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Sharing Our Knowledge conference opens next week

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Beginning Sept. 7, the annual Sharing Our Knowledge conference of Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian tribes and clans will be held in Wrangell for the first time. This five-day event will take place at the Nolan Center and will feature a film festival, a panel discussion and a wide variety of research presentations on subjects ranging from Indigenous history to art.

Organizers expect an estimated 200 people to arrive in town for the event. Because the anticipated attendance exceeds the capacity of Wrangell's hotels and bed and breakfast rentals, conference visitors are seeking housing in the community's spare rooms.

The conference was canceled last year due to COVID.

This year, it will be offering one third of its scheduled programming via zoom for the convenience of out-of-state viewers and presenters.

Joaqlin Estus, the program chair, described the scheduled presenters as "real experts with a lot of insights to share." For her, the conference's central theme is "the continuity of Southeast Indigenous culture from past to present."

Despite the traumatic events the Southeast Indigenous community has undergone, their "cultural strength has endured," she said in a prepared statement.

Estus has deep family ties to the Wrangell community. She is the great-granddaughter of Chief Shakes and granddaughter of Louis Paul and Matilda "Tillie" Paul Tamaree. She attended high school in Wrangell.

Next week's Sharing Our Knowledge conference has attracted people from across Southeast, members of the

First Nations from Canada, and even east coasters from the Lower 48, wrote organizer Peter Metcalfe.

Though the presenters have been scheduled and the venue secured, the organizing committee still has to find housing.

According to Rebecca Gile, of the Stikine Inn, all of the hotel's 34 rooms are booked during the conference. "We started getting reservations for Sharing Our Knowledge weeks ago and quickly booked every room," she said last week. "We are still in tourism season, and we have year-round customers like SEARHC, which books rooms for visiting health professionals."

Linda Belarde, conference executive director and president of Juneau-based Tlingit Readers, hopes that people will open their homes to Sharing Our Knowledge partici-

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Borough contracts for reassessment of all property in town

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The borough followed through on discussions from earlier this summer and the assembly last week approved a contract for reassessment of the value of all commercial and residential properties in the community.

The intent is not to raise revenue — that is determined by the property tax rate the assembly sets every spring as part of the budget process. The reassessment is to ensure that valuations are "equitable across the board," explained Borough Manager Jeff Good.

After the assembly adopts its annual budget, it considers available revenues, such as federal and state funding and estimated sales tax receipts, and sets the property tax rate to balance the spending plan. The tax rate is multiplied against the assessed value of each property.

Inconsistent assessments over the years have created unfair situations, where similar properties, even neighboring properties, "could have extremely different values," Good said in

an interview last Wednesday.

The boroughwide review will include residential and commercial buildings, and undeveloped parcels.

Past intent had been to review one-third of all the properties in town every three years, so that no valuation was more than three years old, the manager said. But, in practice, some properties, particularly some industrial sites, had not been reassessed in 20 years.

The borough assembly on Aug. 23 approved a \$48,000 contract with Anchorage-based Appraisal Company of Alaska to review and assess all properties in Wrangell "at their full and true fair market value" as required by state law.

"The appraiser will complete all building inspections not previously inspected and the appraiser will revalue all real property," the company said in its proposal to the borough.

"I'm glad we're doing this catch-up," Assemblymember Jim DeBord said Aug. 23.

"This includes revaluation of every single property

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An icon retires



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Benn Curtis, owner of City Market, attended a retirement party held in his honor last Saturday. Curtis retired after 58 years working at the store. He began when he was almost 15 years old.

Benn Curtis hangs up his apron after 58 years

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Another chapter closed in the long history of City Market last Saturday. Owner Rolland Benn-Ingles Curtis — or just Benn as most people know him — retired after 58 years of serving the community.

Curtis, 73, began working at the store in 1964 when he was almost 15 years old after much discussion with his father, Rolland. Had Curtis not agreed to work at the store, its story could be much different today.

"He said, 'If you're not going to work in the store, I might as well get rid of it ... and you're on your own,'" Curtis said, recounting the conversation he had with his father. "The store was doing

very well, and I decided I couldn't let an opportunity go by like this, so I dedicated my life to it."

Curtis's father came to Alaska in 1935 and worked in Juneau for a year. The opportunity to buy City Meat Market in Wrangell became available in 1936 and Rolland Curtis bought it. At that time, it was located in a building where the downtown pavilion is now on Front and Lynch streets.

In 1952, when a fire wiped out downtown buildings, City Market was lost in the devastating blaze.

"We lost our home and our business all within the twinkle of an eye," Curtis said. "All that was left were charred pilings. I was only 3 years old. I remember that night like it was only yesterday."

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Foragers take new knowledge into Rainbow Falls trail to find a bunch of fungi



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Noah Siegel, a field mycologist and author, talks about what types of mushrooms can be found in the forest as he led a walk along the Rainbow Falls trail last Saturday. Siegel said there are at least 1,000 species of fungi in Southeast.

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

With names like delicious milky, hawks wing, chaga, puffballs and fairy farts, mushrooms found throughout Southeast are diverse in shape, color and edibility. Some can be used as fabric dyes, and some can kill a person if eaten.

Over the course of last Friday and Saturday, field mycologist and author Noah Siegel educated resident foragers on which mushrooms are safe and which should be avoided.

For about 90 minutes last Friday evening, Siegel, of Royalston, Massachusetts, spoke to a group of nearly 50 people at

the Irene Ingle Public Library, detailing the various species of mushrooms found in Southeast down into the Pacific Northwest. On any given walk along Wrangell's trails, Siegel estimated anywhere from 50 to 75 species could be found.

The following morning, Siegel took a group of about 40 people on a trek up Rainbow Falls to gather and identify as many species as they could find. Before the walk, he gave attendees a bit of edible fungal advice.

"A good rule of thumb: Don't eat little brown mushrooms," Siegel said. There are some that are safe, but most aren't. "If you learn 10 (species) you'll become

the mushroom expert in town ... you'll be the fungi or fun gal."

Siegel has been researching mushrooms for 33 years and has co-authored "Mushrooms of the Redwood Coast: A Comprehensive Guide to the Fungi of Coastal Northern California" with Christian Schwarz. He's currently working on "Mushrooms of Cascadia," a book which he said features 50% more new mushrooms not featured in his previous guide.

"In (Southeast Alaska), there's probably close to 1,000 (species of mushrooms)," he said. "You're not going to see

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Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Wednesday, Aug. 31: Scott Eastaugh, Joel Peterman.

Thursday, Sept. 1: Joshua Campbell, Toni Marie Oliver.

Friday, Sept. 2: Ryan Jabusch, Kameron Stough.

Saturday, Sept. 3: Janice Churchill, Shailyn M. Nelson, Colby Danielle Nore, Tasha Peterman, Marquisa Zrymiak.

Sunday, Sept. 4: Rynda Hayes, Kenny Speers; Anniversary: Glenn and Rebecca Smith.

Monday, Sept. 5: Easton Gushwah, Helen Keller, Devan Massin, Randy Oliver, Jason Rooney, Luke Steele; Anniversary: Matt and Margo Walker-Scott.

Tuesday, Sept. 6: Phil Carey; Anniversaries: Eric and Rebekah Gile, Jeremy and Brandy Grina.

Wednesday, Sept. 7: Donna Wellons, Mathias Wiederspohn.

Senior Center Menu

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

Thursday, Sept. 1

Chicken adobo, carrots, spicy fruit cup, rice

Friday, Sept. 2

Venison loaf with mushrooms, mixed vegetables, peach salad and scalloped potatoes

Monday, Sept. 5

Closed for Labor Day

Tuesday, Sept. 6

Sweet and sour spareribs, green beans, romaine and radish salad, confetti rice

Wednesday, Sept. 7

Baked chicken, broccoli, au gratin potatoes, with carrots and pineapple salad

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

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, Sept. 2

Matanuska, 3:15 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 9

Matanuska, 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 13

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 17

Matanuska, 12:45 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, Sept. 5

Matanuska, 3 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 12

Matanuska, 7:15 a.m.

Thursday, Sept. 15

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 19

Matanuska, 2 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.
Call the terminal at 907-874-2021 for information or call 907-874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.

Tides

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Sept. 1	04:27	14.3	04:39	16.0	10:19	1.7	11:00	0.8
Sept. 2	05:15	13.2	05:21	15.6	11:00	2.9	11:56	1.2
Sept. 3	06:18	12.0	06:18	15.0	11:52	4.1
Sept. 4	07:48	11.3	07:37	14.6	01:04	1.5	12:59	5.2
Sept. 5	09:23	11.6	09:05	14.9	02:26	1.5	02:26	5.7
Sept. 6	10:39	12.8	10:22	15.9	03:52	0.6	03:57	5.1
Sept. 7	11:37	14.2	11:26	17.1	05:03	-0.6	05:12	3.7

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

COMMUNITY MARKET from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at the Nolan Center. Check out the locally grown and handcrafted items.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "DC League of Super-Pets: The Adventures of Krypto and Ace," rated E10+, at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and at 3 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the animation action adventure film that runs one hour and 45 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

PARKS and RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD regular meeting has been rescheduled for 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 14, in assembly chambers at City Hall. Meeting information is available on the borough website www.wrangell.com/calendar. The public is encouraged to attend. Email any comments to the board or the parks director at kthomas@wrangell.com.

WCA and BRAVE are seeking assistant and substitute coaches to coach third through fifth graders for the I Toowú Klatseen (Strengthen Your Spirit) program. Sessions will be Sept. 6 through Nov. 18 on Tuesday and Thursday from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Participants don't have to commit every week and don't need to be a runner — just have a sense of spirit and fun. The program is open to Native and non-Native children. Contact Kim Wickman at kwickman1299@gmail.com or 907-305-0425.

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

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

Continuing Events

PARKS and RECREATION www.wrangellrec.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

Weight room: 6 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 8:30 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Saturday

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

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

Aug. 31, 1922

A call for a meeting for the purpose of organizing a rod and gun club was made two weeks ago, but there was such a small turnout that those present thought it better to defer the matter of organizing until there could be a more representative gathering of those interested in such an organization. An organization can accomplish things that the individual cannot. Organizations in Wrangell and other small towns will tend to crystallize public sentiment and make it possible to check the wholesale slaughter of game animals that is now going on throughout Southeast Alaska. If the game of this region is to be conserved, it is imperative that there be some kind of an organization that will take some sort of hold on the situation. A rod and gun club

could therefore in addition to furnishing much wholesome pleasure and recreation, be the means of accomplishing splendid work in the conservation of game. It is earnestly hoped that there will be a splendid turnout at the meeting called for 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Wrangell Hotel.

Aug. 29, 1947

Wrangell will be host to two U.S. Senate committees tomorrow night. The Senate Small Business Committee, with Sen. Homer Capehart, of Indiana, will be interested primarily in pulp and paper, and the Senate Public Lands Committee, headed by Sen. Hugh Butler, of Nebraska, will hold hearings and make a study of the statehood situation for Alaska. Both parties will be traveling by small boat. The Capehart party, with Secretary of Alaska Lew Williams, will be aboard the Coast Guard vessel Wachusett, and the Butler party, with Alaska Gov. Ernest Gruening, will be aboard the Fish and Wildlife Service vessel Brant. They expect to arrive in Wrangell around 6 or 7 p.m. Mayor Doris Barnes will greet the Senate groups and a public meeting, to which the public is invited, will be held at the Elks Hall, where Wrangell residents will have the opportunity of meeting the senators and their parties and discussing matters pertaining to the

territory with them. A cocktail party will be held, for which the Junior Chamber of Commerce will host.

Sept. 1, 1972

A record \$2.4 million in loans and grants was made in the past fiscal year by the Wrangell office of the Farmers Home Administration, according to Wallace Riehle, supervisor. A breakdown of loans and grants made by the federal agency's Wrangell office, which serves Southeast Alaska, includes: Forty home loans totaling \$860,500 and averaging \$21,500 per home. The funds went for construction of new homes, purchase of homes, and home repair. A \$35,000 grant went to the state for studies of water and sewer planning in Wrangell, Petersburg, Haines, Skagway and Craig.

