



## Borough moves closer to developing former Institute property

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

A preliminary plat for the first phase of developing the former Wrangell Institute property into residential and commercial lots, known as Shoemaker Bay Subdivision II, was approved by the planning and zoning commission Tuesday afternoon.

There is still a lot of work to do, but this is a significant step in the development process, said Wrangell Economic Development Director Carol Rushmore. It may be optimistic, she said, but site work could begin sometime next year.

Final plat approval by the commission could be several months away, Rushmore said,

with consideration by the borough assembly the final step.

Developing the land has been a longstanding project for the borough, with the effort only recently starting up again. The city plans to subdivide the property into lots for residential and some commercial development. The preliminary plat brought before the planning and zoning

commission showed the first half of the proposed development.

The property is upland from Shoemaker Bay. The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs operated a boarding school at the site from 1932 to 1975.

An Anchorage-based regional Native corporation, Cook Inlet Region Inc., took title to the

134-acre school site in the late 1970s, but development plans never went anywhere and the corporation returned the land to the federal government — which transferred the property to Wrangell in 1996.

“In April, a preliminary plat of a full subdivision of the northern portion of the Institute

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## Growing number of seniors receive property tax break

### *State fails to reimburse borough for \$400,000 a year lost revenue*

By LARRY PERSILY  
*Sentinel writer*

The number of senior citizens receiving a state-mandated property tax break on their homes continues to climb in Wrangell, totaling 280 homes this year and costing the borough \$400,000 in lost tax revenues.

Wrangell is not alone in the rising number, as several Alaska communities are seeing consistent growth in their senior citizen population. More than one in five Wrangell residents is age 65 or older, according to state statistics.

About 15% of the assessed property value in Wrangell is exempt from borough taxes under the state-required partial exemption for homes owned by seniors and disabled veterans.

Nenana, about 55 highway miles south of Fairbanks, leads the state at 16.5%, according to the 2020 Alaska Taxable report issued by the state Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Petersburg was third at 11%.

Though state law requires municipalities to exempt from property taxes the first \$150,000 in assessed value on a senior-owned home, the Legislature stopped reimbursing cities and boroughs for the cost almost 25 years ago, even though the statute says the state shall cover the cost.

The law has been on the books since 1972, and the Legislature and governors started phasing out the reimbursement in 1986 before completely stopping the payments to cities and boroughs in 1997.

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## Rezone would allow cell tower next to waste transfer station

By LARRY PERSILY  
*Sentinel writer*

The borough assembly has rezoned several lots adjacent to Wrangell's solid waste transfer site, allowing installation of a cell phone tower on the city-owned land if the developer can obtain a conditional-use permit for such use of the property.

A public hearing and further consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission is required for a conditional-use permit.

The assembly, in two unanimous votes May 25, approved rezoning the seven parcels to open space / public zoning, and allowing communication facilities, including cell towers, as a conditional use within the zoning code for such areas.

The assembly action also allows municipal use of the seven parcels and any other parcels in the borough zoned for open space.

An April request to the borough by a Florida-based company, Vertical Bridge Development, to build a cell tower at the site prompted the ordinances. However, Carol Rushmore, the borough's economic development director, said the zoning change should have happened anyway.

The borough has been using some of the land near the trash site to store old tires and electrical department equipment, which were not allowable uses of the lands before the parcels were rezoned. The rezoning and code changes took effect May 26.

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PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

First grader Hailey Gablehouse celebrates her last day of school the best way a happy kid can — running, twirling and smiling.

## Students bid farewell to school, hello to summer

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

“Middle school here I come!” said Silje Morse, one of 15 fifth graders at Evergreen Elementary, during her last day of school.

Evergreen marked the end of the school year last Thursday with a celebration on the school playground. Every class, from kindergarten to fifth grade, got a hotdog lunch and cupcakes. They then also got to run, dance, and in some cases cartwheel in a procession across the playground. Afterward, following a brief return to class to wrap up the day, the kids officially began their summer break.

Jenn Miller-Yancey, lead teacher, said the last day of school is always a bittersweet moment, particularly after this year. Evergreen had to operate the full year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The celebration event was the first time all year every class was able to get together in one spot, she said.

“We are very, very ecstatic that we were able to be in person nearly all the school year, it's very exciting,” she said. “I think the stu-



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Someone at Evergreen Elementary School chalked a goodbye message for students on the final day of class last Thursday.

dents have worked very hard this year. We couldn't be more proud of them, and for our staff for sticking through, and everybody is definitely ready for summer.”

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

**Thursday, June 3:** Matthew Covalt, Makena Hammer, Mike Jabush, Robyn Lane, Yuri McCloskey, Ryan Reeve, Gail Thomas; Anniversary: Scott and Lorri Angerman.

**Friday, June 4:** Doug McCloskey, Kira Torvend, Haley Vergilio, Maleah Wenzel, Tayla Williams; Anniversaries: Jim Sr. and Sue Nelson, Bill and Janell Privett.

**Saturday, June 5:** Jim Holder, Randy Robinson Jr., Payton Tailele, Eric Yancey.

**Sunday, June 6:** Chelsea Cleghon, Carter Cummings, Cari Hazelton, Mick Young; Anniversary: Jeremy and Dawn Welch.

**Monday, June 7:** Hunter Abbott, Finn Kellar, Jacob Soeteber, Kelly Tuttle; Anniversary Mike and Natalya Jabush.

**Tuesday, June 8:** Chase Robertson, Shannon Smith; Anniversary: James and Cinda Stough.

**Wednesday, June 9:** Carolyn Gould, Jon Ryon Pino.

**Thursday, June 10:** Josephine Lewis, Dan Newport, Aveline Faye Russell; Anniversary: Trevor and Talea Keller, John and Lynn Maxand.

## Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

### Friday, June 4

Ham sandwich, tomato soup, coleslaw

### Monday, June 7

Ham, broccoli toss, sweet potatoes

### Tuesday, June 8

Crispy chicken, Brussels sprouts, coleslaw

### Wednesday, June 9

Spaghetti, peas and carrots, fruit cup

### Thursday, June 10

Baked fish, red cabbage, salad

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

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

## Ferry Schedule

### Northbound

#### Friday, June 4

Matanuska, 5:45 p.m.

#### Friday, June 11

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

#### Friday, June 18

Matanuska, 4 p.m.

#### Friday, June 25

Matanuska, 3:15 p.m.

#### Friday, July 2

Matanuska, 4:15 p.m.

### Southbound

#### Monday, June 7

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

#### Monday, June 14

Matanuska, 5:30 a.m.

#### Monday, June 21

Matanuska, 4:45 a.m.

#### Monday, June 28

Matanuska, 5 a.m.

#### Monday, July 5

Matanuska, 4:30 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times. Call the terminal at 874-2021 for information or call 874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.



## TIDES

June 3-June 10

### High Tides

### Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
June 3	08:31	12.5	09:23	14.5	02:24	4.8	02:33	2.5
June 4	09:41	12.5	10:11	15.2	03:38	3.9	03:33	3.0
June 5	10:41	12.9	10:54	15.8	04:38	2.7	04:27	3.2
June 6	11:33	13.3	11:33	16.3	05:25	1.4	05:13	3.3
June 7	...	...	12:19	13.7	06:05	0.4	05:54	3.4
June 8	00:10	16.5	01:01	14.0	06:40	-0.3	06:31	3.6
June 9	00:44	16.6	01:41	14.1	07:13	-0.9	07:04	3.8

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**NOLAN CENTER THEATER** presents "Spirit Untamed," rated PG, at 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the animation, adventure, family film, which runs one hour and 27 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

**ALASKA MARINE SAFETY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION** is offering hands-on training to survive emergencies at sea, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday, June 7, at the Wrangell Community Center. Training will include cold-water survival skills, EPIRBs, signal flares, mayday calls, person-overboard recovery, firefighting, personal floatation devices and abandon-ship procedures. All mariners welcome. \$125 for commercial fishermen and \$175 for all others. Space is limited. Register online at [www.amsea.org](http://www.amsea.org) or call 907-747-3287.

**WRANGELL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** is looking for volunteers to chair the 4th of July parade, big wheel race and log-rolling event. Extra helpers needed for the canoe races, crazy craft races, fish derbies and logging show. More food and game booths are needed, especially games. Contact the chamber if you are interested in becoming a volunteer at 874-3901, or stop by the chamber office in the Stikine Inn.

**BETA SIGMA PHI 4th of JULY PIE SALE** will be held again this year with one major change: We will only be selling whole pies and they will have to be picked up upon purchase. We will accept donations of covered pies beginning at 9 a.m. July 4; sales will begin at 10 a.m. For more information, contact Lorraine Kagee 874-3235.

**WRANGELL EMBLEM CLUB No. 87** meets on the second Saturday of the month, June 12, at 1 p.m. at the Wrangell Elks Lodge.

**WRANGELL PARKS & RECREATION** - All swims are cancelled through Saturday, June 5, due to the lifeguard and swim instructor courses.

**IRENE INGLE PUBLIC LIBRARY** summer reading program now open for registration. Open to students entering kindergarten through ninth grade in the fall. Register at the library (open Wednesday through Saturday); the reading program runs through July 31. There will be drawings and a special prize for readers. Participants need to sanitize their hands as they enter the library to register and wear a mask while in the library, stay six feet apart from others who are not in their household, and limit visits to 30 minutes. Call 874-3535 for more information.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to [wrgsent@gmail.com](mailto:wrgsent@gmail.com) or call 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)

**Pool activities by appointment and reduced capacity, locker rooms are not 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, 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday

Open swim, 5:30 - 7 p.m. Monday & Wednesday; 6:30 - 8 p.m. Friday; 1 - 2 p.m. Saturday

Swim Club, 3:15 - 5:15 p.m., weekdays

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. Philips Episcopal Church.

## The Way We Were

In the Sentinel 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

### June 9, 1921

The new school and community tennis court on the McCormack property received the attention of a large number of workers Monday evening from 6:30 to 9. A great deal was done. Wrangell autos helped the good work along and hauled sand and gravel from the beach to a spot near the school. Everybody interested, from little Lawrence Crawford and Herbert Borge with a tin cup and a small pail, respectively, to the mayor, worked. Boys from the primary grades mingled with those from the upper and high school classes. Before long, Wrangell will have a tennis court of which it can be proud.

