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A shot at state

- Boys beat Petersburg on Saturday for second place and a trip to state
- Girls narrowly miss second place in tough overtime loss to Haines
- Cheer squad places second, goes to state

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

In four days of tough battles on the hardwood, including an overtime win in the third round, the Wrangell High School boys basketball team took second place in the Southeast regional championships last Saturday in Juneau and a berth at the state tournament.

The boys and girls varsity teams, along with the cheer and pep squads, traveled to the capital city to vie for a chance to compete for the state championship in Anchorage.

Like the boys team, the cheer squad took second place

to qualify for state.

Boys varsity

The boys began their bid for the Southeast championship against the Petersburg Vikings, a team the Wolves have only beaten once in their previous four matchups. The two teams, though different in size and strategies, are equally matched, and the game last Wednesday in the Thunder Mountain High School gym showed just that.

Where Petersburg had a size advantage with Kyle Biggers and Jack Engell and the shooting power of Rik Cumps,

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PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Senior Devlyn Campbell, right, drives the lane while dodging Kieran Cabral (2) and Elijah Whitacre (0) of Petersburg in Saturday's action at Southeast regionals.

Summer ferry schedule finally open for bookings

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Just eight weeks before the start of the summer timetable on May 1, the Alaska Marine Highway System released its schedule and opened its online reservations system for bookings.

The schedule, which was announced March 7, came later than usual this year as the state continues to wrestle with crew shortages that will keep a couple of ships tied to the dock for the summer.

Wrangell will see a weekly ferry stop in each direction May through September.

"The Kennicott and Tazlina will be off-line for the time being due to skilled crew shortages, but will be brought back on-line once hiring increases," the ferry system reported in its announcement.

The announcement described the schedule as "a baseline service that will be increased as AMHS crewing improves."

As of Monday afternoon, however, the Department of Transportation was unable to say how many new hires would be needed before it could put either the Kennicott or Tazlina to work.

"This is not a surprise," Sitka Sen. Bert Stedman, co-chair of the budget-writing Senate Finance Committee, said of the cut in service. "It's not a lack of funding from the Legislature."

"I'm very disappointed," said Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz, who serves on the House Finance Committee. Ortiz and Stedman, who both also represent Wrangell, have pushed hard to

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State tracks Wrangell class of '05, finds over half live out of state

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Zach Taylor of Muddy Water Adventures is a self-described "small town person." He likes striking up a conversation with his barista and greeting the familiar people he passes on the street. However, he acknowledges that life in small towns like Wrangell may not be for everyone.

"Folks who grew up here, (Wrangell) they either stay here and they really like it," said Taylor, or they "have never been back, not for any reason."

The Alaska Department of Labor is interested in the factors that motivate people to leave their Alaska hometowns for the Lower 48 or stick around in-state, where they can bolster its economy. In February, the department released its latest study of Alaska's high school graduating class of 2005, detailing where these grads ended up 16 years after they left high school.

Taylor was part of Wrangell's class of 2005.

Outmigration presents a significant problem for Alaska. In 2022, more people left than moved to the state for the 10th consecutive year, according to Department of Labor data. Outmigration is "a pretty important indicator of economic health," Nolan Klouda, director of the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development told



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY TAYLOR/JENKINS

Zach Taylor, above left, who owns Muddy Water Adventures, was a member of the Wrangell High School class of 2005. The state Department of Labor has been keeping track of Alaskans who graduated that year to learn where they have studied, moved, worked and set up their lives. Clover Jenkins, above right, visited Anchorage last month from her home in Missouri, where the Wrangell class of 2005 graduate is studying public health.

the Alaska Beacon. "People do tend to vote with their feet and move to a place that sees more economic opportunity, has more job growth and more opportunity in general."

Students who attend in-state colleges are more likely to remain in Alaska. After graduating high school, more than half of the class of 2005 who attended college in-state

remained in Alaska. Class of 2005 grads who attended college out-of-state tended to stay away — 75% of out-of-state students have set up their life outside Alaska.

The department's report is based on 2021 survey results.

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Governor proposes parental-rights legislation and teacher retention bonuses

Takes no position on adding more public schools funding

By IRIS SAMUELS AND SEAN MAGUIRE
Anchorage Daily News

While education advocates continue to push for increased state funding to Alaska public schools, Gov. Mike Dunleavy last week opted to introduce proposals that would limit sexual education in schools and impose new requirements on gender-nonconforming students.

The governor at his March 7 news conference did not propose any increase in the state's per-student funding formula for school districts, essentially unchanged in six years, though he did ask legislative

approval of retention bonuses for teachers.

Most legislators have said an increase in state funding for schools is a priority this year — though how much and with what if any strings attached is undecided — while a minority of lawmakers have expressed interest in legislating social issues for schools.

The governor's measure, which he called "parental rights" legislation, would prohibit teaching sexual education before fourth grade, require written parental permission for children to participate in sexual education after fourth grade, require parents to sign off when a child asks to change their name or pronouns, and require children to use locker rooms and restrooms according to their biological sex.

"Parents need to be able to say whether they want their children part of this or whether they don't," said Dunleavy, add-

ing that issues relating to sex and gender are tied to "family values."

"There should never be a case where a parent sends their kid to school, and the child comes back having discussions about things they learned in school that may be a sensitive issue or an affront to a parent's values," the Republican governor said while surrounded by an invited contingent of conservative education advocates and children.

Anchorage Democratic Sen. Lōki Tobin said the governor was turning gender non-conforming students — a small and vulnerable group — into "a political football."

Tobin, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, said, "It really does increase harm to young people. ... However you want to slice it, that's what this bill does."

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Birthdays & Anniversaries

The Sentinel extends its best wishes to everyone listed in the chamber of commerce community birthday calendar.

Thursday, March 16: Paula Rak, Triston Schneider.

Friday, March 17: None.

Saturday, March 18: None.

Sunday, March 19: Michelle Brock, Ryan Soeteber, Jared Stuhr, Emmett Michael Villarma, Frank Warfel Jr.

Monday, March 20: Becky Thomas; Anniversary: Matt and Edna Nore.

Tuesday, March 21: Anniversary: Vern and Nancy Cummings.

Wednesday, March 22: Rachel Stough. Willa Franks.

Senior Center Menu

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

Thursday, March 16

Pork chops baked with apples, french-style green beans, sunshine salad, rice vegetable pilaf

Friday, March 17

Liver and onions, zucchini, garden salad, potatoes and parsley

Monday, March 20

Chicken curry, peas, rice and beans, spicy fruit salad

Tuesday, March 21

Tuna salad sandwich, broccoli and cheese soup, tossed salad

Wednesday, March 22

BBQ beef on a bun, mixed veggies, potato salad

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

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, March 17
Columbia, 6:45 p.m.
Friday, March 24
Columbia, 3:45 p.m.
Friday, March 31
Columbia, 6:15 p.m.
Friday, April 7
Columbia, 2:45 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, March 20
Columbia, 6:30 a.m.
Monday, March 27
Columbia, 4:45 a.m.
Monday, April 3
Columbia, 5:30 a.m.
Sunday, April 9
Columbia, 5:30 p.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.

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

Tides

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Mar. 15	06:38	14.3	08:39	11.0	00:12	5.4	01:36	1.8
Mar. 16	08:14	14.0	10:08	11.9	01:34	6.2	03:07	1.5
Mar. 17	09:46	14.8	11:11	13.5	03:15	6.0	04:29	0.4
Mar. 18	10:57	16.0	04:43	4.5	05:31	-0.9
Mar. 19	00:01	15.2	11:57	17.3	05:46	2.6	06:21	-2.0
Mar. 20	00:44	16.8	12:48	18.2	06:37	0.7	07:03	-2.5
Mar. 21	01:24	18.0	01:36	18.6	07:22	-0.9	07:42	-2.4

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

TALK, THEY HEAR YOU information session for parents, at 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 15, Nolan Center. Join Tlingit & Haida for a conversation on how to talk with your children about the dangers of underage drinking and substance misuse. Intended for parents with children in third through fifth grade. Refreshments will be provided. For more information, contact recovery coordinator Jaclyn Bacani at 907-463-7382 or jbacani@cchita-nnsn.gov.

TALKING CIRCLE, a comprehensive opioid, stimulant and substance abuse program, noon Thursday, March 16, Nolan Center. Join Tlingit & Haida's Reentry and Recovery Department. The objective is to decrease the risk of substance abuse, overdose deaths and damage to families and the Tlingit & Haida culture by creating a tribal action plan to strengthen resources and partnerships among service providers, tribal leaders and the community. For more information, contact recovery coordinator Jaclyn Bacani at 907-463-7382 or jbacani@cchita-nnsn.gov.

PTCC MEETING (Parent Teacher Community Club), at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 16, Evergreen Elementary School gym. Find out more about how parents and the community can help the schools and students. For information, call 907-874-2321.

SHAMROCK SHUFFLE, the Sig and Helen Decker Memorial Run, is planned for Friday, March 17. Half-marathon, 10k and 5k distances. Starts and ends at Rayme's. Start times will be announced soon. Proceeds will go toward the Sig and Helen Decker Memorial Scholarship Fund.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER "Ant-man and the Wasp: Quantumania," rated PG-13, at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 17-18. The action adventure comedy film runs 2 hours and 4 minutes; tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

FAMILY PICKLEBALL, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 18 and 25, at the community center gym. Open to 14 years and up; \$5 drop-in fee. Must bring gym shoes and wear clothing that allows for cat-like speed and reflexes. For more information and to register online visit www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD, 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 20, via Zoom. Go to: <https://bit.ly/40sFhs0>. Meeting ID is 886 5016 1908; passcode 397072. Community members can email comments to kpowell@wpsd.us, or can sign up under guests to be heard by emailing the same address before 3:30 p.m. March 20.

ELECTRONIC WASTE DROP-OFF from noon to 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday, March 30-31, and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, April 1, at the Wrangell Cooperative Association cultural center. Drop off computers, printers, scanners, fax machines, DVD players, gaming systems and more. No kitchen appliances (microwaves, refrigerators, etc.) or hospital equipment. Cost is 25 cents per pound. Call 907-874-4304 with questions.

PERMANENT FUND DIVIDEND application deadline is 11:59 p.m. March 31 for online applications. Paper applications must be postmarked by March 31. The Wrangell Legislative Information Office can assist with PFD issues and help people file online, or paper applications are available outside the office door. The office can copy and certify documents for applicants who do not want to mail in originals. The office in the Kadin Building on Front Street is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Call 907-874-3013 with questions.

LITTLE LEAGUE VOLUNTEERS needed for coaching, umpiring, scorekeeping, concessions, bookkeeping, field upkeep and more. Register for Little League online at <https://bit.ly/3KO1ivZ>, or paper copies are available at the chamber of commerce office in the Stikine Inn. Contact Kaelene Harrison at 808-265-4482 with any questions.

HEAD START is accepting applications for preschoolers. Apply online at cchita-nnsn.gov or get a paper application at the school behind the old hospital building. Call 907-874-2455 with questions.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 907-874-2301.

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

March 15, 1923
Wrangell basketball boys faced an assembly of 900 in Olympia, Washington, on Tuesday and gave detailed reports of Alaska. Wrangell lost the game to Olympia on a canvas floor. Then Wrangell lost to Everett, 19-18. The Seattle Chamber of Commerce is giving a big feed to the boys Friday. The Pacific Steamship Co. arranged to take the Wrangell boys on a free excursion including a big dinner. The Seattle Chamber of Commerce made arrangements for the boys to go through the Navy Yards at Bremerton, with all expenses paid from Seattle. The boys are meeting city, county and state officials wherever they go. County Schools Superintendent House of Seattle says the trip is equal to a year in school for its education value.

