

Wrangell, Alaska  
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# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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## Nearly 70,000 cruise ship passengers expected in 2026

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

The number of cruise ship passengers visiting Wrangell is expected to rise in 2026, with the borough's draft schedule estimating it could come close to 70,000.

This is an increase from the estimated 40,000 in 2025, which is already almost double the number of passengers Wrangell welcomed in 2024. Though the borough anticipated as many as 30,000 passengers this year, cancellations and cruise company bankruptcies caused that figure to fall short of expectations.

The first ship of the 2026 season will arrive on May 7 when the 728-passenger Silver Nova arrives in town. The year's largest ship on the schedule is the Ruby Princess. The ship, with its 900 balconies and carrying capacity

of 3,082 passengers, is on the calendar for June 16.

There will be 21 port calls from large ships that can accommodate more than 1,000 passengers each — a marked increase from this year's three and next year's projected 11.

A fan favorite of Wrangell businesses, the Queen Elizabeth, plans on returning for its third consecutive year in town. The 2,092-passenger vessel will make six port calls to Wrangell in 2026.

The season will begin with the Silver Nova's arrival in May and close on Sept. 30, when the 1,460-capacity Zaandam makes port to round out the tourism season.

July is scheduled to be the busiest month, with ships and small tour boats coming to town on 29 of the month's 31 days, though many of the visits will be

small ships with only dozens of passengers. (Go for a stroll on the 15th or 16th if you are looking for some peace and quiet.)

In May there will be 16 days with ships in town, 19 days in

June, 26 in August and 15 in September.

The Nieuw Amsterdam will be the first large ship to arrive in town in 2026. The 2,100-capacity vessel is scheduled to make port

on May 13.

The borough's draft cruise calendar counts berths — potential passenger loads at full capacity — though ships often run at less

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## New chief, new changes: Gene Meek goes to work to modernize police force

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

Police Chief Gene Meek has revamped the Wrangell Police Department. Since arriving in July, he has implemented a series of policies that emphasize transparency, prevention and community engagement.

When he arrived in town, he realized something pretty quickly about the police department. "This agency was stuck in the 1990s," he said. "It was a reactive model, where you sit back, wait for calls for service, and go out and handle the calls. That's fine from a law enforcement standpoint, but Wrangell needs a public safety entity too."

Meek didn't wait to get settled in town before implementing some new policies. In just his first four months, he has increased crackdowns on intoxicated drivers and given public presentations in drug recognition and current fraud trends. He conducted hostile intruder training for school staff. He also is meeting with individual teachers one-on-one so they can better understand student safety in their classrooms.

He hopes these trainings and increased DUI stops can help prevent issues before they arise. And if they do arise, Meek wants the public and the police department to be adequately prepared to handle them.

He recently acquired two new police cruisers to rotate out the older fleet for a more modern pair of vehicles. The department's most recent acquisitions are 2015 and 2019 Ford Explorers. He said the de-

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PHOTO BY JENNY SPARKS / LOVELAND REPORTER-HERALD, COLORADO

Terri "Teese" Austin Winbolt, center left, holds a sign she made for her brother, Fred Austin, center right, as they stand at the truck he is driving to deliver the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree from Alaska to Washington, D.C. Austin and his colleague in the truck cab John Shank stopped in Loveland, Colorado on Nov. 12, where sisters, Mary Austin Zawloki, left, and Tina Austin Hickey, right, also visited with their brother.

## Truckers are east bound and down to deliver Capitol Christmas Tree

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

Kids keep asking John Shank if he's Santa.

"I can't lie to them," he laughed. "But I say, 'I'm just his helper.'"

John Shank is 72. He has a big white beard and has been driving for Lynden Transport for 49 years. He and Fred Austin, another longtime Lynden driver, are transporting the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree and its 82-foot sled — trailer — from Seattle to Washington, D.C.

This is Shank's second time driving The People's Tree from Alaska to Washington. He was selected to drive the rig back in 2015 when the

selected tree hailed from the Chugach National Forest.

While stopped on Nov. 13 for a quick rest in Kearney, Nebraska, Shank found time to call the Sentinel and share his thoughts on the trip so far.

"There ain't been any big surprises so far," he said. "No derailments or issues ... couldn't go along any better than how it's been."

For Shank and Austin, this isn't a surprise. The two men boast over 10 million miles of safe driving on Alaska's roads.

Shank said they were about halfway to Washington, and that he has enjoyed his time on the road.

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## New access to Mount Dewey Trail opened for public parking — and walking

By LARRY PERSILY

Sentinel writer

It's been 10 years since the community saw the map of a proposed new access route to the Mount Dewey Trail and its viewing platform for a scenic look at the town and harbor below. The wait ended with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new trailhead parking lot on Thursday, Nov. 14.

"It's heavily used already," Amber Al-Haddad, the borough's capital projects director, said a few hours before the official opening.

The trail runs from Bennett Street, starting at the new park-

ing area on the road to the airport just past the elementary school, covering about three-quarters of a mile to connect with the existing downtown trail to the top of Mount Dewey.

A sign at the new trailhead tells people what is under their feet. The borough worked with the Wrangell Cooperative Association to name the trail Sháchk Kináa Deiyí, which means "Path Over the Muskeg."

It cost about \$1 million to construct the parking lot and trail, which involved hauling in a lot of gravel, ground-covering fabric, drainage pipes and other ma-

terial. "All of it was done with a motorized wheelbarrow," Al-Haddad said of moving the gravel.

The trail is about six-feet wide over the muskeg and then narrows to about four-feet wide as it enters the wooded area, she said. It includes two "elevated boardwalks" made of timber, providing a dry crossing over drainages.

The parking lot can accommodate about five vehicles, Al-Haddad said. "It's been a huge need for trailhead parking," she said, noting that there is no park-

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PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

A sign at the new trailhead tells the distance and the Tlingit name: Sháchk Kináa Deiyí, which means "Path Over the Muskeg."



## Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining.

### Thursday, Nov. 21

Turkey with gravy, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, green beans, romaine and radish salad, roll, pumpkin pie

### Friday, Nov. 22

Baked white fish, peas and carrots, honey orange salad, roll

### Monday, Nov. 25

No meal service on Mondays

### Tuesday, Nov. 26

Spaghetti with meat sauce, steamed zucchini, tossed salad, garlic rolls, fruit

### Wednesday, Nov. 27

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

### Thursday, Nov. 28

Closed for Thanksgiving Day

Call the senior center at 907-874-2066 24 hours in advance to reserve a seat at lunch or to request delivery.

The senior van is available to take seniors to medical appointments, errands such as collecting mail, getting prescriptions or other essential items.



## ALASKA AIRLINES CLUB 49 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

**LANDSLIDE REMEMBRANCE** at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 20, at the Nolan Center. Community potluck. Hosted by WCA to remember the deadly landslide that hit Wrangell a year ago.

**STATE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE** will be in Wrangell on Thursday, Nov. 21, and will see clients in the clinic. Immunizations, birth control and STD screening, well-child exams for kids up to age 7, TB screening and medication, Narcan kits and medication disposal bags will be offered. The Public Health Center is in the Kadin Building, 215 Front St. Call 907-723-4611 to make an appointment so the nurse knows which immunizations to bring.

**"ELF,"** presented by the Wrangell Kids Club and the Nolan Center, at 3 p.m. Friday, Nov. 22, at the Nolan Center. Free.. The family friendly movie is one hour, 37 minutes. Kids 6 and under need to have an adult/guardian or sibling older than 13 tag along. Light snacks provided, but people can bring their own as well.

**COMMUNITY PUPPET PLAY REHEARSALS** 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays at The Salvation Army. Middle and high school age students are welcome to participate in a fun, low-stress, low-embarrassment form of theater. Learn the basics and build up to preparing a Christmas play for the community. Adults interested in helping call 907-874-3753.

**FALL STORYTIME** for children 10 to 11 a.m. Fridays at the Irene Ingle Public Library. Stories, crafts and snacks.

**COOKIE DECORATING** 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Nov. 23, at the Irene Ingle Public Library. Free cookie decorating in honor of the Heller family.

**WRANGELL FISH and GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE** will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 26, at the Nolan Center. Agenda includes consideration of proposals for the Alaska Board of Fisheries and election of board members. Zoom access at <https://bit.ly/4fvhsXW>. Meeting ID is 838 2163 0980; passcode Wrangell.

**CHRISTMAS TREE LANE** is coming to town, and decorated trees will be accepted noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30, and 4 to 7 p.m., Monday, Dec. 2, at the Nolan Center. Each entry goes up for a silent auction to support Hospice of Wrangell. Be creative and beautify the Nolan Center lobby. Bidding opens Dec. 5 and closes 1 p.m. Dec. 19. For more information, email [rooney@aptalaska.net](mailto:rooney@aptalaska.net).

**ELKS HOOP SHOOT** free-throw contest for ages 8 to 13 will be Saturday, Nov. 30, at the community center gym: 10 a.m. for ages 8 to 9; 11 a.m. for ages 10 to 11; noon for ages 12 to 13. For more information, call Jeff Jabusch 907-305-0086. A hamburger lunch for all participants will be held at the Elks Lodge after the shoot.

**SING-ALONG MESSIAH** 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 1, at St. Philip's Episcopal Church. Short evening prayer service followed by singing selections from Handel's Messiah. Reception to follow in the parish hall. Bring your own copy of the music if you have one.

**DOVE TREE CEREMONY** 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 1, in the Nolan Center lobby. The ceremony is to remember deceased loved ones, and is open to all. The Dove Tree will remain up through the new year. Anyone may add doves to the tree. Sponsored by Hospice of Wrangell. For more information, call Alice Rooney 907-305-0007.