### May 31, 1946

Seven men, three women and six children are enroute to Alaska today in a 119-foot converted LCT (landing craft tank, an amphibious assault craft). They plan to fish commercially in the waters of Prince William Sound from their converted war vessel, the Mahina Hou (Hawaiian for New Moon). Allen H. Elstron, descendent of Hawaiian chiefs, is skipper of the ship, purchased as surplus property for \$4,500. Its bridge was smashed and starboard

plates buckled from a collision with another Navy ship. Elstron put the LCT into dry-dock, repairs were made and a refrigerated unit was installed for its new civilian role.

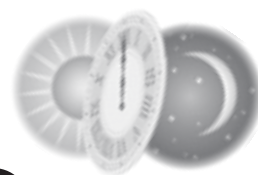
### June 4, 1971

If he can swing it, Art Clark is going to have a big laugh when he gets to little Breckenridge, Missouri, population 700, next month on vacation. Art has been holding on to a 40-pound king salmon he caught mid-May at Babler Point, having carefully frozen the fish. What Art is going to do with the big salmon is to grab it by the gills and walk leisurely down Breckenridge's main street. "When someone asks me where I got it," said Art, "I'm going to tell them, 'In that little pond over there.' They won't believe it, but it's sure going to be fun."

### June 6, 1996

In five and a half decades, Jim and Elsie Nolan brought love and life to their marriage, and to Wrangell. The legacy of the Nolans' love for their community continues with a 20-year charitable trust fund in their name. Since 1992, interest from the trust fund has put more than \$600,000 directly

into the community through various charitable, scientific and educational groups, and more than \$200,000 into such groups as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Alaskans for Drug-Free Youth. Elsie died in March 1983 at 83. Jim died in October 1991 at the age of 90. Jim was a deputy U.S. marshal and served in the territorial and state Legislatures. Elsie ran the Den O'Sweets sandwich and soda shop, which later merged into Wrangell Drug.



## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
June 3	4:05a	9:30p	17:24h
June 4	4:04a	9:31p	17:27h
June 5	4:03a	9:33p	17:29h
June 6	4:03a	9:34p	17:31h
June 7	4:02a	9:35p	17:32h
June 8	4:01a	9:36p	17:34h
June 9	4:01a	9:37p	17:36h



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

## Remembrance for Sig and Helen Decker

Friends, family and community members came out to City Park and the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial last Saturday evening for a Celebration of Life for Sig and Helen Decker, who died July 27 in a car accident in Petersburg. People were invited to a potluck at the park to enjoy friendship and music, and to share stories about the Deckers. Later in the evening, people moved to the nearby Mariners' Memorial (above), followed by the scattering of Sig and Helen's ashes.

## Shoemaker Bay

Continued from page 1

consisting of 40 lots was approved by the Commission," Rushmore wrote in the backup for Tuesday's meeting. "Due to the cost of development, the subdivision has now been broken down into two phases to manage the development costs. This preliminary plat represents Phase 1 development."

The first phase represents 22 of the proposed 40 lots. Rushmore said cost estimates are still ongoing, however a rough number puts development costs between \$1.4 million and \$2

million.

The money would pay for clearing the property, putting in sewer and water lines, building gravel roads and culverts. It could potentially also include paved roads and sidewalks, Rushmore said, adding there is still a lot that needs to be done to more accurately determine costs and potential future revenue from selling the lots.

"I would expect that within the next month or so the estimated development costs will be as close as they can be for now," Rushmore wrote in an

email. "We are waiting on the (Army) Corps of Engineers permit for fill for the roads/utilities to be approved," she said, adding that the permit application is out for public notice.

Since the project would include filling in some wetlands, the borough is waiting for the Army Corps to determine the required compensation for that action.

A Corps of Engineers permit is required for development on wetlands, which includes the land developer compensating for filling in the wetland by pay-

ing into a mitigation bank. The amount depends on a variety of factors, Rushmore said, such as value of the wetland and how much land is being filled.

The eventual sales prices for the lots will depend on a professional appraisal of the property's value. "We are getting the lots appraised, but that may not be done before the end of July," Rushmore said.

The lots vary in size between 17,000 to 41,000 square feet, and would all be zoned for residential construction. Commercial zoning is being kept to the southern end of the property.

The Wrangell Cooperative Association, the local tribal organization, is working on a new name for the subdivision "as part of the healing process of past memories and the cooperative effort to develop the land," according to the material presented to the planning and zoning commission.

There was little discussion at Tuesday's meeting on this item. Following a summary by Rushmore, the commissioners unanimously voted to accept the preliminary plat. Commissioners Don McConachie and Apryl Hutchinson were absent.

## Composting resumes at community garden

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

In an effort to reduce waste and provide good soil for gardens, the Wrangell Cooperative Association is encouraging people to bring their compostable waste to the community garden, out by City Park. The WCA took over the composting project about a year ago, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic things got put on hold.

"In 2018 Chris Hatton (of WCA) completed a solid waste assessment, and in those findings she discovered that 40% of our waste that is being shipped is compostable," said Kim Wickman, with the WCA. "We had big plans, then COVID happened. So things got delayed a bit."

Wickman said the community composting program is easy to use. People need to gather their "greens" (such as fruits, vegetables or coffee grounds) and "browns" (such as shredded paper or cardboard, straw or fall leaves) and

add them to the compost bin labeled "Add" at the community garden.

For every one container of greens, people need to add three equal containers of browns to the mix, Wickman said.

There are also some items that should not be added to the compost.

"We ask that people not deposit any meat, fats, breads or potatoes," she said. "Store-bought potatoes can carry different types of fungus ... which can cause your soil to attack your potatoes for years and years to come."

For the foreseeable future, Wickman said the Cooperative Association is going to use the compost to help revitalize the community garden. This will take about a year, she estimated. Afterward, they plan to start bagging up the compost and either giving it away or selling it at a minimal price.

Anyone with questions on composting can contact the WCA at 874-4304.

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Oncology	July 20-22 August 17-19	907-228-8101
Pulmonology	August 18-20	907-228-7649
Urology	July 12-16 August 16-20	907-225-7346



[peacehealth.org/visitingcalendar](https://peacehealth.org/visitingcalendar)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Wrangell children need an OCS worker stationed here

Because it often takes days for the state Office of Children's Services to send an investigator to Wrangell, I was forced to send a frightened kid to a home where she had recently experienced serious domestic violence.

I cannot describe my anger and frustration.

I cannot describe my anger and frustration at hearing a student say, "Why bother? They never do anything," when I told her I was referring her situation to OCS.

I cannot describe the anger and frustration of being told by an OCS worker, "The state's not taking custody of anyone unless they're hurt enough to be in the hospital." (The worker was not callous; she was as frustrated by this situation as I was).

I cannot describe the anger and frustration I feel when a student's cries for help are ignored until they take the form of an attempted suicide.

After 33 years of working with kids, 27 years in Wrangell, I want to state loudly and unequivocally that Wrangell students need — desperately need — an OCS worker stationed here.

A few years ago, people in Wrangell died because the severity of the situation they were in was lost in the cracks between here and Juneau or here and Anchorage. I believe this tragedy might have been avoided if we had had an OCS worker in Wrangell.

OCS is underfunded and overwhelmed, and so they deal with what is closest to hand, to the obvious. That means situations in outlying communities like Wrangell are often left as second thoughts, as situations "we'll get to when we have time." Without an OCS worker in Wrangell, it's not a matter of if we are going to see a similar

tragedy; it's a matter of when. Wrangell's children deserve better.

The 2019 Alaska Youth Risk Behaviors Survey, the gold standard for this type of information, reported that 19.7% of Alaska's traditional high school students attempted suicide during the previous year. That's one in five. By all reports, this number will skyrocket when this survey is conducted again this fall.

The isolation, unemployment and social stresses caused by COVID-19 have hit Alaska families hard. Not only have child welfare cases increased, the ones that are being reported are more severe. Wrangell students and families need help.

Over the years, I've heard many people bad-mouth OCS. I've done it myself — not, however, because they abuse the power they have to investigate and remove children from dangerous situations. My anger at OCS rests in the fact that in their efforts to keep families together, they too often leave children in truly awful situations. They do not act soon enough.

I've also realized that — like the school — they are often handcuffed by the laws and policies that require confidentiality. They cannot publicly defend themselves when they are accused with lies, half-truths and twisted justifications.

Obviously, assigning a single OCS worker to Wrangell won't solve all of the situations I've described, but it will certainly help. If the community of Wrangell does not loudly and unequivocally support the hiring of an OCS worker here, shame on us. And if the governor vetoes it again, shame on him.

Bob Davis

Assistant principal and lead teacher  
Wrangell High School  
Stikine Middle School

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## EDITORIAL

### Consider the source of cell tower 'facts'

It looks like Wrangell is dialing up for a fight over a cell tower proposed for construction next door to piles of old tires, city electrical equipment and the transfer site for garbage before it is hauled out of town. The tower would be at least a couple hundred feet from the nearest homes.

However, homeowners in the vicinity of the city-owned property on the north end of the island are smart to question whether the tower's radio signals pose any safety risks. People have a right to a healthy life, and good for them to care about the environment.

But please, care about the facts as much as the environment. More precisely, care about the credentials and motives of promoters who claim to know the "facts" about the alleged health risks of cell tower signals.

For example, one website quoted by cell tower opponents is not a respected science journal or credentialed research lab. It is a for-profit business, RadiationHealthRisks.com. The promoter's website claims: "Cell phone tower radiation is very harmful. It disrupts your body's own EMFs (electric and magnetic fields), causing many kinds of health problems such as headaches, memory loss, cardiovascular stress, low sperm count, birth defects and various types of cancer."

Of course, RadiationHealthRisks.com has an answer. Or, more accurately, products to sell.

"There is a way to protect yourself from this radiation," the website says, directing you to Aulterra EMF Neutralizer Products.

Click on the Aulterra Global website and learn that the company's Neutralizer "retunes" the electromagnetic frequencies of devices like cell phones and computers "to transmute the energy so it no longer causes harm to the body's DNA."

And how does the product do that? "The secret of the Neutralizer lies in the crystalline matrix mixed into the ink of the Neutralizer patch." The patch is comprised "of three micro-thin layers of rare activated earth elements," which create "a proprietary blend of activated paramagnetic and diamagnetic elements which neutralize the effect of manmade EMF exposure on human DNA by converting them into safe substances."

A three-pack of these magical patches will set you back \$36.

Don't like wearing a patch? Buy the Aulterra Energy Pendant. "It is a fairly large quality piece of jewelry filled with the Aulterra neutralizing rare activated earth elements."

That is a pricey pendant, at \$437, on sale this week from \$486.

A neutralizing pillow is \$80, available in your choice of three colors.