March 12, 1948
The Wrangell Chamber of Commerce at its Monday meeting decided unanimously to sponsor a celebration this summer in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Gold Rush of 1898. Chamber president Thor Hofstad

pointed out that it is only fitting that Wrangell commemorate the Gold Rush as Wrangell was known in 1898 at the gateway to the Interior. Fifteen sternwheel riverboats operated on the Stikine at the time, carrying gold seekers into the Interior. The celebration will commence about June 15, and extend for the duration of the tourist season with everyone getting into the spirit of 1898 by decorating, dressing up and acting accordingly.

March 16, 1973
The Wrangell City Council on Tuesday approved an ordinance raising water rates on first reading; the ordinance still must go through second and third readings to become law. Overall, the ordinance will increase city water rates an average of 24% for city users, double the connection rates and raise rates for the 30 to 40 outside-city customers 100%. City Manager Herb McNabb told the council and the audience that the water rates the city now charges do not pay for the service, that the city is falling short approximately \$20,000 each year

and that the water utility is about \$60,000 in the red.

March 12, 1998
During the city council meeting Tuesday, the topics of both the current ferry system and an alternative one were presented, both as critical problems and as possible solutions. The discussions stemmed from the council's concern for the local fisheries which are suffering from transportation problems due to sparse ferry service. City Manager Scott Seabury initiated the discussion on a larger, alternative ferry system, stating that this could mean huge changes to Wrangell. He noted that this option would involve building several new terminals on the route. He added that the number of mainline ferries would be geared to the number of people they could put on the ships in Bellingham, Washington, and that these ferries would stop in the main cities, including Wrangell. This would create more traffic, opening the area for a different kind of tourism as well.

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FREIGHT FOR LESS

PFD hearing brings out widely differing viewpoints

LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

When Jan Kanitz of Juneau and Antonia Lenard of Eagle River testified before a legislative committee last Saturday about personal responsibility and the Permanent Fund dividend, they spoke from completely different perspectives.

For Kanitz, it was about acknowledging that current state spending on schools, health care and the ferry system is woefully inadequate, with too much emphasis on paying out large dividends.

"I think a fixed, limited PFD as a symbolic thing helps people have buy-in to the state ... I support that, but it should not bankrupt us," she said. "I think we need a better sense of civic responsibility and personal responsibility in our state to go forward."

Lenard favors the individual approach over the collective good. She testified that a better policy would be to guarantee residents large dividends, allowing them to exercise personal responsibility without having to rely on state-funded services.

"Probably a lot of our state-funded needs would go away because we'd have enough money individually to make decisions based upon schools and building new schools with our own money," she said.

Their opinions were reflective of the differing views offered during a two-hour hearing of the House Ways and Means Committee on five legislative proposals affecting the Permanent Fund, its earnings and the annual dividend paid to Alaskans.

Whether any of the proposals can win legislative passage this year is highly questionable, as the issue has divided Alaskans and lawmakers for years. Without legislation, the amount of this year's PFD will be decided as part of the usual end-of-session budget negotiations.

"No one has been brave enough" to pass a new formula for calculating the dividend, Palmer Sen. Shelley Hughes told the committee earlier in the week. Lawmakers have been debating how to live with or change the 40-year-old dividend formula which the Legislature and governors have not followed since 2016 when falling state revenues made it unaffordable. Then, in 2018, the Legislature started sharing Permanent Fund earnings between dividends and public services as the state had drained most of its other reserves amid declining oil revenues.

The split opinions on prioritizing Permanent Fund earnings for dividends or state spending was an ongoing conversation thread during Saturday's hearing. For Rachel Lord, of Homer, big dividends are of little use to people if streets aren't plowed after heavy snowstorms. For Joel Sigman, of Wasilla, the problem is that the government doesn't know how to efficiently spend the money it gets and thus there is no reason to give the state more money that would better

go to dividends.

Of the five measures before the House Ways and Means Committee, two would establish a new dividend calculation in state law and three would amend the Alaska Constitution — two of which would adopt a constitutional guarantee for the dividend.

Putting a constitutional amendment before voters requires a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and Senate, a hurdle that has been insurmountable for supporters of a constitutionally guaranteed PFD.

A change in state statute, however, requires only a majority vote in the 40-member House and 20-member Senate, and then a signature from the governor to become law.

Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz is behind one of the proposed changes in the dividend statute. Ortiz, who also represents Wrangell, has proposed legislation that would split the annual draw on Permanent Fund earnings with 25% for the dividend and 75% for public services. That would produce a PFD this fall of about \$1,300, growing in subsequent years.

Some of the residents who called in to testify at Saturday's hearing — who were given two minutes each to speak — said they had difficulty understanding the legislative proposals, though many were clear that Alaskans deserve the largest possible PFD.

Ketchikan High School teacher Sara

Campbell had no difficulty in being direct in her testimony. "The Permanent Fund dividend, oh my goodness, what a contentious issue. It shapes elections."

Don Mitchell, also from Ketchikan, raised the elections issue, too. "The way the PFD is structured hurts the election process. The amount of the PFD is used as an irresponsible tool to obtain votes."

Mitchell, who testified that he has lived in Alaska more than half a century, said he has enjoyed decades of public services "without paying state tax." But, he added, "we now have inadequate and inconsistent funding for our state services," such as roads and ferries.

He said he supports legislation to split Permanent Fund earnings with 75% to the budget and 25% to the PFD.

An Anchorage doctor, Royal Kiehl, testified that he remembers paying a state income tax, "when we used to pay our own way." The Legislature in 1980 abolished the personal income tax as oil dollars filled the treasury.

Speaking in support of reducing the PFD to \$1,000, with an annual inflation increase, Kiehl added: "Without intending to do so, we have turned Alaska into a welfare state, with every citizen believing they cannot live without their PFD. ... The PFD has become a true addiction."

Mark Sabbatini of the Juneau Empire contributed to this report.

Alaskans continue pressing for U.S. intervention on B.C. mines

BY CAROLINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

After meeting with representatives of the British Columbia mining and environmental ministries in Juneau last week, state legislators, Alaska Native leaders and environmentalists urged the federal government to intervene against the development of new B.C. mines that could pollute transboundary salmon runs.

In a press conference March 8, stakeholders called on the federal government to use its powers under the U.S.-Canada Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to place an immediate temporary pause on the exploration, development and expansion of B.C. mines upstream from Alaska salmon rivers until an international agreement on watershed protections could be reached.

Such an agreement would enforce mining best practices, exercise control over the placement of mines and hold mining companies responsible for cleanup and liable for damages, according to the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. It would involve input from federal, tribal, municipal and First Nations governments, as well as local residents.

The Central Council passed a resolution supporting these goals. Rep. Dan Ortiz, of Ketchikan, along with other Alaska legislators are sending a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken requesting federal intervention.

Nine Alaska municipalities, including Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka, Craig, Gustavus, Pelican and others have passed resolutions of support. The Wrangell borough assembly passed its resolution of support in late 2021.

"It's fairly simple," said Ortiz, who also represents Wrangell.

"We've heard loud and clear from constituents that Alaskans need enforceable protections. Over 100 Alaska tribes, municipalities, commercial and sportfishing businesses and organizations and thousands of Alaskans have written letters and passed resolutions asking for the Boundary Waters Treaty to be invoked."

The 1909 treaty states that if Canada or the U.S. interferes with transboundary waters in a way that injures the other country, the interfering country has to provide the same legal remedies that it would if the injury took place within its borders. The treaty also established the International Joint Commission to resolve disputes between the two nations.

B.C.'s allegedly lax mining regulations and lack of accountability for delayed mine cleanup concern groups in Alaska, especially as miners seek to move forward with new projects in the province bordering Alaska.

In the past, B.C. mines have introduced metallic waste into salmon waterways. The defunct

Tulsequah Chief mine, 20 miles from the border near Juneau, has been leaking acidic drainage into a tributary of the Taku River for 65 years.

A tailings dam at the Mount Polley open-pit mine, in south-central British Columbia, collapsed in 2014, sending a slurry into area lakes and rivers and casting doubt on the efficacy of B.C. regulatory oversight.

"Apparently, for the last four years, there's been a (British Columbia) working group (for mine cleanup)," said Rep. Sara Hannan of Juneau. "But there are no public notifications, no invitations, no agenda shared, no minutes of those meetings ... the Alaska public has not been engaged or informed of those and we've asked."

"The answer should be we're doing everything we can and we're going to be out there cleaning next season," said Richard Chalyee Eesh Peterson, president of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. "That's the only acceptable answer ... another mine

shouldn't be considered until they can demonstrate that they can clean up their mess here."

The Taku, Stikine and Unuk transboundary rivers produce 80% of Alaska's chinook, or king salmon. One mine — the open-pit Red Chris gold and copper mine — is currently operational on the Stikine watershed, about 50 miles southeast of Telegraph Creek, B.C., and dozens of potential mines are in permitting or exploration on these waters. Nearly 20% of the lands along the three watersheds have B.C. mining claims, according to Salmon Beyond Borders campaign documents.

"The clean water of our shared transboundary rivers has nourished our indigenous peoples here since time immemorial," said Peterson, "and it is our responsibility to ensure that these rivers can provide for generations to come. Our wild salmon and hooligan populations are struggling. We must do everything we can to protect these resources that are the fabric of our culture."

Along with the temporary pause on new development, Tlingit and Haida supports a permanent ban on the construction of tailings dams — earthen embankments for storing mining waste — upstream from communities and salmon habitat. Tailings dams "pose a great risk to environmental and human health because these will ultimately fail," according to documents compiled by Salmon Beyond Borders.

"I've sat in meetings where I've heard industry talk about tailing dams and they talk about the life cycle of them and they talk about bonding them — I'm an Indigenous person of these lands," said Peterson. "We think in a generational capacity. They're thinking of dollars and cents and when they can pass on the responsibility."

He also stressed the importance of building relationships with other Alaska Native, First Nations and Indigenous groups divided by colonial borders, since downstream tribes in Washington, Idaho and Montana also face impacts from B.C. mines.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Reshaping it may be an answer for plastic waste

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

It's bad enough the world stacks, dumps and burns mountains of gallon milk jugs, water bottles, package wrappers and take-out food containers every day. But after we finish our last bites, many of those plastic bits make it into the oceans, where they break down into small, fish-food-size pieces — enough to choke a seahorse.

And without even a side of salsa to season the plastic chips.

Technology has figured out how to put a computer on our wrists, store thousands of photographs in a smartphone and create software that can answer complex questions — though not always correctly. But it hasn't yet solved the dilemma of plastic waste.

Maybe the answer is more about reusing and reshaping than technology.

We like new and clean, and we don't like thinking about what happens to whatever we toss into the trash. And while there are markets to recycle paper and cardboard into new products, aluminum into new cans and glass into fill material, plastics are a tougher piece of the recycling menu to chew — especially in Alaska, where the costs of shipping it out exceed its scrap value.

Doing good for the environment is heartwarming and helpful, but it's not realistic to expect nonprofits to lose money on recycling.

In Haines, the nonprofit Friends of Recycling has amassed a seven-ton pile of plastic in hopes that someday the group will have a solution to the waste. Without a market to sell the collection, the organization has been storing its stash for a year and a half, hoping something will change.

In Juneau, recyclers have been shipping plastics Outside at a loss for the past couple of years. If the financial cost doesn't turn around, the plastic could return to its old home — the landfill.

