

Wrangell, Alaska  
January 20, 2022

# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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## Closure of outdoor program for at-risk teens hits Wrangell



PHOTO COURTESY R.E. JOHNSON

Canoeists in the Alaska Crossings program paddled last September along the Back Channel, heading northbound past Wrangell Island. Outdoor expeditions were a key part of the Wrangell-based program for at-risk youth. SEARHC closed the program last week, deciding to expand a similar operation in Sitka.

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

SEARHC's announcement last week that it was shuttering the 21-year-old Alaska Crossings program in Wrangell, a wilderness therapy program for at-risk children that the health care provider took over in 2017, disappointed much of the community.

The news release cited rising costs. Spokesperson Maegan Bosak, senior director of lands and property management at SEARHC offices in Sitka, said Friday she didn't have an operating cost for Crossings but would ask the finance department for the information.

"Health care systems throughout the United States have been dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium has not been im-

mune," the statement said. SEARHC's adolescent residential treatment programs have seen "a significant decrease in patient volume, serious staffing pressures, drastically rising costs, and infrastructure challenges requiring substantial future capital investment."

The Jan. 12 announcement took former and incoming field guides by surprise, including 26 year olds Sebastian and Lindsay Pomeroy, who moved to Wrangell from Ogden, Utah, in September to work at Crossings. Sebastian said he'd heard rumblings about the program being in flux but the closure announcement caught them off guard.

"We had planned to stay in Wrangell for at least a year, but obviously without work we've had to drastically change our timeline," Lindsay Pomeroy said the day after SEARHC's announcement.

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## School enrollment shows steep drop over the years, not just because of COVID

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

The number of students enrolled in Wrangell Public Schools has dropped by nearly half in the past 30 years.

According to data from the Alaska Department of Education, enrollment for the 1991-92 school year totaled 527. The 2021-22 school year enrollment totaled 257 in the fall count.

So where have the children gone?

"I came in '94 and the mill was still running," said Bob Davis, assistant principal for Wrangell High School and Stikine Middle School. "The mill went down about a year later and things have been rough ever since. When COVID hit, things really dropped, and we haven't recovered entirely."

The 2020 U.S. Census data shows there are 420 school-age children (5 to 18 years old) residing in Wrangell. "We still have around 50 students that are still enrolled in different or homeschool programs outside of the Wrangell Public Schools District, that at one time attended our schools," said Schools Superintendent Bill Burr.

Deducting those 50 from the school-age population of 420, leaves about 113 kids not enrolled in Wrangell schools. Of course, Davis said, there are

some in the census age range that have graduated and some have dropped out, but there are some that just aren't being counted.

"I'm also concerned because a lot of kids have dropped off the radar," Davis said. "And they're not, I think, in homeschool situations. They're just not going to school."

As for homeschooled students, Davis feels that many parents taking on the task of teaching at home "do a fantastic job of that, and I support that 100%."

Census data showed that Wrangell's median age is 49. A 2014 Alaska Department of Labor Economic Trends Report showed that the borough's median age was much higher than that of Alaska's median age of 34. "Older populations have lower birth rates and more deaths, and Wrangell also tends to lose population through more people moving out than in, which is common for smaller Alaska communities," the report read.

A Labor Department report from 2019 stated, "Alaska's negative net migration trend has also contributed to this shift to an older population. Since 2013, Alaska has lost substantially more people to migration each year than it's gained, leading to little or no total population growth."

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## Cause for concern?

### Increased COVID-19 affects school, business and government operations

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

The uptick in COVID-19 cases after the holiday season has caused businesses to alter hours or close for days at a time, borough government to reinstate safety protocols, and schools to postpone sporting events.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the borough had reported 113 cases since Dec. 30, a one-month record for the community and one-third of all the infections tallied in the almost

2-year-old pandemic.

Close contact with active COVID-19 cases for Brittani Robbins, executive director of the chamber of commerce, and her assistant Luana Wellon, caused them to close the office for two days the first week of January.

"We were both sick," Robbins said. "We consistently tested negative (for COVID-19). We both had symptoms. They fell in line with COVID symptoms, so just out of a precaution we closed just the office."