Another option is to read the American Cancer Society website on the topic of cell towers and radiofrequency (RF) waves: "At this time, there's no strong evidence that exposure to RF waves from cell phone towers causes any noticeable health effects."

It's wise to question what is proposed for your neighborhood, and to call up your inner skepticism. Be just as wise when you click the web and some promotional website claims to know the problem and is eager to help sell you the cure.

Wrangell Sentinel

## FROM THE PUBLISHER

### Big PFD gets in the way of community needs

By LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

Wrangell has several multi-million-dollar problems: Replacing the water reservoir dams and repairing the piping; rebuilding the water-damaged public safety building; and reusing or demolishing the old hospital building.

Even with the highest sales tax rate in the state, even if tourist spending fully recovers next year and the economy grows, there wouldn't be enough sales tax receipts coming in to cover the costs of even one of the projects, let alone all three essential community needs.

Sure, voters could approve bond issues for some of the work and the borough could pay back the debt with higher property tax rates, adding maybe \$1,000 a year in taxes on an average home. That's not even counting the full cost of

the reservoir dams, estimated at \$50 million. Water rates would have to increase significantly to help cover that cost.

That's far more than Wrangell can afford.

Or, as Alaska cities and boroughs have done since the 1970s, Wrangell could look to the state for help.

Until the mid-2010s, the Legislature would routinely appropriate funds for community projects, sharing the wealth of oil revenues across the state. Alas, those plentiful oil days are over. The trans-Alaska oil pipeline is three-quarters empty, and oil dollars provide less than one-third of state general fund revenues.

The state — its residents and their community needs — have relied on investment earnings of the Alaska Permanent Fund the past few years to cover about 60% of the cost of state spending. That's what the fund

was created for almost 50 years ago — to help fund public services as oil dollars went into permanent decline.

The math problem is that those same dollars also pay the annual Permanent Fund dividend, and therein lies the dilemma.

The more money that goes to the dividend, the less money available for community needs, such as water reservoirs and public safety buildings.

Legislators this month are stuck in the mud in Juneau, spinning their wheels as the governor's shamelessly promotes a bigger dividend and says Alaska can deal with paying the bills some other time. Many legislators like the governor's politically crass idea of putting more money into voters' pockets. But just as many legislators sees it as an irresponsible fiscal game of chicken: Spend until the Perma-

nent Fund nears the cliff and then hope we can stop in time, or bail out and let someone else pick up the pieces.

The issue for Wrangell, and other communities across the state, is that the money spent on dividends will not be available for legislators to appropriate as state grants for water reservoirs, public safety buildings, school repairs or other needs.

Alaskans need to decide if the Permanent Fund exists primarily to serve individuals' wants or community needs. If the vote is for individual wants, then residents should prepare themselves for signing over their PFDs, and more, to ensure the community's needs are met.

The politics are harder than the math.

Oldest continuously published paper in Alaska



ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER 20, 1902  
Published Weekly By: Good Journalism LLC  
PO Box 798, Wrangell, AK 99929  
Phone: 907-874-2301

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Wrangell Sentinel, P.O. Box 798, Wrangell, AK 99929

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Wrangell Sentinel (USPS 626-480) is published weekly except the third week of July and the week after Christmas by Wrangell Sentinel, 205 Front St., Wrangell, AK 99929. Periodicals postage paid at Wrangell, AK. Phone: 907-874-2301; Email: wrgsent@gmail.com; Website www.wrangellsentinel.com.  
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#### Subscription Rates

Single Copy.....\$1.50  
Local.....\$46  
Other Alaska.....\$62  
2nd class/Lower 48 & HI.....\$70  
First Class.....\$102

# City will pay for COVID testing of Sea Level employees

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

The borough again this summer will use federal funds to cover the cost of COVID-19 testing for Sea Level Seafoods employees.

The borough assembly voted 4-3 at its May 25 meeting to appropriate up to \$70,000 in federal funds to pay for testing this year. Testing last year cost the borough about \$22,000.

“Administration is requesting an amount more than triple last year’s expenditure because it is our understanding Sea Level would like to institute a far more robust testing regime than last year,” Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga briefed the assembly.

“They would like to test 40 employees every 14 days for five months. At a cost of \$175 per test, the amount is \$70,000,” Von Barga explained.

In addition, Sea Level plans to test its out-of-town workers when they arrive in Wrangell, and twice more during their mandatory 14-day quarantine, Robert Hancock Jr., office manager at Sea Level, said last week.

As of last week, most of the seafood processor’s workers were from Wrangell, Hancock said, though he expects more out-of-town workers to arrive later this month as crab and salmon harvests come into the plant.

The company will cover all the costs of housing, food and wages during the quarantine, he said.

“Our plan is to continue quarantines and COVID testing in accordance with health advisories or orders, and your guidance,” Hancock said in a May 18 letter to the borough. “We are hoping it might be possible for the borough help again this season with costs of COVID testing for the processing facility, while we absorb the costs of quarantine and other COVID costs.”

Von Barga advised the assembly that Seward is covering the cost of employee testing for the processor in its community, Pacific Seafood, which operates as Sea Level in Wrangell.

Pacific Seafood does not require its employees get vaccinated against COVID-19, Hancock said.

Wrangell has not used its federal or state pandemic aid to pay for employee testing at any other business — no one has asked, said Jamie Roberts, deputy emergency operations center manager for the borough.

The borough has talked with charter boat and tour operators about paying for testing of their employees, but was told it wasn’t necessary. “They pretty much said we’re going to go out to the airport,” where free tests already are of-

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued from page 4

### Visit reminds former resident Wrangell is a special place

I recently returned to Wrangell (May 27-30) to attend a Celebration of Life for Sig and Helen Decker. It had been three and a half years since I had been in Wrangell and I felt compelled to share my thoughts (and more importantly my thanks) through a letter to the editor.

I was fortunate enough to have my mom accompany me on this trip. Everywhere we went — and I mean everywhere — the hospitality we received was off the charts. From the TSA and Alaska Airlines staff, to the friendly and accommodating people at the Stikine Inn and the terrific coffee/sandwich shop there, to the many merchants we visited (City Market, Wrangell IGA, Angerman’s, Alpine Mini-Mart, even a bar or two) all were pleasant and welcoming.

Both the Friday evening event at the golf course, as well as Saturday evening’s event at City Park, required a lot of work. While I cannot possibly name all of those that were involved in planning each aspect of the Celebration of Life, everything went off without a hitch and was certainly reflective of the lives that were being celebrated. In addition, thanks to everyone in the charter boat industry that helped us all get over to Banana Point to see the memorial.

While Wrangell and the rest of the world has navigated a pandemic, I wasn’t sure what 2021 Wrangell would be like as I look back on the four years I lived in Wrangell very fondly. Everything I described above — as well as the hugs, the waives while walking the loop, the short discussions and visits I was able to have with friends and people I consider family — were all uplifting to me.

ferred twice a day, seven days a week, Roberts said.

The state has a contract with the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium to provide free tests morning and afternoon, when the Alaska Airlines flight arrives, and anyone can go to the

airport for testing during those times.

“Nobody should have to pay for any testing out of pocket,” Roberts said.

The state’s contract with SEARHC ends June 30, and the borough will look at whether it wants to continue the service if the state does not renew. “We’re waiting for the state to make its move,” Roberts said.

Voting yes for the Sea Level testing money were assembly

Looking back, I can’t think of better and more fitting way in which to celebrate the lives of Sig and Helen. I like to refer to all of this as the “Wrangell Standard” and it is the people of your community that make that happen. Be proud of that. What you have is special.

Timothy D. Rooney  
Mustang, Oklahoma

### Graduates say thank you

The parents and graduates of the class of 2021 would like to thank the following businesses and people for their generous donations to the senior class party:

Nic’s Place, Angerman’s, J&W’s, Becky Gile, Ottesen’s, the Stik Café, Stikine Sportsmen, Vince Photography, Wrangell IGA, The Bay Co., City Market, All American Mechanical, 56 North, the Compass Line, the Guggenbickler family, Wrangell Elks Lodge 1595, Wrangell Emblem Club 87, Shop Groundswell, Sirene Spa, the Booker family, Drive Thru Brew, L&M, Sunkist Tanning and Rob and Sherry Rooney.

### Correction

Due to an editing error, the Sentinel incorrectly identified the Carroll Inlet release site as a salmon hatchery in a letter to the editor in the May 27 edition.

A history paper on the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, written by the late Pat Roppel, is available at <https://ssraa.org/in-the-beginning/>

members Terry Courson, Anne Morrison, Ryan Howe and Patty Gilbert. Voting against the funds were members David Powell, Bob Dalrymple and Mayor Steve Prysunka.

“I am not pleased we went over a year to receive a thank you” for last year’s funding, Prysunka said at the meeting.

Hancock last week said staff changes were to blame. “It fell through the cracks.”

## Senior property

Continued from page 1

The unfunded tax exemption will cost cities and boroughs across the state about \$94 million this year, according to the Alaska Municipal League.

“We bring it up every year,” Wrangell Mayor Steve Prysunka said, adding that the lack of state reimbursement is always on the community’s legislative priority list.

“I want the state to either do away with it or pay us back,” he said. “It would make a huge difference for our budget.”

The tax break represents almost 10% of Wrangell’s total revenues from all taxes, state and federal payments.

Though the revenue hit to the borough is substantial, the mayor added, “There’s not a senior in town who would say they could afford it” if the state removed the mandatory tax exemption.

In Wrangell, this year’s total of 280 homes with the tax break is an increase of 21 homes over last year, when the tax loss was about \$369,000. The average tax savings for a senior-owned home in Wrangell was \$1,414 in 2019, according to the Alaska Taxable report.

In 2016, 215 senior citizen homeowners qualified for the exemption, at a cost to the borough of \$310,000.

Wrangell’s over-65 population has grown from 374 in 2010 to 528 in 2019, according to state statistics. The tax exemption is limited to one senior per household.

Statewide, 12% of the population in 2019 was 65 and older, up from 3% in 1980 and 8% in 2010, according to the Alaska Department of Labor’s latest population report.

Alaska “is following the nationwide aging trend,” the report said.

“Some parts of Alaska had higher concentrations of older Alaskans than others,” the report added. “Southeast was highest. Hoonah-Angoon Census Area led the state with 23%, followed by Haines Borough and City and Borough of Wrangell at 22%.”



## Summer Activities Include Protecting Against COVID-19

While enjoying summer, protect yourself and others from the spread of COVID-19 by registering for a vaccine, getting tested when needed and following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) on when to wear a facemask. SEARHC thanks you for being part of the solution to keep our communities, patients and healthcare workers safe and healthy.