No organization in Wrangell tries to collect plastic for recycling — they could not afford to lose money.

For plastic that isn't recycled, buried in a landfill or burned, a lot of it finds its way into the oceans, where sunlight and the churning water break it down into small pieces. It's a "plastic smog," in the words of international researchers who released a study last week.

Those trillions of plastic particles weigh roughly 2.6 million tons and are doubling about every six years, according to the study which drew on nearly 12,000 samples collected across 40 years of research in all the world's major ocean basins.

Plastic bags, packaging and food containers slowly break down into smaller and smaller pieces, called microplastics, less than a quarter-inch long and easily swallowed by foraging marine life. Yes, even small seahorses get tangled up in our waste.

"Plastic is a wonderful product because it lasts. It's also a really horrible product because it lasts," Haines Friends of Recycling board chair Melissa Aronson told the Chilkat Valley News.

The nonprofit has an idea to make plastics last, but as a different product. The group is looking at maybe getting a plastics recycling machine to melt the leftovers and make plastic lumber for picnic tables, decking and benches. The machine could cost an estimated \$65,000 to \$75,000, which means fundraising and grants to pay the bill.

Though it may seem weird for a community in Southeast Alaska to talk about plastic benches and decks in the middle of the largest national forest in the country, it could be an answer to the area's plastic problem. Shipping plastic to Haines, or maybe adding a second machine in southern Southeast, is worthy of regional consideration.

A new bench could be a solid recycling plank to stand on.

"Plastic is a wonderful product because it lasts. It's also a really horrible product because it lasts."

Melissa Aronson
Haines Friends of
Recycling,
board chair

THE EDITOR'S DESK

Keeping daylight saving time would be cuckoo

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Twice a year I have a 50-50 chance of messing up the front page of the Sentinel. This year I did just that, and possibly aided people in being late to work on Monday.

Daylight saving time, otherwise known as the Biannual Menace, makes it necessary to move our clocks ahead an hour or back an hour. Spring forward; fall back.

Despite the ice and chilly temperatures, it's nearing spring and clocks should have been set forward one hour on Sunday morning, not back an hour as the graphic on the front page of last week's paper instructed. I build those graphics. I build the paper. That was my mistake.

Thanks to the watchful eye of reader Walter Moorhead, I now know the error of my ways, for which I'm grateful. We try to keep the mistakes at zero, but some things squeak through, no matter how many times we proof a page.

But let's be honest here: DST is a waste of time. It's ticked past

its prime, if ever it had a prime. Nobody wants it. It's dividing families and ruining Thanksgiving gatherings.

In March of last year, the U.S. Senate finally, miraculously made itself useful by passing the Sunshine Protection Act — unanimously, I might add — which would keep the country on one set time. Though it wasn't decided if that would be standard time or daylight saving time. It would have made changing our clocks unnecessary this year. It never passed the House.

DST was first used in the U.S. in 1918 for seven months as part of an energy-conservation tactic during World War I. It was later enacted in 1974 on a permanent basis.

All sorts of excuses have been used to keep it, from blaming farmers who want more sunny harvesting hours (most farmers have lobbied against DST) to keeping schoolchildren safe, because it's somehow pitch-black at 7:30 a.m. when they're waiting for the bus and everyone drives to work with their

headlights off.

It's argued that it gives people an extra hour of daylight after work so they can feel more energetic and be more productive. That makes absolutely no sense in Alaska where we go from one extreme to the other. One hour at either end of the workday isn't going to make a difference.

In a Reuters report last year, New Jersey Rep. Frank Pallone, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee said, "The loss that one hour of sleep seems to impact us for days afterwards. It can also cause havoc on the sleeping patterns of our kids and pets."

I agree with Pallone. Adjusting to that added or lost hour of sleep screws up the biological clock. I don't know about the part about pets, though. My cats will sleep all day anyway.

Let's finally come together as a country and unite against a common enemy. Let's set our clocks and leave them alone, once and for all. Then I don't have to worry about getting it right in the paper.

EDITORIAL

Ferry system management missed the boat on hiring

It took a consultant's report for the collective management of the Alaska Marine Highway System and state Department of Transportation to realize that of 250 job applicants over the past year, just four were hired to work on the ships.

At that rate, the ferry system would need close to 10,000 applicants to reach full staffing.

The system has been seriously short-staffed for more than two years, losing crew to resignations and retirements faster than it could hire new workers. The crew shortage forced cutbacks in service, keeping ships tied to the dock. It forced a lot of overtime and canceled crew leave. Department of Transportation officials repeatedly testified before legislative committees that they were aware of the problem and hard at work to recruit new employees.

And yet, even with all that, it took an outside consultant's report to wake up management to a multitude of hiring problems that pushed away applicants, including that jobseekers were rejected for mistakes in their cover letter.

"AMHS is losing many potential employees due to a cumbersome application process and lack of timely communication once applications are initiated," according to one report.

A separate report prepared by different consultants was far less gentle. "The whole organization is inert, toxic and bureaucratic," said a report titled "Operational Resiliency and Efficiency," prepared by a team of consultants from Alaska and Seattle.

While it's good that the state asked for the outside look at the inner workings of the ferry system, it's sad that it took so long and found so much that needs fixing. The damage has been done.

No wonder the Kennicott, the second-largest active ship in the fleet, will be tied up for the summer season for lack of crew.

No wonder travelers will not be able to reach southern Southeast Alaska through the nearest highway connection, in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, just a six-hour ferry ride from Ketchikan.

And no wonder the public is losing confidence in the 60-year-old marine highway.

Transportation Department officials say they are trying to fix the hiring mess and repair the damage to ferry operations. They went back and took another look at the 250 applications brought in through a recruitment agency and found dozens of people who met the job qualifications. Some have been hired, with more on the way.

The ferry system has established a path for conditional hires, bringing new employees on board to start training while waiting on Coast Guard credentials. The intent is to speed up the process of getting crew on the ships and the ships to work.

All good ideas. The traveling public can only hope it works. If not, the state could end up with more ships tied to the dock and more travelers who can't remember the last time they boarded a ferry.

— Wrangell Sentinel

Alaska Human Rights Commission cuts back its jurisdiction over LGBTQ cases

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Alaska's human rights commission has reversed an earlier policy and now is only investigating LGBTQ discrimination complaints related to workplace discrimination and not for other categories like housing and financing.

The Anchorage Daily News and ProPublica reported the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights deleted language from its website promising equal protections for transgender and gay Alaskans against most categories of discrimination. It also began refusing to investigate complaints.

The commission is only accepting employment-related complaints and investigators dropped non-employment LGBTQ civil rights cases they had been working on.

The body made the move last year, one year after it published new guidelines in 2021 saying Alaska's LGBTQ protections extended beyond the workplace to housing, government practices, finance and "public accommodation."

The commission adopted the 2021 guidelines in response to a 2020 U.S. Supreme Court rul-

ing saying workplace discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity was illegal.

An investigation by the news organizations found the reversal was requested by a conservative Christian group and was made the week of the August primary election for governor. The commission made the change on the advice of Attorney General Treg Taylor and announced it on its Twitter feed — with no further public announcement.

The LGBTQ advocacy nonprofit Identity Alaska called the reversal "state-sponsored discrimination" and results in real-world harms.

Robert Corbisier, who has been the commission's executive director since 2019, said the attorney general directed him to make the change. He said Taylor said the Supreme Court case was limited to employment discrimination and the agency should limit its own enforcement to employment matters.

"The governor's office was not involved in the Department of Law's legal advice on LGBTQ+ discrimination cases," a spokesman for Gov. Mike Dunleavy said.

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Class of 2005

Continued from page 1

Of the 25 members of Wrangell's class of 2005, 14 live out of state and 11 in Alaska, according to the state survey.

Taylor, Clover Jenkins and Rory Prunella were all members of Wrangell's class of 2005. Each has a unique life trajectory that either returned them to Wrangell, brought them elsewhere in Alaska, or took them out-of-state.

Jenkins had every intention of returning to Alaska after she left Wrangell in 2005 to study painting in Missouri. But after completing her four-year fine arts degree in 2009, she graduated into the midst of the Great Recession and had to join the military to maintain her financial stability. "My trajectory just kind of changed from there," she said.

Since entering the reserves, she's been mobilized in Korea, Honduras, Guatemala, Guyana and more. Working as an Army medic has given her hands-on experience with skills that civilian medical students typically take years to acquire, like using an X-ray and assisting surgeons. "Normally, it takes a couple years of schooling just to handle instruments," she explained.

Working for the military has its ups and downs. Spending time away from family on deployments is difficult, but Jenkins enjoys the comradery and close friendships she's formed. She is currently in graduate school studying public health.

When she graduated from high school, working in the medical field "wasn't a goal at the time, but it became one." She's come to love the research and fact-finding processes that are part of her chosen field in public health.

Though Missouri is home now, Jenkins misses elements of small-town life. "The sense of community that you have growing up in a place like Wrangell just doesn't exist anywhere else," she said.

After graduating in 2005, Taylor moved to Anchorage for college, but always intended to return to Wrangell. "I pretty much figured this was going to be home, I just didn't know when," he said. "When I graduated, my folks told me that they didn't care what I did so long as it was somewhat productive and brought me back to town."

He fulfilled their wish in 2011, moving home with an associate degree and about five years of Army service. Before starting his tour company, Muddy Water Adventures, he worked in construction and guided tours for other companies. Then, in 2016, he used his years of experience to establish a tour business of his own.

"There was a boat that happened to be for sale, so I grabbed the boat and went from there," he recalled. His first few seasons were rough. During his second trip in the new boat, its engine stopped working. His immediate reaction was, "Oh my God, this is what running a business is like. This is awful."

When the business was just getting started, he'd work other seasonal jobs alongside it, like crabbing, construction, driving a school bus and more. "I've cut out a few of those, but I still stay pretty busy," he said. "It got to the point where I had three jobs all at once. ... You didn't dare sit down when you ate lunch because you'd probably fall asleep."

Taylor's life has calmed down somewhat now that his water taxis and tours have established reputations among residents and visitors. He's also looking forward

to taking his new 38-foot catamaran, the Island Cat, out for its first full summer season in the coming months.

Prunella was "a big baseball nut" when he attended high school. "Anytime anyone got me a gift, it was baseball related," he recalled. After playing college baseball in Colorado while studying sports management, he did an internship with the Albuquerque Isotopes, a minor league baseball team based in New Mexico.

Then, he moved to Michigan, where he went back to school for information technology. After doing an internship with the city of Ann Arbor, his wife got a job in Alaska and the family moved back to Prunella's home state. "I don't think I necessarily was planning to come back," he said. "But you know, my family still lives in Wrangell, so (Michigan) was a little far for them."

Since 2017, he's been based in Palmer, where he does IT networking for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. Palmer is "more connected" than Wrangell, he explained. "You can actually drive to other towns" but it "still has that small-town feel. It's definitely less busy than Michigan, which maybe was part of the thought when coming back."

The district Prunella works for is the size of West Virginia and encompasses around 40 different schools, meaning he is always driving from school to school, keeping the district's technological systems running. "It's a big area. It's a lot to cover," he said. "We're constantly going to all the different schools to make sure things are running and upgrading and whatnot."

Before the pandemic interrupted school sports, Prunella passed his love for baseball on to the rising generation by coaching the local high school team.

Ferry schedule

Continued from page 1

win legislative approval for state funding to operate a full schedule.

But without crew to operate all the vessels, the money could go unspent.

