

Wrangell, Alaska  
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# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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## GCI replacing cable with Yukon TV streaming app

By MARC LUTZ  
*Sentinel editor*

Like eight-track, cassette tapes and VCRs, cable TV will soon be a piece of entertainment nostalgia — in Alaska anyway.

GCI announced a year ago that it would cease providing cable television service, and has introduced its streaming app, Yukon TV, to replace it.

The company had set Dec. 31 as the deadline for customers to turn in their cable boxes and sign up for the new service, but later extended the deadline to March 31 — though fewer channels will be available on cable as the company transitions its service.

“The whole industry is moving toward streaming services. That’s no mystery,” said Heather Handyside, v GCI replacing cable with Yukon TV streaming app ice president of corporate communications for GCI in Anchorage. “Anyone who watches content is more and more inclined to watch on a

streaming service.”

Handyside said there are two main reasons the communications provider is doing away with cable, one of which “is to meet the needs of customers.”

The second has more to do with evolving technology. Cable TV boxes just aren’t produced like they once were. And with older models beginning to fail, replacing them might not be as easy as it once was.

“It’s making it very difficult to get set-top boxes,” Handyside said. “There are supply chain issues right now, but beyond that, it’s not something that’s being produced in large quantities.” Though GCI might be a big corporation in Alaska — the largest cable TV provider in the state — she said it’s a relatively small player in the global marketplace, making it difficult to procure equipment at a reasonable price.

Still, that’s little solace to customers who might not understand how technology works.

“The elderly up here, they

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## Dunleavy appointees fire Permanent Fund director

*The Associated Press  
and Wrangell Sentinel staff*

The board that oversees Alaska’s multibillion-dollar investment portfolio has fired Angela Rodell as chief executive officer of the Permanent Fund Corp.

Legislative leaders and Finance Committee members are upset at the surprise decision and plan to hold hearings to ask questions. The fund this past fiscal year grew more than 25%, with record returns on its investments.

The board on Dec. 9 voted 5-1 to remove Rodell. The five votes came from members last appointed by Gov. Mike Dunleavy. The board did not disclose a reason for the decision, which came after the board conducted a closed-door session in Anchorage to discuss Rodell’s annual performance.

Chairman Craig Richards asked for a motion to remove her immediately, and Revenue Commissioner Lucinda Mahoney seconded the proposal. “With that, our meeting is concluded,” Richards said after the vote.

The only vote against the motion came from William Moran, who was reappointed to the board by then-Gov. Bill Walker in 2018. Moran is chairman of the board of Ketchikan-based First Bank.

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## Windstorm prompts assembly to OK airport backup generator

By SARAH ASLAM  
*Sentinel reporter*

Responding to the loss of power at the airport during the windstorm which tore through the community on Nov. 30, the borough assembly has voted to spend \$80,000 in federal funds to install a backup generator for the airport runway lighting.

At its Tuesday meeting, assembly members approved using money from a CARES Act grant fund for the generator purchase and installation.

The capital facilities department will order the generator this week, and expects deliv-

ery in four to five months. The generator would solely be for the runway lighting, said Capital Facilities Director Amber Al-Haddad. Alaska Airlines has backup generator power for the airport terminal itself.

Last year, the assembly approved a sole-source purchase from Juneau-based NC Machinery (NC Power Systems) for a trailer-mounted generator to provide emergency electrical power for the airport runway lights. The engineering design was completed but the borough never ordered the

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## The magic of the season



Above: Alle Gadd, 5, smiles as Santa Claus entered the Nolan Center last Saturday to listen to children’s requests for holiday gifts. Right: Lile Gadd, 3, tells Santa (Andrew Zeutzus) what she would like for Christmas while he sits in a protective “snow globe” during Midnight Madness.



PHOTOS BY MARC LUTZ/  
WRANGELL SENTINEL

## Holiday travelers share stories of volcanoes, waylaid grandma, and long visit in Ketchikan

By SARAH ASLAM  
*Sentinel reporter*

As the holiday season is upon us, people who leave town or receive visitors are hoping for an easy, breezy ride. No overheads or ferry breakdowns.

But it doesn’t always go that way.

Residents were happy to share their holiday travel stories, from heartwarming to humorous.

**Brittani Robbins, executive director of the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce**

In 2013, her grandmother Marian Robbins, in her 70s at the time, came to visit for Christmas from Tacoma, Washington. There had been a blizzard the day before and she overheard Wrangell to Ketchikan. Josie Olsen, who works at Stikine Drug, was on the same flight and found Robbins sobbing in the Ketchikan airport, not knowing what to do or how to pay for it — she had never managed her money well. Olsen and her husband took her in to stay at their hotel room.

“My grandma called and asked, ‘Who is this person?’” said Robbins. “We said, ‘She’s great, just go!’”

Olsen had never met the grandmother before, and didn’t know she was related to Brittani Robbins. “She took her in and said, ‘I got you, we’re going to make this work,’” the younger Robbins said.

Olsen’s husband, who has since passed away, would say, “Marian, you doing OK?” Robbins recalled. Several times a night, Olsen and her husband checked to make sure grandma was all right.

And since then, every time Robbins would see Olsen, she said, Olsen would ask, ‘How is grandma?’” And continued to ask until her grandmother passed away.

That is the friendliness of Wrangell, Robbins said.

**Jenn Miller-Yancey, assistant principal at Evergreen Elementary School**

In December 1989, while attending the University of Portland in Oregon, Miller-Yancey and her best friend made plans to travel with Miller-Yancey’s boyfriend, who would later become her husband.

“At that time you had to fly out of Portland at 5 a.m., get to Seattle, get a connecting flight. My friend, we picked her up at 3:30 a.m. We were running late and she hadn’t even packed yet.”

They threw some things in a bag. She was “not feeling very well” and they couldn’t move her. They were able to put her in their tiny little rental car and prop her up. She started reviving and said she was hungry, so they ripped into a McDonald’s drive-thru.

“We barely make it to check-in,” Miller-Yancey recalled. Then the plane was delayed, and the power went out at the airport. They missed the connecting flight in Seattle to Wrangell.

“But you can do the Juneau route, but it’s full. We can’t get on it. We’re like, OK, our next option is Ketchikan.”

They get to Ketchikan and ended up chartering a plane to Wrangell. They went to the Alaska Airlines terminal in Wrangell to retrieve their

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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, Dec. 16:** Angus Booker, Brogan Booker, Jeff Jabusch, Matt Robinson, Jennifer Wiedersphohn.

**Friday, Dec. 17:** Amber Mann, Karin Nesbitt, Sophia O'Brien.

**Saturday, Dec. 18:** Randy Barlow, Jenna Eastaugh, Cherie Young.

**Sunday, Dec. 19:** Chuck Hay, Gemi Wright; Anniversary: Clay and Holly Hammer.

**Monday, Dec. 20:** Danelle Barlow, Traci Nikodym Campbell, Aliyah Nore Kemfield, Caity Shafer, Logan Vergilio, Marrissa Barker Williams; Anniversary: Ken and Tammy Davidson.

**Tuesday, Dec. 21:** Aundria Cummings, Jace Haggard, Coby Holder, Margaret Rooney; Anniversary: Eric and Staci Dilg, Mark and Jesse Peterman.

**Wednesday, Dec. 22:** Carmen Chaney, Robert Hayes, Roy Hayes, Sean Thomas Gillen, Alicia Sterns.

**Thursday, Dec. 23:** "Barney" Benjamin, Nicholas Howell, Don McConachie.

## Senior Center Menu

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

**Friday, Dec. 17**

Baked chicken, peas, sunshine salad, rice pilaf

**Monday, Dec. 20**

Half chicken sandwich, minestrone soup, romaine and tomato salad

**Tuesday, Dec. 21**

Macaroni and cheese with ham, steamed zucchini and carrots, perfection salad

**Wednesday, Dec. 22**

Roast beef and gravy, green beans, romaine and radish salad, mashed potatoes

**Thursday, Dec. 23**

Chili with beef and cheese, Texas coleslaw and cornbread

**Closed for Christmas Eve and Monday, Dec. 27**

Three meals delivered on Dec. 23. The Dec. 24 lunch will be turkey, stuffing and cranberry sauce. The Dec. 27 meal will be a ham and cheese sandwich, sukiyaki salad and orange slices

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 December 23-December 27

### Northbound

**Monday, Dec. 27**  
Kennicott, 6:45 p.m.

### Southbound

**Thursday, Dec. 23**  
Kennicott, 5:15 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 December 16-December 22

### High Tides

### Low Tides

	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Dec. 16	10:55	16.6	11:49	14.0	04:41	3.6	05:30	-0.5
Dec. 17	11:32	16.8	...	...	05:19	3.7	06:03	-1.0
Dec. 18	00:29	14.2	12:07	16.7	05:55	3.8	06:36	-1.3
Dec. 19	01:07	14.2	12:40	16.6	06:27	4.0	07:07	-1.3
Dec. 20	01:43	14.1	01:12	16.3	07:00	4.2	07:39	-1.1
Dec. 21	02:18	13.9	01:44	15.9	07:32	4.5	08:12	-0.9
Dec. 22	02:53	13.6	02:17	15.4	08:08	4.7	08:46	-0.5

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**WRANGELL PARKS & REC** second annual Candy Cane Hunt for kids will take place at the Nature Trail at 10 a.m. Saturday. Suggested donation of \$5 per family; proceeds will be put toward the youth assistance program.

**ST. FRANCES ANIMAL RESCUE** is having a fundraising silent auction. More than 30 items, including quilted items, artwork, toys, jewelry and other unique pieces. All are displayed at First Bank. Stop by and place a bid. Bidding ends at noon on Dec. 21.

**NOLAN CENTER** holiday community market from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. Check out locally grown and handcrafted items.

**NOLAN CENTER THEATER** no movies the rest of the year.

**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY** is sponsoring Santa for Seniors. Help brighten the season for seniors; buy an item and bring it to the drop box at one of the banks or the credit union, choose a Stocking Hat Ornament and shop for the senior, or donate money directly to the American Legion Auxiliary. Turn in items by Saturday. Call 907-470-0085 or email mmork64@gmail.com for more information.

**WRANGELL HOSPICE** silent bidding on Christmas Tree Lane items — decorated trees and holiday table runners -- is open until noon Friday at the Nolan Center. This is an annual fundraiser for hospice. Winners can take their items home that afternoon. For more information, call Alice Rooney 907-305-0007.

**WRANGELL PARKS & REC** is offering free activities for youth throughout the holiday break in an effort to keep kids moving. Capacity is limited; registration required. The free open swim and middle school open gym schedules are available online at [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

**WRANGELL PARKS & REC** is offering tot gym for children 6 months to 5 years of age on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Program runs through Dec. 29. 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. 10 tot gym punch passes available. Call 907-874-2444 for information.

**WRANGELL PARKS & REC** is offering jiu jitsu Tuesday and Thursdays from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the community center gym for 18 years and up. Information at [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

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

## Continuing Events

**PARKS and RECREATION** [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com)

**Open swim is open by appointment, at reduced capacity. Locker rooms are available.**

Arthritis class, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m., Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap swim, 6 - 7:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap/tot swim, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., weekdays, 5:15 - 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday

Open swim, 6 - 7 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; 6:30 - 8 p.m. Friday; 1 - 2 p.m. Saturday

Water aerobics class, 10 - 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

**Weight room available by appointment and at reduced capacity:** 6 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 8:30 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Saturday

**AA Meetings:** North Star Group meets from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays, St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

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

**Dec. 15, 1921**

J. P. Ludwig has opened a shoe repair shop in the Pioneer Building opposite the Wrangell Hotel. Mr. Ludwig is an experienced shoemaker whose work is of a high order of excellence and speaks for itself. Mr. Ludwig is now equipped to do all kinds of repairs and in a short time he will receive additional machines and will be ready to make shoes to order. Watch for his ad next week.