Vaccinations are available to all people ages 12 and up. To learn more and sign up for a vaccine or testing, please visit [covid19.searhc.org](https://covid19.searhc.org).

**SEARHC** | healthy is here.

# Borough provides schools the same funding next year

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

For the third year in a row, the borough will provide \$1.3 million in funding for Wrangell schools, the largest spending category in the municipal budget.

About \$700,000 of the local contribution to next year's school district budget will come from Wrangell's general fund revenues of sales and property taxes, with about \$600,000 in federal financial assistance directed to Wrangell under a U.S. Forest Service nationwide program of payments to rural communities.

The borough assembly approved the \$1.3 million appropriation without opposition May 25.

The steady local contribution is important for the school district, where funding is tight.

Wrangell schools have suffered a deep enrollment drop the past year with more parents homeschooling their children during the pandemic and some families moving out of town. State funds, which comprise the largest part of the district's budget, are based on enrollment numbers.

Wrangell public schools counted 300 students in the fall of 2019, but the number fell to about 200 during the pandemic year. The district has based next



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

## Fourth of July fundraising begins

The 2021 Fourth of July royalty contest kicked off Monday evening. Wrangell's two candidates, sophomore Cassady Cowan (left) and senior Emma Martinsen, thanked the public for their support at a gathering under the downtown pavilion. The royalty contest is a longstanding Wrangell tradition, dating back to the 1950s. Candidates raise money through ticket sales to support Fourth of July events, and to set aside money for their own education. Martinsen will run a food booth in the downtown pavilion this month, while Cowan said she would manage a door-to-door bake sale.

year's budget on 225 students. Wrangell's enrollment reportedly fell at a steeper percentage than any other district in the state.

The Wrangell School District budget for the coming year totals \$5.2 million, about \$300,000 less than the past school year.

Federal pandemic relief payments this past school year, along with more federal aid for the next two years, are helping

to cover the district's budget gaps caused in large part by the declining enrollment.

The district received about \$370,000 for this past school year under the federal CARES Act and, according to the school board and administration, expects to receive about \$700,000 under this spring's American Rescue Plan that can be used over the next two school years.

The board, when it adopted the district budget in April, designated half of that money for the 2021-2022 school year, saving the other half for the next year.

Generally, local districts can use the federal aid to fill budget gaps, though the American Rescue Plan requires districts

"must reserve at least 20% of funds to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions."

The U.S. Department of Education also requires districts to "ensure that those interventions respond to students' social, emotional and academic needs."

## Cell tower

Continued from page 1

"A proposed cell tower triggered this series of events for a zone change and modification to the zoning uses," Rushmore explained in her presentation to the assembly.

The cell tower conditional-use application has been before the Planning and Zoning Commission, which determined it could not take action without a change in the zoning code.

The commission at its April 29 meeting recommended the assembly amend the code to add municipal facilities and communication infrastructure as conditional uses within the zoning district.

The issue was most recently before the commission May 13 and will be back on the agenda for the commission's June 10 meeting, Rushmore said.

The applicant is required to present the borough with a third-party study to ensure that the tower will meet Federal Communications Commission safety standards for radio frequency waves. Rushmore said that study will be included in the public information packet for the June 10 meeting.

The Vertical Bridge Development request is for a 150-foot-tall metal-lattice tower within a 50-foot-by-50-foot fenced area.

"The proposal would allow for Verizon Wireless coverage on the north end of Wrangell and the Wrangell airport," the application stated.

The new cell tower "will greatly enhance

wireless coverage in the area and will provide an opportunity for other wireless carriers to provide coverage to the north end of Wrangell Island," said a consulting company managing the conditional-use application for Vertical Bridge.

"The initial tenant for this site will be Verizon Wireless whose 4G antennas will be positioned at a height of approximately 147 feet above ground level," the application stated. "The communication tower and lease area are designed to accommodate three additional wireless carriers."

A new, non-exclusive 20-foot-wide access and utility easement would be built to the property from Third Avenue (the road to the trash site).

KSTK has a transmitter atop the solid waste transfer station building, broadcasting its signal to the lower Stikine River area and the Back Channel. The station wrote the Planning and Zoning Commission in April, expressing concern over "the potential for signal interference between the cell tower signal and the KSTK translator signal."

The station advised the commission, "KSTK does not want to be sued by Verizon if the existing KSTK signal and the new Verizon signal are interfering with each other. Any potential signal interference can be avoided if the new service provider ... is held responsible to engineer their system to not interfere with the existing KSTK signal."



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# Legislature hung up on dividend amid budget negotiations

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

Setting the amount of this year's Permanent Fund dividend — and deciding on how to pay the cost — continues to hold up agreement on a state spending plan for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

The Legislature has been in special session since May 20. The joint House-Senate conference committee that was appointed to settle budget differences has met only a few times, briefly reviewing non-controversial items, with a meeting expected sometime Wednesday.

Most legislators have left Juneau to return home or attend to their personal lives while negotiators focus on the political and financial struggles of settling on an amount for the PFD that could win enough votes for passage in the House and Senate.

"By far the most challenging of the compromises that need to be made is the amount of the Permanent Fund dividend," Juneau Rep. Sara Hannan said in an email to her constituents on Tuesday. "Legislators across the political spectrum are at odds on this question."

Years of declining state revenues have made it mathematically impossible to pay the large dividend as calculated under the 40-year-old formula in state law because the Permanent Fund earnings that were used to pay the PFD in past years now also go to help pay for schools, the university system, highways and everything else in the budget.

One option for legislators this session would be to exceed the annual limit on Permanent Fund withdrawals to pay a larger PFD. Though Gov. Mike Dunleavy supports this option with a dividend of around \$2,400 for each Alaskan, he does not have the backing of a majority of lawmakers.

The governor proposes taking an additional \$3 billion out of the Permanent Fund to pay the larger dividend and postpone any taxes on Alaskans for at least two years.

Dunleavy also asked lawmakers in the

special session to support putting the PFD into the state constitution, but he appears far short of the votes to approve that legislation.

The governor's plan assumes more budget cuts and long-term higher oil prices, and counts on years of strong Permanent Fund investment earnings, without any bad years.

Legislators opposed to the governor's fiscal bet point to his reliance on more cuts to public services spending. "If you think it's a good idea to eliminate Pioneer Homes, the Marine Highway, and defund public safety, then this is a great plan," Anchorage Rep. Zack Fields said on social media last week.

Higher oil prices this spring, driven up by OPEC and its allies withholding millions of barrels of oil per day from the global supply, are helping Alaska's budget. And so is more than \$1 billion in the latest round of federal pandemic aid, which the state can use to pay for some public services, freeing up more money for the PFD.

But oil prices are unpredictable, and the federal money is a one-time budget bonus.

Even with the assistance of higher oil revenues and federal aid, settling on the same dividend amount as last year, \$1,000, would require drawing down the last of the state's 30-year-old Constitutional Budget Reserve Fund.

The budget reserve serves as the state's cash-flow account, covering spending at the start of each fiscal year while the state waits for tax and oil royalty payments to arrive. It also provides a cushion against volatile oil prices and their hit to the state treasury.

Using more of the dwindling budget reserve to help cover a \$1,000 PFD this year would "drain it down to dangerous, precarious levels," Anchorage Sen. Natasha von Imhof said Tuesday.

If the Legislature uses a chunk of the federal aid to balance the budget while paying a \$1,000 dividend, what about next year's spending plan, the senator



AP PHOTO/BECKY BOHRER

**Sens. Bert Stedman, of Sitka (left), and Donny Olson, of Golovin, talk at a meeting of the legislative conference committee in Juneau on May 26. The committee's job is to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the state budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1. The committee includes three members each from the House and Senate.**

asked. Essentially draining the budget reserve fund this year could leave the state unable to pay a PFD in 2022, she said.

A slim majority of the Senate last month — not including von Imhof — approved a budget with a \$2,300 to \$2,400 dividend, which would require over-drawing the Permanent Fund. The House majority opposes taking extra money out of the fund to pay a dividend more than double the amount of last year's PFD.

Budget talks this month also include negotiations over how to spend the federal pandemic aid funds on services and possibly construction projects across the state.

Senate Majority Leader Shelley

Hughes, of Palmer, said Dunleavy's plan for a larger PFD enshrined in the constitution is a first step, but said the governor needs to do more. "Is he willing to put forward a sales tax? You know, is he willing to really stick his neck out and take some leadership to help get this through?" Hughes told the Anchorage Daily News.

The governor has also called the Legislature back to work for a second special session starting Aug. 2 to consider several more of his proposed constitutional amendments, including one that would prohibit any new state taxes without the Legislature first going to the public for permission.

## Former legislator, Sealaska president Albert Kookesh dies at 72

By JAMES BROOKS

Anchorage Daily News

A former co-chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives, former board president of the Sealaska Corp. and a retired Democratic state legislator died last Friday at his home in Angoon. Albert Kookesh was 72.

Kookesh was fighting prostate cancer. Alaska public radio reported that after being

treated at a hospital, he made the decision to return to his home village on the coast of Admiralty Island.

In remembrances posted online and shared on social media, he was praised for his work with Southeast Alaska's regional Native corporation, his efforts to preserve Tlingit culture and his state work on subsistence issues. Married to

Sally Woods-Kookesh, they had five children and numerous grandchildren.

"Albert was a lifelong advocate for his people, a force in Alaska politics, and a legendary Alaska Native leader," said former House Speaker Bryce Edgmon, of Dillingham.

Born on Nov. 24, 1948, in Juneau, Kookesh grew up in Angoon, a small, predomi-

nantly Native community on Admiralty Island. He attended Mount Edgecumbe School in Sitka, then attended Alaska Methodist University — now Alaska Pacific University — where he played college basketball. The 5-foot-6 Kookesh was the shortest person on the team but was labeled a "hustler" by the Anchorage Times.

He went on to law school at the University of Washington. In 1976, as a third-year law student, he was elected to the Sealaska board of directors under "Operation David and Goliath," a campaign put together by shareholders who said they felt that the newly formed corporation was neglecting less prominent Tlingit members.

At the same time, he worked with Kootznoowoo Inc., the village corporation of Angoon, and operated a lodge. He ran unsuccessfully for state House in 1978, losing in the Democratic primary for the district that covered Southeast communities between the hubs of Ketchikan and Juneau.

In 1993, he was elected co-chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives and unsuccessfully pushed for the state constitution to be amended to allow rural residents preferential access to hunting and fishing.