The inability to operate the full fleet means that no state ferry is scheduled to stop in Yakutat this summer, and no service is planned to Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

Rupert, just a six-hour sailing south of Ketchikan to a highway connection, has been a popular and cheaper alternative for travelers with cars or trucks than paying three times as much to ride the ferry all the way to or from Bellingham, Washington.

In 2018, the last full year of ferry service to Prince Rupert before the state shut down the run in fall 2019, more than 250 travelers with 165 vehicles traveled between Wrangell and the Canadian port

— more than rode the ferry between Wrangell and Bellingham.

Systemwide, about 6,000 vehicles traveled between Southeast ports and Prince Rupert in 2018, while 10,000 moved between Southeast and Bellingham.

The ferry system restored monthly service to Prince Rupert last summer, only to stop it again this winter.

Ortiz said he is frustrated over losing service to Prince Rupert, which provided southern Southeast travelers with a much more convenient and much less expensive highway connection.

The Alaska Marine Highway System, which is part of the Department of Transportation, "will be seeking alternative travel arrangements for ... Prince Rupert and Yakutat travel," Transportation Commissioner Ryan Anderson said in announcing the summer schedule.

"While we are hopeful we can get the

Kennicott crewed over the next months, we will also be evaluating possibilities to continue Prince Rupert service through alternative means and provide supplemental service for Yakutat," the commissioner added.

The state has not provided further details on "alternative means," other than in past statements when it said contracting with a private operator might be an option to fill some service gaps.

The state has taken steps to recruit more crew for the ferries, but without enough success to fully staff the fleet.

A third vessel, the Matanuska, also will not be at work this summer, as the ship needs millions of dollars of steel work and other repairs. The state is figuring out how much to spend on the 60-year-old ship, how long it might continue to operate, and whether it is worth the cost.

"We didn't need to lose the Matanus-

ka," Ortiz said. Pulling the ship out of service indefinitely left only the Kennicott with the necessary licensing to call on Prince Rupert.

The loss of key management personnel has added to problems at the ferry system, the lawmaker said, calling it "a red flag." The general manager and business development manager both left this winter.

Ortiz also is concerned that continued shortcomings at the ferry system will make it harder for coastal legislators to convince their colleagues to fully fund the marine highway for next year.

Under the summer schedule, which runs May 1 to Sept. 30, Wrangell will see the Columbia stop northbound each week on Sunday, returning southbound on Wednesday, same as recent years when the ferry system operated one ship on weekly runs between Bellingham, Washington, and Southeast.

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KSTK brings artistic flair to fundraising with auction

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

One of the challenges of being a non-profit is continually seeking funds to continue operating, something radio station KSTK is well acquainted with.

But instead of just shaking a bucket and hoping people will pitch in, staff at KSTK tries to put the fun in fundraising, such as their annual art auction.

For the past four years, the radio station has auctioned donated art created by Alaskans. The goal for this year is to raise \$5,000 at the March 24 event. The auction in 2022 had a \$5,000 goal, which was met and exceeded, said station manager Cindy Sweat.

The event will be held at 6 p.m. at the Nolan Center and admission is \$5 per ticket. The doors will be open before the start time to give art appreciators a chance to peruse and pick what they're going to bid on.

Anna Tollfeldt, KSTK's development director, said she had about 25 pieces last week, but is seeking more. "The more the merrier," she said means "more options and interesting items to look at and bid on."

Any medium will be accepted, from photography and painting, sculptures



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Anna Tollfeldt, development director for KSTK, holds up a pen-and-ink drawing by artist Nick Alan, one of many pieces of art the radio station will auction off on March 24 to raise funds.

and crafts. "I have a Japanese glass fishing float that has designs I think the artist painted on or etched in," Tollfeldt said.

Along with the glass float, there is a painting by Ketchikan-based artist Ter-

ry Pyles of a black wolf named Romeo and pen-and-ink line art from Native artist Nick Alan who is from Alaska but now lives in Seattle.

The art auction is one of many events the radio station holds to raise money.

Along with its regular pledge drives, KSTK hosts an annual Halloween party, the Fourth of July wiener toss and a summer solstice dance, formerly called the adult prom. There's even the possibility of holding a chili cookoff.

For now, the focus is on the art auction and emphasizing the pieces created by Alaskans.

"It's interesting to see all the talent that's out there," Tollfeldt said. "There's a lot of local (Wrangell) stuff, but then there's a lot of art that comes from other communities in Southeast and just Alaska as a whole."

Along with a feast for the eyes, the art auction will feature food catered by Sweet Tides Bakery and beverages. The \$5 ticket can either go toward an alcoholic beverage or one of three door prize raffles.

There's also a chance to win any piece of art for just one ticket.

For \$50, a separate raffle will allow the winner to pick any piece of art they want before the auction begins.

Artists who want to donate work to the auction can email Tollfeldt at anna@kstk.org or call or stop by the station 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday. People who want to purchase a ticket can call the station at 907-874-2345.

Proposed legislation

Continued from page 1

The governor's bill is not expected to win legislative approval, as the bipartisan Senate majority has expressed no interest in taking up such divisive social issues this year.

The proposal got a warmer reception in the more conservative-leaning Alaska House, where the Education Committee is co-chaired by Eagle River Republican Jamie Allard. She called Dunleavy's proposals "outstanding."

"Parents have the right to decide what's best for their children. Not strangers, not educators," said Allard.

Alaska already has a parental notification statute that allows parents to opt out of sexual education classes for their children. That measure was championed by Dunleavy during his time in the state Senate, before he was

elected governor. Allard said that's not enough. But her co-chair of the House Education Committee, Soldotna Republican Rep. Justin Ruffridge, said he thinks school districts already do a good job of letting parents know about sexual education classes.

Asked at the March 7 news conference whether he saw his measure as a condition for increasing state funding to public education, Dunleavy called it "a hypothetical" situation. "We're just introducing this approach now, so we want to give a little time so we have the discussions and we'll see what occurs."

Some lawmakers suggested that the teacher retention bonus could lessen the urgency for an overall funding increase, even as education advocates wondered whether one-time bonuses could meaningfully address schools' difficulties in attracting

other essential workers.

"Yes, we have a teacher recruitment and retention problem, but we have a bus driver recruitment and retention problem, we have a superintendent recruitment and retention problem. Principals, administrators, clerical, classroom aides, paraprofessionals, nutrition specialists," said Tom Klaameyer, president of the National Education Association of Alaska, the main union for public school teachers.

"While the gesture means well, it doesn't fully address the problem like fully funding a base student allocation increase and adjusting it for inflation," he said. "That's a structural fix, rather than a temporary fix of bonuses for three years."

The retention bonuses proposed by the governor — at \$5,000 per year in urban school districts, \$15,000 per year in smaller and

more remote districts, and \$10,000 for districts in the middle, such as Wrangell — would be paid in July of each year, 2024 through 2026.

Dunleavy said the goal would be to study the impacts of the bonuses at the conclusion of the three year period.

Allard said the teacher retention proposal, which would cost the state \$58 million over three years, would "guarantee that the funds stay in the classroom." Conservative lawmakers have repeatedly questioned whether too much education funding is spent on administrative costs, even as educators have produced finance reports indicating the vast majority of expenses count as classroom spending.

Regardless of the governor's retention bonus proposal, Senate majority members last week reiterated their commitment to advancing an education spending boost this year. There already are two proposals before the Legislature: A Senate bill to increase state funding by 17%, about \$250 million a year, and a House bill that would boost funding 20%, \$321 million a year. Dunleavy has not endorsed either proposal.

The legislative proposals would bring at least an additional \$600,000 a year to Wrangell schools.

The governor's proposals dealing with gender and sex education raised emotions in the Capitol last week.

Rep. Andrew Gray broke into tears on the House floor as he described how the bill could impact gay kids whose sexual ori-

entation is rejected by their parents — as he had experienced growing up.

The bill "hurts children, specifically gender non-conforming children like I once was," said Gray, an Anchorage Democrat, who is gay. "To those kids, I want to say ... you are no one's shame, you are not your parents' property — you are your own person."

Anchorage Republican Tom McKay, who has introduced a bill prohibiting transgender girls from participating on girls' school sports teams, expressed support for the governor's intent.

"I'm a big advocate of parents' rights," he said. "As a father of five my children belong to me, they do not belong to the school. And when it comes to sex education and changing sexes and naughty books in the library, and so on and so forth, I believe parents have every right to know what's going on in the schools they pay for."

Conservative groups in Alaska celebrated the prospect of limiting kids' exposure to lessons about the LGBTQ community.

Jim Minnery, president of the conservative Christian group Alaska Family Council, which supports the bill, said the legislation is meant to target what they see as public schools' attempt to advocate for LGBTQ rights.

"It's just been known for a long, long time that the LGBT activists are so intent on confusing little kids' minds," said Minnery. "It's fired up so many people that say, just stop the insanity."

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Regionals

Continued from page 1

Wrangell had the speed of Devlyn Campbell and Daniel Harrison and the shooting strength of Ethan Blatchley, Jacen Hay and Kyan Stead.

The Wolves led in the first period and the Vikings in the second, but Wrangell retook the lead in the third period. And just like all their games this season, the two teams stayed neck-and-neck until the final few seconds. Petersburg won, 32-21, sending Wrangell to the consolation round.

The next day, the Wolves took on the Craig Panthers. As Craig began to surge ahead with baskets, Wrangell wasted no time in catching up. They ended the first half tied at 21. In the third period, Wrangell turned on the three-point spigot and drained shot after shot. Harrison and Hay were dropping baskets from downtown to give the Wolves a 14-point lead at the end of the third period.

The team didn't let up in the fourth, and Wrangell won 68-41, sending them to play against Haines on Friday to continue their run to second place.

It was another tight game on Friday, with both teams staying tied or within one point of the other. Near the end of the fourth period, Harrison was fouled and given two free-throw attempts. Had he gotten those, the Wolves would have won. He missed, and the game was tied at 42, sending it into overtime.

Wrangell added 15 points in overtime, about double Haines, and won 57-50, advancing to Saturday's game.

Saturday was the Wolves' last chance to secure a trip to state, but they had to get through the wall of Vikings. Wrangell put the first points on the board in the first period and it was almost halfway through the period before Petersburg put any points on the board.

Both teams kept up a strong defense, but where Wrangell was landing shots, Petersburg was having trouble.

Wrangell led 18-13 at halftime. In the third period, a series of fouls by Wrangell allowed Petersburg to close the gap, eventually tying and then taking the lead by one point. But Campbell took it right back with a drive and a two-point basket in the paint.

Between the cheers and all the bands playing at the same time during timeouts, there was hardly a quiet moment in the gym.

The third period ended 32-30, Wrangell.

Thirty seconds into the fourth quarter, Petersburg took the lead again. It wasn't long until Wrangell surged ahead and started widening the gap. As the clock wound down, the Vikings began fouling the Wolves repeatedly, which only helped Wrangell retain their scant lead with free throws.

A few seconds remained and Petersburg had possession but couldn't catch up and Wrangell won the game and second-place seed, 45-41.

Metlakatla took first place in the regional tournament.

"Obviously, it feels good. We've been in the same situation five years in a row, so to come out on top feels amazing," said

head coach Cody Angerman, who spoke with a hoarse voice that came from exuberant coaching for four days. "I'm excited for the kids. To get a shot up there (in Anchorage) that's all we asked for. We played the best we could this tournament and that's what we worked for all this year."