**ADVENTURERS CLUB** 2 to 3:30 p.m. Saturdays Nov. 23 and Dec. 14 at the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Come learn about the Bible, pick up valuable skills and earn badges. Register and learn more at <https://bit.ly/3TBw0fl>. A \$10 fee covers the school year.

**COMMUNITY MARKET** from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7, at the Nolan Center. Check out the locally grown and handcrafted item.

**CHILDREN'S CLASS** 2:30 to 4 p.m. Tuesdays at the elementary school music room for kindergarten to fifth grade. The focus of the program is for spiritual growth to learn to apply virtues through stories, devotions, music, games and art. All are welcome. No charge. For more information call Kay Larson, 907-209-9117.

**WRANGELL KIDS CLUB** 2:30 to 5 p.m. Mondays at the community center for open gym, board games and coloring; 2:30 to 5 p.m. Wednesdays at the Irene Ingle Public Library for STEM activities and crafts; 2:30 to 5 p.m. Fridays at the Nolan Center for a movie. For ages 7 to 13 years old. Runs through Dec. 16. Free.

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

**WRANGELL PARKS and RECREATION** is offering multiple activities to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities visit [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

## Ferry Schedule

### Northbound

**Sunday, Nov. 24**

Kennicott, 4:45 p.m.

**Sunday, Dec. 15**

Columbia, 10:45 p.m.

**Sunday, Dec. 22**

Columbia, 4:45 p.m.

**Sunday, Dec. 29**

Columbia, 9:30 p.m.

### Southbound

**Wednesday, Nov. 27**

Kennicott, 3:30 a.m.

**Wednesday, Dec. 18**

Columbia, 8:30 a.m.

**Wednesday, Dec. 25**

Columbia, 7:30 a.m.

**Wednesday, Jan. 1**

Columbia, 7:30 a.m.

Listings are scheduled departure times. Call the terminal at 907-874-2021 for information or 907-874-3711 for recorded information.

## Tides

### High Tides

### Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Nov. 20	03:56	13.6	03:27	15.4	09:13	5.0	10:05	0.0
Nov. 21	04:54	12.9	04:23	13.8	10:12	5.8	11:02	1.4
Nov. 22	06:00	12.6	05:34	12.5	11:25	6.3	...	...
Nov. 23	07:08	12.8	06:58	11.9	00:04	2.4	12:51	6.0
Nov. 24	08:06	13.4	08:13	11.9	01:08	3.0	02:11	5.1
Nov. 25	08:54	14.3	09:15	12.4	02:09	3.3	03:13	3.8
Nov. 26	09:35	15.1	10:07	13.0	03:02	3.4	04:01	2.3

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

### Nov. 20, 1924

E.A. Rasmuson, president of the Bank of Alaska, said Wrangell had the best summer it has experienced during the past 20 years. The cold storage plant has done a splendid business, and the lumber mill ran full blast all summer. This mill has a capacity of 75,000 board feet a day. Mr. Rasmuson believes there will be quite a rush into Wrangell next spring, when miners and prospectors will arrive there en route to the new placer gold strike in the Cassiar region in British Columbia. He said miners who have visited the mining properties there believe in the

future of the camp. They say it is virgin ground which looks good, but has not been proven yet. There is a good auto road for 70 miles from Telegraph Creek en route to the new diggings.

### Nov. 18, 1949

The chamber of commerce at its Monday session took a firm stand on the matter of getting rid of some of the town's worst eyesores. They adopted a motion asking the city council to condemn and tear down all buildings unfit for living quarters - of which there are a great many hereabouts. These ancient shacks, the chamber

declared, constitute not only an eyesore but a fire hazard and a menace to health and sanitation. A few houses were pointed out as examples and the city council will be asked to have them formally condemned and torn down.

### Nov. 20, 1974

Wrangell will soon have numbered houses. The city council has approved a system of numbering presented last week by Public Works Supt. Cliff White. White presented a map of the city, assigning groups of numbers to individual city blocks - even numbers on one

side of the street, odd on the other. City Clerk Joyce Rasler said the number designations probably will be included on the January utility bills. No deadline as to when numbers must be displayed on houses has been set, she said, but indicated that putting them up will be the responsibility of property owners. White said the number of dwellings in the city has become too many for the old non-numbered system to be practical. Emergency crews and public works employers frequently have trouble locating specific houses, he said, because there is no formal identification

system.

### Nov. 18, 1999

Wrangell's cats came back to haunt the city council as they deliberated on the unfinished business of an ordinance amending city code to allow felines as well as dogs to be impounded. The city has no specific records on the number of cats which might be impounded and so it is not able to estimate the cost of the ordinance change. However, with fervent hopes that the issue can be resolved for longer than nine lives, the council voted to permit impoundment of cats.

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# Repeal of ranked-choice voting failing as more ballots counted

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

The ballot measure to repeal open primary elections and ranked-choice voting in general elections saw its lead narrow last week and then disappear on Monday, with a final vote count scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 20.

As of Monday afternoon, the repeal effort was behind by 192 votes out of more than 332,000 ballots cast on the measure.

State elections officials estimated there were about 5,000 ballots still to count this week, an assortment of early votes and mail-in absentee ballots.

The repeal initiative led by more than 4,100 votes after the Nov. 5 election night count, but that margin slipped to 2,841 and then 2,412 as more absentee and early ballots were counted last week, shrinking even further to 895 votes on Saturday. By Monday, the supporters of ranked-choice voting were ahead by 192 votes.

Alaskans in 2020 approved the switch from closed political party primaries and winner-take-all general elections to ranked-choice voting of the top four finishers from the primaries. The 2020 initiative passed by a victory margin of 3,781 votes out of 344,283 ballots cast.

"As I've watched where things ended, I held out the possibility that we might overtake," and survive this year's repeal effort, Bruce Botelho, chair of opposition group Alaskans for Better Elections, told the Juneau Empire over the weekend.

"I think the one thing that is clear — and it's been stated often — is that whatever the outcome it's going to be razor thin," he said.

Ranked-choice voting, which requires that winning general election candidates have support from more than 50% of voters, was used in the 2022 and 2024 races for governor, the state Legislature, U.S. House and U.S. Senate.

The repeal initiative was the closest of the statewide issues on the Nov. 5 ballot. The measure to increase the minimum wage in Alaska and require employers to pay sick leave for their workers was far ahead before this week's final count. The initiative was in front by more than 48,000 votes, 57.79% to 42.21% on Monday.

Incumbent Democratic U.S. Rep. Mary Peltola looks headed to defeat in her race against Republican Nick Begich, who was leading on Monday by 7,223 votes, with just 5,000 still to count.

But because Begich was shy of the 50%-plus-one needed to win, at 48.53%, he will have to wait for the state Division of Elections to tally the second choice of the 15,951 voters who cast ballots for two fringe candidates. That tally and recalculation on Wednesday will most likely put Begich over the 50% threshold.

Begich claimed victory in a social media post on Nov. 15. Peltola's campaign did not issue a statement over the weekend.

After the final votes are counted this week, voter turnout in the election will come in at close to 56%.

A half-dozen state legislative races remained in doubt as of the weekend, waiting for the final tally. The House seat representing Wrangell, Ketchikan and Metlakatla was not one of those close races. Republican Jeremy Bynum far outdistanced his two challengers, with 4,223, or 51.99% of the vote, over independents Agnes Moran, at 1,987, or 24.46%, and Grant EchoHawk, with 1,896 votes, 23.34%.

A coalition of mostly Democrats, with several independents and Republicans, has announced it will hold a majority of the 40-member House and will govern the chamber for the session that starts in January. Bynum has not announced his intentions to join the coalition or remain in a Republican minority.



## A salute for veterans

Elementary school students made cards that were put at every placement at the Veterans Day dinner at the American Legion Hall on Nov. 11. Azealea Mora-Miera, 7 years old and in second grade, drew this soldier for veterans.

# GCI will shut down TV cable and streaming businesses by mid-2025

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

GCI is pulling the plug on its cable TV and streaming services, just as its customers have been cutting the cable cord for years.

The company announced Nov. 11 that it will shut down its TV services by mid-2025; it did not provide a more specific date.

"Over the past few years, we have ... seen our customers increasingly choose online video streaming as their preferred way to watch their favorite programming. In light of these factors, we will sunset our TV offerings by mid-2025," the prepared statement said.

GCI has been in the cable TV business in Alaska for several decades, adding the streaming service, Yukon TV, in 2020.

The company said its depart-

ture from TV will not affect its internet or cellphone services, which are offered across Alaska. Consumers can use GCI internet, or the services of other internet providers, to download whatever streaming services they choose.

Alaskan-owned GCI got into the long-distance phone business in 1979 and grew into the state's largest telecommunications provider. It later was purchased and is now a subsidiary of Colorado-based Liberty Broadband.

"While we do not disclose customer data, I can say that we have seen a decline in our TV subscribers over the years as more customers choose online video streaming options and they represent a very small percentage of our overall customer base," Josh Edge, GCI's corpo-

rate communications manager, said in an email Nov. 13, declining to provide the number of Wrangell customers still on cable.

As streaming has become the preference for more consumers, that portion of GCI's business has continued to shrink, he said.

The company stopped providing cable TV in Anchorage more than a decade ago, though it retained the service in other communities across Alaska. In 2021, GCI announced it would discontinue cable service in the majority of its markets in Alaska in favor of its own streaming service, Yukon TV, which requires a subscription to GCI internet.

GCI is not the first cable provider in Alaska to quit the

business. Ketchikan Public Utilities, which is owned by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, shut down its cable services this year. The utility said sub-

scribers had gone down and operation costs had gone up as people turn toward streaming services. It was the last cable provider in the borough.

## Cruise ships

Continued from page 1

than 100% full.