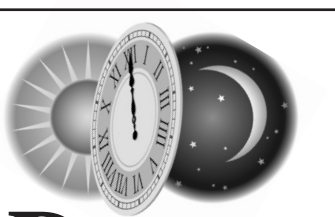
**Dec. 13, 1946**

The city council announced today that it had set two streets aside for coasting. Great danger to the lives of children has been experienced since the arrival of snow and youngsters using the hills haphazardly for sliding. Several already have had narrow escapes from collisions with cars. The city council announced that the hill below the Episcopal church, down to Front Street at the location of the old fire station, will be set aside for sliding, and also the hill from Bidwell's corner, down across Church Street to just back of the bank. Stop signs will be put up at intersections of these streets and vehicles must come to a dead stop before making the crossing. Also, children are warned to confine their coasting to these two streets -- the best hills in town.

most \$11,000 a year -- but the city manages to collect only about 60 percent of the taxes due. City Manager Kester Dotts said Wrangell is one of the last cities in Alaska which has the personal property tax. He indicated that the levy is hard enough to administer and collect, and that the municipality would be better off without it. Dotts said he expects the revenue the tax has been bringing in will be made up by increased sales taxes generated by new businesses.

**Dec. 19, 1996**

After months of debate, the Wrangell city council unanimously agreed at a special meeting last Friday to suspend the city's 7 percent sales tax on food and utilities. The measure goes into effect on food Jan. 13, 1997, and on utilities starting with the February billing. It is estimated the cut will cost the city some \$400,000 of revenue each year, but will save the average family \$70 per month. Councilmember Fern Neimeyer moved to amend the measure to remove the "sunset clause" that would let the city council reinstate the tax Dec. 31, 1998, without a vote of the people. Councilmember Zo Herriges-Sherman moved to amend the measure to exempt heating oil from sales taxes. Both amendments failed 5-2.



## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Dec. 16	8:19a	3:11p	6:52h
Dec. 17	8:20a	3:11p	6:51h
Dec. 18	8:20a	3:11p	6:50h
Dec. 19	8:21a	3:12p	6:50h
Dec. 20	8:22a	3:12p	6:50h
Dec. 21	8:23a	3:13p	6:50h
Dec. 22	8:23a	3:13p	6:50h

**Dec. 7, 1971**

Wrangell's unpopular and hard-to-collect personal property and automobile tax was axed by the city council on Tuesday. The council voted unanimously to have the ordinance drafted striking the 18-mil-per-dollar of valuation collected under city statute. City Clerk Joyce Rasler said the city estimates personal property and automobiles in town are worth a combined \$600,000, which would raise al-



# Community garden begins to take root

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Wrangell's community garden has a chance to grow once more.

On Dec. 8, eight people gathered in the community gym classroom to discuss forming a committee to oversee the direction the project will take.

"That's really what tonight is all about, is not making any decisions or appointing anyone to a position exactly, but we really just want to find out who is serious about being on the committee and if you don't want to be on the committee, that's OK, there's plenty of volunteer (opportunities) we would love to have folks signed up for. We really just want to give back to the community garden," said Valerie Massie, the IGAP coordinator with Wrangell Cooperative Association. She and IGAP technician Kim Wickman are in charge of the community garden project.

"In reality (a committee) should be six to 10 people,"

Wickman added.

Some in attendance have a little gardening background, while others are relatively new. Most agreed it is a chance to spread the seeds of education through classes and hands-on experience.

"I think it's good for the whole community. I think more people need to learn how to grow their own food," said Dawn Mill, who is retired and started her own garden a couple years ago. She said it's good to show people "what can be done in Wrangell, despite the slugs."

It was pests, like the slugs and deer, that led to the community garden going dormant for many years. Maintenance became difficult when garden beds were being decimated by the creatures. The committee went from about 16 members in 2009 down to Wickman and Kate Thomas, director of parks and recreation.

Originally, the garden in the southeast corner of the Lions Ball Field behind the cemetery at 1.5 Mile, was about one-fifth of an acre. Wickman estimates the new size is smaller than one-tenth of an acre, which will be fenced in and more manageable with only 15 gardening beds as opposed to the previous 45.

Massie and Wickman recently applied for a grant through the Rural Alaska Community Action Program for the garden, and were awarded \$17,000 that must be spent by Sept. 15, 2022. Of those funds, \$9,500 is being spent on a commercial compost machine that will break down household waste in a couple of days, compared to the year it takes the current cold composting system to turn green garbage into soil.

"Our goal is to purchase it and start getting it shipped up

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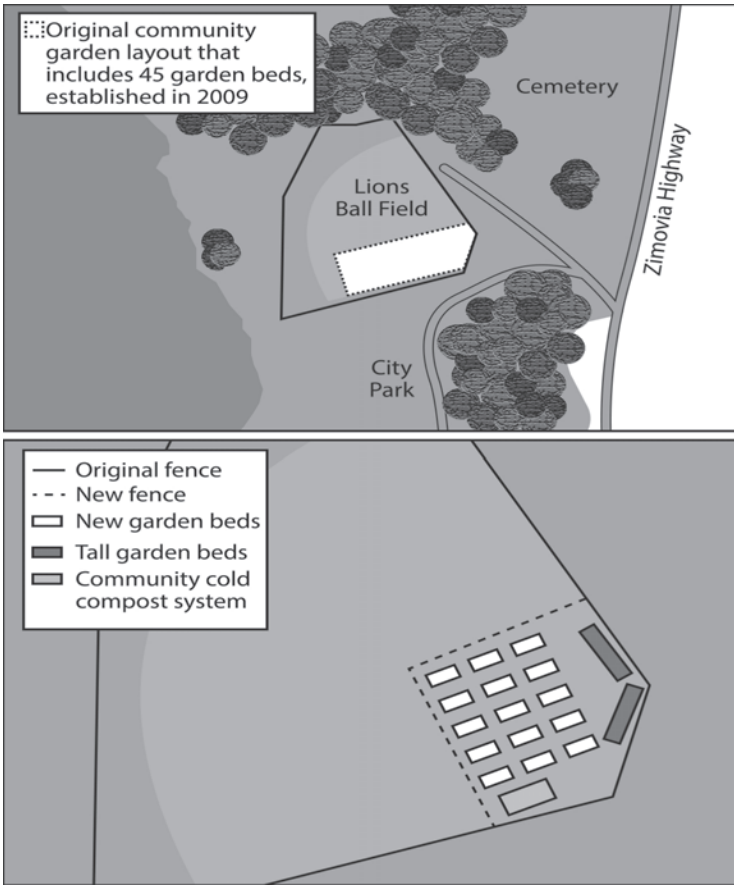


ILLUSTRATION BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Source: Wrangell Cooperative Association

## Jolly Shopping Participating Businesses December 17th-19th

Drawing will be on Facebook Live at 1pm December 20th

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 56° North                                  | Magnolia Beauty Bar             |
| Alaska Marine Lines                        | Marine Bar                      |
| Alpine Mini Mart                           | Michelle's Taste of Asia        |
| American Legion Aux                        | Ottesen's Tru Value             |
| Angerman's Inc                             | Sentry Hardware and Marine      |
| BB Brocks                                  | Shop Groundswell                |
| Buness Bros Inc                            | Silver Liningz Boutique         |
| City Market                                | Stikine Drug                    |
| Compass Line LLC                           | Stikine River Gifts and Apparel |
| Drive Thru Brew                            | Sweet Tides                     |
| GCI  | Wrangell Sentinel               |
| Johnny Cab                                 | The Stik                        |
| Johnson's Construction and Building supply | Totem Bar and Liquor            |
| LNM Services                               | Wrangell IGA                    |

Hosted by the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce





FROM THE PUBLISHER

# It's time to quit hiding behind clouds

BY LARRY PERSILY  
 Publisher, Wrangell Sentinel

I admit it, I've gotten old. Never thought it would happen to me. Certainly not in the '60s, when I was in college. Not when my wife and I moved from Chicago to Wrangell in 1976 and thought we'd never run out of energy working seven days a week at the Sentinel. Not even when I broke a leg playing softball in 1999 or shattered a kneecap in 2001.

It's not that I believe in eternity. Rather, I knew I would age, but never expected I would get cranky about "the way things used to be," much like how your favorite uncle makes everyone listen to his stories about the old days.

Sadly, it has happened at age 70. I've become that older relative.

It's not broken bones or arthritis or failing eyesight that turned me old. It is Amazon and all the other aspects of the internet-connected world that dominates life these days. I have turned crotchety and cranky at society's reliance on digital everything, all the time, and our failing ability to live without it.

Last week's outage of Amazon Web Services, the largest cloud-computing provider in the country, prompted reporters nationwide to ask people: How did you cope? Like it was some cataclysmic event. The answers are as depressing as discovering no one makes parts any longer for that Zenith console TV in the finely grained wood cabinet — the one I bought on a deal in the 1980s and intended to nurse along until I moved into a nursing home.

Want to feel old? Want to feel that the world has turned lazy, beholden to connectivity (whatever that is) and automated appliances? Read on. The Wall Street Journal last week quoted Cali-

fornia resident Kyle Lerner after his internet-connected cat feeding bowl stopped dispensing food when Amazon's cloud computing service got lost in the clouds. "We had to manually give them food like in ancient times," the 29-year-old said. As if a 29-year-old even knows ancient times.

**"It's easier to tell Alexa to turn the lights on and off. She listens better than the kids."**

*Samantha Sherhag,  
 Florida resident*

Another internet fan with his life in the cloud, Steve Peters, of Los Angeles, told the newspaper his Roomba robot vacuum wouldn't clean up the blueberry muffin crumbs on his kitchen floor from breakfast. Without the cloud, the app on his phone could not summon Roomba.

"I had to resort to getting a broom and dustpan," Peters, said. "It was crazy." At least at age 60, Peters knew how to use

a broom. But didn't his mother tell him to eat over the plate and not drop crumbs on the floor?

Losing access to Amazon's Alexa service made St. Louis resident Mark Edelstein feel lonely and helpless, he told The Wall Street Journal. "We chat more during the day than me and my wife do," he said of the electronic, impersonal, faceless digital assistant. "Since the pandemic, I've become tied to the Alexa system," Edelstein said. Without it, "you almost have separation anxiety."

Florida-resident Samantha Sherhag didn't suffer anxiety; she merely had to get up and take over the job from Alexa. When the cloud is working, she tells Alexa to turn on the lights. "Over the last two years, I've grown lazy," she said. "It's easier to tell Alexa to turn the lights on and off. She listens better than the kids."

Sure, the internet has made life better in so many ways. But last week's cloud outage is a reminder to keep that broom handy, remember where the light switch is on the wall, and that cats will shred your furniture if you don't feed them.

# Yukon TV

Continued from page 1

are just not tech savvy," said Ethel Dando, manager of the Wrangell Senior Apartments. "Everything about this is confusing. If the internet goes down, you don't have (TV). Before, even if they don't have internet, they still had cable. This whole streaming thing is just way over their heads."

People need to have an email address to sign up for streaming services, which, she estimates, 80% of her tenants don't.

Nell Churchill, who has been a GCI customer off and on since the company first started offering cable TV, said she had to opt for Yukon TV when she returned to Wrangell in August. It was a trying experience.

"You have to download an app on your phone, and then it goes to your TV somehow," she said. "Then, I'd be sitting here watching, and if I got up and left, the room for a moment, it would log itself out."

She contacted tech support and, after two hours on the phone, she eventually got the problem fixed.

"For elders, like if my dad was sitting here watching TV, he would be without TV," Churchill said.

Dando said the seniors apartment complex offered basic ca-

ble to its tenants who range in age from their late 60s to early 80s. Cable television was cheap enough that the complex could offer it, but the streaming service is too expensive.

"It was way too expensive, beyond what we could offer to tenants," she said. "It was probably 10 times more expensive, and that was just offering them internet. That wasn't even getting Yukon TV on top of that."

Handyside said, "The price for Yukon TV is exactly the same as cable service." She added that seniors who have concerns about cost can contact CGI for assistance, but did not say if that included senior discounts.

Yukon TV's base "AK Core TV" level is \$14.99 per month. It includes about 30 channels, of which almost half are shopping networks or public television channels. The next level, "Plus," is \$109.99 per month, similar to current cable TV charges. It comes with 100 channels. The third level, "Total," is \$129.99 per month and includes 150 channels.