The state 2A tournament starts Thursday morning at the Alaska Airlines Center on the University of Alaska Anchorage campus and runs through Saturday's championship game. Wrangell will face No. 3-ranked Tikigaq at 4:45 p.m. on Thursday. Petersburg was picked in a wild card draw and will also compete at state.

Girls varsity

The girls started strong at regionals last Wednesday, defeating Petersburg 50-10, with Kiara Harrison, Christina Johnson, Kayla Meissner and others sinking three-point shots throughout the game.

It was a different situation as the Lady Wolves took on the Metlakatla Miss Chiefs on Thursday. Metlakatla took an early lead and never let go. Wrangell didn't make it easy on them, however, and came on as aggressively as possible. A tie late in the fourth quarter gave the Lady Wolves a shot at besting the Miss Chiefs, but Metlakatla was able to score just one more basket than Wrangell, winning 49-47.

Metlakatla went on to win the tournament.

The Lady Wolves still had a chance to get the second-place slot when they faced the Haines Glacier Bears on Friday. At first, it looked like it was going to be Wrangell's game. Both teams put up a strong defense, while keeping the fouls to a minimum. Haines used its speed but had trouble landing baskets.

By the end of the first half, Wrangell led Haines 20-10 and kept the lead throughout the third quarter. Coordination, solid passing and getting into the net helped Wrangell maintain a solid lead. The fourth quarter was the game changer. Haines took advantage of free throws and three-pointers to gain on Wrangell, eventually tying the game at 41 points and sending it into overtime.

Haines outscored Wrangell by just enough in overtime to win, 47-45, ending the Lady Wolves' hopes for a trip to state.

Cheer squad

The Wrangell cheer squad al-



PHOTOS BY KLAS STOLPE/FOR THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

Above: Metlakatla junior Ryley Booth battles for a loose ball with, from left, Wrangell sophomore Aubrey Wynne, senior Kiara Harrison, freshman Christina Johnson (12) and sophomore Addy Andrews (21) in the Southeast regionals last Thursday in Juneau. Below: Craig sophomore Ayden Benolken (24) and senior Sam Bass (4) defend a pass by Wrangell sophomore Trevyn Gillen last Thursday.

most wasn't able to go to regionals until last-minute fundraising made it possible. Coach Stephanie Cartwright said the win was a complete surprise.

"We didn't expect to place," she said. "We knew Petersburg would take first. They were amazing this year! So, we were all shocked when they called Wrangell for second place."

Along with winning a place in the state competition, cheer squad members Brodie Gardner and Alisha Armstrong were selected for all-tournament honors, 16 cheerleaders picked by all cheer coaches in Southeast. "It is usually the best of the best, most spirited girls or guys who know the fundamentals of cheer and are great team leaders," Cartwright said.

Wrangell's squad will continue to work on their routines for state, using corrections given to them by the Southeast judges.

Cartwright said the squad has a lot of fundraising to do before they head to state next Monday for Tuesday's competition at the Alaska Airlines Center on the University of Alaska Anchorage campus.

Fundraisers will include four small cheer day camps, which includes sideline cheer and



dance, tumbling, stunting and a dance clinic. There are also plans for a spring carnival and

a bake sale, all of which Cartwright said are being planned by a parent group.

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Gallery plans move to Nolan Center and calls for local artists

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

From painters to comic illustrators, jewelers to woodcarvers, quilters to printmakers, Wrangell is full of talented artists. However, after a downtown gallery closed earlier this year, there was no centralized venue for artists to display their work and tourists to check out the local art scene.

Cyni Cray, director of the Nolan Center, Michael Bania, a member of the former art gallery, and others are planning a collaborative effort that will house a new gallery in the Nolan Center for community members and summer visitors to enjoy.

The former gallery was housed on Front Street, where its 10-or-so members met weekly to work on projects, graze on sweets and socialize. "We would always

get the tourist boat schedule and a couple of us would sit down there," recalled Bania. "The main thing that people liked from the tour ships was that our shop was so different from other locations. It was refreshing to see something that was not commercial."

Before it had a physical location downtown, the ladies' art group began as an informal get-together in 1964. Olga Norris, Roberta Floyd, Jacquie Dozier, Joyce Phillips, Joan Benjamin and others would meet regularly at a variety of locations to create art together.

Each member had a different artistic niche, from quilting to watercolors to beading to children's books. When their mutual friend, artist Lavon White, passed away, her daughter let them use the building on Front Street as a gallery. The group was housed there for about eight years.

Under the building's former ownership, gallery members paid a small monthly fee to cover electricity and heat; when new owners took over, the cost became unaffordable.

In its future Nolan Center location, Bania hopes to continue the gallery's legacy of displaying local talent and bringing the community together. The space will be "an opportunity to recognize the value of art in our hometown," she said. Wrangell artists will get the chance to "sell their stuff and be more recognized for what they're doing. We think it's a real win-win. ... It has a mutual benefit. It benefits the center, it benefits the members, it benefits the tourists."

The new gallery would be housed in the small theater room next to the Nolan Center gift shop, according to a proposal submitted to the borough assembly by Cray on Feb. 14. Her proposal will

require additional hearings before the assembly before it is officially approved, but she and Bania hope that the gallery will be functional by late spring, so it can operate throughout the coming tourist season.

"I think it's a great location," said Norris. "And they have a lot of foot traffic in there when the boats are in."

In the coming weeks, Bania and Cray plan to issue an open call for artwork to community members. The pair is seeking high-quality work in a variety of mediums that represents the best of the local art scene. The financial details are still under review, but artists will likely be asked to pay a display fee or commission to the center and volunteer for small shifts in the gallery during tourist season.

A more detailed proposal to the assembly, which will iron out financial and legal details, is forthcoming.

Hospital implements masking requirement as respiratory illnesses circulate

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Due to an increase in respiratory disease rates — including COVID-19 — throughout Southeast and in Wrangell, the Wrangell Medical Center has re-implemented a mandatory masking policy for its visitors, patients and staff.

"It was in response to what we were seeing as increased respiratory illnesses both in the community and in the region, COVID of course being one of those," hospital administrator Carly Allen said last week. "We've also been following influenza A and B and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), as well as ... other respiratory illnesses that aren't identified and don't have names."

RSV is an infection with cold-like symptoms, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Most people recover within one to two weeks, but the disease can be serious for young children and older adults.

The hospital's new masking policy was implemented two weeks ago after the community transmission level for COVID-19 moved to high. "(The community transmission level) is one of the indicators that health care uses to help us determine our risk and if we need to add

interventions," said Allen.

Wrangell has experienced an influx of statewide and regionwide travelers in recent weeks, Allen explained. New mask requirements are in part a preventative measure, as people from areas with higher transmission visit town. "It's much easier to get in front of it than be behind it."

Wrangell has reported half a dozen new COVID-19 infections in the past month, with more than 100 cases across Southeast during that same period and more than 2,400 statewide, according to Alaska Department of Health data.

Anecdotally, COVID and other respiratory disease caseloads in Wrangell may be somewhat higher than those reported by the state, Allen continued. "We live and work in the community, so we're seeing and we're talking to people who have respiratory illnesses who aren't testing," she said. "Which is fine, it's peoples' choice."

The state's numbers reflect only those cases reported to the Health Department, not at-home tests.

Just because the hospital is putting protections in place doesn't mean community members should be overly concerned about transmission in Wrangell. "People really need to evaluate their own risk and make that

determination for themselves," said Allen.

"In general, health care facilities have to manage communicable diseases differently than your average community business or event," said Allen. The facility treats people with high-risk conditions, and while community members can choose whether they'd like to incur risk by visiting a business or attending an event, many people visiting the hospital do not have a choice. "We have an obligation to keep our facility as safe as possible," she said of the mask policy.

The safety measures aren't just for patients — they're for staff as well. A surge of COVID or another respiratory disease among staff could interfere with the hospital's ability to provide essential services.

The recent statewide COVID caseload bump is small compared to two days in late January 2022, when the Health Department reported almost 6,000 new cases statewide and Alaska led all states with its rate of infection per 100,000 residents.

Wrangell set its own record of 185 cases between Dec. 30, 2021, and Jan. 30, 2022.

The Wrangell hospital plans to continue monitoring caseloads and will reevaluate its masking policy in the coming weeks.

Obituary

Celebration of life for George Phillips on April 1

George Phillips, 74, of Wrangell, passed away from lung cancer at the Veterans Administration Puget Sound Health Care System Medical ICU in Seattle on Feb. 24.

A celebration of life is planned for 2 p.m. April 1 at the Harbor Light Assembly of God Church in Wrangell.

George was born on Jan. 19, 1949, to George and Betty Jane Phillips in Kalispell, Montana. When he was 8 years old, his parents moved to Oregon, where his mother could carry on with her music career. When his parents moved to Astoria, Oregon, he attended Lewis and Clark Elementary and Astoria High School.

After serving two tours in the Vietnam War and being award-



GEORGE PHILLIPS

ed the Purple Heart, George returned home to Astoria and eventually settled in Alaska. He worked for Silver Bay Logging in Cube Cove, on Admiralty Island, and Ketchikan from 1987 to 1998, transferring to work at

the Wrangell sawmill until 2003.

In 2003, he secured a position with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in Virginia and retired in 2014 to move back to his beloved Alaska. "George felt the happiest when he was outdoors fishing and hunting and enjoying the beauty that surrounded him in Wrangell," his family wrote.

George is survived by his three children: Tyler Phillips, of Astoria; Christopher Phillips, of Walla Walla, Washington; and Anastasia Phillips, of Stephen City, Virginia; and his three sisters: Kathy Hayden, of Peabody, Massachusetts; Karen Sarnaker, of Nehalem, Oregon; and Nellie Johanson, of Astoria.

ConocoPhillips gets go-ahead for major North Slope oil project

Anchorage Daily News
and Associated Press

The Biden administration on Monday approved an \$8 billion oil development on Alaska's North Slope.

ConocoPhillips' Willow prospect in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska is expected to be one of the largest oil fields developed in the state in decades and could produce oil for 30 years.

The administration's decision is not likely to end the debate, however, with litigation expected from environmental groups.

Depending on litigation, first oil could flow before the end of the decade. Peak production, estimated at 180,000 barrels of oil a day, could come a few years after operations begin, possibly boost North Slope production by 30% in the 2030s.

The administration approved three drill sites, which the ConocoPhillips has said is economically viable, though the company had asked for five drill sites. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, as part of its environmental review, recommended three sites to limit the environmental impact.

The White House's decision bucked intense pressure from environmental groups, which have called the project a "carbon bomb" and said it contradicts President Joe Biden's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030.

Many Alaska Native leaders,

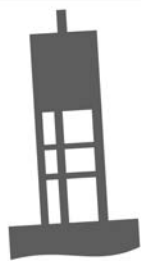
elected officials and business groups have lobbied intensely for approval of the project, saying it would provide badly needed revenues to support North Slope municipalities, help Alaska's economy and pump several billion dollars into the state treasury over the life of production — though the mayor of the Inupiaq village closest to the project has opposed it.

The decision comes a day after the Biden administration announced it will limit oil drilling on 16 million acres in the NPR-A and the Arctic Ocean in an apparent nod to environmental groups that have fought the Willow project.

The plan would bar drilling in nearly 3 million acres of the Beaufort Sea — closing it off from oil exploration — and limit drilling in more than 13 million acres in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The withdrawal of the offshore area ensures that important habitat for whales, seals, polar bears and other wildlife "will be protected in perpetuity from extractive development," the White House said in a statement.

The conservation actions complete protections for the entire Beaufort Sea Planning Area, building upon President Barack Obama's 2016 action on the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the majority of the Beaufort Sea, the White House said.