Earlier this summer, Borough Manager Mason Villarma had the opportunity to board the Nieuw Amsterdam when it docked in Wrangell on May 16. Something that he noted on his visit was that not everyone leaves the ship during the port calls.

"Of the 2,000 passengers, 1,000 might have been through town and on tours," he said. "Some people might get on and off a couple different times, and that helps. But it's not the total passenger count coming to drain the town each day — not all at once."

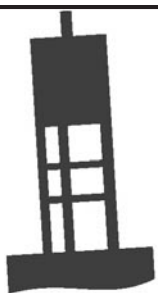
While the 2026 draft schedule continues the trend of increased cruise-based tourism, Villarma said he wants to loosely cap the annual number of such visitors at around 70,000 until the borough can witness the impact of that many tourists firsthand. He also believes Wrangell may not be able to accommodate further tourism increases without future infrastructure upgrades.

"We wouldn't proceed with any further growth that's scheduled in 2026 prior to making those accommodations available," Villarma said.

The borough is exploring options to move the barge dock to the borough-owned former mill property at 6-Mile. This would open up tourism opportunities downtown in the areas surrounding the cruise ship dock.

The 2026 draft schedule is tentative and prone to change.

Though visitors come to Wrangell by plane and by state ferry, cruise travelers have comprised 80% to 90% of the summer tourist load in recent years.



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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

# Wealthy people can be soooooo insensitive

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

Most people are not wealthy, or even close to it, though many enjoy reading about and watching and following the lives of the rich and famous.

Maybe it's envy, maybe it's enjoying hanging on the drama, laughing at the comedy and gawking at the lavish spending.

Or maybe it's just the dumb things rich people do with their lives, the way they behave and the things that show how out of touch they are with the real world.

Of course, I have a couple of examples.

First, it's the opposite of conspicuous consumption, which is when rich people buy expensive and flashy items to display their wealth for anyone not blinded by the glitter.

A recent report in The Wall Street Journal noted that the cost of luxury goods keeps going up. A basic cotton T-shirt with a Christian Dior logo can cost \$1,000. Think about spilling spaghetti sauce on that. Leather handbags can cost as much as a small car.

Psychologists, according to the report, say people pay these prices to strut their wealth under less-wealthy noses. They want everyone to see those pricey logos on their clothes, handbags, eyeglasses and anything else they wear.

Yet, there are limits, particularly for the ultra-rich. A study cited in the Journal's reporting found that for every \$5,000 increase in the price of luxury goods, the size of the brand's embroidered or embossed or printed logo shrinks by almost half an inch.

Which means the more you can afford to pay, the less you want to announce it to your friends, neighbors, the hired help and the doorman at the club.

OK, I'm confused. I thought that was the

point of overpaying for a luxury brand, telling the spa attendant that you spend as much on a T-shirt as they pay in rent for a month.

At least the more-you-pay-the-smaller-the-logo trend does not hurt anyone. Whereas my next example of how a rich person poorly thinks about poorer people does hurt others.

Elon Musk, one of the richest people in the world and a close adviser to one of the most selfish people in the world, President-elect Donald Trump, is in charge of the soon-to-be-created Department of Government Efficiency. Musk, who is worth an estimated \$300 billion, and his cohort in the Trump administration's efficiency drive, former presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, who might be worth only a paltry \$1 billion, are advertising for hard-working Americans to join the government.

The two co-directors of government efficiency posted a call last week for "super high-IQ small-government revolutionaries willing to work 80+ hours per week on unglamorous cost-cutting."

To apply, all you need to do is send your resume by direct message to the department's account on X, the social media platform owned by Musk.

Couldn't be easier. Type, link and post.

But under Musk's changes to X since he took it over in 2022 and changed its name from Twitter, only premium subscribers to X can send direct messages to the federal department's account. And that premium service costs \$8 to \$16 a month.

Which means that the rich guy in charge of making the federal government more efficient, and who will screen job applicants to serve the public, will take a cut from everyone who wants to apply for a job. Way to go Elon, profiting from public service.

Too bad his ego and greed don't shrink as he gets richer, the way designer brand logos do.

## EDITORIAL

# The town can use the extra revenue

Not everyone in Wrangell welcomes more cruise ships or the visitors they bring to the community. There are detractors who fear too many ships and their passengers could change the character of the town.

They look at Ketchikan, Juneau, Sitka and Skagway and see more than a million visitors a year crowding the sidewalks and shops, the buses crowding the streets and the summer workers crowding already tight housing.

But they need to look at the numbers for Wrangell; actually, two sets of numbers.

Wrangell could see 40,000 cruise passengers next summer, and then as many as 70,000 in 2026 if the ships are full and no cruise operator changes its plans before then. That's more than this past summer's 20,000-something passenger count.

Those numbers are, at most, 4% of what Juneau saw this past summer. It's probably a safe bet — much safer than betting on football scores — that Wrangell can accommodate several tens of thousands of visitors spread over almost five months, 150 days, without turning itself into a glitzy, overrun tourist trap.

The other numbers to consider are the work opportunities for tour operators and their crew, jet boat and sightseeing charters, shop owners — and also the revenues that would flow to the Nolan Center, the port fund and sales tax account.

The numbers show that the more the borough can collect from visitors, the less it needs to collect from residents. And with a weak economy, Wrangell needs outside money coming into town.

If, for the sake of a math exercise, 70,000 cruise visitors spent an average of just \$25 each in town, that would add \$122,500 to the borough's sales tax account, of which 20% is designated for the schools. Add in the per-passenger tax collected by the state and shared with the community and the docking fees, and the numbers show that the revenue could provide a noticeable boost to the borough treasury.

Besides, it's not like 70,000 is a launching point for hundreds of thousands of summer visitors. Borough officials acknowledge that might be a good number to stop at and look at how the community handles the load and what might be needed to accommodate the increase — such as more public restrooms downtown.

Wrangell has time to prepare for more visitors next summer and in 2026. And that's the point: The better the community prepares for passengers arriving at the dock, the better the town can prosper from the economic activity.

- Wrangell Sentinel

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### A lesson learned of disrespecting the Native culture

We stayed inside for days, the nonstop rain pelting the windows. We waited for the sun to come out to explore our new community. We were California girls. Little did we know the sun was not coming out; it can rain six to 12 feet a year in Southeast Alaska.

I answered a knock on the front door to find two shy, Alaska Native boys. They had come to show my sister and me their island.

We picked blueberries in the rain, hiked a steep winding trail through a dark, dripping rainforest to a waterfall, saw a beach where 3,000-year-old petroglyphs were carved into the rocks, and visited Shakes Island where very old totems told the stories of the clans who had erected them.

I fell in love with the Three-Frog Totem, a tall pole with a

crossbar at the top holding three fat, green frogs in a row.

My parents were busy laying out the newspaper they had just bought that year (1976), and I showed my mother the Three-Frog Totem. She took a photo which my father sent to his friend, an artist for the San Diego Union, who created a three-frog masthead for the Wrangell Sentinel, which was used for the next 50 years.

I was dismayed when we received our copy of the Sentinel last week. The frogs were gone from the masthead.

The three-frogs was a shame totem, set up in the 1800s to shame another clan who had reneged on their promise to marry three of their women to the chief's sons. A shame totem stands until it falls, at which time the debt is considered forgotten and forgiven.

As the Three-Frog Totem disintegrated over many years, the U.S. Forest Service replicated and replaced it, and then so did the Wrangell tribal council

decades later.

This year, the clans had had enough. In a ceremony with dozens of people attending, the totem was pulled down, the three-frogs crossbar to be cremated.

"We will not speak of this again, and the totem will not be put up again," said one of the clan's leaders.

The Three-Frog Totem had wide appeal. But we had disrespected the Native clans when it was reproduced and when it was used as the masthead for my father's newspaper. We can be tone deaf to cultures not our own.

As a teenager, my self-centered, California-girl perspective changed the day that the two gentle Tlingit boys reached out to us to share their community, their clan's beliefs and their centuries-old culture.

As much as I grieve the loss of the totem, it was never mine to love.

- Betsy Luce  
Boise, Idaho

# Mount Dewey Trail

Continued from page 1

ing lot where the existing trail starts in a residential area above downtown.

The borough originally planned to use cedar logs and steps along the trail but switched to gravel to keep the project within budget.

The budget also included money to pay into a federally required fund to compensate for the loss of wetlands filled in for the trail work.

Ketchikan Ready-Mix and Quarry was the contractor on the project.

Federal grant funding covered about 90% of the project's total cost, with the rest covered by the borough and donations, including \$5,000 from the Wrangell Cooperative Association and \$15,000 from the Walker Foundation, Al-Haddad said.

The Walker Foundation, founded as part of the Alaska Island Community Services merger with SEARHC in 2017,

helps fund health-related projects in Wrangell.

The U.S. Forest Service contributed about \$27,000 as in-kind work on the project, Al-Haddad said. That included a Forest Service crew that helped build a 300-foot connector trail last year between Ishiyama Drive (Airport Spur Road) and the Volunteer Park Trail that takes off from behind the elementary school.

The new Mount Dewey Trail runs about one-quarter of a mile and then veers left for a half-mile to connect with the existing trail. At that quarter-mile marker, the borough would like, someday, to build a new trail, about three-quarters of a mile, reaching the Petroglyph Beach State Historic Site on the north end of the island.

The access route to Petroglyph Beach was on the map of proposed new trails shown at a 2014 public meeting put together by the borough's Parks and Recreation Department.

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## Gene Meek

Continued from page 1

partment is working with the Wrangell Cooperative Association and the public to design decals for the new cruisers that reflect the community's values.

Some of Meek's most notable changes have occurred within the schools, something to which Borough Manager Mason Villarma has taken a liking.