The state's failure to pass such an amendment led the federal government to assume authority over subsistence hunting and fishing in many places.

Elected to the state House in 1997, he switched to the Senate in 2004, where he represented a broad rural district. In 2010, he faced an ethics inquiry after implying that constituents in Craig might have a hard time getting funding from the Legislature unless they stopped opposing a Sealaska lands bill. A legislative panel cleared him of wrongdoing, and he apologized for the implication.

He lost re-election in 2012 to Sen. Bert Stedman, of Sitka, after redistricting consolidated their two senate districts into one.

The following year, he suffered a serious heart attack but recovered well enough to serve on the transition team for Gov. Bill Walker. In a 2015 Alaska Supreme Court decision, he successfully defended against an overfishing charge that he said was the result of the state infringing upon subsistence fishing rights.

Kookesh stayed active in politics afterward, endorsing the passage of Ballot Measure 2 in 2020, which will install ranked-choice voting in Alaska.

## Power agency will replace submarine cable next month

By THE PETERSBURG PILOT

The Southeast Alaska Power Agency plans to begin an eight-day process July 1 of removing a damaged submarine electrical cable and replacing it with a new line between Woronkofski and Vank islands, SEAPA CEO Trey Acteson told the Petersburg borough assembly May 17.

Crews will lay about 3.5 miles of new cable. The manufacturing and installation of the cable is estimated to cost about \$13.4 million, Acteson said.

SEAPA board member Bob Lynn told the assembly at an earlier meeting that the regional power agency would likely need to raise its rates to cover the cost of the project. He had estimated it could add half a cent per kilowatt hour to electrical rates in Wrangell and Petersburg. That would equate to a 4% or 5% rate

increase on the power charge on bills.

The damaged cable is one of four submarine cables that connect the SEAPA terminals between Woronkofski and Vank islands to provide Petersburg with power from the Tyee Lake hydroelectric project on the mainland, as the power moves to Wrangell and on to Petersburg.

Three of the cables are needed to transfer power, while the fourth is backup. Without a fourth cable for that stretch of the power grid, Petersburg would have to rely on diesel generation and the borough's Blind Slough hydro project for electricity if one of the other three cables were to become damaged.

The cable will be shipped to Vancouver, British Columbia, from Japan where it was manufactured by Sumitomo. When the

new cable arrives in Canada, it will be shipped up to Southeast on a specialty cable-laying barge that will be equipped with a GPS system to accurately set the cable, Acteson said.

At a SEAPA board meeting earlier this year, board members discussed selling bonds as a way to pay for the replacement cable.

SEAPA's current rate to Petersburg, Wrangell and Ketchikan has been 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour for more than 23 years. If rates did increase to cover the replacement project, ratepayers across all three communities would see the increase.

Acteson. SEAPA has applied for a grant from the state but won't know whether it will receive the money until sometime in the future.

# Wrangell receives first cruise tourists since 2019

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Ending a long hiatus of cruise ship visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wrangell received its first cruise ship of the season last Friday. The Kruzof Explorer, operated by Sitka-based Alaskan Dream Cruises, delivered about a dozen tourists to town for a day-long visit — the first ship to call on Wrangell since 2019.

“We’re having a great time with Alaskan Dream Cruises,” said Susan Igdaloff, of Newhall, California, one of the visitors. “We’re very fortunate we were able to stop in Wrangell.”

Several visitors said they were happy to be traveling again. They also said they were not too concerned about COVID-19, as the ship had precautions in place to protect passengers.

“I’m glad to be back at work,” said Simon Hook, naturalist expedition leader on board the ship. “Everyone has to get vaccinated, everyone has to be tested. You know, safety first. It’s good to see old friends and make new ones. I’ve been doing this for a long time, so it’s good to be back.”

Jennifer Robertson, of Portland, Ore-



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

**Passengers board the shuttle raft at the City Dock summer float for their return to the Kruzof Explorer last Friday, Wrangell’s first cruise ship visitors since 2019. The Explorer, and several other small ships, are scheduled for regular stops in town through mid-September.**

gon, was traveling on the Explorer with her husband Lee. She said it is much more fun traveling with a small group than on a bigger ship, and that they en-

joyed seeing the sights in Wrangell. They were supposed to sail last year, she added, but it got pushed back to this year due to COVID-19.

“We went and saw the petroglyphs, we just did Mt. Dewey, and the museum,” she said.

According to a schedule of planned visits, Wrangell can expect to regularly see cruise ships from now to mid-September. However, most of these are smaller ships carrying only a few dozen passengers, though at least a couple a larger and can accommodate several hundred visitors.

The city is anticipating about 2,000 cruise ship visitors this year, compared to an original expectation for around 20,000.

Congress last month approved a temporary waiver to allow larger, foreign-registered cruise ships to bypass the U.S.-required stop in Canada on their voyages between Seattle and Alaska this summer, and at least five cruise operators have announced plans to resume sailing as soon as late July. None of the cruise lines, however, include Wrangell on the itineraries for their ships, which can carry as many as 4,000 passengers.

More information on Wrangell’s cruise season is online at <https://www.wrangellalaska.org/visitorservices>.

## State settles alleged political firing cases for \$160,000

By SENTINEL STAFF  
AND THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The state has paid a cash settlement to a second former employee who alleged her firing early in the administration of Gov. Mike Dunleavy was political, not based on merit or job performance.

A former assistant public advocate for the state will receive \$75,000 as part of a settlement in a case she brought against Dunleavy, a former chief of

staff and the state that alleged wrongful firing.

Kelly Parker agreed to drop her lawsuit as part of the agreement, signed last month, the Anchorage Daily News reported last Thursday. The agreement says nothing in it should be deemed an admission of liability by the state.

The case was one of three filed after the Dunleavy administration, as part of its December 2018 transition into office,

asked at-will employees to submit resignation letters and reapply for their jobs. Parker and others alleged it amounted to a loyalty pledge.

Attorneys for the state Department of Law, in court filings, disputed Parker’s description. The Department of Law did not respond to a question asking why it settled the case.

In a separate challenge, the state agreed to settle for \$85,000 with a former employee whose job application was rejected because she supported the recall of the governor.

The out-of-court settlement was announced April 26 by the Alaska chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, which represented Keren Lowell, a former employee for the Alaska State Council on the Arts.

Lowell worked for the arts council in 2019 when Dunleavy vetoed the organization’s funding and Lowell lost her job. She then became involved in the recall effort. When the Legislature restored the council’s funding and Dunleavy approved it, Lowell reapplied for her job. She was told by email that her application was re-

jected because of “statements made on social media about the governor.”

Lowell said the action was a violation of her right to free speech, and she took the case to the American Civil Liberties Union of Alaska.

The ACLU threatened legal action but no lawsuit was filed before the settlement. The ACLU cited state law that prohibits the use of “political beliefs” as a reason to hire or not hire a person for most state jobs.

The Department of Law did not respond to questions.

## Police report

### Monday, May 24

Suspicious noises.  
Subpoena service.  
Agency assist: Alaska State Troopers.  
Illegal parking: Parking blocking roadway.  
Summons service.  
Driving complaint.  
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for expired plates.

### Tuesday, May 25

Criminal mischief.

### Wednesday, May 26

Noise complaint.  
Hazardous play.  
Agency assist: Alaska State Troopers.

Stalking.

Traffic stop: Citation for driving without a valid license.  
Suspicious circumstance.  
Trespassing.

### Thursday, May 27

Agency assist.  
Faulty equipment.  
Driving under the influence: Unfounded.  
Dog complaint.

### Friday, May 28

Agency assist: Electrical line department.  
Disturbance: Unfounded.  
Domestic: Unfounded.  
Vehicle unlock.

### Saturday, May 29

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for failure to carry and show drivers license.  
Domestic violence order violation.  
Found property: Keys.  
Hazardous play.  
Welfare check.

Motor vehicle accident: Hit and run.

### Sunday, May 30

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits.  
Agency Assist: U.S. Forest Service.

During this reporting period there were six agency assists for an ambulance.

## Petersburg defeats Wrangell at golf

Petersburg defeated Wrangell in this year’s Ray Pederson Memorial Ryder Cup golf tournament between the neighboring communities.

The Ryder Cup play used a best-ball and best-score format

the first day, May 22, and a best-ball and individual-score format the second day, May 23, of the weekend tournament.

The first day drew 20 golfers, with Petersburg winning 6-4. The visitors won the

second day 13½ to 8½, with 16 golfers on the course.

The annual tournament, sponsored by the Petersburg Golf Club, is a fundraiser for Wrangell’s Muskeg Meadows golf course.

## Marijuana shop can stay open evenings

Sentinel staff

Wrangell’s marijuana shop can now stay open to 10 p.m., a change from 6 p.m. The borough assembly amended the closing-time law at its May 25 meeting, effective the next day.

The change in municipal code passed unanimously, and there was no public testimony against the ordinance.

Kelsey Martinsen, owner of Happy Cannabis, said he may move to an 8 p.m. closing in June, then later extend to 10 p.m., though staying open later will depend on finding an employee to help at the shop.

The 6 p.m. closing was imposed by the assembly in 2017, soon after retail marijuana sales were legalized in Alaska. Martinsen opened his shop in April 2018.

State law allows shops to operate 21 hours a day, with a required closure between 5 and 8 a.m., but cities and boroughs can establish their own, more restrictive local hours.

Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga told the assembly that Martinsen told her the average closing time statewide is 10 p.m., which is what she proposed to the assembly.



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# Canada says it will not hide from truth of residential school deaths

By ROB GILLIES  
Associated Press

TORONTO — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Monday it's not an isolated incident that more than 200 children were found buried at a former residential school in British Columbia.

Trudeau's comments come as Indigenous leaders are calling for an examination of every former residential school site — institutions that held children taken from families across the nation.

Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation in British Columbia said the remains of 215 children, some as young as 3 years old, were confirmed this month with the help of ground-penetrating radar. She described the discovery as "an unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented" at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, the largest such school in the country.

Kamloops is about 150 miles northeast of Vancouver.

"As prime minister, I am appalled by the shameful policy that stole Indigenous children from their communities," Trudeau said.

"Sadly, this is not an exception or an isolated incident," he said. "We're not going to hide from that. We have to acknowledge the truth. Residential schools were a reality — a tragedy that existed here, in our country, and we have to own up to it. Kids were taken from their families, returned damaged or not returned at all."