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Tlingit history points the way to ‘young man’s’ senior project

BY MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Zeke Yéeskáa Young always enjoys meeting new people, traveling to new places and learning about different cultures. But he had no idea when moving to Wrangell last year from Port Angeles, Washington, that he'd be helping to sustain a culture.

Young's high school senior project is to create five new signs in Tlingit and English to direct residents and visitors to five Native points of interest.

"When I came up here last year, I needed a fine arts credit," he said. "I was put into Tlingit for my fine arts. At first, I was kind of hesitant. New language, totally new culture, and just history in general. I wasn't sure if I was going to be in there long-term or not."

But, he said, the longer he was in the class, the more he started to love it and his teacher Virginia Oliver. "She's a great teacher, really informative."

Oliver took Young to Celebration in Juneau last year, which was the "big changer" for him. He participated in a dance group and was able to see the Native community come together. The event inspired him to look more into Alaska's history on his own and as part of his history class, specifically Wrangell.

"When we started looking at Wrangell, it seems there was a lot more Native culture around here back in the day," he said. "I thought if I could in some way bring some of that back in some aspect through tourism (I would). It's kind of a



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Senior Zeke Young takes a moment between classes to talk about his graduation project, which is creating Tlingit and English language signs to guide people to points of cultural and historic interest in Wrangell.

field I was interested in and wanted to learn more about it."

The 17-year-old became so dedicated to his Tlingit studies that Oliver gave him his Native name of Yéeskáa, which means "young man."

Oliver said she is helping to "push him along" in his studies and senior project, though she's not directly involved. Young is working with Luella Knapp, a tribal council member with the Wrangell

Cooperative Association.

He will make directional signs for Petroglyph Beach, Chief Shakes House, Totem Park, Chief Shakes grave and one other culturally significant site that's yet to be determined. He's planning on making the signs out of sheet metal and then prep them for lettering.

"I'm going to use stencils to put English, then in parentheses, Tlingit, or vice versa," he said. "I want to make sure it's

understandable for all. I think it would be interesting so (people) could learn more words in the culture and get more history out of it."

He estimates the project will be done within the next month.

Beyond high school, Young said he's interested in travel and new experiences. He wants to visit as many countries as he can, but in order to afford such a life, he's focused on creating wealth.

"I have a seining gig lined up, make some money there," he said. "I plan on either going into the mining industry right away or I want to get some sort of trade, like electrician or real estate. I'm really interested in real estate. But I want a trade where I can build up some capital to invest."

Specifically, he wants to invest in real estate to rent out and create a steady flow of income. "I've always wanted wealth of some sort, so I put my time into reading books that were ... about wealth and mindset and leadership."

However, Young admitted that his curiosity will probably take him down many avenues.

When it comes to school, he said he won't miss having to adhere to a schedule and being told when and where to be somewhere.

"I'd rather be working," he said. "I just love being on the back deck, traveling around, seeing new faces and new cultures. All I want to do is travel. That's why I want to work for myself."

Stolen money from Haines Senior Center windowsill unfolds at pot shop

BY KYLE CLAYTON
Chilkat Valley News, Haines

Haines police have connected a suspect to a Senior Center break-in after locating stolen tightly folded, pyramid-shaped \$2 bills that had decorated a windowsill and were later spent at the local pot shop.

"They busted out the window, ransacked the office and took all the donation money, plus the money that was in my drawer," said Senior Center manager Cari O'Daniel.

She said the burglar stole between \$300 to \$400, personal checks, and 21 of the \$2 bills folded into pyramid shapes that decorated her windowsill.

Police had not charged the suspect as of last week.

A Senior Center employee noticed the broken window on Feb. 23 when he arrived to work at 6:30 a.m., according to a police report. In his report, investigating officer Max Jusi wrote that little evidence was found beyond a Three Musketeers candy bar, which didn't belong to anyone at the Senior Center.

"I did not find any blood or other DNA evidence," Jusi

wrote. "No fingerprints were able to be lifted. Snow on the ground was not conducive to casting, and footprint patterns were not discernable."

On the morning following the break-in, Winter Greens owner Brad Adams told police a man purchased items from his marijuana retail store with \$2 bills "that had some very unique creasing." Adams, who eats lunch at the Senior Center, was familiar with the origami-style bills, which were made by Neil Einsbruch.

When Jusi spoke with Einsbruch, the magician and origami artist "made a positive confirmation" that he had folded the bills.

O'Daniel said Einsbruch would give her a \$2 pyramid bill each time he came to the center to eat lunch. Einsbruch said he's been making the origami pyramids for the past four years and gives them out as gifts and party favors.

"I buy a whole bunch of them and I give them out. I'll make 75 of them and put them in an empty fish bowl and give them for a wedding gift; here's some

twos for the two of you," Einsbruch said. "This was the first time my magic (maybe) instigated a crime, and solved it."

A Winter Greens employee was able to positively identify the suspect who spent the \$2 bills at the store. When contacted by police, the suspect said he had been in the area of the harbor, several blocks from the Senior Center, during the early morning hours of Feb. 23.

The suspect initially told police he bought the \$2 bills from a man near the harbor boat ramp, but later admitted to selling the man two grams of methamphetamine and receiving the \$2 bills as payment.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEIL EINSBRUCH

Tightly folded pyramid \$2 bills decorated the Haines Senior Center windowsill before a burglar stole them last month. The unfolded bills later were used at a Haines marijuana shop.

Policy for Letters to the Editor

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

The Sentinel reserves the right to edit any submissions.

The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon for Wednesday publication.

WRANGELL SENTINEL

Letters are run on a space-available basis.

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Police report

Monday, March 6

Citizen assist: Firearm permit renewal.
 Agency assist: Alaska State Troopers.
 Notice of hearing.

Tuesday, March 7

Order to show cause.
 Agency assist: Fire Department.

Wednesday, March 8

Civil issue: Child custody.
 Agency assist: Public Works Department.
 Warrant arrest: Arrest for failure to appear at arraignment.
 Agency assist: Alarm.
 Traffic stop.
 Civil matter.

Thursday, March 9

Agency assist: Ambulance.
 Citizen assist: Vehicle inspection.

Welfare check: Death notification.
 Welfare check.

Friday, March 10

Trespass.
 Report of suspicion of driving under the influence.
 Civil standby.

Saturday, March 11

Citizen assist.
 Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.
 Agency assist: Public Works Department.

Sunday, March 12

Agency assist: Ambulance.
 Traffic stop.

There were five agency assists for the Hoonah Police Department and nine subpoenas served.

Haines nonprofit stores 7 tons of plastic; can't afford to ship it Outside for recycling

By MADELINE PERREARD
Chilkat Valley News, Haines

"Plastic is a wonderful product because it lasts. It's also a really horrible product because it lasts," Haines Friends of Recycling board chair Melissa Aronson said, standing in the operation's warehouse. In a shipping container outside, more than seven tons of plastic waits to be sent to Seattle for recycling.

The nonprofit has been stockpiling plastic since October 2021, as the market for selling recycled plastic is practically nonexistent, Aronson said. Haines usually sends one load of plastic to Seattle each year.

Juneau's municipal and private recycling programs have continued to ship plastics without interruption, Juneau RecycleWorks Operations Manager Stuart Ashton said last week. However, due to a poor market for recycled plastics, Juneau organizations have been paying for their plastic to be recycled for roughly two years. If it becomes too expensive to recycle, plastic will start going to

the landfill, Ashton said.

"We can store it here but the market is not turning around," Ashton said. "It's only going down. To process the plastic becomes too much for the city budget."

Wrangell does not recycle its plastic waste — only aluminum cans. It's the same cost factor as other communities. Recycling can raise money for organizations that collect the materials, but only if there are buyers willing to pay more than the shipping costs.

The price of plastic fluctuates with oil prices, HFR board vice-chair Kate Saunders said. When oil prices are low, corporations opt for manufacturing new plastic rather than buying recycled product.

Haines Friends of Recycling is looking into new technology to recycle plastic on-site and eliminate the cost of shipping.

"A lot of people are getting really interested in Alaska because this is such a huge issue for us," Saunders said. "I'm not quite sure of our direction at the moment but with the amount of support and interest we've had from our community, I'm not going to let this go."

We are going to come up with some kind of solution."

A plastics recycling machine would cost between \$65,000 and \$75,000, and the nonprofit would have to raise the money from grants and donations, Aronson said. Melted plastic from the machine could be used to produce plastic lumber for picnic tables, decking and benches. It is not strong enough, nor is it allowed, to be used for construction.

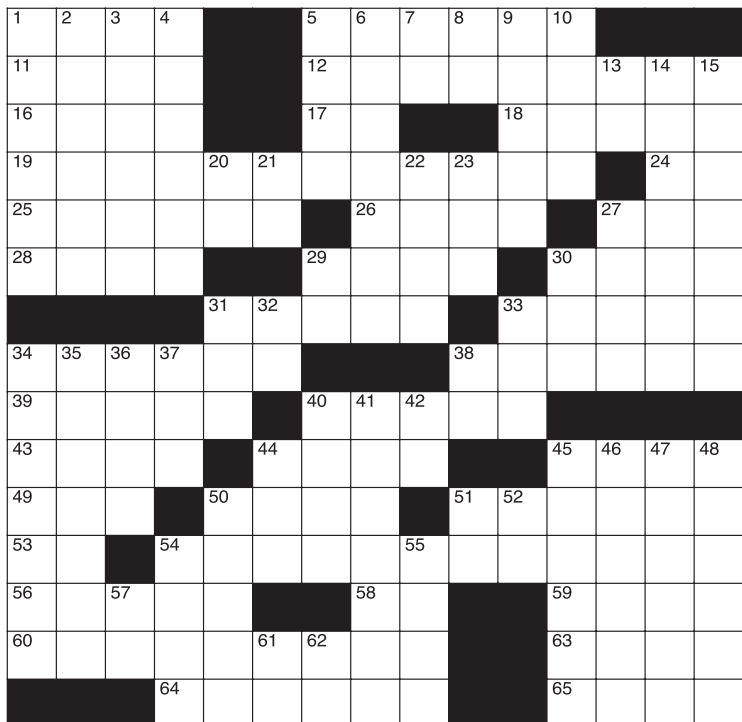
"The great thing about it is it doesn't break down so it lasts way longer," Saunders said. "You don't have it rotting out."

In the meantime, Aronson hopes that residents will continue to find ways to reduce their waste. The Haines Borough passed an ordinance banning single-use plastic bags in 2019. Since then, plastic bags have been "sprouting up in town again," Aronson said.

"We just need to remind people. The plastic bags are horrible. All the plastics are bad. They get into the waterways, marine life chokes on them, they clog up equipment, they blow into trees, they're just a mess," she said.