Aug. 28, 1997

An ongoing project, the Spur Road Extension, recently hit a snag when it was learned that an additional 500 to 1,500 feet of road will be needed to access state lands due to be offered in timber sales. The city also is seeking to open up lots in the area to be sold for residential or industrial use. The city council authorized a change order not to exceed \$50,000. City Manager Scott Seabury noted that the project still will come in under the original estimate.

Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Aug. 31	5:51a	7:46p	13:55h
Sept. 1	5:53a	7:44p	13:50h
Sept. 2	5:55a	7:41p	13:46h
Sept. 3	5:57a	7:38p	13:41h
Sept. 4	5:59a	7:36p	13:36h
Sept. 5	6:01a	7:33p	13:32h
Sept. 6	6:03a	7:30p	13:27h

Bond issues added to upcoming municipal election ballot

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

In less than five weeks, voters will decide whether the borough should borrow \$12 million to repair the schools and Public Safety Building.

On Aug. 23, the borough assembly unanimously approved placing two questions on the Oct. 4 municipal election ballot that will ask voter approval to cover the renovation costs.

One of the ballot issues would approve borrowing \$8.5 million to repair the water-damaged Public Safety Building, while the other would approve borrowing \$3.5 million to help fund repairs at the elementary, middle and high schools.

Though anticipated school repair costs total \$10 million, the borough hopes to cover the majority of the work with a grant from the state Department of Education.

In issuing bonds, the borough would make a commitment to repay the borrowed money. If the bonds are approved by voters, the debt would be repaid out of borough funds, likely using a combination of property taxes, federal and state dollars, and investment earnings from Wrangell's \$10 million Permanent Fund.

Using a 20-year debt and 4% interest rate for their calculations, the borough estimates that annual payments on the school bonds could be \$413,000 per year, while payments on the Public Safety Building could be \$628,000.

Voters may approve one, both or neither of the bond issues.

Wrangell paid off its last school bonds more than three years ago, leaving the borough clear of debt. The last bond issue was in 2010 to help pay for playground improvements at Evergreen School.

Much of the work that would

be funded by the proposed bond issue would cover siding and roofing, new windows and heating system boilers, ventilation upgrades and other long-deferred maintenance. The school buildings are several decades old.

At the Public Safety Building, water has intruded into the walls, requiring repairs and a new pitched roof and new siding to maintain its structural integrity, according to borough officials.

Borough Manager Jeff Good stressed the necessity of the repairs at the Aug. 22 assembly meeting. "The (Public Safety Building) bond is for siding and roofing on a 37-year-old building," Good said. "Usually, you replace siding after 30 or 40 years." Investing in the buildings now will prevent even greater costs in the future, he explained.

Assemblymember Ryan Howe also emphasized the im-

portance of doing repair work sooner rather than later on all the buildings. "Eventually, the buildings will all fail," Howe said. Paying the bill for structural repairs and mechanical issues will be much cheaper than waiting until the buildings' state of disrepair reaches crisis levels.

Patty Gilbert, vice-mayor, suggested that the assembly strive to explain the importance of the repairs and the bonds' potential impacts to the public.

A sunset clause — guaranteeing that whatever property taxes are levied to pay off the bonds will end after the bonds are fully repaid — was added to the ordinances setting up the ballot measures.

The assembly also created a special committee to inform the public about the repairs and the effect the bonds might have on household finances. The com-

mittee will include Good, Finance Director Mason Villarma, and assembly members Anne Morrison and Gilbert.

In the coming weeks, the committee will draft and distribute a brochure to raise awareness about the bond issues in advance of the election. Many assembly members expressed concern that if taxpayers aren't fully informed about the necessity of the long-awaited repairs and how the borough could repay the debt, the ordinances will not pass.

Villarma hopes the borough can maximize the use of other funding, including federal and state dollars and investment earnings, to decrease the burden on property taxpayers.

Howe was apprehensive, however, about anything that could reduce borough funding for school operations. "I don't want them to lose shop classes," he said.

Hannah's Place offers education, clothing and supplies to parents and families

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Hannah's Place is situated in a cheerful yellow house, filled with natural light and enough baby supplies to care for a small army of infants, which is exactly what the organization's executive director, Nedra Shoultz, has spent the past 11 years doing.

"What we are here for is really education and support," she explained. Along with prenatal and parenting classes, the center distributes clothes, books, diapers and other baby essentials to parents in need. "If someone found themselves in a position where they were going to have a baby but maybe not financially able to buy maternity clothes, those things are here, available for them."

The nonprofit is dedicated to providing free and confidential support to women and families in Wrangell. In addition to classes and supplies, Hannah's Place offers free pregnancy tests for those who prefer not to disclose their possible status to the cashiers at City Market or Bob's IGA. Shoultz stressed the fact that access to these free services is "open to anyone." There is no requirement that people seeking help from Hannah's Place demonstrate financial need.

The nonprofit was founded in the fall of 2011, when a group of local women, led by Christian author Maryann Landers, decided to put together gift bags for moms returning to the island with their new babies. Since then, the institution has expanded its offerings and moved into its current location on Church Street, which was donated by the Presbyterian church. On average, the group hands out



PHOTO BY CAROLEINE JAMES/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Nedra Shoultz, executive director of Hannah's Place, displays what she calls a "butt spatula," which is used to apply powder to a baby's rear end. The community nonprofit distributes baby essentials plus clothing, education and support to parents.

about 22 gift bags per year — so far this year, they have distributed 13.

Hannah's Place was named after the biblical Hannah, found in the first and second chapters of the Book of Samuel. After Hannah, who is barren, prays to conceive a child, God grants her wish. Hannah's love for children inspired the mission of the organization. "We have a desire to see (children) grow and prosper and be in healthy relationships," said Shoultz.

Though the organization has close ties to the local interfaith community and its name suggests a religious bent, faith is not a prerequisite for receiving services

at Hannah's Place. "There are some faith-based classes if someone is interested," she said. "They certainly aren't required but they are available."

By participating in the organization's course offerings, new moms earn "mommy money" that can be traded for baby clothes and supplies. The exchange rate is generous — one dollar of this currency is equivalent to the amount of onesies, blankets and baby shoes that can fit into a single plastic grocery bag.

Enterprising parents wishing to get the maximum bang for their baby bucks are welcome to stuff the bag as full as they

see fit. "We're kind of giving it away," laughed Shoultz.

The opportunity to accumulate mommy money is not exclusive to women. New fathers are also welcome to enter the vast baby supply reserves of Hannah's Place and exchange credits for clothes.

In fact, Shoultz prefers to think of Hannah's Place less as a women's resource center and more as a family resource center. Though the handmade sign in front of the building features a woman with a flower in her hair, the organization offers plenty of resources that are not gender-specific, such as classes on budgeting, buying a car or nailing a job interview.

In the coming months, a few big changes are in the works for Hannah's Place, starting with a change in leadership. On Oct. 1, Shoultz plans to retire and the board is selecting a new executive director. The organization is also working to reintroduce some of the in-person programming that was cut during the first two years of the pandemic. On Oct. 3, Hannah's Place will host a "breastfeeding café" with La Leche League, creating a space for new parents to meet, share ideas and learn about breastfeeding.

In March 2020, just before a wave of COVID shutdowns swept the nation, Hannah's Place announced that it would soon offer beginner sewing classes. Like so many COVID-era events, those classes had to be canceled. But in the coming weeks, Shoultz plans to schedule the center's first sewing class, two years and six months after it was intended to take place.

Winner of U.S. House election will be announced Wednesday after final vote tallies

The Anchorage Daily News
and Wrangell Sentinel

Whether Alaskans and the other 434 members of the U.S. House will be addressing Rep. Sarah Palin or Rep. Mary Peltola likely will be announced late Wednesday.

State elections officials plan to announce that day the final vote tally and election winner under Alaska's new ranked-choice voting system — it's the deadline for any absentee ballots from overseas to arrive and be added to the count.

In-person voting for the election was held Aug. 16.

With a near-final ballot count released last Friday evening, more than 190,000 votes had been cast and turnout exceeded 32% — the highest August election turnout in Alaska since 2014, when turnout was 39%.

In the special U.S. House race, which marked the state's first election under the new voting system, Bethel Democrat Peltola increased her lead and had 74,496, 39.6%, of the first-choice votes counted as of last Friday.

Republican Palin had 58,149, 30.9%, of first-choice votes. Republican Nick Begich III trailed at 52,320, 27.8%.

Under ranked-choice voting, the third-place finisher will be eliminated from the race, and those votes will be redistributed to whoever is ranked second on those ballots. The winner will likely be determined by the number of Begich supporters who ranked Palin second. If Palin receives enough second-choice votes from Begich supporters, she could overtake Peltola to become Alaska's new U.S. House member.

The special U.S. House election, prompted by the death of longtime Rep. Don Young in March, will determine who will serve out the last four months of Young's term. Peltola, Palin and Begich are also in the running for the regular November election that will determine who will hold that seat for the full two-year term that begins in January.

The order of finishers in the Aug. 16 primary election for the full term was the same as the special election: Peltola, Palin

and Begich.

Under Alaska's new election laws, the top four vote-getters in the open primary will advance to the November election. The fourth-place primary finisher was Republican Tara Sweeney, at 3.7%, but she announced last week she would drop out of the race, citing no "path to victory" and fundraising challenges.

That means the fifth-place finisher will be on the November ballot: Libertarian Chris Bye, with 0.6% of votes.

In last Friday's count for the U.S. Senate primary, incumbent Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski increased her lead over Republican challenger Kelly Tshibaka, who has the backing of former President Donald Trump. Murkowski had 45% of votes to 38.6% for Tshibaka. Rounding out the November ballot will be Democrat Pat Chesbro, who had 6.8% of votes, and Republican Buzz Kelley, who was in fourth with 2.1%.

In the race for governor, Republican incumbent Mike Dunleavy is comfortably ahead of challengers with 40.4% of votes.

Democratic former Anchorage legislator Les Gara is in second with 23%. Independent former Gov. Bill Walker is a close third with 22.8%. In fourth is Kenai Peninsula Borough Mayor Charlie Pierce with 6.6%.

More than half the voters in Wrangell and Southern Southeast Alaska cast their ballots for Dunleavy over his two main challengers. Wrangell voted 256 for Dunleavy, 126 for Walker and 63 for Gara. State House District 1, which includes Wrangell, Ketchikan, Metlakatla and Prince of Wales Island, was more favorable to Walker, with 1,976 for Dunleavy, 1,229 for Walker and 630 for Gara.

Whereas District 1 went for Murkowski over Tshibaka 1,990 to 1,597, Wrangell favored Tshibaka 230-206.

In the special election for U.S. House, voters in District 1 were closely divided for the top three candidates: Begich, 1,448; Peltola, 1,431; and Palin, 1,409. In Wrangell, Palin was the clear winner with 246 votes, to 137 for Begich and 118 for Peltola.

In the primary election for

state House District 1, incumbent Rep. Dan Ortiz, running as a nonpartisan, outpolled first-time challenger Republican Jeremy Bynum, 2,174 to 1,812. Ortiz carried Wrangell, though by a slimmer margin, 235-212. Both candidates live in Ketchikan.

In the state Senate race that includes House District 1, plus District 2 comprised of Sitka and the rest of Southeast south of Juneau, incumbent Republican Sen. Bert Stedman, of Sitka, collected twice as many votes as his Republican challenger, Mike Sheldon, of Petersburg, 5,537-2,505.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Wrangell needs to think about its future

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Given my aversion to long planning sessions, whiteboards with erasable markers and consensus building exercises, I can't believe I am saying this: The town needs a plan for its economic future. A forum to start making that plan is a good beginning.

Wrangell's economic future is as cloudy as a fall day in Southeast, as uncertain as the state ferry schedule, and as chancy as winning a raffle.