Users will need an internet connection through GCI, which is a separate fee ranging from \$79.99 per month to \$179.99 per month. However, any channels streamed through the Yukon TV app won't be subjected to over-

age fees for internet use. If other apps are used, such as Hulu, Netflix or Disney+, and customers don't have an unlimited data plan, they could still face over-age fees.

"Some apps will gobble up their data," Dando said. "But this Yukon thing, they've worked around that, which is good because that would just be another thing to confuse them." She said tenants who were streaming without the Yukon TV app would watch a movie on another app, "and their data is all gone."

And none of the monthly fees include the cost of one of the streaming platforms users will need to access the Yukon TV app, such as Apple TV, or iPads and iPhones running iOS 11.0 and higher, the Amazon Fire Cube 4K or Fire Stick 4K, Android TV 5.0 and higher, or Google's Chromecast with Google TV.

Handyside said GCI is trying to make the switch easier for those who might be tech-challenged by providing online how-to videos, a booklet to walk users through setup and use, webinars, in-store tutorials, appointments for in-home setup and instruction and a 1-800 number. "We're full service in that way," she said.

EDITORIAL

# Keep politics out of the Permanent Fund

Letting politics influence management decisions of the Alaska Permanent Fund is like inviting an acquaintance with COVID-19 to dinner. You may get lucky and nothing bad happens, but the possibilities for misery are real.

One of the tenets of an endowment fund is to minimize risk, or at least measure the risks against the potential gains. It's unclear whether the Permanent Fund's board of trustees were thinking about that when they voted 5-1 last week to fire Angela Rodell, who has served as executive director the past six years. During her tenure, the state's main savings account grew from \$51 billion to more than \$81 billion under solid management practices that avoided political investment decisions.

That may be ending with Rodell's firing. The trustees provided no explanation for their decision and abruptly ended the meeting after the vote. Her dismissal comes after an audit praised the fund's management, and after record investment gains in the fiscal year that ended June 30.

As long as the fund succeeds with its investment strategy and elected officials do not overdraw the checkbook to pay bigger Permanent Fund dividends, the account is projected to reach almost \$100 billion 10 years from now. That would be enough to cover most of the state budget for public services, just as intended when voters approved the constitutional amendment establishing the fund in 1976, and also pay out a reasonable PFD to hundreds of thousands of Alaskans each year.

So why fire the director? The trustees aren't talking, which violates the first rule of honest and open government, in addition to damaging the fund's relationship with its investment partners, who probably wonder what just happened.

Whatever the secret reasons of the five trustees last appointed by Gov. Mike Dunleavy, it appears the governor's quest for a larger, pre-reelection campaign dividend was a possible factor, along with his attitude that some of last year's investment earnings should be spent on bigger PFDs rather than saved to protect the fund when bad investment years hit the balance sheet.

Rodell, to her fiduciary credit, has spoken consistently and strongly — but always respectfully and politically cautiously — that overdrawing the fund by several billion dollars, as the governor wants, is not a good idea for the account's long-term health.

She also spoke up when the governor's Revenue Department commissioner, who serves on the board of trustees, tried to block performance bonuses for fund employees. The commissioner, in politicizing a budget decision, said it would send a bad signal to pay bonuses when the PFD is smaller than Alaskans deserve. The bad signal was talking about the dividend — the Legislature appropriates money for the dividend, not the fund's trustees.

Legislators are understandably upset that the governor has turned the fund's earnings into a potential campaign speech. They are calling for hearings into Rodell's firing and want to understand what happened and why. As they should.

An impartial board of trustees, not beholden to the governor, is the only vaccine against politicizing the Permanent Fund.

*Wrangell Sentinel*

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Reader appreciates the expanded Wrangell Sentinel**

Early last January, our weekly papers included very nice Mark Kelley 2021 calendars as we welcomed Larry Persily's return as the Senti-

nel's owner and editor. I have enjoyed my calendar all year, along with our improved, expanded local paper.

Thanks for a great first year, and for the calendar!

*Alice Rooney*

# 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.**

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# Holiday travel

Continued from page 1

luggage, but turns out the bags went to Juneau.

"They can't find it. It's not in the next day. We're like, OK, this isn't good. We checked back the third day. We had no clothes or anything. We went to Angerman's and bought sweatpants and sweatshirts to hold us over. They finally tracked our bags. In Portland, instead of getting tagged to Wrangell, our bags got tagged to Juneau. That plane didn't make it to Juneau at all. The bags ended up in Anchorage, and a volcano erupted."

The eruption of Mt. Redoubt shut down all air traffic for days. "We got our bags the same day we were leaving back to Portland. They came in in the morning, and we rechecked the bags without even opening them. We wore sweatpants and sweatshirts for the entire 11 days."

**Janell Roberts Privett, who grew up in Wrangell**

Her brother Darin was born Nov. 25, 1969, and had Rh incompatibility with his mother's blood. He was born in Portland and had to have blood transfu-

sions before returning home to Wrangell.

Privett was 10 years old. Her brother Doug was 9 years old at the time. They were bummed they couldn't go to their grandparents in Ketchikan for Christmas that year. Darin was healthy and doing good in Wrangell until Christmas Eve. Then he started changing color. The family got him to the hospital and the doctors said he had to be flown to Ketchikan for treatment. As soon as it was light, they chartered a flight with Stikine Air.

Chuck Traylor flew the family and the raw turkey her mom had put out to thaw on Christmas Day. Traylor was a great pilot with a great sense of humor, Privett said. "He was concerned about my brother."

To keep her and her brother Doug occupied, Traylor told the kids to look out the window for Santa. And when they said they didn't see him, he said to look faster next time.

Darin went in for 28 days of blood transfusions, Privett said, and she and her brother ended up having a longer Christmas with their grandparents and aunts and uncles in Ketchikan.

# Generator

Continued from page 1

generator and installation.

The agenda statement submitted to the assembly by Al-Haddad said additional project costs — beyond the actual generator unit — would include engineering assistance to provide design for the switch gear necessary for when the backup unit kicks in, and connections and installation by an electrician.

Electrical design work can occur before the generator gets to town, Al-Haddad said, so that everything is ready for the equipment to fit into place. The capital facilities department will put out requests for proposals for the electrical work.

When the runway lights go out, aircraft cannot land between the end of evening civil twilight and the beginning of morning civil twilight. That's a problem, in case of medical evacuation and "overall community resiliency," according to the resolution approved by the assembly in a unanimous vote Monday evening.

The deadline is Dec. 31 for the municipality to spend CARES Act funds, which were granted by Congress in 2020.

"During the emergency, we realized we didn't have a backup at the airport," interim Borough Manager Jeff Good said. "This will pretty much clean out the rest of the CARES Act account."

Finance Director Mason Villarma explained, "We did a high-level review of what can be in the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) bucket, and the CARES bucket." There was just enough loosened up for the generator by moving money around, he said.

"Why we have to spend our own money on a generator beats me. The state needs to pony up."

*Mayor Steve Prysunka*

"I do think the state should be helping us," Good said. "By making it portable, I would like to have them help us, and then we can take this generator elsewhere."

"Why we have to spend our own money on a generator beats me," Mayor Steve Prysunka said. "The state needs to pony up."

Regardless of the lack of state assistance with the purchase, "I like the idea of this being on a trailer," the mayor said.

Good said the borough has a need for generators. "We're at least four shy for the pump stations."

Al-Haddad said she jumped on this project the day after the windstorm. "This money has to be spent within two weeks. What I have scheduled in the \$80,000 is the cost of the generator, the cost of the construction; there is electrical connectivity work that needs to be provided too. It's very likely we won't be able to get that electrical work done in two weeks. If we can't, we will forgo that piece."

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# Post office sorts it out a week before Christmas

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

It's the holiday season and all through town, more people need to get a-stirring and pick up their packages.

That's the word from the post office. Postmaster Dorothy Gladsjo declined an interview last week, and said another time maybe, when she wasn't "covered in sweat."

Gladsjo and a co-worker had just

dumped another orange bag full of packages flown into town onto a pushcart at the post office. The shelves were already stuffed full, but they had to find room to add the latest additions.

Tommy Brown, who has lived in Wrangell for 18 years, came down the steps with his mail under his arm. "You could see 10 or 15 bags of stuff waiting to be picked up," he said Dec. 8.

A steady trickle of people bounding up the steps or the ramp to the post of-

fice doors continued under a few snow flurries.

Darian Burley, owner of Magnolia Beauty Bar, left the post office with her order of cosmetics in the crook of her elbow.

The shelves full of packages — whether business, personal or holiday gifts — have prompted Facebook postings from residents, imploring their neighbors to pick up their boxes and bags and help make space for the next load.

The Postal Service's busiest week of the holiday mailing and shipping season is estimated to be Dec. 14-21.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, the Postal Service anticipates it will deliver between 850 million and 950 million packages for the holidays. The total number of letters, cards and packages processed and delivered is estimated to be more than 12 billion.



FILE PHOTO

Julia Ostrander was chosen to fill a school board vacancy on Monday.

## School board picks Ostrander to take seat vacated by Ballou

Sentinel staff

Julia Ostrander was voted in to fill a short-term vacancy on the school board on Monday.

The vacancy was created when Laura Ballou resigned from the board in early November.

The board received two applications to fill the position — from Ostrander and Alexandra Angerman, both of whom ran for seats on the board in the October municipal election but lost.

At Monday's meeting, board president Don Wilson announced that Angerman had withdrawn her submission, citing other responsibilities.

Ostrander, a parent and

small business owner, was asked to introduce herself and explain why she wanted to serve on the board and what she hoped to accomplish.

"I want to make sure kids get the best education possible," she said, adding that community is a large part of the education process, and it would help to keep the school district accountable.

She will be sworn in at the next meeting on Jan. 17. Ostrander will serve until the next municipal election in October 2022, at which time voters will select a candidate to fill the remaining year of the term.

## Assistant principal Davis started in 1994, will retire at end of school year

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Bob Davis, assistant principal of Wrangell's high school and middle school, has submitted his resignation and plans to retire at the end of the school year.

The resignation was on the agenda for Monday's school board meeting and will take effect next June.

"When I took this job, I made it clear that I had a maximum expiration date of three years," Davis said. "This is my second. From the time I signed my contract this last spring, I've made it clear that this would be my last year."

Davis has been a teacher at the middle school since 1994. He became assistant principal for the middle and high schools in the summer of 2020, when the previous principal resigned.

He said he wanted to put in his notice early enough so that the district would have plenty of time to find a replacement. "The district has a long history of waiting until the last minute when the best and brightest applicants have already been signed by other districts," Davis said.

Schools Superintendent Bill Burr said the process to fill the position has begun.

## Garden

Continued from page 3

here this winter so Kim and I can start working with it, get it installed, and there's going to need to be three-phase electrical access installed," Massie said. "We really want to learn the ins and outs of it to make sure we don't mess it up right when we get it."

The capacity to turn the compost at the garden isn't possible now due to the large amount of it, and the colder weather makes the decomposition process longer.

"The last couple of years, we've been really trying to figure out how does compost work? Composting is intimidating," Wickman said. "I'm so afraid I was going to goof it up and have a gross, gooey mess — and a couple of times I did — but when you add the correct mixtures of browns and greens, you have a really nice product."

There were plans to hold classes on composting and other gardening topics in 2020.

"We were going to do a cool symposium on composting and gardening, we had a list of volunteers who were going to come help, and then the world went crazy, and that all went away," Wickman said.

With that, WCA took a step a back and started looking at how to get the garden growing again. They created a survey to gauge community interest. Forty-four people responded, all expressing various degrees of involvement.

Those in attendance last week offered ideas for gardening classes, growing and sharing produce and herbs, and using the space to teach children where their food comes from. Some said keeping it simple to start was a good approach.

"Keep it simple; grow kale in one bed and strawberries in another bed," said Mya DeLong, owner of Groundswell, which sells fresh floral arrangements as part of its products and services. "I think trying to do too much and too many can get overwhelming."

## Permanent Fund firing

Continued from page 1

Rodell, who was commissioner of the Department of Revenue under then-Gov. Sean Parnell, has led the corporation since 2015. Since then, the investment fund, whose earnings support most of the state budget for public services and the annual

dividends paid to residents, has grown from \$51 billion to \$81 billion as of the corporation's latest financial statement on Oct. 31.

