it back out in the world and see what interest it can generate.”

“He entrusted me to figure out which direction we wanted to go to part with the stone,” von Brandt told The Associated Press.

The family, with roots in California, exhibited the stone at gem shows for years, until the early 1980s, he said. His father then branched out into furniture and displayed it at his shop. Guy von Brandt eventually moved to Oregon and kept the stone “kind of tucked away” for many years, von Brandt said.

Von Brandt said he brought it with him to Alaska more than a year ago as he weighed the best approach to a possible sale. He said he went with Alaska Premier Auctions & Appraisals because he thought it would get more attention from the newer company than a larger auction house.

Nick Cline, a partner and appraisal specialist with Alaska Premier Auctions & Appraisals, said the family has documentation surrounding the provenance of the opal. As part of his research, he contacted Fiona Altmann, granddaughter of John Altmann and general manager of Altmann + Cherny in Sydney, Australia.

Altmann said her grandfather, in his business dealings, made regular trips to Europe and the U.S.

Altmann said when Cline emailed her, she was skeptical; the name of the stone, in particular, threw her. But she said she started digging and discovered “something with my grandfather’s handwriting with the picture of the opal with the word ‘Americus Australis.’”

“I with 100% certainty know that their provenance



AP PHOTO/MARK THIESSEN

Dan Newman, left, the founder of Alaska Premier Auctions and Appraisals, and Nick Cline, a business partner, pose last Friday in Anchorage with the “Americus Australis,” thought to be one the largest gem-quality opals in existence. The gem was auctioned off Sunday for \$143,750.

information is 100% accurate” because it lines up with information she has, she said.

The auction house said the stone was discovered in the same field in Australia as the opal known as the “Olympic Australis,” which weighs 7.5 pounds and is on permanent display in Altmann’s shop. The Olym-

pic had been among the stones that John Altmann and partner Rudi Cherny acquired in 1956, according to Altmann’s company.

The auction company had sought a minimum bid of \$125,000 during Sunday’s auction. The identity of the winning bidder was not disclosed.

Democratic candidate for governor names running mate

JUNEAU (AP) — Democrat Les Gara announced Feb. 14 that a teacher will be his running mate in his bid for Alaska governor this year.

Gara said Jessica Cook, of Palmer, will run for lieutenant governor as part of a

ticket with him. Cook teaches at an Eagle River middle school.

Cook, speaking alongside Gara at an event in Anchorage, said she and Gara “care about Alaska’s kids and we believe that everyone de-

serves a chance to be successful regardless of race, regardless of gender, regardless of wealth or poverty.”

Cook, born in Anchorage, is a parent with 20 years of experience as a schoolteacher, two master’s degrees in ed-

ucation, a history of involvement with teachers’ unions, and no prior experience in public office.

Gara represented Anchorage in the state House for 16 years before deciding not to seek reelection in 2018.

Under an election system, approved by voters in 2020 and being used for the first time this year in Alaska, candidates for governor and lieutenant governor run as a team for the primary. The top four vote-getting tickets will advance to the general election, in which ranked-choice voting will be used to ensure

the winner has the support of a majority of voters.

Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy plans to seek reelection but has not named a running mate.

Others who have announced plans to run include former Gov. Bill Walker, an independent, who is running with former state labor commissioner Heidi Drygas, and Republican Rep. Christopher Kurka, of Wasilla, who has said he is running with Paul Hueper, of Homer.

The deadline to file for the August primary is June 1.



COVID positive? Now what?

If you test positive for COVID-19, here’s what to do to protect yourself and others:

- Contact your health care provider and ask about treatment options. Treatments work best when started right away, so don’t delay!
- Stay home and isolate for at least five days.
- Get plenty of rest and stay hydrated.
- Take over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen to reduce symptoms.
- If your symptoms worsen, contact your health care provider.

If you don’t have a health care provider, call the COVID-19 helpline at 907-646-3322 or your local public health center for guidance.

Visit dhss.alaska.gov for more information and COVID-19 resources.



AP PHOTO/MARK THIESSEN

Jessica Cook speaks to reporters Feb. 14 during a news conference in Anchorage, after she was introduced as the running mate of Democratic gubernatorial candidate Les Gara. Cook lives in Palmer and teaches in nearby Eagle River.