We were still working from home, and people could still call. We could do digital meetings. We were fine. We just didn't want to be down here spreading germs."

She said she and Wellon are both vaccinated and each have received booster shots. It wasn't the first time Robbins was exposed to COVID-19, but it was the first time she exhibited symptoms. The first time she was exposed was from

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PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Reme Privett, owner of Rayme's Bar, watches TV while waiting for customers to show up last Saturday. Privett closed the bar for four days after a couple of his employees tested positive for COVID-19 amid this month's record surge in cases in Wrangell.

## Alaska ferry system in line for multi-year windfall of federal dollars

ELWOOD BREHMER  
Alaska Journal of Commerce

The state appears to be in prime position to capture well more than \$1 billion in federal funding for its ferries that many Alaskans hope is the catalyst for long-sought change in the Alaska Marine Highway System.

The \$1 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed in November by President Joe Biden establishes new national programs and boosts existing funding to collectively offer nearly \$1.6 billion in ferry-specific funding, according to information from Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who was among

a bipartisan group of 10 senators who negotiated the framework of the bill with the White House.

As it turns out, most of that \$1.6 billion is likely headed to Alaska over the next five years due to the specific language of the provisions. Though it's not a foregone conclusion all of the money that flows to Alaska will go to the state ferry system, it represents the opportunity for a sharp turnaround from the constant pressures that budget cuts and an aging fleet have put on the system and the communities it serves.

Less than two years ago, 10 of the then 12 Alaska Marine Highway ferries were laid up for repairs or lack of

funding, with little prospect of significant changes.

"There's basically a billion dollars set aside for the next five years," said Robert Venables, executive director of Southeast Conference, a community development group. "It's historic and game-changing, if we use it wisely."

Venables was also the longtime chair of the state's Marine Transportation Advisory Board, which sunset last year and was replaced by the newly formed Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board, though the new group is still an advisory panel.

Most of the overall \$1.6 billion in federal funds will go to a new program

aimed at improving rural ferry services nationwide. The program will provide \$1 billion spread over five years to eligible ferry systems that operated between 2015 and 2020, according to the bill. The catch is that the money is only available for ferry routes over 50 miles in length that serve rural areas, of which Alaska has many and other states very few.

A program to fund pilot project electric or lower-emitting ferries also provides up to \$250 million for those endeavors across the country, but a provision in the bill requires at least one of those pilot projects be undertaken in the

Continued on page 6

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

- Thursday, Jan. 20:** Shelby Eyre, Pam Wiederspohn.
- Friday, Jan. 21:** Joshua Davidson, Jessica Rice, James Stough Jr.
- Saturday, Jan. 22:** Riley Blatchley, Lisa Messmer, Todd Torvend, Luana Wellons.
- Sunday, Jan. 23:** Shawna Bunes, Jean Petticrew; Anniversary: Steve and Terri Henson.
- Monday, Jan. 24:** Keith Appleman.
- Tuesday, Jan. 25:** Jamison Houston, Ruth Stough.
- Wednesday, Jan. 26:** Gina Simonek, Bryson Stough.
- Thursday, Jan. 27:** Devyn Johnson; Anniversary: Wayne and Marty Kaer.

## Senior Center Menu Open for delivery only

### Friday, Jan. 21

Baked chicken, beets with orange sauce, spinach, calico corn salad

### Monday, Jan. 24

Turkey curry, steamed zucchini, fruit slaw, rice

### Tuesday, Jan. 25

Baked chicken, "copper pennies" carrots, triple bean salad, biscuit

### Wednesday, Jan. 26

Six-layered dinner, green beans, peach salad

### Thursday, Jan. 27

Porcupine meatballs with pasta, mixed vegetables, cabbage/pear/raisin 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, Feb. 4**  
Matanuska, 3:15 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 8**  
Matanuska, 2 p.m.
- Friday, Feb. 11**  
Matanuska, 10:45 p.m.
- Friday, Feb. 18**  
Matanuska, 2:15 p.m.

### Southbound

- Monday, Feb. 7**  
Matanuska, 4:30 a.m.
- Friday, Feb. 11**  
Matanuska, 7:15 a.m.
- Monday, Feb. 14**  
Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.
- Monday, Feb. 21**  
Matanuska, 7 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.