"His interactions with the school have been my favorite thing about Gene," Villarma said. "He's up there greeting kids every morning."

And when he isn't welcoming kids at the door in the mornings, he's coaching them at the community center in the evenings. On Nov. 9, Meek's all-star elementary school basketball

teams beat their Petersburg rivals in two out of three games.

While he is busy imbedding himself in his new community, he is also making sure to plan for the future. He recently wrote grant proposals that would provide funding for a school resource officer. He hopes another pending grant could bring a K-9 unit to town.

He has laid the groundwork for reopening the indoor shooting range in the Public Safety Building. The police department hopes to have the range fully operational in November but has set Dec. 1 as a worst-case-scenario deadline. It will be run by certified range safety officers, and is scheduled to be open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

afternoons.

Despite the early success, the 30-year law enforcement veteran still has plenty of hopes for the future of the department. One of Meek's ambitious goals is to achieve official accreditation for the police force. He achieved the feat earlier this year in Soldotna, acquiring accreditation through the Northwest Accreditation Alliance, but he wants to do it again in Wrangell.

"Accredited law enforcement agencies promote professionalism because they have standardized policies," he said. To achieve accreditation, agencies need to maintain a set of standards for things ranging from use-of-force tactics and reasons for a suspicious-person stop and even evidence collection, Meek said.

The first step in achieving accreditation is to revamp the police department's policy manual. "Our policy platform manual right now is in dire need of updates. Once again, this agency was stuck in the 1990s," he said. "So much has happened over the last three decades. We need new policy manuals to reflect that."

Villarma, who hired Meek earlier this year, has been thrilled by this new iteration of the police.

"I think he's done a great job, shifting away from just policing to a comprehensive public safety approach, which is exactly what we want here. I'm just really grateful for his contributions."



PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Police chief Gene Meek has instituted several initiatives and policy changes since taking the job in July.

## Tree truckers

Continued from page 1

"The kids come out and are just so amped up. It is The People's Tree, you know," he said. "It just puts everybody in that Christmas spirit. People see us and think, 'I better get home and start putting my garland up.'"

"I absolutely enjoy hauling this," Austin told Anchorage TV station KTUU as he and Shank headed out from the Pacific Northwest at the start of their cross-country journey. "This is not just common, ordinary, mega-dollar freight. It's special freight for the whole country."

The tree has had quite the adventure thus far.

After the tree and its root wad was harvested on Zarembo Island, "Spruce Wayne" (named in an online public vote run by the U.S. Forest Service) took a short boat ride to Wrangell. It then rode 700 miles on a barge to Seattle, with a quick public appearance in Ketchikan along the way.

It spent Veterans Day parked

alongside a parade route in Baker City, Oregon. It was parked outside a Cabela's in Grand Junction, Colorado, before heading east on Highway 70 to a ranch in Loveland, Colorado, a couple days later. (Read a report from the Loveland newspaper at <https://bit.ly/3US1nTx>.)

While the country gets a chance to see the tree, the truck drivers are getting a chance to see the country. Austin (who will be 90 in March) and Shank tend to avoid music in the truck's cabin. They don't do much talking either. With a combined 100 years of Lynden trucking, Austin and Shank are just doing their best to take it all in.

"We're pretty much just gawking at the scenery the whole time," Shank said. "We hand out the commemorative coins at all the stops, and then of course we watch people sign the tree."

Shank hasn't signed the vinyl banner around the tree just yet.

But when the caravan makes a stop in Fort Wayne, Indiana, he plans to do it then. The reason? He wants his family to be there when it happens.

Shank is the third oldest of 12 siblings ("I'm the oldest boy, though," he bragged). Many of his siblings live in the 1,100-person Village of North Branch, Michigan. They plan to rent a small bus and make the three-hour drive south to see their brother at the Nov. 16 stop in Indiana.

"I want to wait until I get with my family," he said, "and I'm also still looking for the right color marker."

As the team treks toward Fort Wayne and eventually Washington, Shank wants to continue enjoying the little moments that only a Christmas tree caravan can provide.

"I'll be driving down the road and look out my window and somebody's there giving a thumbs up or pumping their arm to blow the horn," he laughed. "People notice the tree going down the road. It sticks out."

On the road, "Spruce Wayne" is also accompanied by U.S. Forest Service officials, including Wrangell's Tori Houser and Claire Froelich. Local and state police are responsible for keeping the tree safe too, blocking traffic and providing the spruce with round-the-clock protection.

The tree's final stop on the truck's 11-city cross-country whistlestop tour is Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, on Thursday, Nov. 21. Next up: The West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol. The tree lighting ceremony is scheduled for Dec. 3.

## Hospice plans annual remembrance and Christmas Tree Lane

SENTINEL STAFF

Hospice of Wrangell is planning its two biggest events of the year, including its only fundraiser of the year.

The Dove Tree Ceremony is set for 2 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 26, in the Nolan Center lobby. The tree, decorated with paper doves in memory of those who have died, will remain up through the new year.

The annual remembrance started more than 20 years ago.

Volunteers will prepare a dove for each community member who died in the past year, and blank doves will be available for people to add their own remembrances.

People can add a dove to the tree at Tuesday's ceremony or anytime during December.

The second event sponsored by Hospice of Wrangell is Christmas Tree Lane, the organization's only fundraiser of the year, said volunteer Alice Rooney. It's a chance for people to get creative, and a chance for community members and businesses to bid on their favorite tree to take home or to work for the holiday.

Decorated trees will be accepted at the Nolan Center from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30, and 4 to 7 p.m., Monday, Dec. 2. Each entry will go up for a silent auction. Bidding will open Dec. 5 and close at 1 p.m. Dec. 19.

Only artificial trees are allowed — to avoid the fire risk from real trees — though people are encouraged to use their imagination. Past entries have included a "tree" constructed entirely of plastic pipe and covered in garlands, Rooney said. Another was created from driftwood.

Last year's tree display and sale attracted about a dozen entries, she said.

Wreaths are not allowed.

For more information, contact Rooney at 907-305-0007, or email [rooney@aptalaska.net](mailto:rooney@aptalaska.net).

## Local advisory committee on fisheries regulations will meet Tuesday evening

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell advisory committee to the state boards of fisheries and game will meet Tuesday to begin its consideration of multiple proposed changes in state regulations for salmon fishing in Southeast Alaska.

The committee also will hold elections to fill several seats on the 15-member panel.

The public meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 26, at the Nolan Center. Though the public may attend the meeting by Zoom, in-person attendance is required to nominate people to serve on the committee and to vote in the election.

The meeting is one of three or four that will be held in advance of the Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting Jan. 28 through Feb. 9 in Ketchikan, when proposed rule changes for Southeast finfish and shellfish management will be considered, said Chris Guggenbickler, chair of the Wrangell advisory committee.

It will take several meetings over the next couple of months to work through all the proposals, Guggenbickler said. Proposals submitted from around Southeast cover subsistence, sport and commercial fishing, allocation issues and gear.

The local advisory committees provide a forum for communities to put forth suggested rule changes and comment on proposals from Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff, advisory committees, fishing industry organizations and individuals.

"Our advisory committee is speaking for our residents," Guggenbickler said.

There are about 30 proposals related to king salmon fishing, he said. Though the committee does not have to comment on every suggested rule change, he noted, "local residents are passionate about catching a king salmon."

Several of the proposals going before the Board of Fisheries this winter deal with rules governing the Southeast charter fleet, which Guggenbickler said is a bigger industry in other communities, such as Sitka.

"Until the Stikine (salmon runs) start rebuilding, there's not a lot of opportunity here," he said. Weak returns have prompted years of restrictions on fishing in the Stikine area, pushing sport, charter and commercial boats into other areas.

To attend Tuesday's advisory committee by Zoom, go to <https://bit.ly/4fwWbgh>; the meeting ID is 838 2163 0980; the password is Wrangell.

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# Library will offer community use of new 3D printer

By MARK C. ROBINSON

For the Wrangell Sentinel

Since acquiring a new 3D printer for the Irene Ingle Public Library, librarian Sarah Scambler and library assistant Kaitlin Wilson have enjoyed familiarizing themselves on the latest addition. Much of the learning came through experimenting, creating different objects. After several weeks, Scambler had made several skeletons, spring-coiled ghosts and even segmented slugs for Halloween.

"It's been fun to play around with it and figure out how it works," she said.

The printer is not yet available for public use, but the plan is to make it available for a moderate fee.

Wilson produced a tiny replica of the front of the library itself, approximately just a few inches long, which she said took a half-hour for the printer to make, but creating the file for the object took much longer. "I spent about, I'd say at least 24 hours building this over the last week," she said. "It took a bit to



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kevin Gadsey donated his time and money to help the Irene Ingle Public Library get set up with a 3D printer. He demonstrated its uses by making a button-hook tool.



PHOTO COURTESY IRENE INGLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Marina Fitzjarrald admires the purple octopus created by the library's new 3D printer.

figure out how to use the program to build your own (design)."

While the replica was a test run, she hopes to eventually create a larger version.

Scambler had been thinking about getting a 3D printer for the library for some time, but the acquisition was initiated by Kevin Gadsey, who moved to town earlier this year to work at the Wrangell Cooperative Association. He was "really interested in 3D printing," Scambler said.

"He came to me and said that he would donate half of the money to purchase it if we could have The Friends of the Library purchase the other half," she added. "We decided to go for it."

Gadsey noted that other libraries that he had patronized have 3D printers and he wanted Wrangell to have the same opportunity. During his research of various models, he looked for those that had doors to protect patrons, especially children, during the printing process, as the heated filament can reach 450 degrees Fahrenheit. He also focused on filament printers, as they generally have a less toxic smell than models that use resin.