"We write to express our grave concern over the sudden and inexplicable termination of Angela Rodell as executive director of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp.," the chairs of the House and Senate Rules committees wrote on Dec. 10 to corporation chair Richards.

"We strongly believe that the public and the Legislature deserve an explanation for the action the board took," said the letter, signed by Sen. Gary Stevens, of Kodiak, and Rep. Bryce Edgmon, of Dillingham.

The trustees have declined to explain their decision, citing personnel confidentiality. Legislators said that's unacceptable for such the important position

running the investment fund that provides almost two-thirds of state general fund revenues.

The Legislative and Budget Audit Committee, comprised of House and Senate members, was to meet this week and ask that board members attend the committee's Jan. 17 meeting in Juneau. Anchorage Sen. Natasha von Imhof, committee chair, said Saturday that lawmakers want to know the facts that led to Rodell's dismissal and "what new direction" the board wants to take in managing the fund.

"No one's talking, and in a vacuum, rumors swirl. I believe that Alaskans should be given better answers with such a high-profile position," the senator told the Anchorage Daily News last week.

"I want to make sure the Permanent Fund remains apoliti-

cal," von Imhof, who also serves on the Senate Finance Committee, said Saturday.

An independent audit of the corporation, presented in September, found no major problems.

Just last month, Rodell was elected chair of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds, a global network that manages trillions of dollars of funds.

Sen. Bert Stedman, of Sitka, who chairs the Senate Finance Committee, told the Daily News he has requested a hearing on the firing and finds it suspicious.

"There is a lot of concern that this is clearly politically related in that the Permanent Fund board is being set up and pushed to become more of a political arm of whoever the sitting governor is," Stedman said. "And that is something that we

have avoided for years."

Several lawmakers said they worry that the decision to fire Rodell is linked to the governor's unsuccessful efforts to win legislative approval for drawing \$3 billion more from the Permanent Fund this year to help pay larger dividends to Alaskans. Rodell has publicly urged elected officials to avoid over-drawing the fund, which would diminish its future earnings and could jeopardize its annual payout to the state budget.

Responsible management of the fund and guarding against excessive withdrawals is even more important amid high inflation rates that could eat into the fund's real earnings, von Imhof said Saturday.

Rodell disagreed with two of the governor's appointees on the board in October when they tried unsuccessfully to cut employee incentives from the corporation budget. Mahoney said it would be unfair to pay out financial incentives at the same time as the Legislature declined to approve larger Permanent Fund dividends.

"I'm stunned. I can't wait to see the board of trustees' reasoning for terminating her. To me, it's the equivalent of trading Michael Jordan after you've won five NBA championships," Sen. Click Bishop, of Fairbanks, and a member of the Senate Finance Committee, told the Daily News.

A spokesman for the governor issued a statement last week: "Governor Dunleavy has no involvement in the board of trustees' actions or decisions."

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**Holiday Schedule**  
Wrangell Sentinel will be closed Friday, Dec. 24 at noon and will reopen Monday, Jan. 3.

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# 'Now that's rock and roll'

## Friday night WCA program preserves culture and traditional way of life

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

Friday night drumming at the Wrangell Cooperative Association's carving shed on Front Street brings together Tlingit elders and teens, different generations forming a circle around an overhead projector as instructor Virginia Oliver guided the group through the pronunciation of Tlingit song lyrics.

Oliver's son Tommy Rooney Jr., Luella Knapp and Tom Gillen Sr. were among the adults on drums, accompanied by children that included 14-year-old Keaton (Saak, "hooligan") Gadd, 13-year-old Boomchain (Galshāat, "hold together") Loucks, and 14-year-old Shelton (Duhūnxw, "older brother") Eklund.

"I'm counting on you, Tom, to hold the beat," Oliver said.

Gillen smiled. "Good luck."

Oliver sang. She kept her finger on the lyrics, leading the group in singing, advancing the page as the voices and drums melded together and leapt from one line to the next, and cajoled the boys when she noticed wandering attention and fewer sticks rolling off the drumskins, until the song concluded.

Oliver approved. "Now that's rock and roll."

The group went through a couple more songs. Knapp sang and held hands with her great-granddaughter, 10-year-old Jocelyn Smith, Chukateen in Tlingit, as they swung their linked arms to the beat.

"I heard your sweet voice, Lue," Oliver said to Knapp, who laughed.

Knapp, who was sat right next to Gillen, said his drum was loud.

"But it sounded so good though," he said.

Oliver asked the boys if they had any modern requests. "Christina Aguilera? Pitbull?"

The boys looked back in silence as if to ask, "Who now?"

Oliver said the kids ask her for Jason



PHOTOS BY SARAH ASLAM/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Tom Gillen Sr. plays a Tlingit drum he made. He was at last Friday's drumming and sewing session, organized by a WCA cultural program.

Derulo, but she doesn't know who that is.

Since there were no requests, Oliver concluded the program with a Tlingit exit song. After some snacks, for those who chose to stay, it was time for sewing and beadwork.

Emma Frost made progress with her headband, even without her glasses, which have gone missing.

Richard Oliver, Virginia's husband,

held up rectangular beads carved from the devil's club plant, which holds medicinal and spiritual significance. Initially he carved one down to the core, smooth and nondescript as a dowel. Then Gillen suggested Oliver leave some of the bark on, because that's where the medicine lives, he said.

The drumming and sewing practice is part of the Johnson-O'Malley program, which provides educational opportuni-

ties and advocacy for Alaska Native and American Indian students from ages 3 through grade 12, guided by local parent committees, and emphasizes tutorial and cultural enrichment activities, according to the website.

The Wrangell JOM group is practicing for a tribal assembly, which convenes in Juneau in April. The assembly went virtual the past couple of years, but is anticipated to be in-person in 2022.



Above left: Tlingit elder Emma Frost holds up a headband she's beading, which symbolizes her raven moiety. Frost was working on her art at last Friday's sewing and drumming night at the WCA carving shed. Above right: Thirteen-year-old Boomchain Loucks (Galshāat, "hold together"), left, and 14-year-old Shelton Eklund (Duhūnxw, "older brother") practice Tlingit drumming last Friday.

## Annual Hoop Shoot Saturday morning

Sentinel staff

The annual Elks Hoop Shoot is back on schedule this year. The event is set for Saturday morning at the community gym, with staggered times for different age groups.

Last winter's shoot was postponed to January, to stay away from holiday events amid concerns over COVID-19's impact on the community.

Each participant Saturday will receive a free basketball to use in the Hoop Shoot — and will get to keep the ball.

A hamburger lunch at the Elks Club for all participants will follow the competition.

Boys and girls ages 8 and 9 will shoot at 9 a.m., followed by 10 and 11 year olds at 10 a.m., and 12 and 13 year olds at 11 a.m.

Event organizers are asking kids to

arrive 15 minutes early to register.

Trophies — if they arrive in time — will be awarded at the hamburger lunch, said Jeff Jabusch, organizer of the Hoop Shoot. If not, a trophy presentation will be scheduled for later.

All participants, spectators and volunteers will be required to wear masks and sanitize their hands before entering the gym. They will also be required to remain six feet apart.

Competitors will be required to keep their masks on at all times except when they are shooting.

"This is part of a national program where youth start at the local level and then can compete to advance to state, regional and lastly to the national finals," Jabusch said. "We have had kids from Wrangell make it to the regionals, but never to the finals."

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# Assembly continues talking about public safety building, water plant rebuilds

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

When Amber Al-Haddad inherited the public safety building project as the borough's capital facilities director in 2018, she was told the building simply needed a paint job.

The now 34-year-old building needed, and still needs, much more than that. The assembly convened in a work session Monday night to discuss a phased rehabilitation plan for overhauling the water- and rot-damaged building, a plan it had requested of Al-Haddad at its Nov. 9 assembly meeting.

The latest proposal comes with an estimated price tag of at least \$14.7 million, in three phases.

The first phase would address top priorities like replacing the roof, drains, structural framing, siding, interior wallboard, exterior doors and windows, interior finishes and electric/telecom work for reconstructing the court area.

The first-phase estimate is \$4.5 million.

The second phase, at \$3.6

million, would address the fire alarm and sprinkler system, heating and ventilation and temperature controls, firewall repairs and seismic ceiling bracing, and underground fuel tank replacement.

The third phase would include adding a sloped metal roof, additional interior work, a backup generator, more electrical work and modernizing the elevator, totaling \$6.5 million.

The 2020 estimates have not been updated to reflect inflation since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Assemblymember David Powell took affront to the sloped roof not being put on right away, and said he would not sign off on a project that replaces a flat roof with a flat roof, lest his kids one day sit in his seat and debate what to do with the flat roof repair 30 years later.

Finance Director Mason Vilarma said funding is intact for Phase I, but, after that, "you're going to have to go out to bond."

Assembly members spent

much of the meeting debating what is really needed. The building houses the police department, indoor shooting range, fire department, jail, motor vehicle and driver licensing office, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, and state court offices.

Mayor Steve Prysunka floated giving up the court offices in town.

Police Chief Tom Radke said the main thing with a court office in Wrangell is convenience. "A lot of people will miss it when it's not here," he said, but everything is being done via Zoom anyway. "You don't see a judge maybe once a month."

The assembly requested interim Borough Manager Jeff Good and Al-Haddad "go back and verify the spaces required for the police, fire, DMV, jail and courthouse," Good said. "Once we have the space requirements, they would like an estimate on how much a new facility would cost given the space requirements."

Next on the list of unresolved municipal projects was a review of the updated engineer-

ing report, project funding and timeline for improvements to the community's water treatment plant. The assembly discussed, but made no decisions on this one either.

Five years have passed since the original estimated cost of about \$9 million, Al-Haddad said. The updated preliminary engineering report now puts the cost at \$15.5 million.

In addition to U.S. Department of Agriculture funding approved in 2017 and 2019, there is additional federal funding of \$1 million, leaving a shortfall of about \$5.4 million.

Another problem, she said, is that the grants and loans are set to expire. A USDA loan for \$3.8 million and a USDA grant for nearly \$3.2 million, both received in September 2017, terminate in September 2023.

A nearly \$3 million federal Economic Development Administration grant approved in September 2019 terminates September 2024.

The economic development agency has indicated it would

consider terminating the grant in September 2022 if the project has not advanced to the design phase, Al-Haddad wrote in the statement to the assembly.

Similar to EDA, the USDA has indicated no further time extensions will be considered until the borough signs an engineering design contract.

The borough has reached out to its federal and state lobbyists to see if one-year extensions are possible. "Having this time extension would give the borough time to seek the additional \$5.4 million needed for full project funding," Al-Haddad wrote.

Al-Haddad said USDA is putting pressure on the borough to enter the engineering design phase, but if funding isn't secured for actual construction, a costly design would be futile.

"If something did go awry, we may have to shelve a \$1 million design," Good said.

## Congress working to extend CARES Act deadline for Native corporations

By BECKY BOHRER  
Associated Press

JUNEAU (AP) — The U.S. House has passed legislation to extend a year-end deadline for Alaska Native corporations to use federal coronavirus relief funds. The U.S. Supreme Court in late June ruled the corporations were entitled to receive the CARES Act funds, but delays in disbursing the money have been many corporations in a bind to spend the funds by Dec. 31.

The House bill, however, isn't the same measure that earlier passed the Senate. For the bill to become law, the same version has to pass both chambers before going to the president for signature.

Some Alaska Native corporations have yet to receive funds and others face challenges distributing money they have received, said Hallie Bissett, executive director of the Alaska Native Village Corporation Association. She said there have been administrative issues, and documentation requirements in some cases created confusion.

She also cited challenges in setting up websites, application processes or other systems to handle and distribute funds, particularly for corporations with limited staff or in areas with "basic to nonexistent" internet service.

The Wrangell Cooperative Association, a tribal council, not a village corporation, has received its CARES Act funding and is not at risk from the deadline, said Esther Reese, tribal administrator.

The first payments to tribes in the U.S. went out in the spring of 2020, according to U.S. Government Accountability Office — well over a year before

Continued on page 12

**FIVE WAYS TO HOLIDAY SEASONS**

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A message from the City & Borough of Wrangell.