## Tide Depths

	High Tides		Low Tides	
	AM	PM	AM	PM
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Jan. 20	02:32	14.6	02:06	16.1
Jan. 21	03:02	14.7	02:41	15.6
Jan. 22	03:33	14.9	03:19	14.9
Jan. 23	04:08	15.0	04:04	14.0
Jan. 24	04:48	15.0	05:01	12.9
Jan. 25	05:37	15.1	06:17	11.9
Jan. 26	06:39	15.2	07:46	11.6
			...	...
			01:12	1.8

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**WRANGELL MARINERS MEMORIAL** is accepting applications through Jan. 31 for plaques for those lost at sea and who had a close connection with the water in the Wrangell area. Applications are available at [wrangellmarinersmemorial.com/plaques.html](http://wrangellmarinersmemorial.com/plaques.html) or contact any board member for printed copies. Or meet with board members for more information from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jan. 26 at the Nolan Center if you need help with the application.

**NOLAN CENTER THEATER** presents "Spider-Man: No Way Home," rated PG-13, at 7 p.m. Friday and 4 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the action adventure fantasy film that runs two hours and 28 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

**On pause through Jan. 22 to reduce the spread of COVID-19 - WRANGELL PARKS & REC** is offering a warm, dry space to move the body for gym walkers at the community center gym Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. for adults 18 years and up. The fee is \$5, or \$3 for seniors, with punch passes available. Must bring gym shoes. More information at [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

**On pause through Jan. 22 to reduce the spread of COVID-19 - WRANGELL PARKS & REC** is offering tot gym for children 6 months to 5 years of age on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Program runs through March 3. A parent or guardian must provide supervision; staff are not responsible for child supervision. \$2 for the first child, \$1 for the second child, and the third child is free. Ten-punch passes available. Call 907-874-2444 for information.

**On pause through Jan. 22 to reduce the spread of COVID-19 - WRANGELL PARKS & REC** is offering jiu jitsu Tuesday and Thursdays from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the community center gym for 18 years and up. Information at [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

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

## Continuing Events

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Weight room available by appointment and at reduced capacity:**

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

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

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

### Jan. 19, 1922

Some excellent work is being done on the cemetery road this week by a number of public-spirited citizens. The road was badly in need of repair, and a number of citizens with picks and shovels have been on the job this week, with the result that this highway is greatly improved. The various automobile owners rendered valuable aid in hauling dirt and gravel for

the fill-ins. The movement to improve the cemetery road was fostered by the Redmen's Lodge and supported by the public-spirited citizens generally.

### Jan. 17, 1947

Mrs. Norman Bakke and Mrs. C. Don Miller were the lucky ladies winning free permanents in suggesting a name for the new beauty and barber shop, established here recently by Frank Young. Both women submitted the same name, which was accepted: The Stikine Beauty and Barber Shop. Miss Selma Swanson, beauty shop operator, said many suitable and appropriate names were offered and she thanked local folk for their interest in this contest. The Stikine Beauty and Barber Shop is located near the shrimp cannery float, at the site of the store formerly run by James Bradley.

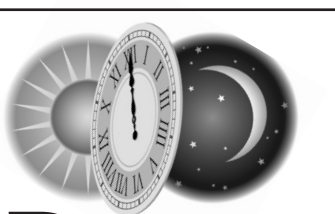
buildings for the power plant expansion and a new public works shop were due to arrive this week by ferry. He said the building cannot be erected, however, until a thaw will allow construction of the necessary foundations.

### Jan. 23, 1997

The U.S. Department of Transportation will give \$2.39 million to Wrangell for construction of a light aircraft exit taxiway and a new 440-foot by 250-foot general aviation apron, and to overlay the main aviation apron and rebuild the access road to Wrangell Airport. By enlarging the apron, general aviation, cargo and air carrier flights can be separated, increasing safety and security. By reconstructing the exit taxiway, light aircraft can access the runway without having to cross behind an Alaska Airlines jet aircraft. The program's next phase involves putting in a new approach, an access road at the eastern end of the airport, Mayor Doug Roberts said, to open up land for leases for air freight facilities and other services. "We've told them, kind of preliminary, that we'd be willing to participate in that, if they'd be willing to get that on the fast track."