Improving those dreary odds can't be based on hope. Wrangell needs a realistic plan.

The chamber of commerce is sponsoring an economic forum on Sept. 30 at the Nolan Center, open to anyone with ideas, everyone willing to work, and all who want a community with stable jobs, new housing and more students in the schools.

"The goal for me," said Borough Manager Jeff Good, "is to identify what Wrangell is going to look like in five to 10 years. Where do local businesses see it? Where does the community see it?"

It's easy to look back to the years of two sawmills running two shifts each and a larger seafood processing industry that operated every summer, not just when the salmon runs are optimum. It's nice to reminisce back 30 years, when Wrangell schools had double the enrollment of today — the count was 500 students in 1992.

And it brings a fiscal smile to think about the 1980s when the state treasury was fat with oil dollars and communities received a bigger share of that money.

But that was then and now is different. "The economy is in a bad spot," said Brittani Robbins, chamber executive director. The problems on her list are not new to anyone running a business or managing a

household in town: Insufficient access to child care, lack of housing for workers and seasonal economic stagnation all contribute to the downturn.

All are real problems and are not unique to Wrangell. But ignoring the pain, taking two aspirin and figuring the headache will be gone by morning is not a plan.

Statewide over the past decade 53,000 more people left Alaska than arrived. That loss of new workers, new families, new adventurers has been a real hit for communities looking to grow or even hold steady.

"The goal for me is to identify what Wrangell is going to look like in five to 10 years."

*Jeff Good,
borough manager*

The U.S. Census Bureau and Alaska Department of Labor both say Wrangell lost population over the past decade. Unemployment is the lowest it's been in years, but much of the town's problem is a shortage of workers for the jobs that exist.

As reported this summer by the Alaska Department of Labor, Wrangell's available workforce in May was down

by about 80 to 90 people from the past decade.

Part of the reason is that Wrangell is aging. The median age of residents is 11 years older than the statewide average, and 25% of residential property value in town is off the tax rolls under a state-mandated benefit for senior citizens. An aging community means fewer people in the workforce and fewer students in school.

The economic forum is an opportunity to bring business owners, borough officials, school and community leaders together to talk about the problems.

It's not useful to blame the federal or state government, or to grasp at unrealistic, unaffordable ideas. Alaska has spent far too much time and money dreaming about mega-projects. Wrangell needs to focus on what's needed and what's possible.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Community kindness, support make it 'truly a great place to live'

My voice is an echo. So many people write to the Sentinel to express their thanks and appreciation for the great work that the folks at the Wrangell Volunteer Fire Department and

especially the EMT corps do for this community. I don't have any better words than what has already been expressed but I want to make sure that everyone involved knows how much I appreciate the rapid response to my call, the good care and the kindness you all displayed.

And a huge thank you to the police department and the medical staff at the emergency room. The caring got me through that night and reinforces my belief that this is truly a great place to live.

Thanks to all who have reached out.

Anne Winters

EDITORIAL

Property reassessment isn't about raising taxes

The borough assembly and staff spent a fair amount of time at last week's assembly meeting, explaining the intent of a contract with an appraisal firm to reassess the value of all the property in town. Homes, businesses, industrial properties, empty lots — they will all get a new look to make sure the borough's valuation is fair.

This is about treating property owners equitably.

It's also about following state law, which requires that cities and boroughs assess property "at its full and true value."

This is not about raising taxes, though several assembly members said they have heard complaints from residents who believe otherwise.

The borough manager discovered soon after starting the job late last year that property valuations around town are inconsistent, that similar homes might be assessed at significantly different values. And although the borough's long-held intent had been to update assessments every three years, some properties have been stuck in time at the same assessment for 20 years.

None of which meets the requirement in state law for "full and true value."

The solution is to have the borough's contract assessor look at every file for every piece of property, check out the ones that need new information for the file, drive by some as needed, and prepare an updated valuation for everything in Wrangell.

Under the law, property owners will be able to appeal their assessments to a borough review panel.

It's likely that the new assessments will be higher for many of the homes, businesses and pieces of land in town. Housing and land prices have gone up, not down, in recent years. But that doesn't necessarily mean property taxes will increase.

After the new assessments are in the system, the borough will look at its spending plan for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

How much should the borough contribute to school district operating expenses? What's the cost of fuel for heating buildings? The cost of employee health insurance? The budget for Parks and Recreation, the Nolan Center and the police?

After adding up expenses, seeing what is available from state and federal sources and how much the borough expects in sales tax revenues, the assembly will set the property tax rate, also known as the mill rate — which has nothing to do with a saw-mill but is the tax rate per \$1,000 in assessed value.

The current mill rate for most of the borough is 12.75, or, for example, \$2,550 on a \$200,000 home.

If assessments increase and the assembly decides the borough can function just fine with the same property tax revenue this year, then the tax rate could decrease so that overall tax collections do not change. If the borough needs more money, such as to repay bonds for repairs to school buildings, the tax rate could increase.

The borough is doing the right thing to reassess all the property in town to ensure people are taxed fairly. The actual tax rate will be set next spring as part of the budget. It's a two-step process.

— Wrangell Sentinel

Cranky machines, inky fingers get the newspaper ready for readers each week

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

What started as a sort of fact-finding trip to Petersburg turned into a deeper appreciation for something I've done for decades, and something many take for granted.

Every Wednesday, the Sentinel is delivered to mailboxes and stores throughout Wrangell, making its way into the hands of readers. Many more copies are sent out of town and state and even into Canada. But it takes a lot of work to get it there.

I've worked in almost every department of the news industry, from proofing pages to delivering papers. The final product is meant to inform, entertain and engage readers. That's something we consider before we even begin working on stories.

Each publishing cycle begins with a story "budget" meeting, in which I and reporter Caroleine James talk with publisher Larry Persily. We discuss the stories we have in mind for the next week, what readers will want to know most and what we should know going into the reporting.

In most cases, we each start with five to seven stories to work on, knowing that some will fall through or get pushed back a week or two or six. I like to call it the shotgun approach — pull the trigger and see what we hit.



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Petersburg Pilot publisher Orin Pierson makes sure the paper looks good coming off the press last Thursday. The Pilot prints its own paper on Thursdays and the Sentinel on Tuesdays. Pierson checks for alignment and any bleeding colors as part of quality control during the print process.

At the same time, Amber Armstrong, the Sentinel's office manager, circulation and advertising sales director, busily coordinates with advertisers to make sure their latest specials and messages reach our readership.

We all wear multiple hats. For example, I write stories, shoot photos for the stories,

create ads, draw a comic strip and lay out the pages each week. There was a time when newspapers had a different person for all those jobs. Some still do, but not here.

That brings me to the Petersburg trip.

Ola Richards, at the Petersburg Pilot, used to lay out both the Pilot and the Sentinel. (The owners of the Pilot also

owned the Sentinel until Persily bought the paper in January 2021.) When I came onboard, I took over building the Sentinel as Persily wanted to bring the work back to Wrangell. Richards operates the press that prints both newspapers.

I visited the Pilot to sit with Richards and go over adjustments to the color levels in our photos and ads so that they'll turn out better in print. That's one of those things we're always trying to fine tune so that the reader experience is more satisfying.

Sometimes we run the paper in all black and white. Even then, we need to adjust the photos so they turn out better and not faded or muddy in print. It takes time and patience.

I watched early last Thursday as Richards prepped the old four-color printing press she calls a cranky old woman (among other names not fit for print). She crimped the metal plates to mount them on the print drums. She cleaned rollers. She made sure the inkwells were fresh and ready. After firing up the press, she checks the registration marks to make sure the plates are lining up and pictures aren't blurred. She goes back and forth between the different color stations to turn knobs, adjust rollers and make sure

Continued on page 5

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Sharing Our Knowledge

Continued from page 1

pants. Belarde is not asking anyone to provide rooms for free, though she doubts that any Sharing Our Knowledge visitors would turn down free housing. "I can remember when small communities would house traveling basketball teams and their fans," she said. "Local people took care of the visitors."

To offer a rental or host a Sharing Our Knowledge visitor, call Jana Wright of the Wrangell Cooperative Association at (907) 470-1011. Wright will serve as the point of contact between hosts and Sharing Our Knowledge organizers.

Keynote speakers will include Debra Dzjijuksuk O'Gara on decolonizing Alaska Native justice and Miranda Belarde-Lewis on northern Native art.

Though many of the conference's presentations deal broadly with Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian topics, some explore history that is specific to Wrangell. On Sept. 10, keynote speaker Jim Labelle, who attended the Bureau of Indian Affairs Wrangell Institute, which closed in 1975, will share his experiences as a boarding school survivor and discuss his path to healing.

On Sept. 8, at 10:15 a.m., Ronan Rooney will use historic maps to explore the 1869 bombardment of Fort Wrangell. The bombardment is an oft-overlooked historical event in which the U.S. Army carried out a multi-day artillery attack on the Tlingit village of Khaachxhan.áak'w.

Also on Sept. 8, at 2:20 p.m., James Crippen will delve into the subtleties of Wrangell's unique Tlingit dialect, which combines elements typical to both northern and southern styles of Tlingit speech.

An hour later, Steve Brown will provide a stylistic analysis of Wrangell totem poles. Though Wrangell is famous for its totems, early photographers of the poles did very little to associate them with the carvers who created them. Through careful observation, Brown hopes to reattribute the poles to specific carvers and illuminate Wrangell's artistic history.

In addition to sessions at the Nolan Center, a healing ceremony will be held the afternoon of Sept. 10 at Shoemaker Bay, near the former site of the Wrangell Institute. On Sept. 8, a session will be held at Chief Shakes House: "Continue to Build Our Connections with Elders from the First Nations."

Vendors of Native arts and crafts will have their work for sale in the Nolan Center lobby Sept. 8-10.

Funding for Sharing Our Knowledge comes from a variety of sources including WCA, the U.S. Forest Service, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, Sealaska Heritage Institute, Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska and others. The first conference was held in 1993, in Haines and Klukwan.

Tickets to the entire conference cost \$75, or \$25 for students and seniors. A single day ticket costs \$25, or \$10 for students and seniors. For more information and to register, go to sharingourknowledge.org.

Reassessment

Continued from page 1

within the borough," staff reported to the assembly.

The work is scheduled to start in September, "and this process usually takes a couple of months, with values finalized by the end of the year or early January," staff reported. "Fieldwork will be conducted in October/November, during which the assessor will meet with the assembly to explain the value changes, on average how much property values will change, and the real estate market overview."

"We want it well in advance, so that we can see it through the process," Good said. Borough staff will monitor the assessor's work to ensure consistency and completeness, he told the assembly.

The assessor's work will include a mix of on-site

visits of properties and reviews of files, property descriptions and past assessments.

Assessment notices will be mailed at the end of March, allowing owners time to challenge the valuations before tax notices are sent out.

Aside from any changes in property valuations, the borough next year will send out a different assessment notice for each property, a change from current practice of sending a single, combined notice to an owner of multiple properties.

The assembly also approved an \$8,600 add-on to the contract for Appraisal Company of Alaska to scan — turn into digital files — all property tax records, which will make it easier for staff, and property owners, to review the public information.

Benn Curtis

Continued from page 1

City Market began its second life in a small house located where the shop's liquor store is now. The man who lived there owed Rolland Curtis for his winter grocery bill. "Dad knew this fellow very well, and he said, 'I'll forgive you your winter grocery bill, plus give you \$1,000 for your house,'" Curtis said. "The guy said, 'OK.'"

Inside the house was gutted and City Market began operating in the small space. The larger grocery store was built in 1958 and was half City Market and half hardware store and machine shop owned by Einar Ottesen, Curtis said.

Eventually, Ottesen moved his operation "uptown" to McKinnon and Front streets, and City Market took over the entire building.

Curtis' father retired in 1980 at the age of 76 and remained the president of City Market Inc. until his death in 1985 when Curtis became the president of the company.

Though the store has gone through

changes over his time there, Curtis said probably the biggest change he's seen is in the way freight gets received.