After looking at several possibilities, they decided on the Flashforge Adventurer 5M Pro. Scambler is eager to discover how they can use it in the community. "It's very easy to use; super user-friendly."

The cost came to \$600; the printer was \$500, with \$100 for a supply of the filament used in the printer with choices of different colors. Scambler said she and

her staff have been using it since it arrived in early October, learning the different settings and materials, suitable printer files, and slicer programs (wherein the digital 3D model is divided into very thin "slices" used as the basis for the movement of the printhead). The library staff is relying on Gadsey's extensive knowledge of 3D printing. "I don't want to offer a product to the community that I don't know how to use," Scambler said.

Eventually, she hopes to have residents come to the library to print their own items, such as simple replacement parts for appliances. "There will probably be a nominal fee just for materials and wear and tear on the machine," she said. "We want the community to be able to afford it."

"You can print tools with it," Gadsey said. "People have printed screwdrivers and hammers, and replacement pieces. ... I've seen amazing things."

He displayed one such personal item of his own: a button-hook tool that he uses to get dressed, which can be a challenge with the physical disability he's had since birth. Used to aid in the closing of buttoned clothing, it's a hook fixed to a handle, which helps people with limited use of their hands to manipulate buttons and move zippers.

While Gadsey works at the WCA as a domestic violence prevention specialist, he stressed that his sponsorship of the 3D printer for the library is a personal project. "This was just me wanting to do something fun for the community," he said.

# Swimmers wrap up season at Southeast championships

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

And with that, the Jamie Roberts era of the Wrangell swim team comes to a close.

A head coach who has always valued improvement over results, Roberts was pleased with the high school team's final performance with her watching over from the pool deck. Of the 28 individual events that Wrangell swimmers competed in, they earned 13 personal-best times. Both relay teams posted their fastest swims of the year as well.

The Southeast championships were held in Petersburg on Nov. 1-2. Juneau-Douglas High School: Yadaa.at Kalé won the girls championship and Ketchikan claimed the boys title. Wrangell finished sixth in the girls standings, just 11 points back from Craig.

The layout of the competition is relatively straightfor-

ward. Each swimmer is eligible to swim in two individual events. The top 12 swimmers in each event advance to the finals.

"This young team had a great showing at regions," Roberts said.

Roberts was especially impressed with Johanna Sanford, who earned personal bests in all her events — both in the preliminary round and in the finals. In the 50-yard freestyle, Sanford finished with a 29.08 in prelims before cutting that time to 28.93 in the finals.

"Johanna had a great meet," Roberts said. "Going under 30 seconds in the 50-yard freestyle was a goal that she has been working toward this season. It was nice to see her achieve that before I go."

In the 100-yard breaststroke, Sanford's finals time of 1:06.32 propelled her to sixth in the region.

Maddy Davies also ended

her season on a high note. In the month leading up to the Southeast championships, Davies was able to shave 17 seconds off her 200-yard freestyle time, culminating in a personal-best time of 3:03.58 in the final round.

Similarly, Peter Houser dropped 18 seconds from his previous 100-yard breaststroke time. He was able to get under the two-minute mark, posting a personal-best time of 1:58.70 in the finals.

Captain and lone senior Anika Herman wrapped up her swimming career with a time of 7:25.56 in the final round of the 500-yard freestyle. In the 100-yard freestyle, Herman swam a 1:25.61.

Herman was also a part of the team's two relay teams. In the girls 200-yard medley, the team (Ellee Voltz, Davies, Herman and Sanford) posted 2:33.57 in the final round — a

season best for the Wrangell swimmers. The same four swimmers competed in the 200-yard freestyle relay. With Herman leading the line, the team again finished with the quickest time of the year: 2:15.89.

Amura Breck posted a personal-best time in the preliminary round of the 100-yard freestyle. Her 1:25.46 was good enough to qualify for the final round. Andrei Bardin-Siekawitch's time of 27.51 in the 50-yard freestyle preliminary round qualified him for the finals as well.

In addition to competing in the relays, Ellee Voltz also swam the 100- and 200-yard freestyle at the Southeast championships. She qualified for the finals in both events, notching a personal-best 200-yard freestyle time of 2:57.20 in the preliminary round.

Kalee Herman's 35.56 in the 50-yard freestyle was a personal

best for her. Herman's two events of choice were the 50-yard freestyle and the 100-yard freestyle. In the ladder, she improved her time by four seconds between the preliminary and final round of competitions.

Though Roberts leaves town this month for the family move to Oregon, the high school swim program isn't going anywhere. Matt Nore will take over the reins of the team, who are returning all but one swimmer in 2025.

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# Sleep specialist shares advice for healthier habits

By MARK C. ROBINSON  
Special to the Sentinel

As another dark winter season in Southeast Alaska approaches, developing healthy sleep habits can improve overall well-being, from creating a calming bedtime routine to tackling sleep disorders like insomnia and sleep apnea.

Internal medicine physician Dr. Guillermo E. Espinoza, who has worked for SEARHC since 2017, specializes in sleep study at the Mount Edgumbe Medical Center in Sitka. Starting about three years ago, he began focusing on developing a practice for weight management.

"(There's) a lot of overlap between obesity and obstructive

sleep apnea," he said. "That led to working out a pathway to treating sleep apnea in the Southeast population and got me interested in the study of sleep medicine ... led to me pursuing a fellowship in sleep medicine that I'm actually currently doing at Duke University in North Carolina."

Sleep apnea is a disorder that causes people to stop breathing or breathe shallowly while they sleep.

He said it's never too late to develop good sleep habits, starting one hour before bedtime. "Make sure you turn off the lights, make the place cool, avoid (cellphone, computer and television) screens."

Espinoza also stressed the importance of maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, even during the weekends, as staying up late at night and sleeping later can disrupt overall sleep health. "That takes some recovery ... and the next week, you may not start so refreshed."

He also said it's important to avoid eating or watching television in bed, and don't sleep in other areas of the home like the couch.

For issues with insomnia, Espinoza suggested avoiding naps during the day, and engaging in exercise or other physical activities to exhaust any energy before bedtime.

One unique factor uncommon to people in the Lower 48 is the long days of summer and long nights of winter in Alaska. "The climate and the exposure to the sun, or lack thereof, can affect your circadian rhythm," Espinoza said, advising the use, when needed, of things like blackout curtains for summer nights and blue light therapy lamps during winter days to create a fixed circadian rhythm.

Espinoza said bad sleep is "a big driver of stress on the body," which in turn can lead to health issues.

As he has helped patients dealing with sleep apnea, he has witnessed the effects of leaving it untreated. "You see the consequences of intermittent low oxygen levels on the brain that would lead to issues with long-term cognition, increased risk of dementia, Parkinson's disease. ... In-



PHOTO COURTESY SEARHC

Dr. Guillermo E. Espinoza specializes in sleep study at the SEARHC Mount Edgumbe Medical Center in Sitka.

creased stress of low oxygen on the heart leads to issues with heart failure, heart arrhythmia, hypertension," he said. "Basically, most of the organ systems you can think of are affected by that increased stress level."

He has seen patients ranging in age from the teenage to the elderly who have other issues with sleep in addition to or apart from obstructive apnea.

For many dealing with sleep apnea, one recommendation is a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine,

which delivers continuous air through the nose or mouth to keep the airways open while the person is asleep.

"A lot of folks do prefer using CPAP machines that just go to the nose," he said, citing its comfort level. "Problem is that half the pressure that goes in through your nose can escape out your mouth when you're sleeping if you sleep with your mouth open."

In those instances, if the patient still prefers the nasal mask, they have the option of using a chin strap that's usually attached to the CPAP machine or porous mouth tape that gently keeps the mouth closed.

He also pointed out that a healthy amount of sleep can vary from one person to the next, which can pose other challenges. "Sometimes, the folks who don't need that long of a sleep, their issue is that they try to force themselves into the norm of seven to eight hours," he said, adding that such people can start developing anxiety from trying to reach that goal.

Espinoza said sleep patterns and behaviors can also vary by age as well as gender. "Men and women can definitely have different amounts of sleep that they might need. They also can have different types of pathologies that come up. Sleep apnea is classic; it's just more common in men and postmenopausal women."

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PHOTOS BY MATT HENSON

Senior Della Churchill defeated two different Petersburg opponents in wrestling match-ups Friday, Nov. 15. The one-night exhibition was senior night at Wrangell High School.

## Wrangell wrestlers wow home crowd on senior night

BY SAM PAUSMAN

*Sentinel senior reporter*

In a series of intersquad and exhibition matches, Wrangell wrestlers put on a show in front of their fans, friends and families.

On Friday, Nov. 15, the high school wrestling team hosted their only home event of the year. Petersburg made the trip to town for the one-day meet, comprised of a handful of exhibition matches between the two rivals.

The senior night festivities that preceded the competition were emotional for head coach Jack Carney. Carney, who also serves as the middle school wrestling coach, has worked with two of the three graduating seniors for the past seven years.

"I've worked with Della (Churchill) and Vanessa (Barnes) from sixth grade to 12th," he said. "I've won lots of titles with these girls, lots of matches, and just gone through the highs and lows of life. It's going to be tough to see them go."

Kyan Stead is the third graduating senior on the team. While he only started wrestling two seasons ago, Carney has rel-

ished the opportunity to coach the newcomer.

"He's just a great kid," Carney said. "He's really coachable. He's been such a great part of the team. We will miss all of them certainly."

On the mat, Wrangell wiped the floor with Petersburg, winning eight of the nine exhibition matches — all by pin to boot. Carney also organized a dozen friendly inter-squad matches within the team. But by the end of the night, he said his wrestlers were begging him for some more time on the mat.