### Jan. 21, 1972

Chilly December was the biggest month in the history of the city power plant, City Manager Kester Dotts said this week. Dotts said the city's generators produced a total of 839,000 kilowatt hours of power for Wrangell users during the month, up 11.6 percent from December 1970. Dotts also announced to city councilmen in a work session that new steel



## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Jan. 20	8:06a	3:55p	7:49h
Jan. 21	8:04a	3:57p	7:52h
Jan. 22	8:03a	3:59p	7:56h
Jan. 23	8:01a	4:01p	7:59h
Jan. 24	8:00a	4:03p	8:03h
Jan. 25	7:58a	4:05p	8:05h
Jan. 26	7:56a	4:08p	8:08h

# Marine Service Center may need to raise rates in future

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

Based on the current rate structure, Wrangell's Marine Service Center could operate at a loss over the next five, 15 and 30 years. That's according to a newly finished Marine Service Center business plan the port and harbors department will present to the port commission.

Port Director Steve Miller will present the plan to the port commission at its Thursday night meeting.

Any rate hikes — which would maintain future revenues in line with potential expenses — would require port commission and borough assembly approval.

There are no operating losses at present, Miller said Tuesday, though any future gaps would depend on new spending and revenues.

The 30-year cost-benefit analysis, prepared by Rain Coast Data, "is a very good tool for us to use to be able to set rates that will ensure our viability into the future," wrote Miller in his harbor master's report.

The borough will earn 78 cents for each dollar invested in the Marine Service Center in the next five years, and by year 30, it will fall to 66 cents for each dollar invested if the rate structure does not change.

The business plan is to assist the borough in understanding the long-term costs and revenues associated with the sev-

en-acre Marine Service Center. It has 150-ton and 300-ton haul-out lifts and a 40-ton hydraulic trailer operated and managed by the borough. It includes a wash-down area and upland storage for more than 85 boats.

Private businesses that lease space provide repair, maintenance, fabrication and marine industry services to meet vessel owner needs. The Marine Service Center primarily caters to commercial fishing boats but also accommodates recreation and other commercial vessels.

A couple of years ago, the assembly asked the department to prepare a business plan, Miller said Jan. 12. The assembly wanted to know if, when setting rates at the Marine Service Center, that the port and harbors department wasn't "pricing people out of business," Miller said.

The Marine Service Center's short-term rate for leasing shipyard space is 59 cents per square foot per month. According to the study, that should average to \$637 per month for a 60-foot vessel, 47% below the study average of \$1,208 compared to 14 rate structures at nine Alaska and Washington communities, according to the business plan.

Conceptually, there is 34,290 square feet of billable short-term work space in Wrangell, but the maximum functional space is 21,000 square feet.

Its long-term shipyard space rent is 37 cents per square foot

per month, which according to the study averages \$400 per month per vessel, 52% below the comparison study average of \$829 per month for a vessel of the same size.

After looking at comparable marine lifts at shipyards in Alaska and Washington state (Hoonah, Juneau, Seward, Sitka, Bellingham, Seattle, and two in Port Townsend), Wrangell's marine lift fee is 41% below the average rate, at \$9.43 per foot of vessel length versus an average \$13.28, according to the report prepared by Rain Coast Data.

The study showed if Wrangell's short- and long-term storage fees increased to 50% from the comparison average of 47% during the low season, if the borough instituted a rate increase of 5% for all vessel storage and increased the short-term storage rate fee to \$1 per square foot from 59 cents per square foot, the Marine Service Center's return on investment would just exceed a break-even point over the next five years at about \$2.8 million per year in expenses and the same in revenues.

"I'm going to be looking at rates for all of the harbors and the Marine Service Center," Miller said. "In the past, it went up 2% every July 1. When COVID hit, they did away with that. So we just have to look at it again. We can't keep going backwards and pay the bills with inflation."