"When I started, the old steamships came in every other week and unloaded," he said. "We had flatbed trucks, and we'd go down and take a forklift and put (the groceries) on (the trucks), drive them to the store and unload them."

Now product comes in on a weekly barge and gets delivered to the store by an Alaska Marine Lines truck.

Things like dirt streets and raised wooden sidewalks have also gone the way of the steamships, but Curtis' approach to the business is very much like his father's.

"He's generous to a fault," said Jake Hale, store director for City Market. Hale said Curtis will help those in need where he can. It's a trait Rolland Curtis had as well, according to his son.

"My dad, if somebody came to him and said, 'I have no money, but I need food. I got two little kids and a wife.' My dad would

say, 'Don't worry about it. Get what you need, and you pay me when,'" Curtis said.

Though Curtis does admit that times have changed and "people are not on the honor system like they were 50, 80 years ago," Curtis' son, Rolland Wimberly, said his dad has a "big heart."

Niki Blake, the office manager at City Market, said she will miss working with Curtis, and working at the store with him is partly why she and her husband returned to Wrangell. "I love working with him," she said, admitting that he needs to be able to relax. "He's been here for so long, and after 58 years, he needs to be able to retire. He's worked hard."

Wimberly worked in the store when he was younger but left to pursue a law degree. He's recently returned to become vice president of the business. It's Curtis' hope that his son will be the third generation "Rolland" to run City Market.

"(Rolland) has worked in the store before," Curtis said. "He's not new to the

business. He knows and understands everything, and he's not scared to ask questions. He's very intelligent. I think we've got a good mix there."

Curtis has been easing into retirement since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, going into the store less and less. Still, when asked what his plans are for retirement, he isn't quite sure.

"I have no idea. Just putter around," he said. "I'm sure my wife has a whole list of stuff she wants me to do."

Shirley Wimberly, Curtis' wife, said she's trying to get him to figure out what he wants to do, though she hinted that he'll probably still go into the store on occasion to work.

What will he miss the most?

"The people. A lot of people, even today because I'm not there all the time, when I'm in the store and they're shopping, they come up to me and say, 'Oh, I'm so glad to see you're here,'" he said with a smile, adding, "All the ladies like to give me hugs and kisses on the cheek."

Mushrooms

Continued from page 1

them every single year, and it could be years in between seeing them."

Mushrooms can be just as picky as people on where they live. In an area with spruce or hemlock, there may only be about 600 species of mushroom, Siegel said, whereas entirely different species would be found in the muskeg or alpine.

"Yesterday, the smallest thing I saw was this thing called endogone pisiformis, which is about (the size of a pinhead) and is bright yellow and grows on moss," he said about a walk up Mount

Dewey where he found about 50 mushrooms. "The largest thing was a catathelasma, which was about 14 inches across."

Out of the mushrooms that Siegel found, he said five or six are worth eating, possibly 10 more were edible but not something people would want to eat, and nothing was "deadly poisonous, but would make you sick if you ate them."

In Wrangell, there are two or three deadly poisonous species, 10 edible species, 50 to 75 poisonous species and about the same number of species you could eat but wouldn't eat again. The rest

of the species fall somewhere in between all those, Siegel said. "It's fairly easy to learn a handful of good edibles."

Many in attendance at the lecture and the field trip wanted to know what mushrooms were safe to eat, but they were just as curious about the natural world in Wrangell's backyard.

"I know Washington state mushrooms, but I don't know what's specific to the region up here," said Dave Davidson, who has been foraging since he was a child, being taught by his father. "You can move from one region to another and some things will look the same, some will look different. You might end up getting poisoned, so I'm here to learn."

Fungus found on the underside of hollowed-out trees, growing trailside or even stair-stepping up tree trunks (a kind known as bear bread) were in abundance along the trail on Saturday. However, Siegel said after a dry spell, such as the one Wrangell recently had, mushrooms would be more scarce than usual. Dry weather, followed by wet, then dry and more wet would spur

mushrooms to emerge more abundantly from their vast underground networks.

Melody Morford and Heather Kaminski joined the outing to Rainbow Falls and within a few minutes of setting out on the trail they had found about five

different species.

"It's always been on our mind to learn more and then the opportunity presented itself and we took it," Kaminski said. "We're excited to be out, just discovery what there is to see. It's like a new lens that's been opened up."



Kate Thomas collected more than 10 different species of mushrooms just in walking the first half of the Rainbow Falls trail last Saturday.

PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/
WRANGELL SENTINEL

Printing press

Continued from page 4

everything looks as good as possible.

As she did that, the Pilot's editor and publisher, Orin Pierson, jumped in to stack papers and monitor the quality. Richards is training her boss how to love the high-maintenance machine and fill in for her when she's on vacation.

Witnessing the printing brings me full circle. It's the end of what we start every week in black and white ... and cyan, magenta and yellow. Even before the paper is in our hands in Wrangell, we've started creating the next one.

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WRANGELL SENTINEL

Community chorale to return after 2-year pandemic hiatus

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

After their last Christmas concert in December 2019, members of the community chorale packed up their music stands and filed away their songbooks, unaware that they would not be meeting again the next year. But now that two Christmases have gone by without this treasured community tradition, Bonnie Demerjian, the group's longtime musical director, has decided it is time to bring the chorale back.

For Demerjian, restarting the community chorale is "a responsibility as well as a pleasure." She has guided the group through 23 years of concerts and fears that if it isn't reestablished in time for the coming Christmas season, it may cease to exist.

In Demerjian's experience, the choir helps fill a cultural void in town. "There just aren't a lot of performing arts activities going on here," she said. It is also a sustaining force for members through the dark winter months.

Steve Helgeson has been involved with the choir since its very first year, before Demerjian became the director. He and his wife, Jenny, both have a background in chorale music. After singing in high school and college, they welcome any opportunity to be part of a choir yet again. "Chorale singing gets in your blood," said Helgeson.

Lori Bauer, also a veteran chorale member, participates in the chorale for the "sense of community" that it fosters. Members grow both individually and as a group as they struggle to memorize their parts and blend their voices. As the concert draws closer each year, Bauer enjoys listening to the choir progress from disjointed to harmonious. "It sounds really horrible at first, but by the end it all comes together."

Though she missed the chorale during its pandemic hiatus, Bauer believes that shutting down was the right thing to do. "We were all in an enclosed area," she said. "It would have been a super spreader." Infection rates have now decreased enough that she is comfortable singing with the group again.

Listeners at the chorale's upcoming December concert can expect both a return to tradition and a

departure from past shows. As in other years, the song selection will include a mix of sacred hymns and secular Christmas songs, like "I'll Be Home for Christmas." But this year, for the first time, the choir will have no instrumental accompaniment. Because the regular pianist's eyesight is failing, Demerjian has chosen arrangements that are designed to be performed by voices alone.

The unique challenges of singing a cappella make recruiting a large choir particularly important for the upcoming performance. Without a piano to help performers stay in tune, members of the chorale will have to rely on each other as they carry their complex harmonies.

So far, about 10 people have reached out to Demerjian expressing interest, but she hopes that more will join the chorale's ranks before October, when practices start. To round out the group's sound, she would like between 18 and 25 singers total. Those who would like to participate can email Demerjian at bonniede@aptalaska.net, or call her at 907-796-9632.

Returning members may constitute the backbone of the choir, but this year, Demerjian is seeking new voices. "I really would like to try and scare up some people who haven't ever sung, or are new in town," she said. The community chorale welcomes all levels of vocal ability. Those without sight reading experience will be placed next to a more experienced singer, who they can mimic until they learn their part by ear. Helgeson also encouraged youth, particularly high schoolers, to join.

The choir will meet once a week from 5:15 to 6:45 p.m. beginning the second week of October. Demerjian has not decided on a day to hold rehearsals yet—she plans to delay that scheduling decision until more members have joined the choir. Then, she will determine a recurring practice date based on the group's availability.

Helgeson, however, is not concerned about the choir's size. No matter the turnout, he is happy to do what he loves for another season. "We're going to make it work regardless of how many people show up."

Ballot will ask voter approval to sell 6-Mile mill property

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

On election day in five weeks, Wrangell will vote whether to give the borough permission to sell or lease all or part of the former 6-Mile sawmill property, which the borough purchased earlier this summer in hopes of spurring economic development in town.

Sale or lease of borough property valued at over \$1 million requires approval from a majority of voters.

The borough paid \$2.5 million for the 32-acre parcel.

The assembly Aug. 23 voted

unanimously to put the question on the Oct. 4 municipal election ballot.

Assemblymember David Powell anticipated minimal pushback from the community on the sale or lease of the property. "People don't want the borough to own land," he said. Selling or leasing the property would take it off the borough's hands and potentially open up new economic opportunities in industry or tourism.

The borough is currently discussing disposal of the land with "interested parties," Borough Manager Jeff Good told the assembly. The borough has

not disclosed who these parties are, or how many are interested in the mill property.

If the assembly can strike a deal to sell or lease the property, it still would require assembly approval of the contract. Before any such vote, the assembly would solicit community feedback through a public forum. "We want to see what the public wants for the site," Good said.

If the borough waits until next year's election to get permission to sell or lease the land, it would lose the opportunity to make a deal with any private parties this year.

SEARHC expanded long-term care unit to open next year

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium's expansion of its long-term care unit at the Wrangell Medical Center remains on

target for construction completion at the end of 2022.

In June, SEARHC broke ground on an 1,800-square-foot addition to increase the unit's capacity by four beds.

According to Lyndsey

Schaefer, director of marketing and communications at SEARHC, the additional beds will be available for use in early 2023.

Spots in the 14-bed long-term care unit are "hard to come by," said Schaefer. Once construction ends and the new beds are made available, they will be filled using an "ongoing waitlist," she wrote in an email to the Sentinel.

The long-term care unit provides residential services for aging or chronically ill patients who require meals and 24-hour medical care. Wrangell has the second-oldest population in the state. According to 2021 census data, 25.1% of residents are over 65. As the population continues to age, pressure on the long-term care unit is unlikely to abate.

SEARHC has not disclosed the construction cost of the expansion.

All smiles on the first day



PHOTOS BY LARRY PERSILY/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Baylee Daugherty, above, bounds up the stairs for the first day of classes at Evergreen Elementary School last Thursday. Jayden Mathieu, below, gets some last-minute backpack help from grandmother Nicole Szyller on the first day of school at Evergreen Elementary.



Lillian Edens heads into Evergreen Elementary for the start of school last Thursday, after saying goodbye to her mother, Laura Edens.

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Huna Totem expands its cruise ship terminal business

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

After opening its successful Icy Strait Point development to cruise ships 18 years ago, the village corporation for Hoonah is expanding its interests in tourism, particularly new cruise ship terminals.

The company last week said it will work to develop a new cruise terminal in Juneau, following announcements earlier this summer that it will develop a cruise ship destination in Klawock, on Prince of Wales Island, and one in Whittier, on Prince William Sound, which is just a short train ride or drive to Anchorage.

The corporation's first development, the Icy Strait Point terminal, expects to welcome about 450,000 cruise ship passengers this summer, said Mickey Richardson, Huna Totem's marketing director. It's a big jump from about 300,000 in 2019, though some of the increase is because rockslide damage to the main cruise ship dock in Skagway this summer forced diversion of several ships to other ports of call.

The development is a big employer in Hoonah, a community of about 850 people at the northern end of Chichagof Island, about 160 miles northwest of Wrangell. Roughly 85% of the staff "call Hoonah home," the company says on its website.

The Icy Strait development includes a restored 1912 salmon cannery and museum, a zipline, whale watching and other tours, nature trails, restaurants and Alaskan-owned retail shops.

The cannery last served as a maintenance and support facility for the seine boat fleet in 1999. Huna Totem started work on the cruise ship terminal in 2001. It added a second dock in 2020.

"During the pandemic, we looked at the industry and saw there were opportunities" to expand further into tourism,

"During the pandemic, we looked at the (tourism) industry and saw there were opportunities," especially for a locally owned and Native-owned business.