From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 First Nations children were required to attend state-funded Christian schools as part of a

program to assimilate them into Canadian society. They were forced to convert to Christianity and not allowed to speak their Native languages. Many were beaten and verbally abused, and up to 6,000 are said to have died.

The Canadian government apologized in Parliament in 2008 and admitted that physical and sexual abuse in the schools was rampant. Many students recalled being beaten for speaking their Native languages. They also lost touch with their parents and customs.

Indigenous leaders have cited that legacy of abuse and isolation as the root cause of epidemic rates of alcoholism and drug addiction on reservations.

Plans are underway to bring in forensics experts to identify and repatriate the remains of the children found buried on the Kamloops site.

Trudeau said he'll be talking to his ministers about further things his government needs to do to support survivors and the community. Flags at all federal buildings are at half-staff.

Opposition New Democrat leader Jagmeet Singh called Monday for an emergency debate in Parliament.

"This is not a surprise. This is a reality of residential schools," Singh said.

"215 Indigenous kids were found in an unmarked mass grave," he said. "Anytime we think about unmarked mass graves, we think about a distant country where a genocide has happened. This is not a distant country."

The Kamloops school operated between 1890 and 1969, when the federal government



DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA AP

**Women from the Sto:lo Nation help carry a canoe after a ceremony to lead their late ancestors from an unmarked, undocumented burial site back to their home, outside the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, in Kamloops, British Columbia, on Monday. The remains of 215 children have been discovered buried near the former school.**

took over operations from the Catholic Church and operated it as a day school until it closed in 1978.

The National Truth and Reconciliation Commission has records of at least 51 children dying at the school between 1915 and 1963. The commission identified about 3,200 confirmed deaths at schools but noted the schools did not record the cause of death in almost half of them. Some died of tuberculosis.

The commission said the practice was not to send the bodies of the students who died at the schools to their communities. The commission also said the government wanted to keep costs down so adequate regulations were

never established.

"This discovery is a stain on our country. It is one that needs to be rectified," Opposition Conservative lawmaker Michelle Rempel Garner said.

Empty pairs of children's shoes have been placed at memorials throughout the country.

Perry Bellegarde, chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has said while it is not new to find graves at former residential schools, it's always crushing to have that chapter's wounds exposed.

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations and the Saskatchewan government said they want Ottawa to help research undocumented deaths and burials at residen-

tial schools in the province.

Federation Chief Bobby Cameron said finding the children's remains and giving them proper burials is important to help First Nations communities and families find closure. The federation has compiled a list of initial sites where it hopes to complete radar ground searches.

Sol Mamakwa, an opposition lawmaker with the New Democrat party in Ontario, also called on the government to search the grounds of other former residential schools.

"It is a great open secret that our children lie on the properties of former schools. It is an open secret that Canadians can no longer look away from," he said.

## Administration defends earlier decision to allow North Slope Conoco oil project

By BECKY BOHRER  
The Associated Press

Biden administration attorneys are defending a decision made during the Trump administration to approve a major oil project on Alaska's North Slope. Critics say the action flies in the face of President Joe Biden's pledges to address climate change.

U.S. Justice Department attorneys, in a filing May 26, wrote that opponents of the ConocoPhillips-led Willow project in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska were seeking to stop development by "cherry-picking" the records of federal agencies to claim environmental review law violations. The filing defends the reviews underpinning last fall's decision approving project plans.

Groups representing conservation and tribal interests sued to invalidate the Trump-era approval. An appeals court earlier this year halted certain construction activities, and parties in the case later agreed to keep in place construction activity limits until Dec. 1 while the underlying case continued.

The development, if Conoco proceeds to full build-out, is estimated at about \$6 billion.

The May 26 filing came in the underlying case. The filing was lauded by members of Alaska's congressional delegation, who have been critical of prior actions by President Joe Biden's administration affecting resource development, such as a temporary moratorium on oil and gas leasing in the Arctic National

Wildlife Refuge.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski told reporters the defense of the Willow project was "good news for Alaska. But I don't think that folks should believe that we've been able to all of a sudden charm the administration and they're going to do whatever it is that we have on our to-do list. We have to work very, very hard."

ConocoPhillips is the project developer, and has said it could start producing oil from Willow in 2025-2026. A company spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment May 27.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, in its decision approving Willow, said production over 30 years could reach about 585 million barrels of oil.

Trustees for Alaska filed the case challenging the adequacy of the review process on behalf of conservation and tribal interests. Bridget Psarianos, an attorney with the group, in a statement said the Biden administration's defense of the project "goes completely against its stated promises to take immediate and effective climate action, protect biodiversity, and take environmental justice concerns seriously."

Scott Fogarty, executive director of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, one of the litigants, said the administration's response "gives us real reason to question their commitment to science-informed management and climate action."

## GCI settles, channels restored

ANCHORAGE (AP) - Telecommunications company GCI has resumed carrying three major TV channels after ending a months-long dispute with Alaska television network owners.

An agreement was reached May 22-23 and the channel blackout was lifted for GCI customers, said Josh Edge, a GCI spokesperson.

GCI cable customers lost access to ABC, FOX and The CW in January, when a prior programming agreement expired.

The Alaska operators for the three channels are Coastal Television Broadcasting and Vision Alaska. The dispute was over how much GCI should pay the companies to carry the channels. GCI said the companies demanded to be paid more in the new contract. But Scott Centers, Coastal Television's chief operating officer, said GCI offered them less than in prior deals.

Edge and Centers declined to provide details of the new contract, including financial terms or the duration. GCI customers will not see an increase in their monthly bills from the new agreement, Edge said.

During the dispute, GCI recommended workarounds for customers to view blacked-out content, including streaming services. Centers started an online petition and called for GCI customers to leave GCI and subscribe to satellite TV.

GCI negotiates television contracts each year with numerous providers, Edge said. A prior blackout, in 2017, left GCI customers in southeast Alaska temporarily without the FOX channel.



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WRANGELL SENTINEL

# Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH  
Fisheries columnist

## Genetically modified Atlantic salmon on its way to U.S. markets

More than five tons of genetically engineered Atlantic salmon are on their way to U.S. restaurants and food service outlets where customers will not be told what they're eating.

Federal labeling law "directs" companies to disclose genetically modified ingredients through use of a QR code, on-package wording or a symbol. Mandatory compliance takes effect in January 2022, but the rules don't apply to restaurants or providers of meals away from home.

The Associated Press reports thus far, the only customer to announce it is selling the salmon is Samuels and Son Seafood, a Philadelphia-based distributor.

Bio-tech producer AquaBounty raises the man-made fish that are genetically tweaked to grow twice as fast as wild salmon, reaching an 8- to 12-pound market size in 18 months rather than the normal three years. The fish are reared at an indoor growing facility in Indiana, with other locations planned.

"Most of the salmon in this country is imported, so having a domestic source of supply that isn't seasonal like wild salmon and that is produced in a highly controlled, bio-secure environment is increasingly important to consumers," AquaBounty CEO Sylvia Wulf told the AP.

AquaBounty markets the salmon as disease- and antibiotic-free, saying it comes with a reduced carbon footprint and none of the risk of polluting marine ecosystems as in traditional sea-cage farming.

The FDA approved the AquaAdvantage Salmon as "safe

and effective" in 2015. It was the only genetically modified animal approved for human consumption.

### Interest grows in kelp farming

Alaska's interest in growing kelp continues to outpace that of shellfish, based on applications filed during the annual window that runs from January through April.

Though the number of applications was down compared to last year, most were to raise kelp, and the pandemic is the likely cause of the recent decline in overall applications.

"We had people whose personal situations changed because of COVID. They became homeschooling parents, things like that, where they can no longer dedicate the time they thought they were going to have out on a farm site," said Michell Morris, permit coordinator at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The agency partners with the Department of Natural Resources, which leases the lands where aquatic farming takes place.

Of the new applicants, six plan to grow kelp in waters of Kodiak, Yakutat and Cordova, and one intends to farm oysters at Sitka.

So far, 76 active shellfish farm and kelp permits in Alaska cover nearly 900 acres, and 35 pending applications total 1,631 acres, Morris said.

Most of the active farms (42) are located throughout Southeast, with 26 in the Southcentral regions of Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound and eight at Ko-



DUSTIN SAFRANEK/KETCHIKAN DAILY NEWS VIA AP

## Crew vaccination cruise

The 102-passenger National Geographic Orion, a Lindblad Expeditions vessel, arrived in Ketchikan on May 24 — without any passengers. The ship carried 110 crew members to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations. The Orion left Ketchikan on Monday. Acting Ketchikan Port and Harbors Director Mark Hilson said the idea to bring cruise ship crew to Ketchikan to receive their vaccine shots came up a couple of months ago in talks with the company's local agent. "They have a mitigation plan that keeps them in their own environment and from mixing with the community so they can get them safely vaccinated," said Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center Incident Commander Abner Hoage. The crew members remained on board during their stay. The Orion sailed to Ketchikan from Mexico, and headed back to Mexico when it left, said local agent Rick Erickson. Lindblad will start its Alaska cruises on June 25.

diak.

The number of operations reporting sales through 2020 stayed steady at 28, said Flip Pryor, statewide aquaculture section chief at Fish and Game. Overall, sales last year dropped to approximately \$1.08 million, down from \$1.5 million, with Pacific oysters making up about 80% of the value.

"Production in 2020 dropped below one million oysters for the first time since 2016," Pryor said.

At the same time, sales of primarily ribbon and sugar kelp doubled, topping 230,000 pounds.

"The statewide value of aquatic plants was just under \$200,000, which is a nice jump from \$60,000 in 2019," Pryor added.

Nearly all of the kelp sales came from three Kodiak growers who expect to produce up to 300,000 pounds this year, according to the Kodiak Daily Mirror. All sell their harvests to Blue Evo-

lution, a California-based buyer that produces kelp popcorn, pastas and powders.

Alaska kelp pioneer, Nick Mangini of Kodiak Island Sustainable Seaweed (KISS), also is working with the U.S. Department of Energy on a biofuel project that would eventually need hundreds of millions of pounds of product.

Small growers fill a niche, Pryor said, but it will take bigger operators to scale up the industry's economic potential.

"Small growers can do things like supply local restaurants because of very low transport costs compared to shipping stuff down to the Lower 48. But it's going to take those big farms and the big processors that have money to invest to bring that volume up and make those economies of scale happen and provide a constant product," he said.

"People who are buying kelp for biofuels, for example, don't want a boom-and-bust sort of thing. They want to know they can count on X number of pounds every single year. And that's definitely going to take some big operations in the water."