# Assembly drops 'interim' from borough manager's job title; hires Jeff Good

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

After nearly three months, Jeff Good can drop "interim" from his title. On Friday, the assembly announced it had selected Good as borough manager.

A committee took two days in executive session to interview Good and two other candidates for the job. The interviews, closed to the public, went Wednesday and Thursday, in part because one of the candidates, Kim Zimmerman, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who serves as borough manager of Lewistown, Pennsylvania, had to reschedule his interview for Thursday.

Also interviewed was Alexandra Angerman, CARES Act coordinator at the Wrangell Cooperative Association.

After pivoting the private Zoom meeting to a public session Thursday afternoon, Mayor Steve Prysunka announced the assembly had made a decision to offer the job. Though the mayor did not announce it at the time, the decision was made to offer the position to Good, which was announced by the borough in a prepared statement the next day after he had accepted the job.

The 50-year-old retired Coast Guard officer, who served as Kodiak base director from 2017 to 2020, was hired as interim borough manager on Nov. 1 at a salary of \$9,000 a month.

He holds master's degrees from Duke University and the University of Illinois in engineering management and civil engineering, respectively, and has a bachelor's degree in civil engi-

neering from the Coast Guard Academy. His wife, Christy Good, grew up in Wrangell, and coaches the girls' high school basketball team.

Former borough manager Lisa Von Bargen, who resigned effective the end of October, earned



JEFF GOOD

\$125,000 a year, said Borough Clerk Kim Lane. The assembly has yet to set Good's salary. Good said switching from interim to borough manager is definitely a mental shift — going from maintaining the needs of the borough to looking at developing long-term goals for the next year, and the next three years.

Good has ideas in mind, but said Friday, "I want to meet with the assembly as well to have a collaboration with them and what they'd like to see."

Assembly members this week will be working on the details of Good's contract for presentation and approval at the Jan. 25 meeting.

Prysunka said he is thrilled Good took the job. "I enjoy working with him and I know the assembly does as well," he said Friday.

"The whole assembly is looking forward to work with him to address issues and improve on economic opportunities that are out there and keep the community moving forward," Prysunka said.

# State contracts for private ferry operator 'as needed'

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel reporter

The Alaska Department of Transportation is contracting with Allen Marine to run one of its vessels "as needed" between Ketchikan, Wrangell and Petersburg this winter, though no runs are scheduled and any operations likely would depend on whether the state ferry Matanuska finally comes out of winter overhaul as now expected on Jan. 31.

Delays caused by extensive repair work to the 58-year-old ferry forced the Alaska Marine Highway System to cancel several sailings between the three communities in December and January.

The Matanuska's first port calls at Wrangell and Petersburg are scheduled to resume Feb. 4, on a northbound voyage from Bellingham, Washington, with the ship then returning to its regular weekly northbound and southbound service.

The state would pay Sitka-based Allen Marine a

fixed price of \$11,499 per run for any fill-in service between the three communities. The company is required to use a vessel at least 60 feet long, with a capacity of at least 80 passengers. The contract does not provide for carrying any vehicles.

"It will be on a case-by-case basis depending upon community needs," Sam Dapcevic, Department of Transportation spokesman, said by email last week. "As needed" service could also be used if the Matanuska is further delayed, depending on the length of the delay," he said Tuesday.

The contract for potential fill-in service in Southern Southeast is among several agreements negotiated between the state and private vessel operators to cover for large gaps in ferry service to Southeast communities this winter.

The department went through a hurried process to solicit bids and select contractors, with the

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# State awards contract for crew quarters aboard Hubbard

Ketchikan Daily News  
and Wrangell Sentinel

The Alaska Department of Transportation on Jan. 14 announced it had awarded a \$15 million contract to Vigor's Ketchikan shipyard for installation of living quarters aboard the state ferry Hubbard, which will enable the ship to carry a change of crew for longer runs.

The 280-foot-long Hubbard and its sister ship Tazlina were built at state specifications at a cost of about \$60 million each at the Ketchikan shipyard and launched a few years ago, but have seen limited service due to the ferry system's tight budget, lack of crew quarters and other constraints.

The Tazlina has been used sparingly but the Hubbard has never been placed into service — it is tied up in Ketchikan.