Mickey Richardson,
marketing director
Huna Totem

especially for a locally owned and Native-owned business, Richardson said.

The corporation is taking a lead role in a new Juneau cruise terminal with help from Norwegian Cruise Line, which announced Aug. 22 that it would donate downtown waterfront land to Huna Totem. The cruise line bought the 2.9-acre parcel for \$20 million in 2019 from the Alaska Mental Health Trust, which leases and sells its land holdings across the state to raise money for mental health services.

Huna Totem and the Juneau village corporation, Goldbelt, will jointly develop the property, building a pier and cruise terminal.

Norwegian Cruise Line will have preferential use of the pier, according to the company's news release.

"Having local ownership and operation of the site makes a lot of sense for Huna Totem and Juneau," Richardson said. The land donation and business deal began more than a year ago, he said.

Huna Totem's goal is for the terminal to see its first ships in 2025, Richardson said, but that's subject to permitting, supply chain and other issues.

"As we began planning its development, it became abundantly clear that Huna Totem, owned entirely by Native Alaskans, was the right stakeholder to lead this effort," Norwegian Cruise Line executive vice president Dan Farkas in

a news release.

"This is an astonishing gift for Juneau and our Goldbelt shareholders," Goldbelt president and CEO McHugh Pierre said in a prepared statement. "Giving ownership back to the Tlingit people is a tremendous way to honor the culture of this community. We look forward to partnering with Huna Totem to share the values and ancestral history of this land."

The cruise terminal in Whittier is also a partnership between Huna Totem and Norwegian Cruise Line. In its first phase, the \$80 million project will include a 1,200-foot-long dock and a 20,000- to 30,000-square-foot bus and train terminal for travelers as they shuttle in and out of town for cruises.

City officials said the first ships could dock at the Whittier terminal by late 2024 or 2025.

The project in Klawock is a joint venture between Huna Totem and Doyon, the Fairbanks-based regional corporation for Alaska's Interior. The two companies are working with Klawock Heenya, the village corporation for the Prince of Wales Island community of about 800 people, to make the town into a cruise ship destination.

Klawock is on the west side of Prince of Wales, about 70 miles southwest of Wrangell.

The first cruise ships are scheduled for next year.

"Like Huna Totem's other ports, Klawock will promote Native and local Alaskan workforce and features an Alaskan-only retail program," Huna Totem said when it announced the project in May.

The new cruise ship terminal will be built on 16 acres on Klawock Island, connected by bridge to Prince of Wales Island and its road system to other communities and tour options around the island. The plan is to use the Klawock Heenya-owned dock that had been used for exporting logs years ago, when Southeast Alaska had a thriving timber industry.

"Tourism is the opportunity we need," Klawock Heenya Corp. President Teresa Fairbanks said in announcing the project.

Much like Huna Totem has done at Icy Strait Point, Na-Dena' will assist Klawock Heenya to develop a series of attractions and experiences, embracing Klawock's totem-carving traditions, wildlife and the area's sportfishing industry.

Na-Dena' also holds majority ownership of Alaska Independent Coach Tours, which operates in Southeast Alaska ports as well as in Seattle. Richardson said Na-Dena' is looking to increase its interests in lodging, transportation and tour park development.

Wrangell has long advocated for growth of its tourism industry but a lack of attractions to accommodate the heavy passenger load of larger cruise ships has been an issue.

Jetboat tour operators have banded together to promote more cruise travelers to take day trips up the Stikine River or to LeConte Glacier, and the Anan Wildlife Observatory has grown in popularity. However, adding a stop in Wrangell often means a cruise ship has to drop a visit to another port to stay within its travel schedule.

SEARHC is switching food service contractors

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium will switch its food service contractor for the Wrangell Medical Center from NANA Management Services (NMS) to Aramark Corp.

The switch in providers, according to SEARHC marketing and communications director Lyndsey Schaefer, was a "business decision."

SEARHC will officially transition from NMS to Aramark on Oct. 1. All 20 current NMS employees in Wrangell will be offered jobs with Aramark, Schaefer said last week.

NMS is an Alaska-based, Native-owned company that provides food and security services, as well as support to tribal entities and remote work camps. It began as a caterer for construction workers on the trans-Alaska pipeline in 1974.

Aramark is a global corporation, headquartered in Philadelphia. Like NMS, it provides facilities and food services. It has been listed among the Fortune 500's largest employers.

Though NMS made national headlines this summer after an employee mistakenly served students at a Juneau elementary school floor sealant instead of milk, Schaefer said the incident did not prompt SEARHC's move to switch providers.

Schaefer does not anticipate any interruptions in food service at SEARHC as Aramark takes over. "Patients will not know the difference," she wrote in an email to the Sentinel.

Municipal ballot short of a full slate coming into final week of filing

Sentinel staff

At the start of the final week to file for borough assembly, school board or port commission, Wrangell was still short of candidates to fill half of the open seats.

The deadline to file for the Oct. 4 municipal election is 4 p.m. Wednesday.

As of Monday afternoon, candidates had filed paperwork for four of the eight races on the ballot.

Patty Gilbert, who serves on the borough assembly and previously served on the school board, has filed to run for mayor. Steve Prysunka, in his sixth year as mayor, has decided not to seek another term.

Brittani Robbins, the chamber of com-

merce executive director, has filed for a three-year term on the borough assembly — there are two seats open. There was no second candidate as of Monday afternoon. If more than two candidates file by the Wednesday deadline, the top two vote-getters would each win a three-year term.

Elizabeth Roundtree has filed for a three-year term on the school board, and board president Dave Wilson has said he intends to seek reelection to a third term. There are two three-year terms and a one-year term on the ballot for school board.

Port commission member John Yeager has filed for reelection. Yeager is

finishing his second term on the port commission. There are two three-year port commission seats on the ballot.

None of the other incumbents whose terms expire in October — assembly member David Powell, school board members Julia Ostrander and Jessica Whitaker, and port commission member Frank Roppel — had filed candidacy papers with the borough clerk as of Monday afternoon.

Persons interested in filing for office need to submit their candidacy declaration form and a petition signed by 10 qualified voters. The forms are available from the borough clerk's office at City Hall.

We're looking for opinions!

Wrangell has never been short of opinions
but we seem to be short of letters to the editor



Send us your letters and share your
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Limited to no more than 400 words,
accuracy and civil language.

Email your letter to wrgsent@gmail.com

WRANGELL SENTINEL

Another winning bidder gives up on ANWR oil lease

ANCHORAGE (AP) — An Alaska state corporation is the only remaining oil-and-gas leaseholder in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge after a second private company gave up its lease in the controversial area.

Other than the state putting down millions of dollars in hopes that drillers might someday want to look for oil in ANWR, only two private companies submitted winnings bids in the 2021 lease, and now both have given up on the prospects and returned their leases.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management said Knik Arm Services, a small real estate and property leasing firm, asked to have its 49,000-acre federal lease rescinded and lease payments refunded. The agency said it will honor the request made last week.

The lease sale was held in the wan-

ing days of the Trump administration. The other private bidder, oil company Regenerate Alaska, a subsidiary of Australia-based 88 Energy, gave up its lease earlier this year.

It's another defeat for drilling advocates who have long wanted to explore in the northernmost slice of the refuge. The area has been the subject of significant controversy for decades. Though it could sit atop billions of barrels of oil, Indigenous groups, including Gwich'in communities, and environmental groups have long fought against drilling in the coastal plain, in particular because it is a calving ground for caribou.

The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, a state corporation, acquired seven leases in the sale. It is suing federal officials over what it calls improper actions that are preventing ac-

tivities in the leased area.

Mark Graber, who owns Knik Arm Services, said he invested about \$2 million into his lease and for a first-year lease payment. He said he had wanted to hold onto his lease in hopes that the state corporation prevailed in its lawsuit and that oil development would produce royalties for his company. But he said the fight over the leases could take years.

A federal law passed in 2017, with support from Alaska's congressional delegation, called for lease sales on ANWR's coastal plain, but the Biden administration suspended the leases and is reviewing the leasing program. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland last year said the Interior Department would conduct a new environmental review of the leasing program.

Alan Weitzner, AIDEA's executive director, said the decision by Knik Arm Ser-

vices does not change the corporation's plans. "There's too much at risk not to (pursue exploration), when we talk about the potential for jobs and economic development for the state," Weitzner said.

Separately, Hilcorp and Chevron previously canceled their interests in older leases on Native corporation-owned land within the refuge's boundaries.

The Gwich'in Steering Committee, which represents 15 Gwich'in communities in Alaska and Canada, said the decision by companies to give up leases shows that drilling in the refuge is not worth the economic risk.

"These lands are sacred, and we — the Gwich'in people — will never give up fighting to protect the Arctic Refuge," said Bernadette Demientieff, the group's executive director.

Abandoned mine upriver of the Taku may be closer to cleanup

By CLARISE LARSON
Juneau Empire

British Columbia may be able to move ahead with cleanup of the abandoned Tulsequah Chief mine just a few miles from the Taku River that flows into Alaska waters.

Cleanup of the property just under 20 miles from the Canada-U.S. border, about 40 miles from Juneau, has been held up while the mine's bankrupt owner, Chieftain Metals, of Ontario, was in receivership proceedings in court.

This month's end of the receivership wipes away any legal holdups that have prevented the provincial government from taking action. The only statement made by the province as of Aug. 18 was its acknowledgment of the receivership conclusion. It provided no timeline or funding source for any cleanup.

"There is no more delay now, it's time to get moving," said Rob Sanderson, the chair of the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission. "The headwaters are in British Columbia, but we're at the receiving end of it — and we're going to fight to the nail."

The abandoned copper, lead and zinc mine has been leak-

ing toxic acid mine drainage into the Tulsequah River — a main tributary of the Taku and a prime Alaska salmon habitat — for more than six decades since the mine's original closure in 1957.

Since then, two attempts have been made to revive the mine, but both were met with failure and bankruptcy in the process, the most recent the 2016 filing by Chieftain Metals.

The company's main creditor, West Face Capital, has been trying to sell the mine to recoup some of its losses but presented no offers before it reached the Ontario Superior Court-ordered end to receivership on Aug. 11.

The mine's negative impact has been wide-reaching not only to the environment in British Columbia and Southeast Alaska but also to the Alaska Native tribes who have lived in the watershed for centuries. The Taku River Tlingit First Nation filed suit in the Supreme Court of British Columbia to stop the mine. Rivers Without Borders also commissioned a 2016 report that found an estimated 260,000 gallons of Tulsequah River contaminated water flows into the Taku River daily.

"It's vital to the area and even more so to the culture and

people that live around the Taku — you can't put a dollar value on these river systems," Sanderson said.

The B.C. government has expressed concern in the past for the mine's damage to 2020.

Sanderson urged the public to continue putting pressure on the provincial government to follow through with its commitments and prompt action, along with pressuring the U.S. government to take action well. He said if that happens, he believes the cleanup will happen.

Nikki Skuce, co-chair of the BC Mining Law Reform Network, a collective of 30 local, provincial and national organizations, said she thinks it's "amazing" to see the receivership has ended but agrees that more action needs to continue.

"It's been polluting for 65 years and it's a long overdue retirement for the mine for sure," she said. "I think that it's definitely an important milestone because now there are no excuses for moving forward and finding solutions to protect the watersheds."

Multiple messages sent to the B.C. government were not returned.

Federal order opens more land to selection by Alaska Native Vietnam veterans

By MARK SABBATINI
Juneau Empire

More than 50 years after many Alaska Natives were unable to apply for their rightful 160 acres of land because they were fighting in Vietnam, a solution is now in place that overcomes laws and regulations that stifled their efforts for decades.

About 27 million acres of public land in Alaska managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management are being made available, with details and applications available online, according to an order filed Aug. 15 in the Federal Register. The parcels are mostly in the North-

west, Southwest and Interior regions of the state, with a relatively small number of lots in Southeast in the vicinity of Skagway and Haines.

Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's order vastly expands the 1.2 million acres of federal land made available for the program under then-President Donald Trump, authorized when Congress passed a bill in 2019 sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski.

It also removes some bureaucratic complications in the application and evaluation process, including some of the original lands being put under a stay in

2021 when President Joe Biden called for a review of orders issued by Trump.

The stay received significant criticism from veterans and Alaska Republicans.

George Bennett Sr., an Alaska Native Vietnam veteran in Juneau, expressed enthusiasm for the new order opening up more land. "That's probably going to be a big plus for a lot of our veterans to finally have a choice beyond the original lands they gave us to choose from," he said Aug. 18, referring to the 1.2 million acres previously allotted.

Bennett said one of his hopes going forward is efforts will

be made to obtain land parcels for heirs of veterans who were killed while serving overseas during the 1960s.

Alaska Natives were promised 160 acres of land in the 1906 Alaska Native Allotment Act, but restrictions prevented many people from applying until the 1960s, when it wasn't feasible for many serving in Vietnam and elsewhere overseas. The process was interrupted by the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971.

"Subject to valid existing rights, the lands described in the Public

Lands Order will be open to selection and application processing starting at 8 a.m. Alaska time on Sept. 14," the Bureau of Land Management announced in a statement. "The BLM has already received approximately 203 applications for allotments on these lands. All valid applications received prior to the opening date shall be considered simultaneously filed at that time. Those received thereafter shall be considered in the order of filing."

Eligible veterans can apply for allotments until Dec. 29, 2025.

Genetic testing confirms five dogs in Haines are part wolf

By MAX GRAHAM
Chilkat Valley News, Haines

Five dogs born in Haines in February were confirmed this month to be part wolf, according to Alaska Department of Fish and Game wildlife biologist Carl Koch.

The state last month sent samples from six suspected wolfdogs to the University of California Davis for genetic testing. State wildlife managers have received results from five of the samples so far.

Some of the owners and the state suspected the animals were wolf hybrids after one registered as 50% wolf on a DNA home test. "Some of (dogs) were described as difficult to manage by their owners even back in June/July," Koch said.

They reportedly had high energy, and one bit somebody, he said.

Wolfdog hybrids are illegal to breed or possess in Alaska. But dogs awaiting genetic test results are considered legal, even if they're suspected hybrids. There was some worry among residents that if the test results

came back positive, the state would seize the puppies and possibly euthanize them.

A Colorado organization that runs several wolfdog sanctuaries — in states where they're legal — rescued six of the Haines dogs earlier this month. Fish and Game has been trying to locate all the dogs from the litter, at least 10.

Koch said the state's priority is to find safe homes for any dogs that are part wolf. "The goal continues to be to help folks succeed in determining the status of their animals and find appropriate facilities for any that are in Alaska after the results come back (if they are hybrids)," he said.

It could be another five to eight weeks before the rest of the test results come back.

The litter's owner, Sean "Seandog" Brownell, said he thinks the mother, Inja, a lab, could have mated with a wild wolf last December on or near his property at 35 Mile Haines Highway. Such an occurrence, according to biologists, would be very rare but not impossible.



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FerryAlaska.com/employment

Illegal firing lawsuit against Dunleavy will extend into 2023

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

A legal dispute that began when Gov. Mike Dunleavy took office in 2018 will not be resolved before this year's gubernatorial election.

Last week, a federal judge set a 2023 timeline for a trial to determine financial damages in a case involving Libby Bakalar, one of four state employees who sued Dunleavy, his former chief of staff Tuckerman Babcock and the state after being illegally fired when Dunleavy took office.

Babcock is now a candidate for state Senate and Dunleavy is running for reelection.

The state has settled with three of the people who filed lawsuits, but Bakalar has declined settlement offers and her case is continuing. In January, a federal judge ruled that Dunleavy unconstitutionally fired Bakalar after he took office in 2018.

Attorneys familiar with the case say they expect that ruling against Dunleavy will be appealed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, but because that has not yet happened, the case is proceeding toward a trial that would determine how much the state would pay in damages to Bakalar.

"We are identifying the remaining issues to fight about," said Mark Choate, a Juneau attorney who is representing Bakalar.

An attorney representing Dunleavy and Babcock declined comment. Bakalar also declined.

Choate said the upcoming gubernatorial election will not affect the case and that it will continue whether or not Dunleavy is elected.

New governors regularly ask top-level, politically appointed officials for their resignations as part of the transition between administrations. The resignations are not always accepted — officials can stay over

from one administration to the next.

Dunleavy asked for more resignations than historically typical but was advised by the attorney general, that the expanded list at the Department of Law was legal.

Bakalar, an assistant attorney general at the department, was an outspoken critic of former President Donald Trump, posting frequently on social media. After her resignation was accepted, she filed suit, saying that she was fired because of her statements beyond the job, not because of actions at her state position.

Babcock, in charge of the process, said he accepted Bakalar's resignation because the tone of her resignation letter was unprofessional, but in a January ruling, Judge John Sedwick concluded otherwise, noting in part that an identical letter from another attorney was not accepted.

Sedwick wrote, "it is clear that Babcock's decision to terminate

plaintiff was motivated by reasons connected to her First Amendment rights" and concluded that Bakalar's firing amounted to "unfair dealing" under Alaska law.

The judge said Bakalar could have been fired legally, but the state did not prove that Bakalar's political commentary was detrimental to her work with the state's elections division.

In a separate but related case, two Alaska Psychiatric Institute doctors refused to submit resignation letters, saying they amounted to a statement of "political allegiance." The doctors won their subsequent lawsuit, and Sedwick ruled that Dunleavy and Babcock could be held personally liable for violating the state and U.S. constitutions.

Despite some reluctance by legislators in the Alaska House, the state ultimately paid a \$495,000 settlement on behalf of the governor and his former chief of staff.

Children's vaccination rate in Alaska dropped sharply from 2018 to 2022

By ANNIE BERMAN
Anchorage Daily News

The percentage of Alaska children who are up to date on their routine vaccinations has fallen considerably since the beginning of the pandemic, prompting concern among health experts about the return of certain serious illnesses that had been all but eradicated in the U.S. until recently.

Although there have been no outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses — including measles, mumps or polio — identified in Alaska so far, recent flare-ups of those diseases in the Lower 48 and multiple countries are part of a disturbing trend that epidemiologists have linked to lower vaccine coverage during the pandemic.

Routine childhood immunizations for diseases such as hepatitis A and B, diphtheria, tetanus, polio and the flu are an important way of priming a child's immune system to protect them against potentially deadly illnesses from an early age, said Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska's chief medical officer. When uptake is high enough, vaccines help eradicate diseases.

"Vaccines have been the core public health success of the last 100 years," she said.

For polio, the World Health Organization recommends 95% vaccine coverage to control the disease.

In Alaska, by June 2018, 65% of children between 19 and 35 months old had received their recommended shots.

By June 2020, that rate had fallen to around 61%, and by June 2021 it hit a low of 51%, according to data from the Alaska Department of Health. By June 2022, that number had rebounded just one percentage point, to about 52% coverage among younger children.

That drop is concerning, said Dr. Joe McLaughlin, Alaska's state epidemiologist.

"Even a transient decline in vaccine coverage can compromise herd immunity and result in propagation of outbreaks such as measles," he said.

"It's particularly concerning that it's been sustained now," he added, noting that while some states have seen a larger rebound in vaccine coverage in recent months, Alaska has not.

Vaccines are typically created for diseases that are associated with higher morbidity rates and increased likelihood of outbreaks.

Zink said a big concern for her is the possibility of a polio outbreak, which the state is un-

prepared for.

"I have never seen a case of polio in my clinical career, ever," she said. "But even our testing mechanisms or training for providers — this has been a disease has been essentially eliminated in the United States and in most of the world. And so just even having clinicians think about and to recognize this disease and to test for it would be really, really challenging."

Until June of this year, no sustained community transmission of polio had been detected in the United States for decades.

The last U.S. case of the virus was confirmed in 1979, and in 1994, the World Health Organization declared the region polio-free as a result of an effective vaccine given to young children.

Then in June in New York, a previously healthy man in his 20s was hospitalized with fever and leg paralysis before testing positive for polio. Wastewater sampling showed evidence the virus that causes polio has been circulating in New York for months. Cases have also now been detected in Israel and London.

"This is our first big flare-up, as a world, of polio since this

huge effort for polio eradication," Zink said. "It's enough of a signal to make us concerned that we might be getting toward that tipping point."

McLaughlin said that while it was difficult to know the exact reasons why vaccination rates in Alaska had fallen, survey data and research in the Lower 48 pointed to factors like a rise in telemedicine over in-person visits, decreased vaccine confidence and decreased enforcement of vaccination by school districts during periods of virtual learning.

"I think that the reasons why are very nuanced," Zink said. "I think the thing that we can do from a public health perspective is look at why people are getting vaccinated, and why they're hesitant."

Zink said she often hears from patients and providers that convenience often plays a role in Alaskans' decision to get vaccinated, and the solutions to the problem must include making it easier and less expensive for families to access shots.

Developing trusted relationships with health care providers and learning from Alaska Native communities — which typically have among the highest vaccination rates in the state — are also important, she said.

McLaughlin said he's hopeful that Alaska will soon see a rebound in vaccination coverage, as other states have experienced.

"We really encourage health care providers to use their electronic health records ... to identify children who have missed their recommended vaccinations. And then contact the parents to schedule in-person appointments to get their children caught back up," he said.



The Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) is recruiting for an Operator/Electrician for its Tye Lake Hydroelectric facility located approximately 40 miles southeast of Wrangell, Alaska. The position performs typical operations and maintenance duties associated with hydroelectric power generation and transmission facilities. Standard work schedule is 8 days on and 6 days off. Position requires residency on site in employer-provided housing during each tour of duty. Position will require travel by fixed-wing aircraft and boat. Qualifications for the position include a High School Diploma, valid Alaska Driver's License, and State of Alaska Department of Labor Certificate of Fitness in the Electrical Field. Position is open until filled. Compensation is defined in IBEW Local 1547 Collective Bargaining Agreement. A general job description and electronic application process are available online at: <https://seapahydro.applicantpro.com>. SEAPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Publish: Aug. 24 and 31, 2022

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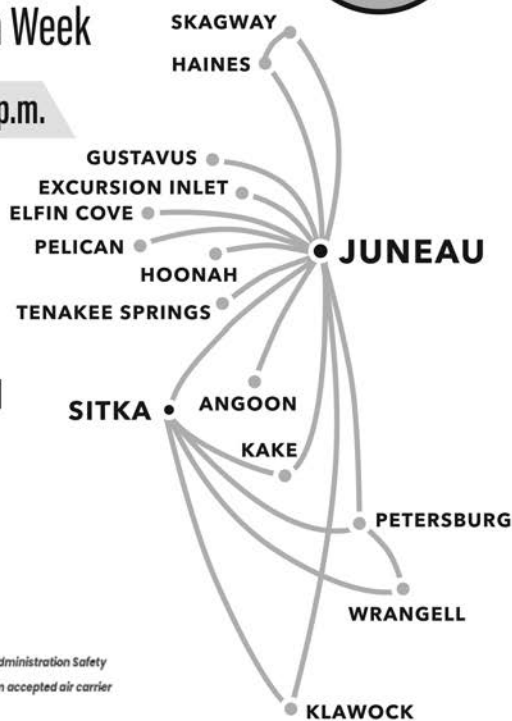


Alaska Seaplanes began service to Wrangell in May. Photo credit: Deni Hoy

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High fuel costs particularly painful in rural Alaska towns

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

Throughout rural Alaska, the summer's fuel barges arrived with loads of diesel, heating fuel and a big bill for cities and boroughs.

Away from Alaska's road system and along western and northern coasts that freeze in winter, fuel arrives by barge or plane once, twice or a handful of times per year. This year, those deliveries are coming with prices near record highs.

While consumers are paying at the pump directly, there is the growing potential for a second financial hit as towns, villages, cities and boroughs absorb high fuel costs in their budget.