### Shellfish safety zone

Kachemak Bay appears to be a refuge from ocean acidity levels that prevent shellfish and marine creatures from growing skeletons and shells.

That's based on first results of a study started in 2017 that placed an array of sensors nearshore to test for carbon dioxide levels which indicate ocean acidity. The tested regions never indicated long-term periods of corrosivity, and that's good news for aqua-farmers doing business

Continued on page 11

## CLASSIFIED/LEGALS

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**CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL 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 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 June 3, 2021

**CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE**

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

Ordinance No. 999 of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending Chapter 20.32 of the Zoning Code titled OS District-Open Space/Public Section 20.32.020 Conditional Uses by adding Municipal Facilities and Communication Infrastructure as two new Conditional Uses

Ordinance No. 1000 of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending the Zoning Map to effect a change to Lot 11A, Lot 11B, and Lot 10A, Block 5, Third Avenue Subdivision and Lots 12-15, Block 5, USS 2127 from Holding to Open Space/Public

Ordinance No. 1001 of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending Chapter 6.05 of the Wrangell Municipal Code title Marijuana Section 6.05.005 Titled Hours of Operation; Penalty for Violation, by increasing the allowable hours of operation

Emergency Ordinance No. 1002 of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, reaffirming the Declaration of Emergency in Emergency Ordinances 976, 980, 985 and 994, Repealing Emergency Ordinance 995, and Reenacting the Adoption of International and Interstate Travel Testing measures

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

Publish June 3, 2021

# Southeast cemetery bill awaits governor's signature

JUNEAU (AP) - A bill that protects the graves of Unangax people in Southeast Alaska awaits a signature from Gov. Mike Dunleavy after both chambers of the Alaska Legislature approved the measure.

The Unangax cemetery holds more than 30 graves of people who died at Funter Bay during World War II. They were relocated to two internment camps there from the Aleutian Islands by U.S. forces after the Japanese military invaded.

They spent much of the war at the remote spot on the western side of Admiralty Island, about 20 miles west of Juneau, and, more than 1,000 miles from their homes in the Aleutian Islands.

Many of those who died were young children or elders. The camps did not have clean water or basic medical care.

The bill, sponsored by Juneau Rep. Sara Hannen, would protect the graves and also add 251 acres to the cemetery.

Friends of Admiralty Island sought legislation to protect the graves. Group member Martin Stepetin is Unangax and Tlingit. His grandparents were interned at Funter Bay.

He told Juneau public radio station KTOO that having the state recognize the violent past of the land they own at Funter Bay was a crucial aspect of the bill.

"What happened to the Aleuts in 1942 by the federal government was a really bad thing," he said. "It was a really bad thing that we don't ever want to happen again. And the only way we can ever protect ourselves from things that happened to us, by us, is to remember it. That's why we have history class. That's why we have history."

He also hopes this is just a start in having other cemeteries in Southeast Alaska afforded similar protections, such as one on Killisnoo Island.

The island, located about 50 miles south of Funter Bay, was where about 83 people from Atka in the Aleutian Islands were relocated in 1942. They were allowed to return home three years later but 17 people had died on Killisnoo, according to "World War II Aleut Relocation Camps in Southeast Alaska," by Charles M. Mobley and published by the National Park Service.

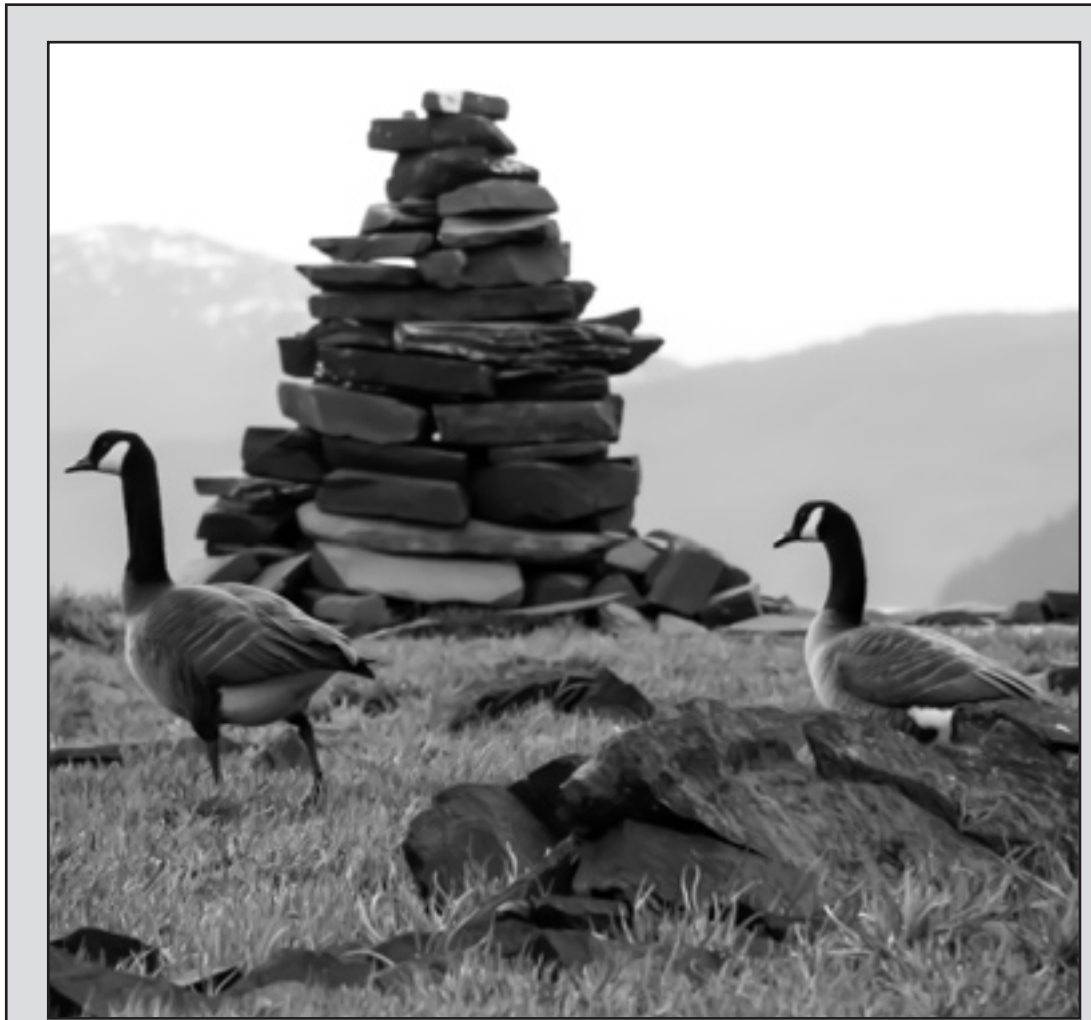


PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/WRANGELL SENTINEL

## Evening stroll

A couple of geese make their way through City Park, past the stone pile, early last Saturday evening.

# Fish factor

Continued from page 10 in the bay.

Researchers found that Kachemak Bay also is one of the most variable places on Earth in terms of hourly acidic changes, likely due to its vast tidal range.

"I think it's the second largest in the world being about eight meters or 24 feet in total, in June and December," said Cale Miller, at the University of California who led the study for his doctoral thesis at the University of California. "The other thing that's important is the oceanography of the bay itself. You get a lot of influx from the Gulf of Alaska and Cook Inlet, and the Homer Spit bisects the bay into two distinct regions that have different oceanographic patterns. There's evidence that organisms, especially the photosynthesizing organisms, are different between the inner and outer portions of the bay. And those are what you would call the lower trophic level or food chain items for a lot of other organisms that they live on."

Miller worked under the guidance of Amanda Kelly, an assistant professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, who said the multi-year study will give a better gauge of corrosive water conditions and when they are occurring.

"One of the benefits of studies like these is that we're able to identify areas that are potentially good for shellfish or maybe not so good, or maybe better for seaweed aquaculture," she said.

# Man places swastikas on windows of Jewish museum in Anchorage

By MARK THIESSEN  
The Associated Press

A tall, thin man wearing a hood and a mask was caught on a security camera plastering Nazi stickers on a Jewish museum in Anchorage on May 25.

He drove a scooter to the Alaska Jewish Museum, placed one sticker on the door and jumped to place three more symbols of hate on windows before driving off, Rabbi Yosef Greenberg, the president of the museum's board of directors, said of what their video cameras showed happening at 2 a.m.

About 45 minutes later, another sticker was placed on the main entrance door to Mad Myrna's, a gay bar in downtown Anchorage.

Each white sticker was emblazoned with a black swastika, the symbol of the Nazi party, and targeted two groups associated with Holocaust victims.

Written above and below the swastika are the words, "WE ARE EVERYWHERE."

"There is no place for hate in our community," Anchorage police said in a statement asking the public's help in identifying those responsible.

"What that sticker symbolizes is hate," Anchorage police spokesperson MJ Thim told The Associated Press. "And we're not going to stand for it, and there's no place for it. And we're going to investigate it and figure out what this is all about."

Thim said to his knowledge, these were the first reports of such stickers showing up in Anchorage. But in Washington state last October, similar stickers were placed on several businesses in Bellingham, the Bellingham Herald reported at

the time. "Swastikas have also become a symbol of white supremacy and the far right, and actions like this disproportionately impact people of color in the LGBTQ community," said Laura Carpenter, executive director of Identity Inc., a statewide LGBTQ+ organization headquartered in Anchorage, not too far from Mad Myrna's.