In addition to the lack of crew quarters, which limited their use on runs longer than 12 hours, neither ferry had a side-loading door, blocking their use for transporting

vehicles and docking in several smaller Southeast communities.

The state spent \$4.4 million more than a year ago to add side doors to the Tazlina and Hubbard.

Neither vessel is on the Alaska Marine Highway Schedule for this year, though state officials have looked at putting the Tazlina into temporary service to help cover for the Matanuska, which has been delayed for winter overhaul work in the Ketchikan shipyard.

The addition of crew quarters will enable the Hubbard to reach more ports, "increasing systemwide flexibility," the Department of Transportation said in a prepared statement Jan. 15.

In particular, crew quarters will allow the ship to make same-day Juneau-Haines-Skagway round-trip sailings.

In addition to crew quarters, the contract work will include installation of a galley and mess spaces on the upper deck, and other improvements, the Department of Transportation said.

The Hubbard and Tazlina can each carry up to 300 pas-

Continued on page 4

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## Correction

Ryleigh Rowan Crowley's name was misspelled in a photo caption in the Jan. 13 issue of the Sentinel.



## NORTHLAND AUDIOLOGY

### & Hearing Services

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER



PHOTO COURTESY MARK KELLEY/MARKKELLEY.COM

A black bear heads away from Anan Creek with a prized salmon meal in its mouth while bear viewers are watching in the other direction in this July 2019 photo, which appears in the 2022 Mark Kelley calendar available for free at the Sentinel office for anyone who brings in a letter to the editor.

## Write a letter, get a free Alaska calendar

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

Polite requests didn't work, so I'll try bribery. Not the illegal kind that infects corrupt nations and businesses, but the nice kind, sort of like how your parents offered you dessert if you finished the broccoli on your plate.

Think of a blank sheet of paper or an empty computer screen as that piece of broccoli. And think of a free 2022 Alaska calendar by award-winning Juneau photographer Mark Kelley as your dessert. Just as colorful as and artistic as chocolate cake, an ice cream sundae or a snickerdoodle, but with a lot fewer calories.

Fill in the blank sheet and come into the Sentinel office to take home a calendar. It's a sweet deal.

The reason behind the trade is that the Sentinel needs more letters to the editor.

The paper's main purpose is to inform, to fairly and accurately report the news of our community, Southeast and the state. Its other purpose is to share opinions, in the interest of getting people to think and decide for themselves, whether when they vote or when they discuss the world over coffee with friends.

Just talk and drink the coffee, please don't throw it. Same for letters to the editor, no pouring hot coffee on Sentinel readers who may disagree with your opinions. No screaming, no all-capital letters, no exclamation points, and no language you wouldn't want to hear from your kids at the dinner table.

Letters for publication should be based on

facts, not the latest unproven claim on social media. Humorous opinions, educational opinions, disagreeing opinions are all good — most anything within the boundaries of good taste and within the confines of accuracy.

That last one is essential. The Sentinel will not print opinions and accusations based on unprovable "facts." A fringe blog or website (of any political persuasion), a tweet, TikTok video or anonymous posting will not necessarily be accepted as factually accurate proof in decid-

**"Letters for publication should be based on facts, not the latest unproven claim on social media."**

ing letters to the editor. I am not trying to control opinions, but rather I am trying to steer public discussion to real facts, not hyped-up political garbage that masquerades as truth.

We limit letters to no more than 400 words, and shorter is always better. Typed, hand-written, email attach-

ments all work. Just no voicemail letters, please. Email then to [wrgsent@gmail.com](mailto:wrgsent@gmail.com), mail them to PO Box 798, Wrangell, or drop them off at the office on Front Street.

All letters must have your name and a phone number so we can call with any questions (we will not print your phone number but we will print your name).

Each letter writer in January and February can have up to two free calendars. One offer per writer. And even if we decline to print your letter for whatever reason, you can keep the calendar for making the effort. Just like getting credit for at least trying the broccoli.

## Contracts

Continued from page 3

bid notice issued New Year's Eve, and price quotes due seven days later.

The contracts extend through March, with renewal options for the state to call on the private operators January through March of 2023 and 2024.