Crossword

Answers on Page 12



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Influential American political family
- 5. _ Chantilly, _ de Menthe
- 11. Within
- 12. Pleasure seekers
- 16. Computer manufacturer
- 17. Home to college sports' Flyers
- 18. Fungal disease
- 19. Sleepwalk
- 24. Spielberg sci-fi film
- 25. Seasonable
- 26. Taxis
- 27. Radio direction finder (abbr.)
- 28. Thin, narrow piece of wood
- 29. "Mystic River" actor Sean
- 30. Ingenuous
- 31. Musical composition
- 33. Turkish surname
- 34. High or hilly area
- 38. Wilco frontman
- 39. Pour it on pasta
- 40. Electric car company
- 43. Sea eagle
- 44. Walk with difficulty
- 45. Sign of healing
- 49. Boy
- 50. Protein-rich liquid
- 51. Washington city
- 53. Individual portion of TV series (abbr.)
- 54. Thought over
- 56. Scads
- 58. News agency
- 59. Standard
- 60. Deadlock
- 63. Pre-Columbian empire
- 64. Removed
- 65. French commune

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Large, dangerous animals
- 2. Straighten out
- 3. Family tree
- 4. Large stinging paper wasp
- 5. European river fish
- 6. Cut down in size
- 7. Denotes past
- 8. Larry and Curly's partner
- 9. Samoyedic ethnic group
- 10. Male parent
- 13. Specific gravity
- 14. Demeaned oneself to
- 15. Rigidly
- 20. Yankovic is a "weird" one
- 21. Belonging to me
- 22. Path
- 23. Airborne (abbr.)
- 27. Level
- 29. Atomic #94
- 30. Born of
- 31. Midway between northeast and east
- 32. Northeastern bank
- 33. Defunct airline
- 34. Having no purpose
- 35. A low wall
- 36. Swedish city
- 37. Earn a perfect score
- 38. Atomic #81
- 40. Beginner
- 41. Give off
- 42. Incorrect letters
- 44. Telecommunication service provider (abbr.)
- 45. Idyllic
- 46. Popular beer
- 47. A way to fine
- 48. Evildoer
- 50. More withered
- 51. Seventh note of a major scale
- 52. Commercial
- 54. Abnormal breathing
- 55. Moved more quickly
- 57. City of Angels
- 61. Partner to Pa
- 62. Equally

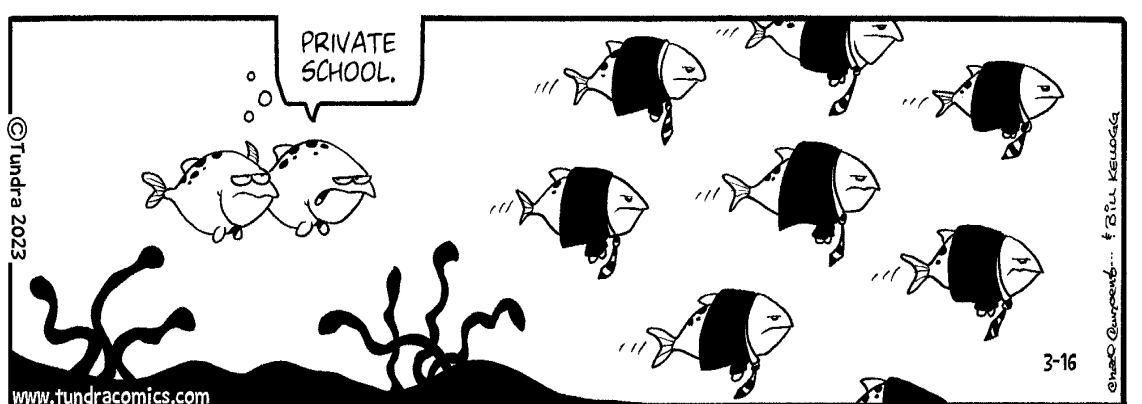
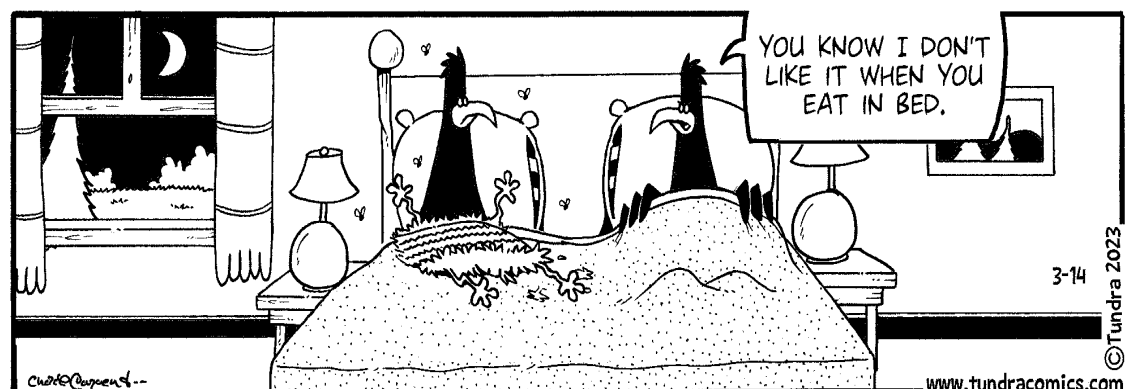
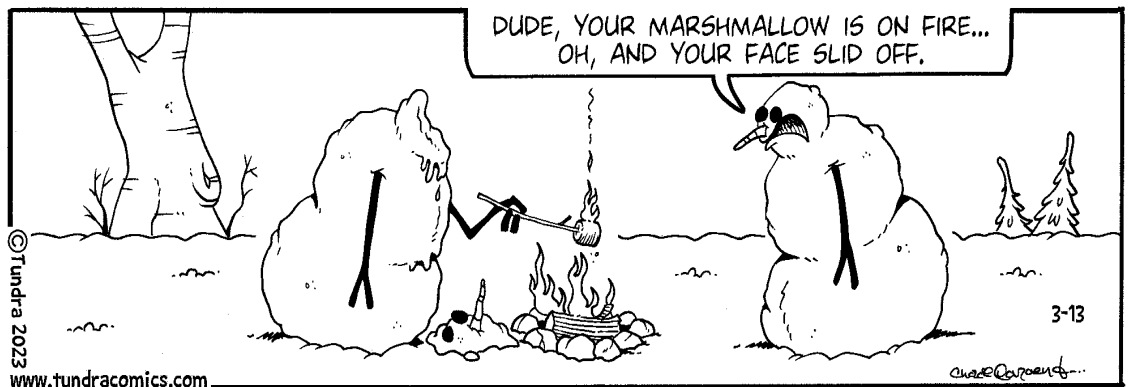
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Postal Service selects skateboard stamp by Juneau Tlingit artist

KINY Juneau

Crystal Kaakeeyáa Rose Demientieff Worl is a Tlingit, Athabascan and Filipino artist and co-owner of Trickster Company in Juneau. And a postage stamp designer, too.

On March 24, she will attend the Art of the Skateboard U.S. Postal Service stamp release in Phoenix, at the Desert West Skatepark. Worl's stamp is featured with three other skateboard stamps selected for the honor.

"It's so cool to be in this collective of artists. I didn't know about the artists before and then we've been talking to each other and tagging each other on Instagram," she said. "We're going to meet in person at this event. It's really cool. I love working with other artists and meeting other artists. I really admire their work in the communities they're from. They have parallel issues."

While Worl doesn't consider herself a skateboarder, she said Trickster Company started off as a skateboard painter.

"Rico (her brother) started it in 2010 and he was hand painting skateboards to sell his art to hang on walls. He had me do a couple as well. But we developed into manufacturing and creating graphic designs that are heat-pressed on skateboards and sold at a more fair price," she said. "We're offering selling those skateboards at different sizes. We want to see actual skaters and kids outside skating on our boards."



Postage stamp art (top right) by Crystal Kaakeeyáa Rose Demientieff Worl, of Juneau, is one of four skateboard stamps selected for U.S. Postal Service release on March 24.

"Trickster Company promotes innovative Indigenous design focused on the Northwest Coast art and exploration of themes and issues in Native culture," according to its website. During the pandemic, the business transitioned from its downtown location to an online store only.

Worl commented on what it's like to see Tlingit formline art represented on

a national level.

"My brother Rico designed the Raven Story on a USPS stamp (2021) and it was really awesome to see his work be recognized at that level. But also Northwest Coast art to be recognized nationally.

"Historically, in Southeast Alaska, Northwest Coast Native art has been appropriated time and time again and again," she said. "Gift shops and tourist

boats and cruises and tours have sold a lot of knock-off Native art that's made in Bali or overseas in China. It's really been stifling to the Native communities and local artists. That's our livelihood. It also perpetuates stereotyping and taking from Indigenous people."

She said her brother received fan mail with his stamp on it, and she looks forward to sending off letters with her skateboard stamp. "I don't actually have the stamp in my hands yet," she said last week. "It will be rewarding once I do."

Worl explained how her stamp will help others learn about Tlingit culture.

"It's a sockeye salmon, which is also in my clan — Tlingit Lukaax.ádi, Raven Sockeye clan. The design for the USPS stamp is not my clan crest, but it is of a sockeye salmon. It's this powerful, amazing being. It's built of muscle that carries nitrogen and nutrients from the deep waters and brings it to Southeast Alaska.

"The salmon are able to navigate back home, which is incredible, very intelligent, amazing beings that travel very long ways to their homeland where they were hatched so that they can spawn and create the next generation," she said. "Then their bodies die, they pass away. The nutrients and the nitrogen are seeped into the earth here and it's created this lush, Tongass rainforest."

The Art of the Skateboard Forever stamps will be available for purchase at post offices and online at USPS.com after the release on March 24.

Alaska may quit nationwide effort that helps maintain accurate voter rolls

By IRIS SAMUELS

Anchorage Daily News

Newly appointed Alaska Division of Elections Director Carol Beecher said last Thursday that she was considering severing ties with a nonprofit that helps maintain voter rolls nationwide, after several Republican-led states announced earlier this month their intention to pull out of the effort.

Beecher told state lawmakers she was evaluating Alaska's membership in the organization during a presentation to the Senate State Affairs Committee. She cited the cost of the program as a reason for leaving despite the benefits it provides.

Her comments came after Florida, Missouri and West Virginia announced plans to no longer work with the Electronic Registration Information Center, a voluntary system known as ERIC that aims to help member states maintain accurate voter lists. Other states, including Texas, are considering pulling out.

ERIC has been the target of false claims from Republi-

can former President Donald Trump and his allies, who have pointed to funding the program received from George Soros, a liberal billionaire and investor, as cause for concern.

"We are definitely looking into it," said Beecher, who is a member of the Republican Party and has donated money to Republican candidates, including to Trump, but has vowed to keep her own political views separate from her position as required by state statutes.

"There are some benefits to remaining in (ERIC) because it does help us with list maintenance. There are also some drawbacks," Beecher said in her first presentation to legislators since she was appointed to oversee the state's elections by Lt. Gov. Nancy Dahlstrom earlier this year.

Beecher said the organization helps the division remove individuals from Alaska voter rolls if they move to another state, but she added that given the cost of membership, she was considering alternatives.

"It's expensive and we are a small state, so to the degree that

it has a value monetarily based on our smaller population in the cleaning it does — are there ways that we could do it better ourselves? Those are the things that we're looking into to see if this is a good return on investment for the state," said Beecher, who did not provide the specific cost of the program during her exchange with lawmakers.

According to data provided by the Division of Elections, ERIC fees and dues in recent years have been less than \$17,000 annually. Additionally, the state has spent between \$10,000 and \$24,000 per year on contacting voters by mail once the system identified issues with their registration.

Between 2016, when Alaska joined the program, and the midpoint of 2022, the state paid a total of just under \$199,000 for both annual membership dues and mailing expenses. In that time, the service helped the state cancel the registration of 14,000 individuals who left Alaska and 1,565 individuals who died.

The program has also helped

the state identify and contact more than 136,000 individuals who were eligible to vote but not registered between 2016 and 2022.

Election officials in other states, including some Republican-controlled states, have praised the system and reported that it has helped them identify thousands of names to be removed from voter lists.