Lucas Stearns was matched up against Michael Cook. Carney said the match between the 130-pound freshmen was great to watch and the boisterous crowd of nearly 150 was getting into it. In another match, Jackson Carney and Everett Meissner, two of the team's best, were paired up against one another. Carney ended up winning by one point, but Meissner managed to put the sophomore sensation on his back.

"Jackson has only been put on his back one other time this year," coach Carney laughed, "So he wasn't too happy."

Churchill put on a show dur-



Jackson Carney (top) and Ian Nelson were among the Wrangell wrestlers who put on a show for the home crowd last Friday.

ing her senior night, dismissing her two Petersburg opponents "pretty quickly," according to Carney. Stead and Barnes also won their matches, rounding out an unblemished senior celebration.

Cody Barnes achieved quite



Wrangell's Lucas Stearns (right) and Michael Cook are tangled up in their exhibition match.



Hailey Cook (top) wrestled Bella Ritchie in one of the exhibition matches featuring Wrangell wrestlers competing against their teammates.



Wrangell's Everett Meissner pinned Petersburg's Edgar Olsen in competition on Nov. 15.

the feat in his match, beating a guy about 30 pounds heavier than him handedly.

"Cody pinned him real fast in the first round," Carney recalled. "He threw the guy straight on his back, so there was some excitement. The crowd was into it."

Up next, Wrangell will attend the Sitka Invitational on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 22-23, before a weekend off to rest up for the final push of the season: the final regular season tournament

in Petersburg, Southeast championships in Haines the next week and then the state championships in Anchorage.

The team is also hosting a fried halibut fundraiser on Nov. 30. The event will be held at the Stikine Inn to help fund the team's travel and operating costs.

"Come down and support the wrestlers," Carney said, "and get some really good, deep-fried halibut. It's amazing."



# Judge rejects trawlers' challenge to stricter halibut bycatch limits

BY SEAN MAGUIRE  
Anchorage Daily News

A federal judge in Alaska has dismissed a legal challenge filed by the Bering Sea bottom-trawl fleet against stricter halibut bycatch limits.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council, or NMFS, approved a new halibut bycatch quota system in December 2021 based on annual surveys of the valuable flatfish. Instead of fixed limits, the new abundance-based system means that when halibut stocks are low, bycatch caps can be cut by up to 35%.

The lawsuit challenging those caps was filed by Groundfish Forum, a Seattle-based trade association representing five companies and 19 bottom-trawl vessels. The association argued that it was unfairly targeted, and that the new bycatch limits could result in significant economic losses.

Bycatch is a lightning-rod issue in Alaska. Halibut stocks

have declined, and the amount of halibut discarded by the Bering Sea bottom-trawl fleet has often exceeded the number of fish caught by hook-and-line fishermen.

In their complaint, the bottom-trawl fleet's attorneys argued that advances have been made to limit halibut bycatch, but further reductions were not practicable. Attorneys argued that trawling for yellowfin sole and other flatfish could be halted if halibut stocks are low and the bycatch limit is reduced.

Alaska U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Gleason dismissed the lawsuit on Nov. 8. In a 39-page decision, Gleason held that the new limits were "reasonably calculated" and did not violate federal laws.

Gleason said that federal fisheries managers had "satisfactorily explained" how the new limits were connected to a goal of managing halibut bycatch in the Bering Sea.

In a prepared statement, the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association said that it was pleased with Gleason's decision. The group manages allocations of crab, halibut and other groundfish for residents of St. Paul in the Pribilof Islands.

Ray Melovidov, president of the association, said members "finally have closure" after working for almost 10 years to implement a more responsive bycatch limit.

"The halibut fishing families in our community can be assured that the halibut resource will continue to be managed more fairly and appropriately. We wanted improved equity and stability in the halibut fishery, and now we have it. Our future is brighter," he said.

Chris Woodley, executive director of the Groundfish Forum, did not respond to a request for comment on Gleason's decision or whether the bottom-trawl fleet would appeal.

# Petersburg may impose new fees on inactive and inoperable boats

BY OLIVIA ROSE  
Petersburg Pilot

The Petersburg borough assembly is considering an ordinance that would impose requirements — including storage fees, a marine condition survey and proof of insurance — on vessels that don't leave their moorage stall in the harbor for 12 consecutive months.

The ordinance aims to discourage using stalls for vessel storage, especially for boats that may be inoperable.

An inactive or inoperable boat may deteriorate as its condition worsens; removing derelict vessels is expensive and historically burdensome for the borough, officials said.

The ordinance will be scheduled for a public hearing before the assembly.

The Wrangell port commission and borough assembly considered a similar ordinance earlier this year but dropped the idea over concerns about costs to boat owners, enforceability and how to set insurance requirements.

Under the proposed Petersburg ordinance, a vessel that does not, by its own power, leave its moorage stall and the harbor for more than a day within a year is deemed "inactive."

According to the borough, there are more than

100 vessels on the waitlist for permanent moorage space in Petersburg's harbors, and inactive vessels using moorage spaces add to the backlog.

Under the ordinance, inactive vessels would be subject to a storage charge in addition to its moorage rate.

If inactive for two years, vessel owners would need to provide a marine condition survey to the borough. Any safety threats identified by the survey would need to be remedied, otherwise the vessel would be declared derelict.

For vessels that remain inactive for three years after they are initially deemed inactive, the owner would be required to provide proof of insurance to the borough, otherwise the vessel would be considered derelict.

"Under this ordinance ... it takes three years to actually determine whether a vessel is derelict or not, or whether it needs to be moved," Assembly Member Bob Lynn remarked. "If a vessel hasn't been moved in one year, it seems to me that at that point we need to have some kind of proof of insurance on that boat."

Noting the high cost to the borough for removing derelict vessels, Lynn expressed interest in moving up some of the third-year requirements to after the first year of inactivity.

# Hoonah residents will vote whether to create their own new borough

BY JAMES BROOKS  
Alaska Beacon

A five-member state commission has approved plans for a new borough centered on the Southeast Alaska town of Hoonah.

Approval sets the stage for a local election on the proposed Xunaa Borough. If voters approve the borough's creation, Hoonah will be dissolved as a town and reincorporated as a city-borough with governmental authority over a wide swath of northern Southeast Alaska, including much of Glacier Bay National Park.

It would be the state's 20th borough and the first new borough since Petersburg created a city-borough in 2013. Wrangell switched from being a city to becoming a city-borough in 2008.

The Local Boundary Commission approved plans for the proposed borough on a 3-2 vote Nov. 12.

"I believe that the best interest of the state, clearly, is to establish this borough, and I believe that the (legal) standards have all been met, including the boundaries," said commissioner John Harrington, who cast the decisive vote.

Within 30 days, commission staff will draft a written report finalizing the commission's recommendations. Once the commission adopts the report, the state will hold an election.

Hoonah voters are expected to approve the borough, in large part because the new borough excludes three neighboring communities — Gustavus, Tenakee Springs and Pelican — that have opposed the new borough. Hoonah has a population of about 950 people.

The exclusion of the three nearby communities caused commission staff to recommend that the commission reject Hoonah's plans as incompatible with state law, regulation and the Alaska Constitution.

Hoonah has attempted at least twice before to create a borough, and the Local Boundary Commission itself recommended the creation of a "Glacier Bay Borough" in 1992. The Alaska Constitution requires that all of the state be included in "boroughs, organized or unorganized," much as all parts of the Lower 48 are included in counties or county equivalents.

The borough's operations would be funded by a local sales tax whose proceeds would principally come from the large tourist cruise ship port at Icy Strait Point, near Hoonah.

Commissioners Larry Wood and Clay Walker each voted against the proposed borough.

"The best interest of the state is to create greater economies of scale and greater efficiencies, and this proposal, while commendable in so many ways, doesn't hit that target," Walker said.

Because it excludes three small communities, there's no consolidation of government services — such as school administration — that would make things more efficient, he explained.

Wood called the boundaries of the borough "the crux of this case" and said they were his principal reason for voting against the proposal.

Those two were outvoted by commissioners Harrington, Ely Cyrus and Clayton Trotter.

Trotter said he believes a borough makes sense and compared the three excluded communities as "crabs in a bucket" acting to pull down another crab, Hoonah, that was making moves to climb out of the bucket.

Communities decide to create boroughs for various reasons, including to expand their land base and tax base, and sometimes to avoid being included in a different borough with other towns, so as to maintain full local control over their own community.

*The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.*

# Juneau sets record at almost 1.68 million cruise ship visitors

BY MARK SABBATINI  
Juneau Empire

Juneau got a record number of cruise ship passengers for a second straight year, with 1,677,935 arriving during the 2024 season that ended Oct. 24 compared to 1,638,902 last year, according to the Docks and Harbors Department.

Ships this year were at 104% capacity — meaning some cabins had more than two people staying in them, such as a child with parents — compared to 101% capacity last year, according to Docks and Harbors. Every month of this year's season between April and October was at or above 100% capacity, compared to last year when it was 96% in May and 98% in September.

This year's visitor numbers were about in line with expectations, Alexandra Pierce, Juneau's

tourism manager, said.

"The season went pretty well operationally," she said. "Our biggest issue was (lack of) crossing guards downtown and we're working on a fix for that over the winter. Of course, we also had issues with connectivity — cell phone connectivity — and we think we've resolved that between the city's Wi-Fi project and the providers adding capacity."

Hovering over the community during this year's season was a high-profile debate about the impacts of cruise tourism — good and bad — due to a ballot proposition seeking to ban cruise ships with capacity for 250 or more passengers on Saturdays and the Fourth of July. The proposition was defeated with 61% of voters opposing it in the Oct. 1 municipal election.

Pierce said she expects a

slight decrease in passengers next year, with 1,625,950 as the current projection, and the hope is to establish a reliably pre-

dictable number of passengers at about that level in future years.