The results have yet to play out, but experts are already warning of the potential for service cuts or tax increases, particularly in small towns and villages.

"At the community level, in much of rural Alaska, I think it's a huge hit to municipal budgets," said Nils Andreassen, director of the Alaska Municipal League, an umbrella organization for local governments across the state.

"To some extent, those costs ... will be passed on to residents. For actual fuel sales, it'll be passed on. But I think a lot else will just be absorbed by the municipal government, and they're already making

hard decisions," he said.

In the Southwest town of Aniak, finance director Missy Kameroff said officials are considering whether to shut down the fire station in order to compensate for the cost of fuel.

It's not a decision that's come out of the blue — the local fire department has been without a chief, certification and volunteers — but it's an example of the decisions that are being considered.

In Aniak, population 557, city officials were quoted a price of \$9.10 per gallon for 5,000 gallons of bulk fuel — \$5.16 per gallon more than was paid last year, she wrote in an email to Andreassen.

In a later phone interview, she said officials are considering how much they can cut their fuel order and whether delaying action might help. Fuel costs have been falling in the Lower 48 in recent weeks.

In many small towns, the cost of fuel to run heavy equipment, heat buildings and generate electricity is already one of the biggest local expenses.

Cordova, a town of 2,248 people off of the road system at the mouth of the Copper River, is lucky to have hydroelectric power part of the year, said city manager Helen Howarth. "We would be in a world of hurt without it."

Even with hydropower, the city's electric cooperative still burns some diesel, and the town's average monthly residential power bill is about \$250. That's the highest figure in at least a decade, even adjusted for inflation.

When it comes to running the city's heavy equipment and heating city buildings, "in terms of the cost right now, what we're seeing in terms of fuel — and however we consume it, at any level — has doubled," Howarth said.

The state runs a bulk fuel loan program intended to help communities front the cost. The state pays for the fuel directly — up to \$750,000 per community, per year — and local governments pay the money back throughout the year.

Melody Nibeck, who runs the program for the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, said officials there haven't seen more communities join the program — 40 had enrolled as of late July, four fewer than in all of 2021 — but those who have enrolled are asking for more money.

It's possible that those figures could change. According to historical records kept by the program, activity peaks in the late summer and early fall, just before the rivers freeze in many parts of Alaska.

Another figure to watch is the

number of borrowers in default, which could indicate financial stress among communities. Those numbers won't be available until 2023, at the earliest.

Nibeck, who lived in rural Alaska before being hired by the state, said it's critical to remember that high fuel costs now mean those prices are likely locked in for a year, until the next barge arrives in summer 2023.

"Those pricing schemes stay there, and it's just pervasive, and it just impacts everything," she said.

In the Kuskokwim River town of McGrath, population 231, it's the water system that's the biggest concern, said city manager Sarah

McClellan.

McGrath has underground piped water and sewer service, but in a place where temperatures reach minus 50 with regularity, that means heating the water is a necessity.

"This year, due to the exorbitant cost of diesel, the city ordered 7,000 gallons (of diesel) less than normal but still paid \$30,000 more," she wrote by email to Andreassen.

She said the year's barge has already arrived, which means fuel costs have been locked in until 2023.

"Fuel is a fifth of our budget, and it's something we can't change," she said.

Most marine mammal deaths due to fishing gear and marine debris

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

Over a five-year period, 867 Alaska sea lions, seals, whales and small marine mammals like dolphins died or were gravely injured from interactions with humans, according to a report newly released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The report, required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, lists documented cases of human-inflicted harm from 2016 to 2020 to mammal species managed by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.

The vast majority of cases involve entanglements in fishing gear or marine debris, and Steller sea lions were the vast majority of the animals that fell victim, said the report, which was released by the NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center.

Steller sea lions have been protected since 1990 under the Endangered Species Act. The Western segment of the population, which ranges from the Prince William Sound area to the Aleutian Islands, has declined precipitously and is listed as endangered. The Eastern segment of the population is now considered recovered and healthy; it had been listed as threatened but was delisted in 2013.

The bulk of the mortality and serious injury cases in the report involved Steller sea lions from the plentiful Eastern population segment.

Among those animals, entanglements in fishing gear were the leading causes of death, followed

by hookings in salmon-fishing gear. Sea lions can be attracted to lures intended for salmon, the report noted. "Steller sea lions that have ingested gear are found with flashers hanging from the edge of their mouth connected to monofilament line that is attached to a swallowed hook," it said.

While the fishing-related deaths of Eastern population segment sea lions generally involved the salmon harvests, the 146 documented deaths of or grave injuries to Steller sea lions in the Western population segment generally involved the groundfish trawl harvests, the report said.

Seal deaths listed in the report were also dominated by entanglements, in many cases with fishing gear or debris encircling the animals' necks. For large whales, for which there were over 50 deaths or grave injuries during the five-year period, the largest number of cases involved entanglement in gear, followed by ship strikes.

The numbers and patterns in the current report are similar to those documented in NMFS' previous five-year report, which listed 922 human-caused deaths or serious injuries to marine mammals from 2013 to 2017.

Cases in the report do not include traditional Indigenous subsistence harvests, which are allowed under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The report does not include Alaska marine mammals that are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — walrus, polar bears and sea otters.

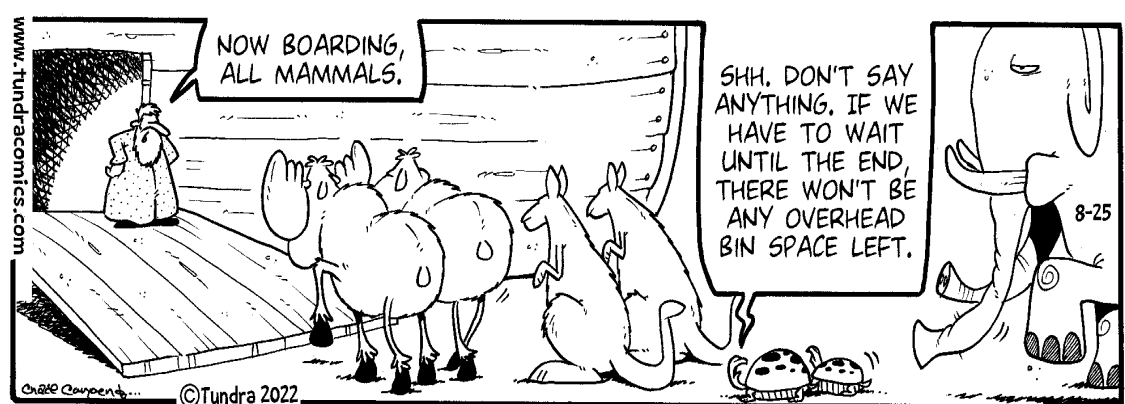
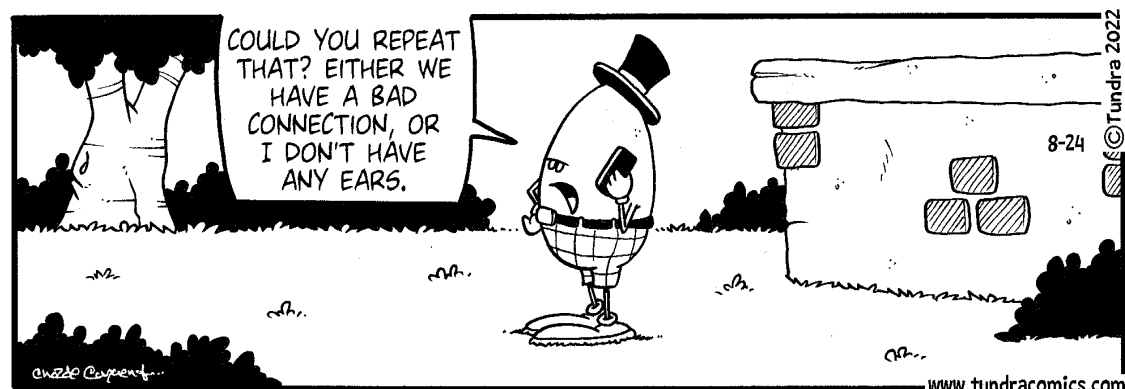
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Police report

Monday, Aug. 22

- Harassment.
- Theft.
- Intoxicated person.
- Hazardous play.
- Agency assist: Ambulance.

Tuesday, Aug. 23

- Traffic complaint.
- Contraband.
- Emotionally disturbed person.

Wednesday, Aug. 24

- Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance; verbal warning for tail light out.
- Agency assist: Harbor Department.
- Suspicious circumstance.
- Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance.
- Security check.

Thursday, Aug. 25

- Criminal mischief: Unfounded.
- Agency assist: Ambulance.
- Criminal mischief.
- Agency assist: Harbor Department.
- Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide insurance; ver-

- bal warning for driving habits.
- Noise complaint.
- Dog at large.
- Traffic stop: Verbal warning for speed.

Friday, Aug. 26

- Agency assist: Petersburg.
- Agency assist: Harbor Department.
- Parking complaint.
- Traffic stop.

Saturday, Aug. 27

- Reckless driving.
- Agency assist: Power Department.
- Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.
- Subpoena service.
- Civil standby.

Sunday, Aug. 28

- Found property: Credit card returned to owner.
- Theft: Unfounded.
- Assault arrest: Domestic violence.
- Noise complaint.

There were 10 agency assists for the Hoonah Police Department during this reporting period.

CLASSIFIED

HELP WANTED

Wrangell Parks and Recreation is accepting applications for the following positions:

- Aquatics and Recreation position supports the office during the evening part time Monday through Friday.
- Lifeguard and Swim Instructors positions with year-round opportunities.

Applications at the Parks and Recreation office, City Hall or online at wrangell.com/jobs. Call 907-874-2444 for more information.

HELP WANTED

Wrangell Public Schools is accepting applications for the following extracurricular positions for the 2022-2023 school year:

- High School Assistant Volleyball Coach
- Middle School Boys' Assistant Basketball Coach
- Middle School Assistant Volleyball Coach
- Freshmen Class Adviser
- Sophomore Class Adviser
- Junior Class Adviser
- Elementary Student Council Adviser

For a job description and information, please contact the district office at 907-874-2347. Positions are open until filled. It is Wrangell Public School District's policy to not discriminate based on age, race, color, national origin, sex or disability.

PROPERTY FOR SALE

Remote property for sale on South Wrangell Island (Thoms Place subdivision). 1.88 acres, waterfront. Lot 18, Block 2, Unit 3 of Alaska State Land Survey No. 81-234, Wrangell Recording District.

Phone or text 907-321-3240.

SINGERS WANTED

Calling all singers! The Wrangell Community Chorale will be starting rehearsals in October for their annual Christmas con-

cert. Contact Bonnie at bonnie-de@aptalaska.net or call 907-796-9632 for more information.

FREE

Recycled newspapers. Stop by the Sentinel to pick some up.

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

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

- Ordinance No. 1029 of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, authorizing the Borough to issue General Obligation Bonds to finance the major renovation of the Middle School, High School and Elementary School and other related capital improvements, and to submit the question of issuing the bonds to the qualified voters of the Borough at the regular election to be held on October 4, 2022.
- Ordinance No. 1030 of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, authorizing the Borough to issue General Obligation Bonds to finance the major renovation of the Public Safety Building and other related capital improvements, and to submit the question of issuing the bonds to the qualified voters of the Borough at the regular election to be held on October 4, 2022.
- Ordinance No. 1031 of the assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, asking the voters of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, to ratify Ordinance No. 1031 that allows the City and Borough of Wrangell to dispose by means of selling and/or leasing the 6-mile deepwater industrial site (former mill site property).

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

Publish Aug. 31, 2022

State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry Southern Southeast Area Office

Preliminary Written Finding under AS 38.05.035(e) and AS 38.05.945

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, gives formal notice under AS 38.05.945 that the Division has made a preliminary decision under AS 38.05.035(e) regarding the sale of the following commercial timber sale: El Capitan Timber Sale (SSE-1380-K).