# State extends contract one month for traveling health care workers

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel reporter

Wrangell Medical Center will get an extra month of help from three traveling health care professionals, as the state has extended its contract for the workers.

Alaska is adding to its \$87 million contract that brought in about 470 out-of-state health care workers to assist hospitals, clinics and schools stressed this fall by the heavy workload of COVID-19 patients and testing, and to provide relief for overwhelmed medical staffs in multiple communities.

In September, the state signed up Atlanta-based DLH Solutions to bring the workers to Alaska under a 90-day contract.

The health care workers have individual contracts, and state officials are working with DLH to figure out which workers will want to extend, said State Public Health Division Section Chief Gene Wiseman.

"Identify those who are not going to renew their contract, source new workers to come, and then hopefully have them cross over with a couple of days of overlap," Wiseman said on a call with reporters Dec. 9. "So that onboarding can happen and minimize any

impact on facilities' operating schedules."

While the contracted workers won't be in the state forever, Wiseman said he's received positive feedback from hospitals around the state regarding the extra help.

"They've allowed hospitals and administrations ... to focus on the long-term solutions and problems," he said.

The state contract with DLH has been extended to Jan. 20. Wiseman said the state is applying for federal funds to fully reimburse the extension. The original contract also is eligible for federal reimbursement.

"Wrangell was fortunate to benefit from this state contract during our recent COVID surge," Carly Allen, Wrangell Medical Center administrator, said last Friday. The community set a record in November with 66 COVID cases.

"WMC had as many as eight travelers (including registered nurses and certified nursing assistants) at one time during the state's contract. These travelers assisted in a variety of areas including long-term care, acute care, and with immunizations and testing," Allen said. "We have three extending into January."

Unlike the state's largest hospitals in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Wrangell was not

overwhelmed with hospital patients amid the thousands of new COVID-19 cases reported statewide this fall. The Wrangell hospital issue is a long-term staffing shortage, Allen said. The temporary workers were a big help, taking pressure off staff, she said.

Since the pandemic count started in March 2020, almost 3,200 Alaskans have been hospitalized with COVID, though just six in Wrangell, according to state health department statistics as of Monday. Ketchikan has had 31 hospital patients and 14 deaths, and Petersburg has reported 15 hospitalizations and three deaths. The state has reported one COVID-related death in Wrangell.

Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage, the state's largest hospital, was in the contract for 161 temporary health care workers. The Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage was on the list for 60 personnel.

The temporary workers also were assigned to other facilities in Anchorage and in Fairbanks, Kodiak, Valdez, Homer and Utqiagvik, and schools in Sitka, Unalaska, Dillingham, Kotzebue, Nome, Skagway, Petersburg and the Kenai Peninsula.

## First case of Omicron variant reported in Alaska

Ketchikan Daily News  
and Wrangell Sentinel

The first known case of the Omicron variant in Alaska was reported on Monday, according to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. The variant case was identified in an Anchorage resident.

"The case was identified today through genomic sequencing performed at the Alaska State Public Health Laboratory from a person who recently tested positive in Anchorage following international travel in November," the statement read.

"Alaska now joins at least 30 other states and more than 60 countries that have already identified the variant," the health department reported.

A New York Times variant tracker updated on Monday identified 32 states (and Washington, D.C.) that have seen the Omicron variant, including Washington, California and Idaho.

"Protective measures against the variant remain the same as for the other COVID virus variants," Alaska health officials said. "The Anchorage Health Department and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services encourage Alaskans to get vaccinated against COVID-19 if they haven't already done so and to get boosted if you're eligible."

"While this case of Omicron does not come as a surprise, it is a reminder that we need to remain vigilant to reduce the risk of COVID transmission," the state's chief medical officer, Dr. Anne Zink, said in an emailed statement Monday evening to the Anchorage Daily News.

Almost 67% of eligible Alaskans had received at least their first dose of a COVID vaccine as of Monday, according to the state health department. Almost 60% were fully vaccinated, and 19% of the eligible population had received a booster shot.

The rates in Wrangell as of Monday were 65% with at least one dose, 62% fully vaccinated, and 23% with a booster shot in their arm.

Less than 40% of 12 to 18 year olds in Wrangell are fully vaccinated, and less than 13% of 5 through 11 year olds.

"Layering on other protective measures, including masking, handwashing, physical distancing and testing can also help to reduce transmission of the COVID-19 virus, including Omicron," state health officials said Monday.

The COVID-related death toll in Alaska was at 887, as of Monday, with almost 154,000 cases reported in the state since March 2020, according to the public health online dashboard.

After a record number of new cases in November (66), Wrangell had reported just one new infection in December, as of Monday.

South African health authorities first identified the Omicron variant — which features around 50 mutations, including those around the spike protein — in late November.

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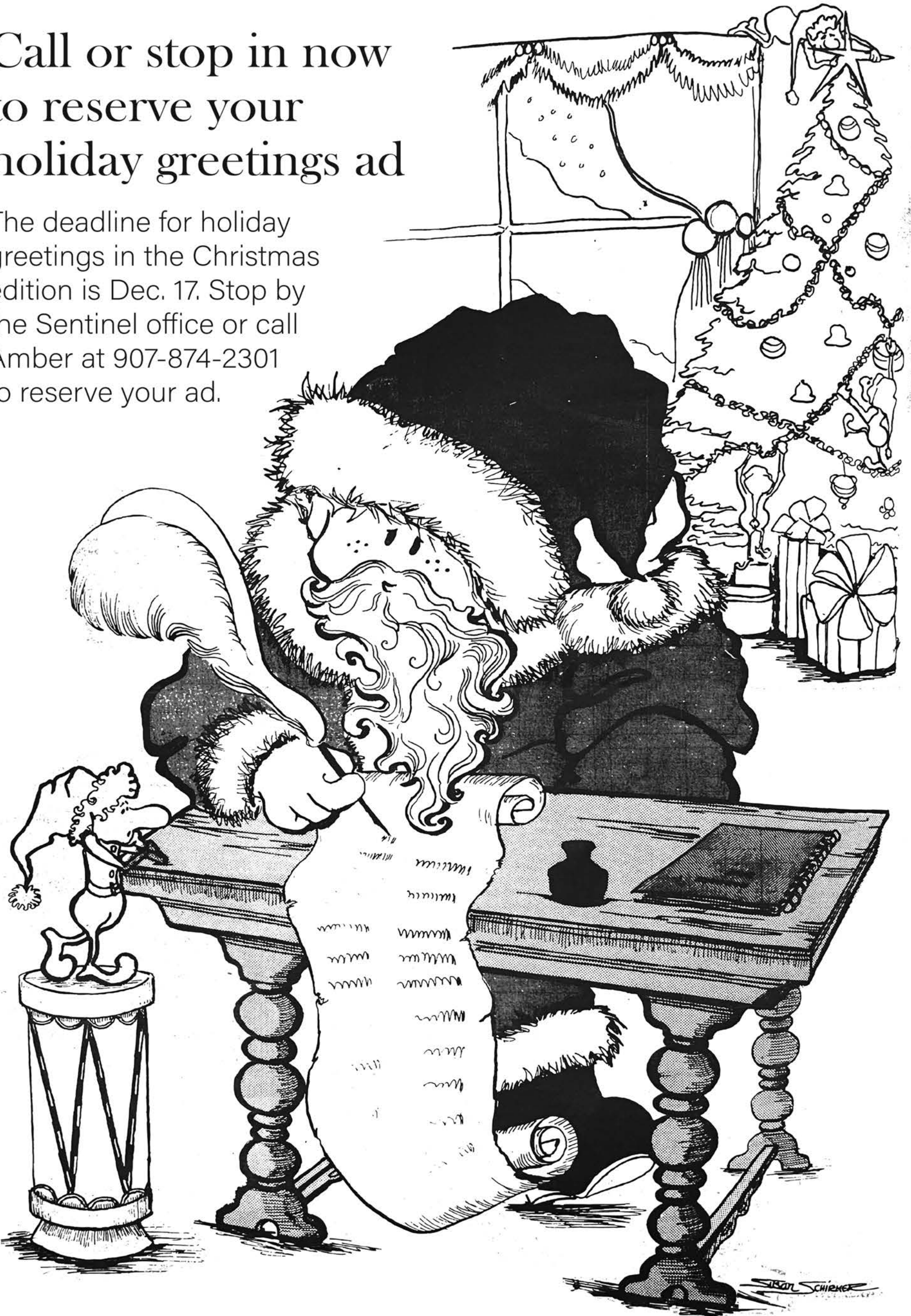
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# SENTINEL SPORTS

## Wolves pin 8 first-place wins at Wrangell regionals

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Wrangell's wrestlers secured more first-place wins during regional championships than any other high school at the meet.

Athletes from Mt. Edgecumbe, Craig, Petersburg, Sitka, Haines, Thorne Bay, Ketchikan and Juneau's Thunder Mountain came to Wrangell to compete in the Southeast regional championships last Friday and Saturday.

In the girls division, two-time state champion senior Liana Carney bested Ruby McCue of Ketchikan in the 135-pound weight class. Carney pinned her opponent in 30 seconds to win first place in the finals.

Sophomore Mia Wiederpohn pinned Chloe Vasquez of Thorne Bay in 15 seconds to win first place in the 145-pound weight class.

Wrangell's boys compete in Division II, pitting them against Craig, Haines, Mt. Edgecumbe, Petersburg and Sitka. Ketchikan and Thunder Mountain are in Division I. The boys competition in Alaska is split into two divisions, based on school size.

It was Lucas Schneider's first time at a regional championship. The freshman didn't have any competitors in the 112-pound weight class, though he did pin Hayden Jimenez (103 pounds), of Haines, in the second round of an exhibition match. Schneider had a guaranteed first place in his weight class and will be joining other teammates at the state championships this weekend.

Junior Randy Churchill pinned Rogan Hanson of Craig after 3:18. He won first place for the 152-pound weight class. Teammate Ryan Rooney won first in the 160-pound weight class, pinning Sitka's Jason Young in 1:49. Fellow junior Ethan Blatchley won first place in the 171-pound class, pinning Aiden Ojala of Sitka in 3:10.

Senior Rowen Weiderspohn pinned Kael Osborne of Mt.



PHOTOS BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Above: Senior Ryan Rooney squares off with a wrestler from Mt. Edgecumbe during the regional semi-finals last Friday night in Wrangell. Rooney went on to win first place in his weight class in the finals. Below: Junior Randy Churchill pins Wyatt Litster of Petersburg in the final match of semi-finals on Friday night Churchill won his weight class at finals on Saturday.



Edgecumbe in 1:26 to win first place in the 189-pound class. And senior Jake Eastaugh pinned Petersburg's Kyle Big-

gers in 5:50 to win first place in the 215-pound class.

Rooney and Carney were voted by the coaches as Out-

standing Wrestlers, the third time for each athlete for their divisions. The competition also produced the most individu-

al regional titles the Wrangell team has ever won.

"We're proud of all these kids," said Jack Carney, assistant coach for the Wrangell squad. "We have kids who want to wrestle the tough matches. They want to wrestle the ones they lose to, not just the ones they beat."

Some of those matches were tougher than most, as junior Steven Bales was injured on the first day in his match against Frank St. Denis of Mt. Edgecumbe, taking him out of play for the rest of regionals.

Freshman Della Churchill took on Laney Green of Mt. Edgecumbe in the finals, eventually falling to her opponent and landing in second place in the 112-pound weight class. Churchill's teammate senior Jamie Early also ended up second in the 130-pound weight class after falling to Hayley Gilson of Ketchikan.

Freshman Daniel Harrison looked forward to competing against long-time rival Jason Young, but fell to the one-time No. 1-ranked junior, earning Harrison third place in the finals.

Though competition was fierce throughout the weekend, the sportsmanship and bond between teams was evident and positive.

"We got some fire. People are showing up," said James Valentine, Petersburg's head coach. "Even if they're losses, they're better losses than I've seen all year. Wrangell is so tough, and they always have been. They've always brought it to us. However, there isn't animosity because we're doing the same to them, but at the end of the day, it's Southeast first."

State championships are scheduled for Friday and Saturday in Anchorage.