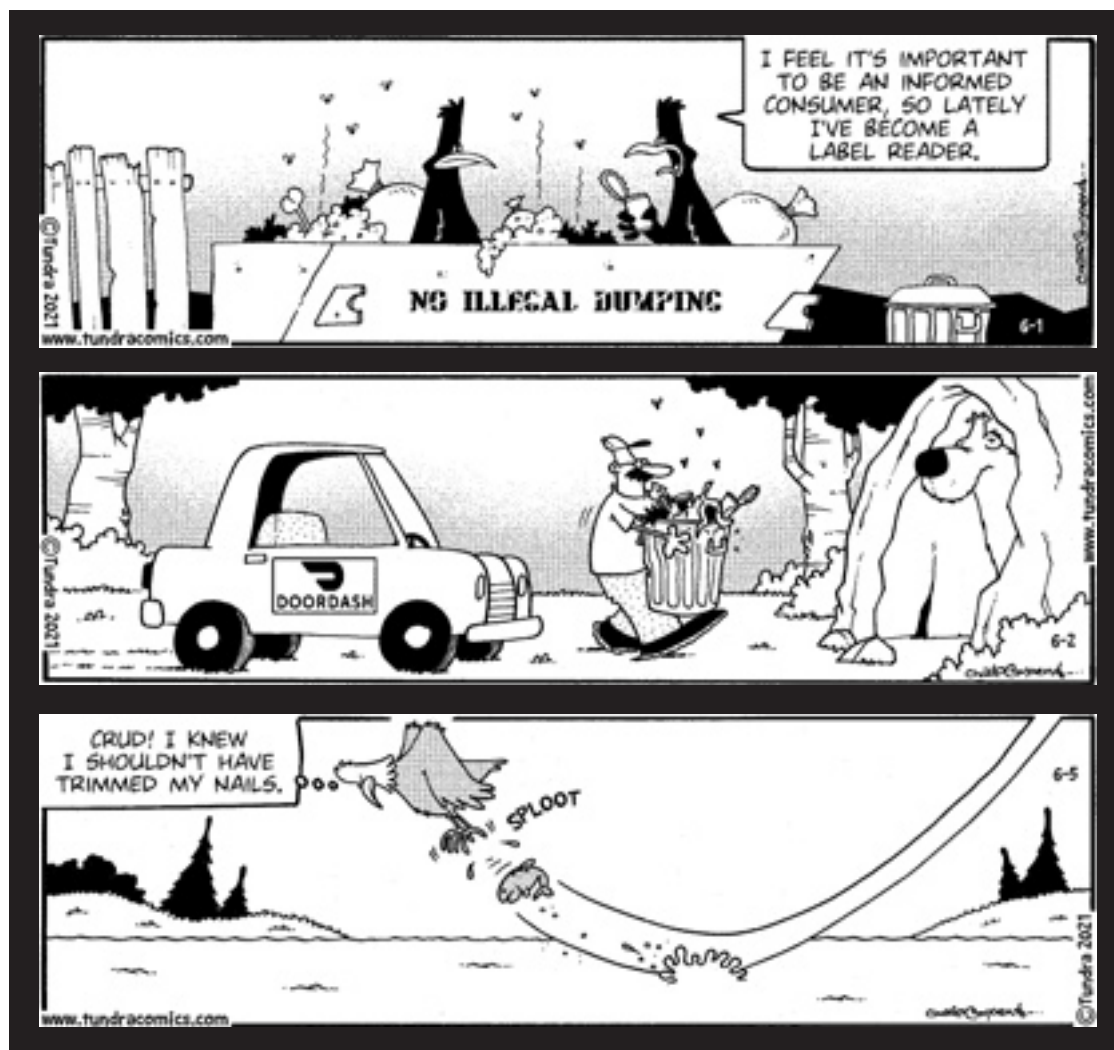
"This is just another example of people trying to demonize the LGBTQ community and Jewish people," Carpenter said.

Under Adolf Hitler, Nazis systematically murdered 6 million Jews during World War II. Nazis also persecuted gays, mostly men. About 15,000 were sent to camps and at least half were killed.

Greenberg called the person on the scooter, a man believed to be in his late 20s or 30s, a coward whose only purpose was to create fear. "He is dealing with the wrong people," Greenberg said. "We are not the people that fear."

He said the FBI and police indicated it was not a serious or organized threat.

"One guy got excited about something he read on the internet and came and put a sticker," the rabbi said.



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# Researchers work to identify origins of 'ghost nets'

By CALEB JONES  
Associated Press

HONOLULU - "Ghost nets" from unknown origins drift among the Pacific's currents, threatening sea creatures and littering shorelines with the entangled remains of what they kill.

Lost or discarded at sea, sometimes decades ago, this fishing gear continues to wreak havoc on marine life and coral reefs in Hawaii.

Now, researchers are doing detective work to trace this harmful debris back to fisheries and manufacturers — and that takes extensive, in-depth analysis on tons of ghost nets.

The biggest concern is that derelict gear keeps killing fish and other wildlife such as endangered Hawaiian monk seals, seabirds and turtles long after it's gone adrift, said Drew McWhirter, a graduate student at Hawaii Pacific University and one of the study's lead researchers.

"These nets bulldoze over our reefs before they hit shore," McWhirter said. "They leave a path of destruction, pulling coral heads out, and can cause a lot of ecological damage."

Ghost nets foul oceans throughout the world, but the Hawaiian Islands — with the Great Pacific Garbage Patch to the east and another gyre of floating trash to the west — are an epicenter for marine waste.

Past efforts to identify origins of nets have proven difficult because debris comes from so many countries and nets have few, if any, unique identifying marks or features.

Experts believe many nets are lost accidentally, but boats occasionally ditch nets to avoid prosecution when fishing illegally. Other fishermen cut away portions of damaged nets instead of returning them to shore.

The ghost net study is being supervised by Hawaii Pacific University's Center for Marine Debris Research co-director, Jennifer Lynch, a research biologist

with the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

"We're going to have a very challenging time ... trying to identify it back to its source," said Lynch. "And if we fail ... that's going to be increased evidence for policymakers to see the importance of gear marking and potentially bring those kinds of regulations to the front."

For Lynch, it's not about pointing fingers. Rather, she hopes the study, which will be presented to the fishing industry first, will help develop new ways to prevent damage to the marine environment.

"We're doing this study in a very forensic way where we're gathering as much evidence as we possibly can so that we can present the best, most accurate story," Lynch said.

The crew gets ghost nets from three sources: The main Hawaiian Islands, the fishing grounds of the Hawaii longline tuna fleet that often snags nets — and the shores of the uninhabited Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, which are part of Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument.

An April cleanup expedition to Papahānaumokuākea — the largest protected environment in the United States and a UNESCO World Heritage Site — brought back nearly 50 tons of nets and other lost gear.

In a shed on the university's campus, researchers pull apart bundles of fishing gear, noting the relationships between items. Then samples are taken to a lab for analysis.

"We only really need a small sample here to really understand how it's constructed," said Raquel Corniuk, a research technician at the university.

Researchers look at about 70 different aspects of each piece of net, including its polymer types. "We look at how it's twisted. Is it twisted versus braided? We are trying to look at how many strands does it have, its twine diameter, mesh stretch size"



AP PHOTO/CALEB JONES

**Hawaii Pacific University graduate student Drew McWhirter (left) and Raquel Corniuk, a research technician at the university's Center for Marine Debris Research, pull apart a massive entanglement of ghost nets May 12 in Kaneohe, Hawaii. The two are part of a study that is attempting to trace derelict fishing gear that washes ashore in Hawaii back to the manufacturers and fisheries that it came from.**

Corniuk said.

The information is entered into a database to help scientists find patterns that could lead to manufacturers and eventually individual fisheries or nations.

The researchers have spent about a year collecting data and hope to have findings peer reviewed and published this year.

Among the ghost gear are fish aggregation devices (FADs), floating bundles of material fishing vessels leave in the ocean to attract fish. The devices have receivers linked to satellites, but when they drift outside designated fishing areas, they're usually abandoned.

Mike Conroy, president of West Coast Fisheries Consultants, works with purse seine and gillnet operators off California. He said FADs are prohibited in U.S. waters and that fishers do everything they can to prevent

loss of nets.

"An average one of those nets is going to run the operator somewhere between 150 and 250 grand," he said.

Conroy acknowledged ghost gear is a problem. "These types of research activities will point the finger in the right direction," he said. "I think what you'll see is that West Coast fisheries probably aren't contributing much."

The researchers have already found debris from all corners of the Pacific, including Asian countries and the U.S. West Coast.

Much of the ghost net problem lies with less developed nations that have few fishing regulations and sometimes buy or manufacture low-quality nets, according to a career fisherman who now works for a net manufacturer in Washington state.

"Their products tend to be weaker," said Brian Fujimoto, a sales executive for NET Systems, in Bainbridge Island. "And if you look at the poly netting and ropes that you're finding, they're all very inexpensive stuff."

Fujimoto said his company uses technology, colors and other construction techniques unique to their products, so they're easily identifiable.

Making that an industry standard, he said, is "only going to happen with the more industrialized nations, say for exam-

ple, the U.S., Canada, Japan."

Daniel Pauly, a marine biologist and professor at the University of British Columbia's Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, said, "We kill fish for fishing and for consumption, but these fish that are killed by lost gear are killed for no reason, not to mention the marine mammal and turtles and other animals that we like."

Jonathan Moore, principal assistant secretary of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs at the U.S. State Department, said last year, "Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, which is sometimes associated with ghost gear, is among the greatest threats to the sustainable use of our shared ocean resource."

Although U.S. and some international laws require identifying markers on some fishing gear, such as crab pots and buoys, nets are not required to be marked.

Officials with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's fisheries division declined to be interviewed for this story, but said in an email: "NOAA Fisheries is unaware of any regulations that have been, or are being considered, with regard to ghost nets. We continue to work agency-wide on this international marine debris problem."

## Google Earth app shows time-lapse images that illustrate climate change

SAN RAMON, California (AP) - The Google Earth app is adding a new video feature that draws upon nearly four decades of satellite imagery to vividly illustrate how climate change has affected glaciers, beaches, forests and other places around the world.

The tool is being billed as the biggest update to Google Earth in five years. Google says it undertook the complex project in partnership with several government agencies, including NASA in the U.S. and its European counterpart, in hopes that it will help a mass audience grasp the sometimes abstract concept of climate change in more tangible terms through its free Earth app.

Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald believes that mission may be accomplished.

"This is amazing," she told The Associated Press after watching a preview of the new feature. "Trying to get people to understand the scope of the climate change and the land-use problem is so difficult because of the long time and spatial scales. I would not be surprised if this one bit of software changes many people's minds about the scale of the impact of humans on the environment."

This isn't the first time time-lapse satellite im-

agery has been used to show how parts of the world are changing due to a changing climate. Most scientists agree that climate change is being driven by pollution primarily produced by humans.

But earlier images have mostly focused on melting glaciers and haven't been widely available on an already popular app like Google Earth, which can be downloaded on most of the more than 3 billion smartphones in use around the world.

Google is promising that people will be able to see a time-lapse presentation of just about anywhere they want to search. The feature also includes a storytelling mode highlighting 800 different places on the planet in both 2D and 3D formats. Those videos also will be available on Google's YouTube video site, a service more widely used than the Earth app.

The feature was created from 24 million satellite images taken every year from 1984 to 2020 and provided by NASA, the U.S. Geological Survey and the European Union, according to Google. The time-lapse technology was created with the help of Carnegie Mellon University.

Google plans to update the time-lapse imagery at least once a year.

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