In addition to the loss of the Matanuska for extensive repairs, other state ferries headed into the shipyard this month for their annual winter maintenance,

leaving a shortage of operating vessels to serve coastal communities. The state's two newest ferries have been in money-saving layup status, though the ferry system is looking at putting the Tazlina into service next month — if it is needed, and if it can assemble a crew.

The first trip between Juneau, Hoonah and Pelican under a separate contract with Allen Marine, which uses its vessels in the summer for whale-watching tours,

was scheduled for Wednesday this week as the first of three such runs under the agreement through March.

The state will pay \$7,999 per voyage.

Separate contracts with Goldbelt, the village Native corporation for Juneau, which also operates summer sightseeing tours, cover service between Juneau, Hoonah and Gustavus, starting Jan. 26, at a cost of \$5,390 per voyage, and a run between Juneau, Tenakee and Angoon, starting Jan.

27, at a cost of \$6,860 per sailing.

Although the private operators will run the vessels, the Alaska Marine Highway System will handle all ticket sales and keep the proceeds.

Goldbelt also will provide service between Juneau, Haines and Skagway, at a cost to the state of \$6,305 per sailing. Runs already are scheduled for Jan. 24 and 29 out of Juneau, with sailings in February dependent on need, the state said.

## EDITORIAL

### The assembly needs to be more careful

The borough assembly made a good choice in erasing the "interim" from Jeff Good's title as borough manager. He has done a solid job since signing on Nov. 1 until the assembly could decide on a long-term hire. Stability and continuity are helpful and appreciated, especially for Wrangell as it faces multiple costly decisions in the years ahead.

But the assembly didn't go about the hiring decision the right way last week. No malfeasance, nothing so dramatic as that. The members were well intentioned when they met in executive session Jan. 12 and 13 to interview candidates for the job, and when they decided in executive session to offer the position to Good.

Problem is, that's not how it's supposed to work under Alaska's Open Meetings Act.

The law says executive sessions — meetings of elected officials closed to the public — are allowed to discuss "matters, the immediate knowledge of which would clearly have an adverse effect upon the finances of the government unit," which generally means lawsuits and labor negotiations; and "subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person."

In a decision 40 years ago, in which the Peninsula Clarion newspaper sued the city of Kenai over closed-door interviews of city manager job applicants, the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that interviews should be conducted in public. "Ordinarily, an applicant's reputation will not be damaged by a public discussion of his or her qualifications relating to experience, education and background or by a comparison of them with those of other candidates," the court said.

Discussion among elected officials of personal characteristics, especially any flaws, could present a risk of damaging an applicant's reputation and may be discussed in executive session, the court ruled.

The court decision is precisely on point for the Wrangell assembly's actions of last week: The interviews of the three finalists for borough manager should have been held in public, so that the community could learn more about the applicants. The subsequent discussion among assembly members of the merits, or faults, of the applicants could be held in private.

The other flaw in the assembly's actions was that members decided in executive session to offer the job to Good. Under the state's open meetings law, and subsequent court decisions, elected officials may not make decisions or take action in executive session, except for giving direction on legal issues to their attorney.

After finishing the last candidate interview in private on Thursday, the assembly reconvened in public session and Mayor Steve Prysunka announced the assembly had decided to make a job offer, but did not announce who. "If they accept the offer, we will make an announcement on who that is." Which the borough did the next day.

The law does not allow such decisions in private. The assembly needed to reconvene in a public session and vote on the record to make a job offer.

It may seem like a technicality to some, but it's not. Elected officials need to make their decisions in public.

*Wrangell Sentinel*

## Hubbard

Continued from page 3

sengers and more than four dozen vehicles.

The department on Jan. 14 also announced it had awarded a \$9.4 million contract to JAG Alaska, which operates at the Seward shipyard, for upgrades and repairs to the 58-year-old Tustemena.

"Upgrades include refurbishing the main vehicle elevator, new exterior hull coatings,

steel piping replacements including black and gray water drains, bilge and ballast systems, ballast piping and valves, LED lighting upgrades and promenade deck upgrades."