## Lady Wolves confident in return to basketball court

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

A new year, a new coach and new attitudes are propelling the high school girls' basketball team into the new season.

After just four games, last season was cut short due to COVID-19. But the players have shaken that off and are in the winning mindset.

"I think it's looking really good. I'm super excited to see what our team can do," said junior Kiara Harrison.

The team looks at last season as an opportunity to learn, practice and grow, which is already making a difference in this year's performance.

"Their attitudes and maturity, their personal skills, even their relationships with their teammates are better," said assistant coach Anna Allen. "Last year was a learning year for everybody. It was a huge growing opportunity. This year, they have our trust, we have their trust, and I think that changes the dynamic immensely."

Head coach Christina Good echoes Allen's sentiments, having only worked with the team for a short time. It's her first year coaching in Wrangell, having recently returned to town after being away for 25 years.

"After our first three days of practice, we're ready," Good said. "If there's go-

ing to be a year for a championship, this is going to have to be the year."

The connection between teammates is also crucial, Good said. Many of the players have known each other since kindergarten, and some are cousins, like Kayla and Kendra Meissner, Jamie Early and Allen. "We have a lot of cohesion on the team and the communication is there," Good said.

Those familial bonds can help form a tighter squad, but they can also create a different dynamic. Allen said she has a higher expectation for the girls to whom she's related.

"I know that can frustrate them, and it can frustrate me, but overall, I'm still very impressed with them and super thankful that I can even be in this role in their lives," she said.

The coaching staff is playing to the natural strengths of the team, putting them where they'll make the most impact. Good said the team is strong in post and guard positions and has one other natural gift.

"We have a lot of height," she said. "We've got Kiara Harrison. She's 6 feet, 1 inch. We don't have anybody under (5 foot, 5 inches)."

Allen said they would definitely take advantage of height, but the focus is



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kiara Harrison covers Kayla Meissner at basketball practice on Dec. 9 at the high school gym while Kendra Meissner looks on.

Continued on page 12



# Judge rejects state's lawsuit against Kake subsistence hunt

JUNEAU (AP) — A U.S. District Court judge has rejected a challenge by Gov. Mike Dunleavy's administration to a special subsistence hunt authorized for a Southeast Alaska tribe by a federal board last year.

The Organized Village of Kake in spring 2020 requested an emergency hunt, citing food security concerns amid the pandemic. The Federal Subsistence Board granted a limited season of up to 60 days, and the harvest was distributed to 135 households in the village, according to filings with the court.

The normal hunting season doesn't

begin until the fall. The federal board authorized the limited hunt in June. Residents took two moose and five deer.

The governor's administration sued against the federal decision, claiming there was no food security risk and that the special hunt excluded other Alaskans. The lawsuit also said the subsistence board's action was an example of federal overreach.

The state's lawsuit also raised a number of procedural objections to allowing the special hunt. U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Gleason, in her Dec. 3 ruling, rejected all of the state's arguments.

Tension between state and federal authorities over subsistence rights goes back decades.

The Native American Rights Fund, which offered legal assistance to the tribe, welcomed the ruling.

"The Organized Village of Kake, like many Alaska Native communities, relies on subsistence hunting to ensure food security for its tribal citizens," Matthew Newman, a staff attorney with the fund, said in a statement. He said federal authorities did well to work with a Native community like Kake, concerned about its food security, and that the court

"made the right decision when it held that the board acted within its authority."

The judge also rejected the state's objections to the federal board excluding urban hunters from harvesting moose in an area of the Interior, which the subsistence board determined was needed for public safety.

Aaron Sadler, a spokesperson for the Alaska Department of Law, said the state was considering an appeal. He called the ruling "contradictory" to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act and said the state maintains the subsistence board "overstepped its authority."

## Basketball

Continued from page 11

on individual skill sets. "They could be a (5-foot, 5-inch) player and outjump anybody, and I'm going to put them closer to a post so they can get those rebounds," she said. "But the height is nice, that's for sure. It makes it a little easier."

Harrison takes advantage of her height where she can, but recognizes when it can be a hindrance.

"The fastest defender is the lowest defender," she said. "As long as you're working hard to get low and move your feet quickly, (height) is not a drawback, but sometimes it can pose a little bit of a challenge."

Even though they have plenty of strategy in place for offensive, defensive and out-of-bounds plays (inbounding the ball), Good said the girls' talents are going to be what helps them dominate on the hardwood.

Coaches and players alike are looking forward to all the matchups to come, but there are a couple of teams that come to mind when they talk about their main competition.

"The biggest competitors are Petersburg and Metlakatla,"

Allen said. "Mainly because Petersburg is our biggest rival, mainly because of the township rivalry. It's really easy to get into our heads that we have to perform and we have to beat them, and if we don't it's a big deal. A lot of Petersburg is a mental game."

Metlakatla comes to mind because, Allen said, they always have good players and are the hardest to beat.

The first game is on Jan. 15 in Wrangell against Haines. For now, Good will keep honing those skills she knows her team has.

"We're just trying to keep things very calm, very simple at practice," she said. "I really want these girls to be confident and work out their natural abilities. That's what we focus on when we're at practice."

### This year's team:

- Jamie Early (senior)
- Kendra Meissner (senior)
- Liana Carney (senior)
- Kiara Harrison (junior)
- Kayla Meissner (sophomore)
- Aubrey Wynne (freshman)
- Della Churchill (freshman)
- Vanessa Johnson (freshman)
- Addy Andrews (freshman)



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kayla Meissner tries to block Grace Miller during basketball practice on Dec. 9. The team's first game is in Wrangell on Jan. 15 against Haines.

## Deadline

Continued from page 8

funds began going to Native corporations.

Alaska Rep. Don Young called for urgent Senate action to extend the deadline for corporations.

Karina Borger, a spokesperson for Sen. Lisa Murkowski, said Alaska's congressional delegation was "working every angle possible" to get an extension in place.

A report by the Government Accountability Office cited issues with the rollout, including guidance from the Department of the Treasury for use of funds that changed over time.

The House bill would push the spending deadline to Dec. 30, 2022.

The Treasury Department began making payments to Native corporations in early August. Altogether, there are more than 180 Alaska Native regional and village corporations. Funding for the corporations was tied up in the courts until the

U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

Bissett said that while some corporations have faced challenges, others have fully allocated their funds.

Juneau-based Goldbelt, with about 4,000 shareholders, received \$11.1 million, all of which is spoken for, said McHugh Pierre, the corporation president. Goldbelt set up an initial round of up to \$2,600 for each shareholder who certified financial losses, expenses or emergency economic need due to the pandemic, and an additional round of up to \$800 for purchases or losses not accounted for in the first round.

WCA, with its two rounds of federal pandemic relief funds, allocated up to \$4,000 per eligible tribal household in Wrangell to help with groceries and utilities.

### Clarence 'Chuck' Helland

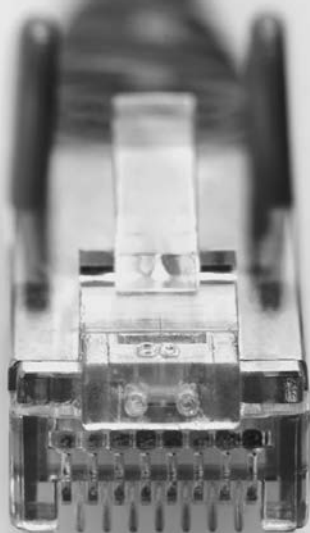
Chuck died Dec. 6, at age 82. His family has set up an account at First Bank to help with expenses. Or you can send donations directly to Funeral Director David Halko at the Ketchikan Mortuary (designated for Chuck Helland), PO Box 8181, Ketchikan, AK 99901.

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# Petersburg continues mask mandate to Jan. 3

BY CHRIS BASINGER  
The Petersburg Pilot

The Petersburg Borough Assembly has voted to extend an emergency ordinance requiring masking in indoor public buildings. The Petersburg hospital reported 230 COVID-19 cases in November — infecting more than 7% of the community's population.

An emergency face mask ordinance adopted Nov. 5 was set to expire Dec. 6. The assembly voted 6-1 on Dec. 6 to extend the masking requirement to Jan. 3.

The ordinance requires masking in public and communal spaces, other than private residences.

Phil Hofstetter, chief executive officer of the Petersburg Medical Center, presented to the assembly on Dec. 6, explaining that the facility has seen increased severity in the illness of patients.

"It's very difficult to manage the situation and also do day-to-day operations, so it's a significant burden on our staff," Hofstetter said. "I really can't articulate how hard it is and the expenditures from a hospital standpoint are really high to manage a COVID situation."

He encouraged the assembly to think longer term on how to mitigate COVID outbreaks and maintain operations and the economy.

Dr. Mark Tuccillo, borough public health officer, told the assembly, "We are seeing a new wave, adding, "whether the Omicron is going to make a big difference, I don't know."

He continued, "In the big scheme of things it really doesn't matter because if we don't do the things that we know work, the rest of it really is superficial, so if we don't have immunization rates that go up, if we don't have mask wearing, and physical distancing practiced, we are going to continue to see intrinsic spread."

The COVID case count has declined since November's record, with just six new infections reported in Petersburg in the first 10 days of December.

Assembly Member Chelsea Tremblay said the decline is a good thing, but warned that Petersburg is now in the same spot it was in before the spike. "I would like to have a local government that can both plow roads and pick up garbage at the same time, so I believe that keeping smart public health measures in place right now is incredibly important," Tremblay said.

Mayor Mark Jensen opposed extending the masking ordinance. He said he is not against masking, but could not support mandating masking and believes that people who are going to wear masks will wear them without a mandate. The mayor was the only vote against extending the ordinance.

# Petersburg may ask U.S. Postal Service for home delivery

BY CHRIS BASINGER  
The Petersburg Pilot

While Petersburg continues to endure limited hours at the post office service window, long lines and a lack of masking enforcement in the building, the borough assembly is considering asking the U.S. Postal Service to offer home delivery.

A draft resolution was presented to the assembly at its Dec. 6 meeting, with further consideration planned when the assembly meets Dec. 20.

The Petersburg Chamber of Commerce wrote a letter in support of home delivery.

The post office has been a common frustration among businesses, said Jim Floyd, chamber of commerce president.

"It's been a frustration because of the constant turnover and lack of help at the post office, so as far as a business, what happens is we send people up there and they have to wait for an hour or two or whatever it is," Floyd said.

Though businesses receive products through barges and planes, Floyd said they also get many items through the post office, such as firearms, which makes delays hard on business.

He believes home delivery could help the situation, but warned that it would take time and money to install mailboxes.

"I understand, you know, stuff happens, we have seen people call in, but nothing has worked so far and it is frustrating, and so this is a viable option," Floyd said.

Assemblymember Dave Kensinger said home delivery could provide an economic benefit. He said his other goal in presenting the resolution was to get the attention of the Postal Service to address its poor service. Home delivery is not an unreasonable request, he said.

"If we do get delivery service, then we're going to save a lot of money individually, our individual time that we have to spend going to the post office and a lot of time that the businesses have to spend paying an employee to go up to the post office to receive mail," Kensinger said.

Assemblymember Jeff Meucci believes the problems at the post office are a topic of daily conversation and believed the resolution would be a good start for change.

## OBITUARY

# Mark Seimears dies at 65, arrived by riverboat in 1960

After a courageous four-year battle with cancer, Mark Dwayne Seimears passed away on Nov. 26, 2021, in Wrangell, at age 65.

Mark was born on Feb. 20, 1956, in Everett, Washington, to Margaret and Robert (Bob) Seimears. He grew up the youngest of three children including Gail Ottesen and Robert Seimears.

In 1960, the family headed north to Alaska along the Alaska and Cassiar highways to Telegraph Creek, British Columbia. From there, they boarded his grandfather's riverboat, the Judith Ann, to their new home in Wrangell.

Mark was active in sports from his early years throughout high school. He graduated from Wrangell High School in the class of 1974. Later, he met and married Fern Seimears, though the couple later divorced, they shared two children together, Trevis and Carly.

Mark completed heavy-equipment school in Portland, and returned home to apply his training as a manager at Union 76 Wrangell Oil for many years.