"If our numbers are predictable we can plan and man-

age, and try to solve problems rather than bracing for record growth year over year," she said.

## Police report

**Monday, Nov. 11**

Burglary.

Traffic stop: Citation issued for speeding.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for equipment.

**Tuesday, Nov. 12**

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for speeding.

Courtesy transport.

**Wednesday, Nov. 13**

Bear complaint.

Agency assist: State Department of Transportation.

Summons service.

**Thursday, Nov. 14**

Traffic stop.

Citizen assist.

Traffic stop.

**Friday, Nov. 15**

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for turn signal.

Suspicious circumstance.

**Saturday, Nov. 16**

Dog bite.

Bar check.

Bear complaint.

**Sunday, Nov. 17**

Agency assist: Fire Department.

During this reporting period there were three agency assists for ambulance calls.



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OBITUARY

**Former resident David Sturdevant dies at 76**

David C. "Dave" Sturdevant, 76, passed away on Nov. 7, 2024, at his home in Juneau of brain cancer.

Dave was born April 5, 1948, in Centralia, Washington, to Clint Sturdevant and Ruth Reeder Sturdevant.

He first came to Wrangell in

the summer of 1959 to gillnet with his uncle "Duke" Chase (Bertrace "Sturdy" Chase). Dave's entire family moved to Wrangell in June 1960.

Dave enjoyed playing basketball while attending school in Wrangell through 10th grade. He transferred to a high school Outside to graduate in 1966. He spent summers fishing on his dad's boat, the Patrol, and through his college years at Stanford University. He received his master's degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks studying sockeye salmon ecology. He retired from a career with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation in Juneau.

Dave loved Southeast Alaska and enjoyed spending time at his family's cabin near Juneau, traveling and birdwatching around the world, cross-country



David C. Sturdevant

and Ruth Reeder Sturdevant; and sister Jean Sturdevant.

Dave is survived by his wife Susan Baxter; daughters Lissa Sturdevant and Blythe Barton; four grandchildren; siblings Molly (Mary), Bill and Jim, and half-brother Bob Sturdevant; numerous nieces and nephews; cousins Sheila Denney Galindo (Ed), Sharon Denney Horsman (Robert) and Rosie Chase Huntemann (Gene) from Wrangell.

"Dave loved his upbringing in Wrangell and it was the foundation for how he lived the rest of his life," his family wrote.

A celebration of life is planned for the end of July 2025 in Juneau.

Cards and letters may be sent to his wife at: Susan Baxter, 2551 Vista Drive, C302, Juneau, AK 99801.

skiing and hiking.

He was preceded in death by parents Clinton T. Sturdevant

**Crossword**

Answers on page 12

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**CLUES ACROSS**

- 1 The Beehive State
- 5 PIN points?
- 9 Bring aboard
- 13 Beget
- 14 Entreaty
- 15 Nonchalantly unconcerned
- 16 Bewitches
- 18 American Idol winner --- Studdard
- 19 Block
- 20 Conjectures
- 22 --- Dalgleish, P.D. James protagonist
- 24 Pole
- 25 Biological duplicate
- 28 Shun
- 31 "A very high price to pay for maturity" (Tom Stoppard)
- 34 Acquire through merit
- 35 Bank link
- 36 Strain
- 37 Tote
- 38 Speaking point?
- 39 Little devil
- 40 Pitcher's stat.
- 41 Requested in exchange for a kingdom (Shakespeare)
- 42 Locale of the Viminal Hill
- 43 Prohibition
- 44 Colombian cash
- 45 Artificial waterway
- 46 Matinee favorite
- 48 "Chop-chop!"
- 50 Magic
- 54 Pickle
- 58 Chemically inactive
- 59 Obsolete
- 61 Rocky debris at the base of a hill
- 62 Fail to mention
- 63 Bean capital of S America?
- 64 Decline to bid
- 65 Charts
- 66 Everyone, down South

**CLUES DOWN**

- 1 Employs
- 2 Hue
- 3 Heavy ordnance, briefly
- 4 Author --- Hesse
- 5 Sleeping problem
- 6 Careful attention
- 7 Encounter
- 8 Obi, for example
- 9 Insulting remarks
- 10 Crookedly obtain Thai dwelling
- 11 Now it makes sense!
- 12 Pigs' digs?
- 15 Diversify
- 17 Trusted assistant
- 21 Homeland leaver
- 23 Imelda ---, who had a shoe surfeit
- 25 Tabloid target
- 26 Spanish saint martyred in boiling pitch
- 27 Arrangers
- 29 Synthetic meat can be created in this
- 30 The Pearl of the Black Sea
- 32 Third letter of the Greek alphabet
- 33 Eject
- 35 Gazed upon
- 38 The door in Dordogne, or in Texas
- 42 With celerity
- 45 Found behind the shin
- 47 Ventures
- 49 Lends
- 50 Small tuft
- 51 Machu Picchu builder
- 52 Chamber
- 53 Where the 3:10 went
- 55 Mother of Uranus
- 56 Web code
- 57 Small dabbling duck
- 60 Apex

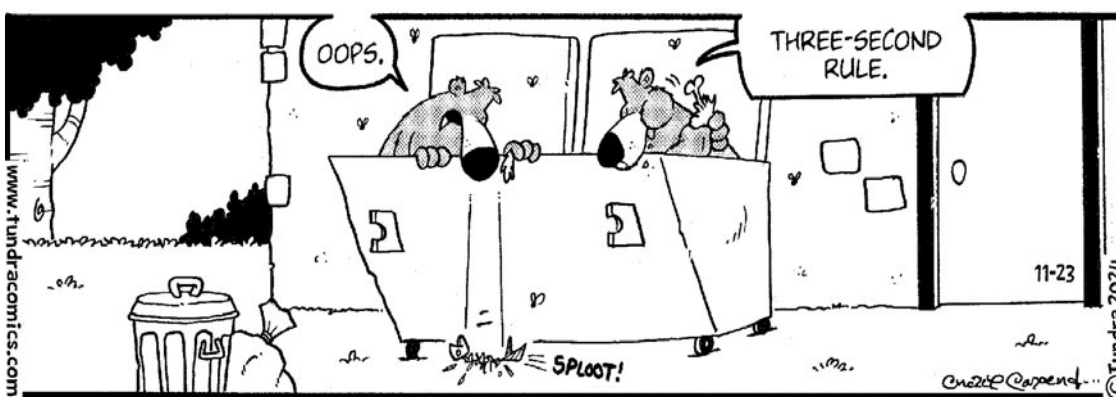
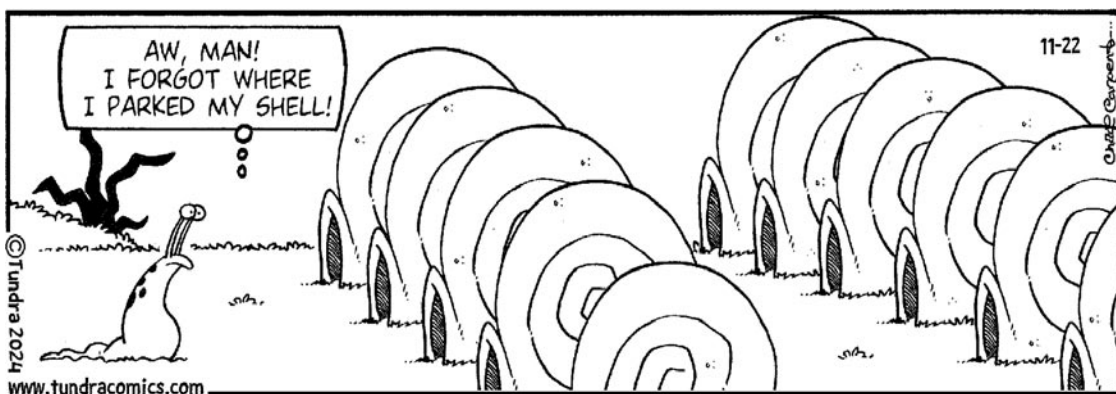
**Ritter's River**

by Marc Lutz



**Tundra**

by Chad Carpenter





# Southeast programs receive federal grants to use Indigenous knowledge of fisheries

BY THE CORDOVA TIMES

Two Southeast Alaska Native organizations are among seven entities that will share in \$1 million in federal grant funds to support multi-year projects through the Alaska Fisheries Science Center Indigenous Engagement Program.

Sealaska Heritage Institute was awarded \$110,000 to use Indigenous knowledge to document changes in the ocean and marine ecosystems from human and climate-related impacts, to better understand their effects on subsistence resource systems in Native communities.

The Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska was awarded \$67,000 for a relationship-building and knowledge-sharing component to their Southeast Tribal Environmental Forum and to address common barriers faced by tribal environmental professionals across Southeast.

Other recipients of the grant funds include the University of Alaska Fairbanks for support of the Alaska Arctic Observatory and Knowledge Hub; to elevate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives from underserved Alaska Native communities in ice seal co-management and recovery planning for ringed and bearded seals; and to work with Indigenous partners to build their use of environmental DNA as a resource management tool.

The Yukon-Delta Fisheries Development Association received funds to build a network of river water monitoring stations along the Lower Yukon River to collect data important to salmon management and for the health and well-being of people in river communities.

# AP&T extends undersea fiber optic cable to Coffman Cove and Hollis

BY ANNA LAFFREY  
Ketchikan Daily News

With a new stretch of undersea cable complete, Alaska Power & Telephone is set to expand its fiber optic broadband internet service to more communities on Prince of Wales Island.

The utility announced Nov. 12 that it had finished a \$39 million undersea fiber optic cable that connects Ketchikan with Hollis and Coffman Cove.