Before this sale may be held, the Commissioner will make a written final decision that the sale is in the best interest of the State. This decision will set out the facts and applicable policies upon which the Commissioner bases his determination that the proposed timber sale will or will not best serve the interest of the State. The final decision is expected to be available to the public after **September 26, 2022**.

The area of the sale is proximate to the El Capitan Passage on Prince of Wales. The timber sale area is found within Sections 1, 12, and 13, Township 66 South, Range 78 East, and Sections 6, 7, 8 and 18, Township 66 South, Range 79 East, Copper River Meridian. The sale area is found within the Petersburg A-4 NW USGS quadrangle. The main access for this sale area is from the existing Prince of Wales Road System, specifically off the 2000 Road.

The harvest units total approximately 340 acres and contain approximately 8,000 MBF of timber. This volume will be negotiated and sold under provisions of AS 38.05.115 or AS 38.05.118, in the form of one or multiple sales. The sale(s) will require in-state manufacturing and will be a negotiated contract.

The public is invited to comment on any aspect of the preliminary decision. Comments should be mailed to the Alaska Division of Forestry, 2417 Tongass Avenue, Suite 213, Ketchikan, AK 99901. Comments must be received at the Division of Forestry office no later than **September 26, 2022**, in order to be considered in the final best interest finding decision of whether or not this sale will be held in whole or in part. To be eligible to appeal the final decision a person must have provided written comment by **September 26, 2022**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SUBMIT COMMENTS CONTACT:

Alaska Division of Forestry
2417 Tongass Avenue, Suite 213
Ketchikan, AK 99901

Contact: Greg Staunton
Phone: (907) 225-3070
Email: greg.staunton@alaska.gov

Copies of the preliminary decision are available for review at the Division of Forestry at the above address and at the Ketchikan, Craig, Petersburg and Wrangell Public Libraries and the State Online Public Notice System at <http://notice.alaska.gov/207904>.

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

Greg Staunton
Southeast Area Forester

Publish Aug. 31 and Sept. 7, 2022

FREE ADS

Do you have something to sell? Having a garage sale? Looking to buy something? Classified ads for individuals and community groups are free in the Sentinel. Contact Amber at 907-874-2301 or email wrgsent@gmail.com.

EMPLOYMENT ADVERTISEMENT WRANGELL CAPITAL FACILITIES DEPARTMENT Facilities Maintenance Specialist

The Wrangell Capital Facilities Department is accepting applications for the position of Facilities Maintenance Specialist.

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

This is a full-time, hourly position with full benefits, paid at Grade 19 with a starting wage at \$25.26 per hour. Applicants must meet the qualifications of the position, as listed in the job description. Employment is based on a successful background check and pre-employment drug screening.

Applications and job descriptions may be obtained at City Hall. To be considered, interested applicants should submit their City and Borough of Wrangell employment application, a cover letter and current resume to Robbie Marshall at City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929, or via email at payroll@wrangell.com. This position is open until filled.

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

Jeff Good, Borough Manager
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Aug. 31, Sept. 7 and 14, 2022

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL INVITATION TO BID High School and Middle School Fire Alarm Replacement

Notice is hereby given that the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska will receive sealed bids for the construction of the High School and Middle School Fire Alarm Replacement.

Work consists of all activities necessary to completely replace the existing fire alarm systems at the Wrangell High School and Middle School. This includes demolition and replacement of all field devices, initiation devices, flow and tamper switches, and all auxiliary components including fire alarm relays and circuit interface modules. Work includes demolition and replacement of the fire alarm panel, remote annunciator panels, fire alarm extender panels, and all fire alarm wiring. The engineer's estimate for the project is \$525,000 – \$575,000.

The contract documents are available in electronic format only and can be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFP's section. Sealed bids will be received by the City and Borough of Wrangell, P.O. Box 531, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, or at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, until 2 p.m. prevailing time on September 22, 2022.

Jeff Good, Borough Manager
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Aug. 24, 31, Sept. 7 and 14, 2022

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Voter qualifications for the City & Borough of Wrangell, October 4, 2022, Regular Election, are as follows:

1. a United States citizen;
2. registered and qualified to vote in the State of Alaska elections and registered thereat for at least thirty (30) days immediately preceding the municipal election;
3. at least eighteen (18) years of age;
4. a resident of the City & Borough of Wrangell for thirty (30) days preceding the election;
5. not disqualified by reason of having been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude, and if so, that civil rights have been restored, nor disqualified because judicially determined to be of unsound mind.

Voters are cautioned to make certain their residence address is correct on their State Voter Registration. City law requires that each voter shall be registered to vote in the precinct in which that person seeks to vote in order to vote in municipal elections.

Your name must appear on the precinct list. If you are registered in another city, you must change your registration **prior to Sunday, September 4, 2022, to qualify to vote in the Regular Election of October 4, 2022.**

You may ask the Borough Clerk to check the precinct register to ensure your qualifications.

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

Publish Aug. 17, 24 and 31, 2022

Columbia River is key to history and future of Native tribes

By DEEPA BHARATH
Associated Press

ALONG THE COLUMBIA RIVER (AP) — James Kiona stands on a rocky ledge overlooking Lyle Falls where the water froths and rushes through steep canyon walls just before merging with the Columbia River. His silvery ponytail flutters in the wind, and a string of eagle claws adorns his neck.

Kiona has fished for Chinook salmon for decades on his family's scaffold at the edge of the falls, using a dip net suspended from a 33-foot pole.

"Fishing is an art and a spiritual practice," says Kiona, a Yakama Nation elder. "You're fighting the fish. The fish is fighting you, tearing holes in the net, jerking you off the scaffold."

He finds strength, sanctity, even salvation in that struggle. The river saved Kiona when he returned from Vietnam with post-war trauma, giving him therapy no hospital could.

When he lies on the rocks by the rushing river and closes his eyes, he hears the songs and the voices of his ancestors. The water, he says, holds the history of the land and his people.

"It heals you."

From its headwaters in British Columbia where the Rocky Mountains crest, the Columbia flows south into Washington state and then westward and into the Pacific Ocean at its mouth near Astoria, Oregon. Just below the confluence with the Snake River, the Columbia's largest tributary, the river turns through the Cascade Mountain Range, carving out the Columbia River Gorge.

It's a spectacular canyon, 80 miles long and up to 4,000 feet deep, with cliffs, ridges, streams and waterfalls. For thousands of years, Native tribes in this area have relied on Nch'i-Wana, or "the great river," for its salmon and steelhead trout, and its surrounding areas for the fields bearing edible roots, medicinal herbs and berry bushes as well as the deer and elk whose meat and hides are used for food and ritual.

Yet the river is under threat because of climate change, hydroelectric dams and industrial pollution. Warming waters linked to climate change endanger



AP PHOTO/JESSIE WARDARSKI

Terrie Brigham, of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, stands on the banks of the Columbia River, in Cascade Locks, Oregon, where her family has used dipnets to fish from scaffolds for generations. Brigham's grandfather built the family's scaffolds in the 1950s.

the salmon, which need cooler temperatures to survive. Hydroelectric dams on the Columbia and its tributaries have curtailed the river's flow, further imperiling salmon's migration from the Pacific upstream to their freshwater spawning grounds, and threatening millennia-old spiritual traditions that bind these Native communities together.

"We are the salmon people or river people," says Aja DeCoteau, executive director of the Portland-based Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, which represents the interests of the four Columbia River treaty tribes — Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Nez Perce — in policy, advocacy and management of the basin. "Without water there are no fish, plants or herbs."

Each year the tribes honor the salmon, roots, berries, deer and elk — which they believe were originally placed in the land for their sustenance — with what are known as "first food ceremonies." In their creation story, the salmon, deer, elk,

roots and berries offered to provide sustenance to humans, and humans in turn were given the responsibility by the Creator to care for these resources.

Elders speak of how streams flow from the mountains sanctified by the prayers of ancestors who went there to commune with the spirits. These rivulets then flow down and merge with the Columbia. If Nch'i-Wana is the main artery of the land, those streams are like the veins that feed it. So even the smallest creek is vital and sacred.

At communal meals, tribe members typically begin and end with water. "You take a drink of water to purify yourself before you eat and you end the meal with water to show respect for what you've eaten," DeCoteau says.

Tribes also use the river's water and rocks for rituals such as sweat lodge purification ceremonies, held in low, dome-shaped structures where river rocks are heated along with herbal medicine.

"After you sweat and pray, there is

also the practice of jumping in the river to cleanse yourself," DeCoteau says. "It's hard to continue practicing these rituals when the river is so contaminated."

Bill Yallup Jr. was 6 when Celilo Falls "drowned," as he puts it.

Known as Wyam to Native people, the thundering cascade was a sacred place where for 15,000 years Indigenous tribes netted salmon as the fish jumped upstream. It was also their economic nerve center, with the salmon trading for all manner of goods from feathers to copper to wampum, beads crafted from shells.

The falls fell silent in 1957 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers erected The Dalles Dam, flooding the area and creating the Celilo Lake reservoir.

Young salmon, or smolts, swim down the Columbia to the ocean, where they grow for between one and five years. Then they migrate back upstream to spawn. Some are caught and become a source of sustenance for the people, and others die and become one with the environment. The cycle repeats over and over.

It was worries over the spring salmon's disappearance from the river that inspired Elaine Harvey to get her bachelor's degree in aquatic and fishery science. She is also concerned for species like the Pacific lamprey, which has "been around since the dinosaurs" but today faces possible extinction.

Now a fish biologist for Yakama Fisheries, Harvey says what keeps her up at night is the "race to harness green energy" that has brought multinational corporations to the Columbia River.

"Wind turbines and solar farms are impacting our archeological sites, cultural resource sites, wildlife and fish," she says, pointing to a sacred mountain near the John Day Dam that the Native people call Push-pum. "Our root fields are on that mountain. We could lose access to our food."

Harvey says she will never leave the river because that's what she was taught by her elders.

"We have a real, deep connection to all these places. Our blood line is here."

Juneau bears have learned to get into parked cars in search of food

By CLARISE LARSON
Juneau Empire

Bear activity has been increasing in Juneau in August, said wildlife officials, and some of the bruins are looking in parked cars to grab some food.

Carl Koch, assistant area management biologist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, said the department is monitor-

ing two black bears in the Mendonhall Valley area that have learned how to open car doors, and have caused "fairly significant damage" to at least three vehicles in the past few weeks.

Another bear occurrence was posted on the Juneau Community Collective Facebook page, showing video footage of a bear running and climbing around

the lobby of Best Western Country Lane Inn while the front desk attendant was on the phone.

Another viral post showed a bear tearing into bags of garbage on a well-traveled downtown street.

Koch said despite the recent events, overall it has been a relatively quiet year.

This comes after two years of

increased bear encounters in the Juneau area that necessitated multiple euthanizations because of safety concerns. This year Koch said Juneau has had three to four bears hit by vehicles, one of which died due to the impact.

He said the most concerning occurrence that he has seen and wants Juneau residents to be aware of is the increasing ac-

tivity of bears climbing into or opening unlocked vehicles.

"Please remember to keep cars cleaned out," Koch said. "Keeping them locked not only can prevent crime but also prevent bears from coming in."

He said this occurrence is a relatively new phenomenon happening in Juneau over the past five years and speculated it could be because new car designs make it easier for a bear to open doors. He said it's important for people to make sure they're locking their cars and keeping vehicles free of food because bears can cause significant damage to both themselves and cars if they become trapped inside.

"If they get stuck inside, they're eventually going to find a way out — and it's usually not by opening the door," he said.

He said another thing to be increasingly aware of as the summer progresses is bear activity will likely continue to increase as they start to transition into hyperphagia — their "last push to pack on calories" ahead of winter.

Hyperphagia typically runs from mid-August through to late September or October, and Koch said people should make sure they are doing preventative measures like locking their garbage, and livestock and removing any bird feeders or attractants that may bring bears into human-populated areas.

"We live in bear country and you have to be aware all the time, none of us are immune," he said.

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