"To those who knew him best, Mark is remembered as a great storyteller who could make you laugh until you cried, could fix just about anything with the most inconspicuous objects, took pride in handcrafting intricate models of fishing vessels and cars, including a replica of the historic Judith Ann riverboat, a coach to his children and a faithful cheering fan, enjoyed cooking for family and visitors. Many remember their trips to Wrangell by his signature crab melts," his family wrote.

"He loved spending time with his family and adored his grandchildren. He loved the town of Wrangell, history, the outdoors, fishing, hunting, and enjoying a cigar on his front porch while taking in the views of the neighborhood and Woronkofski Island. He will be dearly missed."

Mark was preceded in death by his brother, Robert Seimears Jr.

Mark is survived by his son, Trevis (Celeste) Seimears; daughter Carly (Adam) Danner; grandchildren Kael, Braelyn and Asher; his sister Gail Ottesen; and many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

At Mark's request, there will be a small service for immediate family at a later date.



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PUBLIC NOTICE**

Pursuant to the City & Borough of Wrangell Code, Sec. 3.04.080, notice is hereby given that the regular assembly meetings of the assembly shall be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month and shall begin at 6 p.m.

If any such Tuesday shall fall on a legal holiday as defined by the laws of the State of Alaska, the meetings scheduled for that day shall be held at the same hour on the next succeeding day which is not a holiday. Separate notice for the regular assembly meetings shall not be required. There will be no regular meetings the second Tuesday in July and August and the fourth Tuesday in December.

If a work session is scheduled preceding the regular assembly meeting, publication shall be made on the website and posted at City Hall and the post office that the regular assembly meeting shall begin at 7 p.m.

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

Publish Dec. 16, 2021



**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) will hold a Special Board Meeting on December 16, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. AKST. Due to recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and its social distancing guidelines, the meeting will be held electronically. The purpose of the meeting will be to change the effective date of SEAPA's new wholesale power rate and adjust SEAPA's FY2022 budget accordingly. For additional information, please call 907.228.2281.



# Washington state artists charged with faking Native American heritage

SEATTLE (AP) — Two Washington state artists are facing federal charges that they faked Native American heritage to sell works at downtown Seattle galleries.

Lewis Anthony Rath, 52, of Maple Falls, and Jerry Chris Van Dyke, 67, also known as Jerry Witten, of Seattle, have been charged separately with violating the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which prohibits misrepresentation in marketing American Indian or Alaska Native arts and crafts.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Rath falsely claimed to be a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, and Van Dyke falsely claimed membership in the Nez Perce Tribe. The goods included masks, totem poles and pendants sold in 2019 at Raven's Nest Treasure in Pike Place Market and at Ye Olde Curiosity Shop on the Seattle waterfront.

"By flooding the market with counterfeit Native American art and craftwork, these crimes cheat the consumer, undermine the economic livelihood of Native American artists, and impair Indian culture," Edward Grace, assistant director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement, said in a news release.

Attorneys for Rath and Van Dyke, federal public defenders Gregory Geist and Vanessa Pai-Thompson, said in an email on Dec. 10 they did not have any immediate comment on the charges.

Authorities said the investigation began when the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, an Interior Department agency that promotes Native art, received complaints that the two were fraudulently holding themselves out as enrolled tribal members.

Rath is charged with four counts of misrepresentation of Indian-produced goods, which is punishable by up to five years in prison. Van Dyke faces two counts of the same crime.

Rath also faces one misdemeanor count of unlawfully possessing golden eagle parts, and one of unlawfully possessing migratory bird parts.

According to charging documents, an employee of Ye Olde Curiosity Shop, which has been in business for more than a century, told investigators that she wrote an artist biography of Rath based on information he provided about his tribal affiliation.



AP PHOTO/TED S. WARREN

Customers leave the Ye Olde Curiosity Shop on the Seattle waterfront last Friday. Two artists are facing federal charges that they faked Native American heritage to sell works the shop and another downtown gallery. The men were charged separately with violating the Indian Arts and Crafts Act.

Matthew Steinbrueck, the owner of Raven's Nest Treasure, told investigators that the artists told him they were tribal members and that he believed them, according to the documents. He said he did not knowingly sell counterfeit Indian products.

"I've been doing this on good faith for many years — for more than 30 years," Steinbrueck told The Associated Press on Dec. 10. "Our whole mission is to represent authentic Native art. We've had more than 100 authentic Native artists. I've always just taken their word for it."

He said his family had a long appre-

ciation for American Indian culture, dating to when his great-grandfather adopted a tribal member. Steinbrueck's father, Victor Steinbrueck, an architect credited with helping preserve Pike Place Market and Seattle's historic Pioneer Square neighborhood, brought him up to revere Native culture, he said.

Van Dyke told investigators that it was Steinbrueck's idea to represent his work as Native American.

Steinbrueck denied that, saying Van Dyke appeared to be trying to lessen his own culpability. He called Van Dyke "a fabulous carver" who made art in the style of his wife's Alaska Native tribe,

including pendants carved from fossilized mammoth or walrus ivory.

Neither Ye Olde Curiosity Shop nor Raven's Nest has been charged in the case.

Gabriel Galanda, an Indigenous rights attorney in Seattle who belongs to the Round Valley Tribes of Northern California, said that if shops offer products as Native-produced, they should be verifying the heritage of the creators, such as by examining tribal enrollment cards or federal certificates of Indian blood.

"There has to be some diligence done by these galleries," Galanda said.

## Sitka will go five weeks without any state ferries

BY GARLAND KENNEDY  
Sitka Sentinel staff writer

Sitka will see minimal state ferry service this winter. Scheduled sailings of the Matanuska have been canceled until late January while the vessel undergoes more steel plate repairs in a Ketchikan shipyard, leaving Sitka cut off from the ferry network for more than a month.

As a stopgap measure, the Alaska Marine Highway System ran the Kennicott into Sitka on Dec. 8, but the vessel is not scheduled to return until Jan. 11.

The 58-year-old Matanuska is not expected to resume service until the fourth week in January.

With the ferry system stretched as it is, the Kennicott is covering a lot of communities by itself, running from Bellingham, Washington, through Southeast and out to Kodiak. As a result, the Dec. 8 and Jan. 11 Sitka visits are all the Kennicott is able to muster, said Sam Dapcevich, state Department of Transportation spokesman.

With hundreds of millions of dollars likely heading to the Alaska Marine Highway System under the federal infrastructure bill signed into law by President Joe Biden on Nov. 15, Sitka Sen. Bert Stedman said he hopes to ensure it is not used as a reason to further cut state funding for ferries.

"When we take a look, I would include pretty much all the coastal delegation, we'll be very concerned that the funds from the new infrastructure plan don't just supplant normal state funding," Stedman said. "In other words, they give you \$200 million extra to build something and they take \$200 million out of your back pocket. ... We'll be working on that issue and tracking that."

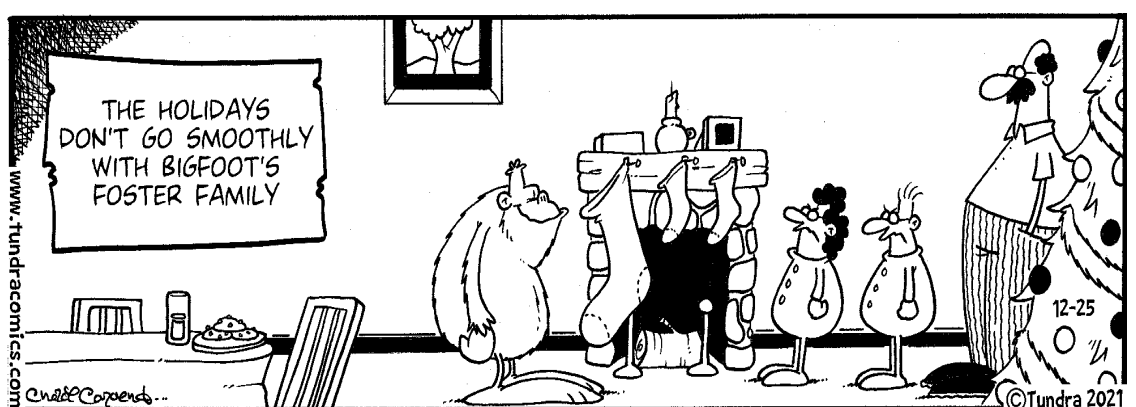
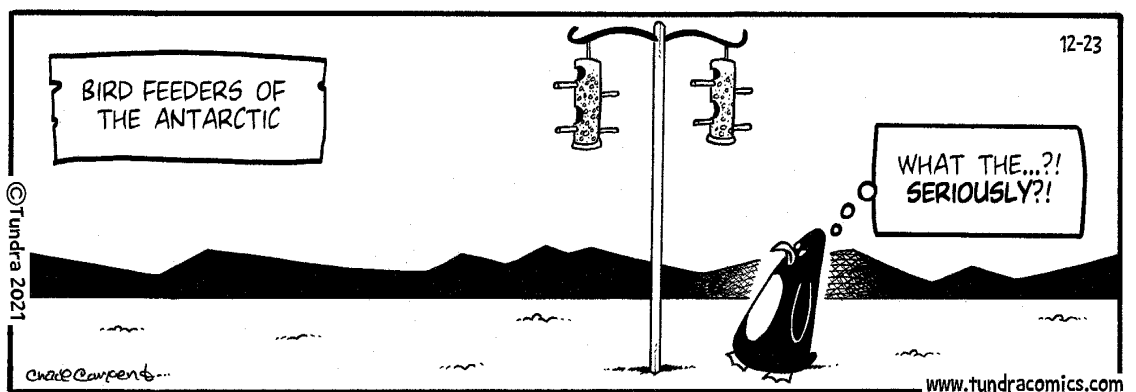
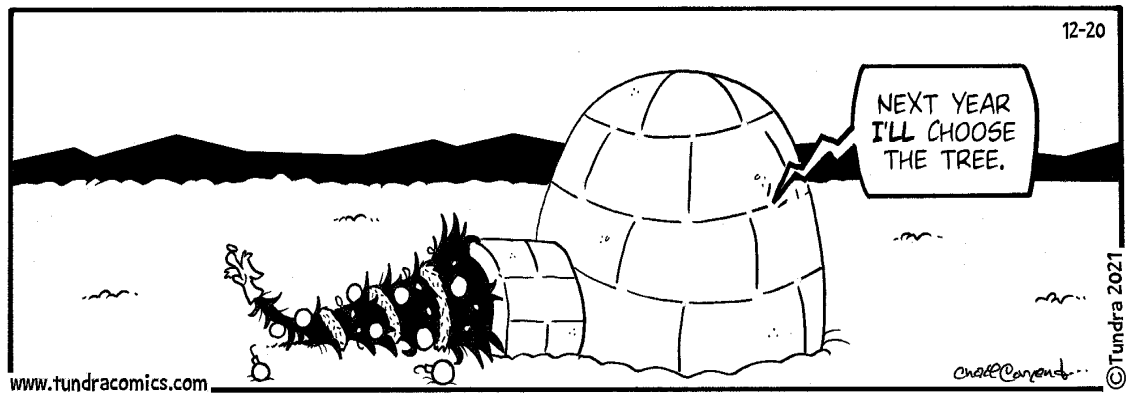
With the state's next gubernatorial election less than a year away, Stedman said some things will hinge on who wins that race.

"We'll be trying to make sure that the federal intent to help the marine highway is actually implemented, and we won't know the conclusion of that until the next election and the next governor settles in with their policies," the senator said.

Fixing the ferry system's problems, he said, is going to require a sizable fiscal appropriation.

"We still have significant gaps in marine highway service that can only be fixed with increasing the operations appropriation. ... And the classic example of that is Sitka ferry service — it's virtually eliminated," Stedman said.

## Tundra by Chad Carpenter





# Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH  
Fisheries columnist

## LED lights help guide salmon to openings in trawl nets

Low-cost LED lights can help Chinook salmon escape trawl nets.

A 2020 study by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center showed that LEDs are very effective in directing Chinook salmon to escape openings in trawl nets targeting Pacific hake, the largest groundfish fishery on the West Coast that typically takes more than 500 million pounds a year.