The new 101-mile-long SEALink South cable runs west of Ketchikan and splits into a Y near Kasaan Arm to reach the two communities. The project is intended to strengthen high-speed fiber optic internet access across Prince of Wales, according to a

press release from AP&T.

Crews laid the undersea cables in late October. The work was finished and the cable put into service on Nov. 1.

SEALink South was funded in 2022 by a \$29.3 million ReConnect grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with AP&T expecting to add in about \$9.7 million in matching funds for the project.

Project funds also cover build-outs in communities and hookups for residences, AP&T stated. The utility's crews are set to begin connecting fiber optic cables to homes in Klawock this year, and to continue in Hollis in 2025 and Craig in 2026.

Jason Custer, vice president of regulatory and government affairs for AP&T, said service

will be more reliable now that a fiber optic cable connects the island communities to Ketchikan.

The company said its undersea cables now form a "fiber ring" around the island. The SEALink South cable connects via Coffman Cove to AP&T's existing 214-mile-long SEALink cable that runs north of the island.

AP&T completed the SEALink cable in 2022 with a \$21.5 million ReConnect federal grant. The company contributed more than \$7 million in matching funds for the project. Since laying the SEALink cable, the internet provider has rolled out fiber optic services in Coffman Cove and Kasaan, according to Custer.

# Acting mayor in Southwest Alaska pleads guilty to election interference

BY JAMES BROOKS  
The Alaska Beacon

Arthur Sammy Heckman Sr. has agreed to plead guilty to a felony charge of unlawful interference with an election after illegally canceling a 2023 election and hiding the results of a 2022 election while serving as acting mayor of Pilot Station in Southwest Alaska.

The Alaska Department of Law announced the plea deal on Nov. 14 by email. It did not immediately answer a request for a copy of the plea deal and associated documents.

Pilot Station is a town of about 600 people, on the Yukon River.

Heckman and city clerk Ruthie Borromeo were indicted in July 2024 by a grand jury on eight felonies apiece for their activities in Pilot Station. Charges remain pending against Borromeo, according to online court records.

According to the Alaska Department of Law's

email, Heckman took office in May 2022 after the death of Mayor Nicky Myers. Under Pilot Station's municipal code, Heckman should have served as interim mayor only until the October 2022 municipal election, when a permanent mayor would be chosen.

According to state prosecutors, Heckman directed that ballots from the October 2022 election be kept in a locked filing cabinet and not counted.

A year later, he directed that the October 2023 municipal election would not be held.

Pilot Station residents reported Heckman's actions to the Department of Law, whose Office of Special Prosecutions brought charges against both Heckman and Borromeo. It was not immediately clear why it took two years for Heckman's actions to come to light.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. [alaskabeacon.com](http://alaskabeacon.com).

## Wrangell Cooperative Association NOTICE OF JOB OPENING Receptionist

Wrangell Cooperative Association is seeking a Receptionist. Seeking experience of two years of increasingly responsible, varied, and highly skilled clerical work.

High school diploma or GED is required. Must have a valid drivers license and the ability to pass a pre-employment drug test.

Contact WCA at 907-874-4304 for an application or more information. Applications can be submitted in person at the Wrangell Cooperative Association office at 1002 Zimovia Highway or emailed to [receptionist.wca@gmail.com](mailto:receptionist.wca@gmail.com).

Closing date: Open until filled.

Publish Nov. 13 and 20, 2024

## CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING WRANGELL CAPITAL FACILITIES DEPARTMENT Facilities Maintenance Specialist

Wrangell Facilities Maintenance Department will accept applications for the position of Facilities Maintenance Specialist.

This position performs a wide range of technical maintenance and repairs of building systems, equipment and grounds throughout all Borough-owned facilities and assists other departments with special projects. Independent or cooperative work with others is required under the daily direction and supervision of the Facility Maintenance Specialist Lead. This is a permanent position with all City and Borough benefits. This position is a union position covered under a collective bargaining agreement.

This is a full-time, hourly position with full benefits, paid at Grade 17 with a wage range from \$23.99 to \$30.42 per hour. Applicants must meet the qualifications of the position, as listed in the attached job description. Employment is based on a successful background check and pre-employment drug screening.

Applications and job descriptions may be obtained at City Hall. To be considered, interested applicants should submit their CBW employment application, a cover letter and current re-sume to Robbie Marshall at City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929 or via email at [payroll@wrangell.com](mailto:payroll@wrangell.com). This position is open until filled. The first review of applications will take place beginning Monday, Dec. 2, 2024.

The City and Borough of Wrangell is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

Mason Villarma, Borough Manager  
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Nov. 20 and 27, 2024

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experience a plus, starting pay is DOE. Stop by Johnson's for an application.

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Wrangell Public Schools is looking for a volunteer crossing guard at the elementary school from 7:40 to 8 a.m. Even one or two days a week will help. Call Kendra at 907-874-2321 if interested.

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### ADVERTISEMENT

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## Join the Alaska Power & Telephone team Customer Service Representative Wrangell, Alaska

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plus benefits package.



For a full job and benefit description please see our careers page at:  
<https://www.aptalaska.com/careers/>



# Canadian mining company looks at hydrogen potential of Southeast prospects

By SHANE LASLEY

North of 60 Mining News

A belt of rocks spanning Southeast Alaska hosts at least a dozen prospects and deposits enriched with nickel, copper and platinum group metals (PGM) needed for the energy transition. Granite Creek Copper, a small mining company based in Vancouver, British Columbia, believes a couple of prospects also host hidden stores of geological hydrogen that could offer a clean-burning fuel for the 21st century.

The company has acquired two Southeast Alaska PGM projects with "white hydrogen" potential.

An element that only emits water vapor when burned, hydrogen is seen by many as a game-changing clean energy fuel of the 21st century. However, hydrogen has the paradoxical distinction of being the most abundant element in the universe, yet very rare in its pure form on Earth.

Being the lightest of elements on the periodic table, any pure hydrogen on Earth tends to escape the atmosphere. Most of the hydrogen that remains is locked up with other elements in water, hydrocarbons and other forms.

Splitting hydrogen from water or natural gas, however, requires a lot of energy that comes with financial and carbon emissions costs.

The hydrogen currently being split off natural gas for fertilizers, chemicals and steel production costs about \$2 per kilogram to produce and has a significant

carbon footprint that cuts into its clean energy fuel potential.

Green hydrogen, which is split off from water molecules using renewable energy, does not come with inherent carbon dioxide emissions but costs more than three times as much to produce — way too expensive to be a practical solution to fueling global commerce.

Geological hydrogen, a process that involves iron-rich rock formations producing hydrogen naturally, could be the solution.

The U.S. Geological Survey estimates there are potentially billions of tons of geologic hydrogen, also known as white hydrogen, buried in the Earth's crust.

Granite Creek believes that PGM projects in Alaska and British Columbia have the right conditions to host deposits of geological hydrogen and has acquired two such projects in the Southeast Alaska, at Duke Island and Union Bay.

To position itself among the first movers in the emerging white hydrogen space, Granite Creek has teamed up with Cornell University, which recently received a U.S. Department of Energy grant to study potential geologic hydrogen.

A team led by Greeshma Gadikota, an associate professor who directs the Sustainable Energy and Resource Recovery Group at Cornell, is working with Granite Creek to study the geological hydrogen potential of the Duke Island and Union Bay projects.

Union Bay is about halfway between Wrangell and Ketchikan; Duke Island is south of Ketchikan.

"Our team looks forward to this collaboration with Granite Creek on strategies to stimulate geologic hydrogen production," Gadikota said.

Stimulated geological hydrogen leverages catalysts found naturally in the ground to speed up Earth's ability to naturally produce hydrogen.

Artificial hydrogen is split off from water, natural gas or other sources using catalysts such as PGMs or nickel. This process also occurs naturally in Earth's crust, but usually at a slow rate, and in most cases, the clean-burning fuel escapes too fast to accumulate in economic deposits.

Scientists, however, believe they can generate larger volumes of hydrogen from these rocks by stimulating reactions that would take millions of years to occur naturally.

Granite Creek's newly acquired Duke Island and Union Bay projects have the two main ingredients required for white hydrogen: catalysts and water.

"We see the potential for multi-use approach to these types of projects including critical metal recovery, durable carbon storage and geologic hydrogen production," said Gadikota.

Lying within the Alexander Platinum Belt about 30 miles southeast of Ketchikan, Duke Island has long been known for its stores of copper, nickel and PGMs. Historical exploration on

the property has turned up surface samples with grades as high as 1.95% copper, 0.25% nickel, and more than 1 gram per ton of PGMs.

While several prospective zones have been discovered based on geologic mapping, surface geochemistry and surface and airborne geophysics, only one of these zones has been tested to date with about 11,000 feet of drilling in 16 holes.

Granite Creek has entered into an agreement to acquire 90% interest in Duke Island from Stillwater Critical Minerals, which is a fellow company under the Metallic Group of Companies umbrella, for \$108,000 in shares and a commitment to invest at least \$360,000 in exploration over three years.

Union Bay hosts classic "Ural-Alaska-type" ultramafic rocks

famed for their PGM potential. Mapping, sampling, geophysics and drilling have identified high-grade platinum targets on this project. Granite Creek was able to pick up Union Bay by staking 20 mineral claims over the project.

Granite Creek's exploration of geological hydrogen in Southeast Alaska follows an announcement earlier this month that it is collaborating with New England Research, a Vermont-based research and development company that recently received a \$1.5 million U.S. Department of Energy grant to study geological hydrogen on the company's Star project in northern British Columbia.

To read the full article, go to [North of 60 Mining News https://bit.ly/40OccKo](https://bit.ly/40OccKo).

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