Beecher's comments were met with some concern by members of the Senate State Affairs committee, including Anchorage Sen. Matt Claman, who urged Beecher to analyze alternatives before deciding to leave the organization.

"If somebody says ERIC is imperfect, I bet it's imperfect. The question becomes, do we have a better alternative and if we were going to switch, do we have confidence that that alternative will actually work

ERIC was founded in 2012, the same year a report found that one out of eight voter registrations in the U.S. were no longer valid. The organization uses voter registration information and motor vehi-

cle registration information from member states to identify when people move from state to state or within a state.

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Dam operator accused of not protecting last Atlantic salmon run

By PATRICK WHITTLE

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Environmental groups and a Native American tribe have accused the operator of a Maine hydroelectric dam of not fulfilling its obligation to protect the country's last remaining Atlantic salmon river run.

The last wild Atlantic salmon live in a group of rivers in Maine and have been listed under the Endangered Species Act since 2000. The Penobscot River, a 109-mile-long river in the eastern part of the state is one of the most important habitats for the fish.

The Penobscot is also the site of the Milford Dam, which is owned by renewable energy giant Brookfield Renewable. The company is required under the Endangered Species Act to maintain fish passages that allow 95% of adult salmon to pass the dam within 48 hours.

The small dam has an installed generating capacity of about 8 megawatts.

According to the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Atlantic Salmon Federation and Penobscot Indian Nation on March 6, documents obtained using the Maine Freedom of Access Act show that Brookfield isn't living up to that obligation and that data compiled by the Maine Department of Marine Resources last fall show that only about 21% of salmon pass the dam in the required timeframe.

The groups contend that the problems at the dam are longstanding and that the data illustrate that Brookfield isn't doing enough to fix them.

"We need to see some action here because this problem has been festering for too long," said Nick Bennett, a staff scientist with the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

A Brookfield representative declined to comment on the group's statements.

Brookfield's stewardship of Maine salmon has long been a point of contention with environmental groups. The company has touted its efforts to im-

prove passage on the Penobscot and Kennebec rivers.

Salmon were once plentiful in U.S. rivers, but populations were hurt by overfishing, and factors such as dams and pollution have made restoring them difficult. The species is widely used as seafood because it is widely grown in aquaculture farms.

Salmon counters found more than 1,300 of the wild fish on the Penobscot River last year. Numbers ebb and flow from year to year, with a recent low of 503 in 2016 but more than 1,400 in 2020.

The environmental groups shared the documents they obtained with The Associated Press. The documents include an email from Dan Kircheis, a salmon recovery coordinator with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in which Kircheis states that Brookfield is "not meeting the delay standard for Atlantic salmon."

Kircheis declined to comment. Officials with the Maine Department of Marine Resources also declined to comment.

THANK YOU

The Interfaith Table of Wrangell would like to thank everyone who participated in its inaugural Gathering of Prayer last month.

We are grateful for those businesses and sites across town for setting out our prayer jars. Our thanks to Jenn Miller, for her assistance in using the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial for our gathering. Most of all, we thank the people who wrote their prayer petitions — their joys, their sorrows and their hopes — and filled our jars, trusting that we would pray faithfully for them.

We were honored to lift up your prayers.

The Interfaith Table
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Hollie Levine,

Pastor Sue Bahleda,
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Electric vehicles drain batteries faster in the cold — that’s a problem in Alaska

By TOM KRISHER
AND MARK THIESSEN
Associated Press

Alaska’s rugged and frigid Interior, where it can get as cold as minus 50 Fahrenheit, is not the place you’d expect to find an electric school bus.

But here is Bus No. 50, quietly traversing about 40 miles of snowy and icy roads each day in Tok, shuttling students to school not far from the Canadian border.

It works OK on the daily route. But cold temperatures rob electric vehicle batteries of traveling range, so No. 50 can’t go on longer field trips, or to Anchorage or Fairbanks.

It’s a problem that some owners of electric passenger vehicles and transit officials are finding in cold climates worldwide. At 20 degrees, electric vehicles just don’t go as far as they do at the ideal 70 degrees. Part of it is that keeping passengers warm using traditional technology drains the battery.

So longer trips can be difficult in the coldest weather. Transit authorities like Chicago’s, which has pledged to convert its entire bus fleet to electricity by 2040, have to take extraordinary steps to keep electric buses charged and on schedule.

Some automakers and drivers fear lower battery range in the cold could limit acceptance of electric cars, trucks and buses, at a time when emissions from transportation must go down sharply to address climate change. There is hope. Scientists are racing to perfect new battery chemistries that don’t lose as much energy in cold weather as today’s lithium-ion systems.

“It is a problem to have batteries in cold weather, and we have a pretty cold climate, one of the coldest in North America,” said Stretch Blackard, owner of Tok Transportation, which contracts with the schools in the community 200 road miles southeast

of Fairbanks.

When the temperature hits zero, his cost to run Tok’s electric bus doubles. Tok has among the highest electricity prices in the nation.

In the coldest weather, 0 down to minus 10, the electric bus costs roughly \$1.15 per mile, versus 40 cents per mile for a diesel bus, Blackard said. The cost of the electric bus drops to about 90 cents a mile when it’s warm, but he says the costs make it unworkable and he wouldn’t buy another one.

Wrangell could be one of the next Alaska communities to get an electric school bus — maybe. The school district last fall was awarded a \$395,000 federal grant to buy a bus and charging station.

John Taylor, who operates the school bus service under contract with the district, wanted to compare costs, the benefits and challenges before going electric.

“We are in the final stages of making a decision,” he said last week. “We have until April per the grant rules to get a purchase order. One of my priorities is to meet with the superintendent to make a decision and see if we’ll be electrified or not.”

Many owners of electric vehicles also are finding that long-distance winter-time travel can be hard. EVs can lose anywhere from 10% to 36% of their range as cold spells come at least a few times each winter in many U.S. states.

Mark Gendregske of Alger, Michigan, said it starts to get serious when temperatures drop to the 10 to 20 degree range. “I see typically more than 20% degradation in range as well as charging time,” he said while recharging his Kia EV6 in a shopping center parking lot near Ypsilanti, Michigan. “I go from about 250 miles of range to about 200.”

Gendregske, an engineer for an auto parts maker, knew the range would drop, so he said with planning, the Kia EV still gets him where he needs to go,

even with a long commute.

Some owners, though, didn’t anticipate such a big decline in the winter. Rushit Bhimani, who lives in a northern suburb of Detroit, said he sees about 30% lower range in his Tesla Model Y when the weather gets cold, from what’s supposed to be 330 miles per charge to as low as 230. “They should clarify that one,” he said.

Around three-quarters of this EV range loss is due to keeping occupants warm, but speed and even freeway driving are factors. Some drivers go to great lengths not to use much heat so they can travel farther, wearing gloves or sitting on heated seats to save energy.

And to be sure, gasoline engines also can lose around 15% of their range in the cold.

The range loss has not slowed EV adoption in Norway, where nearly 80% of new vehicle sales were electric last year.

Recent tests by the Norwegian Automobile Federation found models really vary. The relatively affordable Maxus Euniq6 came the closest to its advertised range and was named the winner. It finished only about 10% short of its advertised 220-mile range. The Tesla S was about 16% under its advertised range. At the bottom: Toyota’s BZ4X, which topped out at only 200 miles, nearly 36% below its advertised range.

Nils Soedal, from the Automobile Federation, calls the issue “unproblematic” as long as drivers take it into account when planning a trip. “The big issue really is to get enough charging stations along the road,” and better information on whether they’re working properly, he said.

Recurrent, a U.S. company that measures battery life in used EVs, said it has run studies monitoring 7,000 vehicles remotely, and reached findings similar to the Norwegian test.

Inside batteries, lithium ions flow

through a liquid electrolyte, producing electricity. But they travel more slowly through the electrolyte when it gets cold and don’t release as much energy. The same happens in reverse, slowing down charging.

Neil Dasgupta, associate professor of mechanical and materials science engineering at the University of Michigan, likens this to spreading cold butter on toast. “It just becomes more resistant at low temperatures.”

General Motors is among those working on solutions. By testing, engineers can make battery and heat management changes in existing cars and learn for future models, said Lawrence Ziehr, project manager for energy recovery on GM’s electric vehicles.

GM sent a squadron of EVs from the Detroit area to Michigan’s chilly Upper Peninsula in February to test the impact of cold weather on battery range.

Despite stopping to charge twice on the way, a GMC Hummer pickup, with around 329 miles of range per charge, made the 315-mile trip to Sault Ste. Marie with only about 35 miles left, barely enough to reach GM’s test facility. After finding a charging station out of order at a grocery store, engineers went to a nearby hotel to get enough juice to finish the trip.

At universities too, scientists are working on chemistry changes that could make cold weather loss a thing of the past.

The University of Michigan’s Dasgupta said they’re developing new battery designs that allow ions to flow faster or enable fast charging in the cold. There also are battery chemistries such as solid state that don’t use liquid electrolytes.

He expects improvements to find their way from labs into vehicles in the next two to five years.

“There’s really a global race for increasing the performance of these batteries,” he said.

Walgreens will not sell abortion pills in Alaska, at request of state attorney general

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

Following criticism from Alaska Attorney General Treg Taylor, the nationwide pharmacy chain Walgreens will not seek to sell the abortion-inducing drug mifepristone in Alaska, the company said earlier this month.

Though abortion is legal in Alaska, Taylor was one of 20 Republican attorneys general who wrote the nation’s second-largest pharmacy chain and urged it to not sell mifepristone by mail.

The attorneys general said

they disagree with a Biden administration analysis approving the sale and distribution of the drug through the mail and by chain pharmacies. Walgreens was one of several firms that had said it would seek to sell the drug, which is not currently available through the mail.

Allowing mifepristone by mail would make abortion access more available to most Alaskans; abortion services are currently available only at hospitals, clinics and four other sites in the state.

Walgreens operates 11 stores in Alaska: nine in Anchorage

and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, one in Fairbanks and one in Soldotna.

One-third of the members of the Alaska Legislature sent a letter on March 6 to Walgreens’ chief executive in response to the company’s announcement it would not carry the drug in its Alaska stores.

There was “a lot of anger among many elected officials that an attorney general who’s charged with upholding our constitution is working with a bunch of Outside people, encouraging companies to undercut Alaskans’ constitutionally

protected rights,” said Anchorage Rep. Zach Fields.

Mifepristone is the second-most-common method of abortion in Alaska, accounting for 442 of 1,226 recorded abortions in 2021.

In its response to the attorneys general, Walgreens said it “does not intend to dispense Mifepristone within your state and does not intend to ship Mifepristone into your state from any of our pharmacies.”

Taylor is among 23 Republican attorneys general who signed a brief in support of a federal lawsuit seeking to block the sale of mifepristone nationwide. That suit, filed in Texas, could be decided within weeks.

In January, the Food and Drug Administration approved rules allowing mifepristone to be dispensed by chain and local pharmacies and through the mail. That has the potential to increase the availability of medication abortions across Alaska,

but the process isn’t immediate: Individual pharmacies need to obtain permission before selling the pills.

Alaska law prohibits medication abortions unless they are performed by state-licensed doctors, but Planned Parenthood Great Northwest sued the state in 2019. In 2021, a state Superior Court judge issued a preliminary injunction suspending the law. That means advanced practice clinicians can also perform medication abortions. That means the doctor or practitioner must be present when the patient takes mifepristone.

Despite the injunction, which found that Planned Parenthood was likely to succeed at trial, the state is continuing to defend the law. A trial is tentatively set for November this year, online court records state.

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