The study showed that Chinook are much more likely to exit the nets where lights are placed — 86% of escaped salmon used the LED-framed openings — without fishermen losing the targeted catch.

"Our data and video observations indicate that at deeper, darker depths where trawl nets go, light from the LEDs are enhancing the salmon's ability to perceive the escape areas and the areas outside the nets," said Mark Lomeli, lead researcher at the Pacific States Commission.

Lomeli said the lights have also proven effective at reducing bycatch of eulachon (Pacific smelt) and juvenile rockfish and flatfish in the shrimp trawl fishery off Oregon.

"We also think the LEDs could be used in other fisheries — for example, in the pollock midwater trawl fishery in Alaska — to reduce Chinook salmon bycatch," Lomeli said in a NOAA release about the project.

"Many fishermen are aware of this technology and use it if they think Chinook bycatch will be an issue. It's easy to use, relatively cheap and widely available. You can easily clip the lights to the webbing of the net around the escape openings. ... We think these LEDs are low-hanging fruit for contributing to the

recovery of this species and can also play an important role in the stability of this fishery," Lomeli said.

### Looks to be good year for federal fisheries

Fisheries are driven by numbers, and there will be more ups than downs in 2022 catches for Alaska fishermen based on poundages set by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The NPFMC is a federal advisory panel that has the herculean task of setting six fishery management plans covering 140-plus species within 47 stocks and stock complexes, including setting annual bycatch limits. Their jurisdiction includes waters from three to 200 miles offshore where more than 60% of Alaska's fish catches by volume are harvested.

For Pacific cod in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, the catch for next year was increased by 20% to just over 330.5 million pounds.

Cod catches in the Gulf of Alaska got a boost to 61.5 million pounds, a 61% increase over 2021.

In Gulf waters that are managed by the state (out to three miles), the cod numbers are based on the federal tally, which translates to 22.4 million pounds for next year, also a 61% increase.

Also getting a larger allocation is the so-called "head-and-gut" fleet of 19 Seattle-based bottom trawlers that have been making headlines for their annual takes/tossings of more than four million pounds of halibut bycatch (which comes off the top of all other users). The big boats, which include seven owned by Western Alaska Native groups, target flounders, cod, perch and Atka mackerel. The 2022 catch limit for all but one of

those was upped by 20% or more. Their most important catch, yellowfin sole, was increased 25% to 550 million pounds.

On the downside, the world's largest food fishery — Bering Sea pollock — will be reduced by 19% next year to 2.4 billion pounds.

Pollock catches for 2022 also are down in the Gulf to 219 million pounds, a drop of nearly 12%.

The 2022 catches must be approved by the U.S. Commerce Department, which almost always adopts NPFMC recommendations.

### Fishermen enhance science

More than 100 Alaska fishermen signed on for a "skipper science" program that lets them share what they know and see out on the water.

The pilot program started in June and uses a free phone app for logging real-time observations.

"Basically, it worked, and fishermen are very well equipped to be a big part of the science and the research going on so we can better understand and manage our fisheries," said Lindsey Bloom, director of SalmonState's Salmon Habitat Information Program (SHIP), which partnered with the St. Paul Island tribal government to run the citizen-scientist project.

The app is an offshoot of an Indigenous Sentinels Network started nearly 20 years ago at St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs to monitor wildlife and environmental conditions in the Bering Sea.

"There is a vast body of deep knowledge that fishermen hold from their experiences on the water, indigenous and non-indigenous fishermen alike, that

they're using for decision making and risk evaluation. And we have very much underutilized that knowledge for years and years, especially here in the North Pacific," said Lauren Divine, director of ecosystem conservation for St. Paul's tribal government at the launch of the skipper science program.

A report showed that nearly 1,700 fishermen shared their views on ways a changing climate is affecting Alaska's waters and habitats, and 61% said they are very or somewhat concerned about impacts to fisheries.

"There's not a fisherman out on the water who has not experienced abruptly changing conditions as a result of a changing climate," Bloom said. "We have consistently heard that in terms of what people are feeling are the threats to their businesses and bottom lines — climate is in the top two or three."

Nineteen diverse industry members, processors and fishing groups sponsored the science project and helped get the word out, and Bloom said it has support from fishery managers.

Bloom is hopeful that fishermen might eventually get paid to collect and provide data.

"I think there are incredible efficiencies to be gained. When you have all these small boats out on the water day in and day out, why not use them to measure and report on what's happening," she said.

Divine added that local knowledge and experiences enhance the science provided by drones, satellites, ships and other high-tech devices.

More information is available at skipper-science.org.

## Lt. Gov. did not receive nearly as many election complaints as claimed

By BECKY BOHRER  
The Associated Press

Lt. Gov. Kevin Meyer last year said the issue his office seemed to be getting the most email on after the 2020 election was the narrow victory of a ballot measure to overhaul Alaska's election process. His chief of staff said they were getting up to 20 emails a day.

But a records request by The Associated Press yielded fewer than 20 total unique emails that were received by the office with complaints or concerns about the election, and only three mentioned the ballot measure that would end political party primaries and institute ranked-choice voting in general elections.

The emails were recently released, more than a year after the AP first requested them, providing evidence that the lieutenant governor's office last year publicly inflated the numbers of complaints about vote counting.

Meyer, a Republican who oversees elections in Alaska, in November 2020 announced plans for a hand-count review of votes on the citizens initiative, casting it as a way to calm questions that had been raised about the validity of election results tied to the state's vote tabulation equipment. The review occurred after the general election results were certified and election officials said it affirmed the measure's passage.

The hand count cost around \$55,750, said Tiffany Montemayor, a Division of Elections spokesperson.

Meyer, in an interview with the AP on Dec. 9, said his interest in a hand count went back

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Lt. Gov. Kevin Meyer

to his race for lieutenant governor in 2018, when he said he was hearing questions about trust in the elections process. Months before the 2020 election, he said he met with a politically conservative group that had concerns with the tabulation equipment.

He said he didn't know at the time which race would be involved in the hand count but that the ballot measure ultimately made sense, given how close the results were and that some questioned how the measure had passed when early, partial votes on election night showed it failing.

Certified results showed the ballot measure won with about 50.6% of the vote — 174,032 in favor and 170,251 against.

"My whole intent here is to try to get as much confidence and trust in elections as possible," he said. "And if that means doing a ... statewide hand count, then we did it. And again, I think some people feel better now but there's definitely a small group out there that still don't."

Meyer's chief of staff, Josh Applebee, said the emails given to AP provide an "accurate representation" of those received by the office last year. He agreed that perhaps he had counted phone calls and

emails together when he said last year the office received as many as 20 emails a day — which wasn't anywhere close to true.

He said calls to Meyer's office and the division were "more aggressive" in tone than the emails and almost reached a point where "we didn't want to pick up the phone." He described the month after the November election as "rough."

Election officials, ahead of the 2020 general election, sought to tamp down expectations about vote tallies released on Election Day, which did not include the large number of absentee and other ballots; officials did not begin counting those until later. Some campaigns and others had encouraged early or absentee voting amid pandemic concerns.

The AP, on Nov. 19, 2020, spoke with Meyer and Applebee about the planned hand-count review and requested emails to and from Meyer between Nov. 10 — when the state began counting absentee ballots — and Nov. 18 concerning the election and ballot measure.

An unsigned email to Meyer said of the initiative to change elections: "Alaskans do not want a leftist scheme to ensure leftist wins from here out," the

unsigned email says.

Another person wrote to "demand" a hand count of the initiative results, claiming "zero confidence" in the election results and tabulation machines. Others raised questions about absentee ballots, whether the pen they used to mark their ballot was "legal" and the machines.

Some supporters of former President Donald Trump nationally have sought to sow doubt about the results of the race for president, won by Joe

Biden, by attacking Dominion Voting Systems, a widely used voting technology provider in the U.S., whose machines Alaska uses. The company has filed defamation lawsuits over some of the claims that have been made.

Meyer said Alaska's election was conducted fairly. If anyone doubts that, he said he encourages them to work an election or be an election observer to see the process in action.

## Police report

**Monday, Dec. 6**  
Parking complaint.  
Welfare check.  
Civil issue.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.

**Tuesday, Dec. 7**  
Reckless driving.  
Agency assist: Maintenance.  
Parking complaint.  
Agency assist: SEARHC.

**Wednesday, Dec. 8**  
Agency assist: Public works department.  
Lost property.  
Agency assist: Ambulance requested.

**Thursday, Dec. 9**  
Agency assist: High school.  
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits; also, crack in the front windshield that the owner will address as soon

as possible.  
Agency assist: Ambulance requested.

**Friday, Dec. 10**  
Civil standby.  
Trespass.  
Agency assist.  
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.  
Traffic stop: Citation issued for no proof of insurance.  
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

**Saturday, Dec. 11**  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Agency assist: Department of Transportation.  
Safety issue.  
Intoxicated person.  
Agency assist: Line crew.  
Driving complaint.  
Citizen assist.  
Citizen assist.

**Sunday, Dec. 12**  
Agency assist: Department of Transportation.  
Agency assist: State Troopers.



# Light up the night

Hundreds of people turned out last Saturday to enjoy the lighting of the community Christmas tree in downtown Wrangell. Mayor Stephen Prysunka thanked Municipal Light & Power and public works crews for harvesting and setting up the tree, especially given the storm that knocked out power and delayed the tree lighting by a week. The crowd counted down and cheered as colorful lights lit up the night.



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

# Canada's Indigenous leaders postpone meeting with Pope

TORONTO (AP) — A meeting at the Vatican between Pope Francis and Canadian Indigenous people who were abused at church-run boarding schools has been postponed because of the new coronavirus variant.

National Chief RoseAnne Archibald of the Assembly of First Nations said Dec. 7 that the delegation had planned to travel to Rome and meet with the pope on Dec. 20, but the trip is being put off because of the Omicron variant. Many of the First Nation delegates are elderly.

"Particularly for many elderly delegates as well as those who live in remote communities, the risk of infection and the fluid nature of the evolving global situation presents too great a threat at this time," the Indigenous groups and Canadian Catholic

bishops said in a joint statement.

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 Indigenous children in Canada were forced to attend state-funded Christian schools as an effort to assimilate them into Canadian society.

Canada's government has admitted that physical and sexual abuse was rampant in the schools, with students beaten for speaking their native languages. That legacy of abuse and isolation has been cited by Indigenous leaders as the root cause of epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug addiction on reservations.

There has been increased pressure on the pope to publicly apologize after the remains of more than 200 children were found buried in unmarked

graves in Kamloops, British Columbia, last May at what had been Canada's largest indigenous residential school. There are also unidentified remains in unmarked graves at other residential schools across Canada.

First Nations representatives and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau have urged Pope Francis to publicly apologize in Canada. The Vatican recently announced that the pope would visit Canada next year. A date has not been announced.

Nearly three-quarters of the 130 residential schools were run by Catholic missionary congregations.

The aim of the residential school system was to isolate young Indigenous Canadians from the influence of their homes and culture, which the government at the time considered inferior to mainstream Canadian society.

# Governor proposes spending federal dollars on tourism marketing

JUNEAU (AP) — Gov. Mike Dunleavy said Monday he plans to propose as part of his upcoming budget that the state spend \$5 million in federal dollars to support tourism marketing efforts amid the ongoing pandemic, and additional funds to prepare state parks for visitors next year.

He said the hope is for a return to "robust" tourism activity after a difficult two years. Speaking in Anchorage, Dunleavy said people are "starting to learn to live with (the coronavirus) ... understanding that it's not going to go away, but there's ways to protect oneself."

There have been promising signs on the tourism front, he noted, citing such things as improved passenger counts at the Anchorage airport and higher hotel occupancy levels in some communities.

Dunleavy's office credited a prior marketing effort with helping draw tourists to Alaska this year, including independent travelers. Several large cruise ships returned this year after being sidelined amid COVID-19 concerns last year, though traffic was a fraction of normal.

Dunleavy's office said he has proposed a \$5 million grant in federal funds for the Alaska Travel Industry Association. The governor also said he would seek an extra \$1 million for state parks to ensure facilities are "clean and accessible" for visitors.

He indicated plans to release his budget proposal Wednesday. The Legislature convenes next month, with the budget the main work assignment.

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