The department said the work will help extend the ship's service life until a replacement vessel is built, which could take five or six years. The Tustemena generally serves Gulf of Alaska and Southwest Alaska ports.

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# Crossings

Continued from page 1

The couple is heading back to Utah in a month. "It's not what we had planned on or wanted," she said.

Sebastian worked as the program's equipment coordinator.

During the winter, he conducted inventory and gear prep for what was supposed to be the upcoming season. While the season was running, his job was to prepare the equipment to send out, and clean and sanitize things from the field — canoes, paddles, life jackets, water bottles, bowls, kettles, pots, cast iron griddles, sleeping bags and clothing.

He said SEARHC offered to relocate him to Raven's Way in Sitka the same day it made the closure announcement.

In shutting down Crossings, SEARHC announced it was unifying its residential services for teens into the recently expanded Raven's Way program, which operates a resident treatment center and uses wilderness-based therapy for young people.

"They did offer myself and everybody who is a full-time employee, they offered everyone some position. It sounded like, depending on what position you were in, they offered the closest thing. My (offered) position was a guiding position in Raven's Way up in Sitka," Sebastian Pomeroy said.

The couple declined. "I don't have any desire to move to a different island in Southeast," Sebastian Pomeroy said.

"It's a big bummer for the program, and all the Crossings communities and the guides. It will be hard for the town."

As of the closure announcement, Crossings had 16 employees in Wrangell. Bosak said 12 were offered commensurate positions with other SEARHC operations in Wrangell, and four were offered jobs in Sitka.

Caitlin Cardinell, executive director of the Stikine River Jet Boat Association, moved to Wrangell in March 2013 for a position as a field guide at Crossings, her first job out of college.

Through that work opportunity, it allowed her to experience a different part of the world, which she fell in love with. She worked at Crossings for two years and decided to stay in Wrangell.

Cardinell said she is not alone. Several people with active roles in the community started out at Crossings, including Chris Bunes, port commission board member; Kate Thomas, director of the parks and recreation department; and Tom Wetor, borough public works director. Mayor Steve Prysunka helped found the organization.

Mad Hesler started at Crossings in 2017 and worked as a field guide for five years. She creates handcrafted jewelry under the name Tongass Resin, inspired by the landscape of Wrangell and Southeast.

Her partner, Alex Riordan, was planning on working at Crossings this year. "It's a huge loss of income for our house-

hold and so many," Hesler said the day of SEARHC's announcement.

"I think behind the stars are our dreams, but only our good ones," Hesler wrote in a post on Facebook the following Saturday. A 12-year-old kid said that to her on her first Crossings shift in 2017. "I don't really know what to say about the program shutting down except it is a huge loss to adults and kids alike," she wrote.

"Each and every person has made an impact in some way, economically, culturally or personally," Cardinell said, "(Either) volunteering, starting organizations or taking positions around town."

Pre-pandemic, the program served about 125 teens each year.

SEARHC took over Crossings in 2017 from Alaska Island Community Services, the same time the health care provider took over operations at the Wrangell hospital with its acquisition of AICS.

"Everyone was relieved because AICS wasn't necessarily doing well. We were all relieved that Crossings was going to be under SEARHC. They painted it out that they were going to make it saved," Cardinell said.

Aaltséen, Esther Reese, tribal administrator at Wrangell Cooperative Association, said Friday the closure of Crossings will be a loss for tribal youth across Alaska. Tribal youth had the opportunity to come to the land of the Shtax'heen Kwáan, she said. "Through the wilderness therapy, they were able to connect

to the land, to their ancestors."

Reese said the tribe is in the process of contacting the SEARHC executive leadership staff to see if there is anything that can be done to reverse the decision. "It is such an important program. There was no warning from SEARHC that they were shutting down."

The economic impact to Wrangell will be significant, she said. Crossings did its best to purchase all its groceries for the program locally at City Market and IGA. "At its peak, \$10,000 a month at one grocery store," Reese said.

She doesn't believe the program can be replicated in Sitka.

"I don't believe that Raven's Way can provide the same type of experience," Reese said. "It (Raven's Way) is a substance abuse program, not a behavior health program." Even if they could expand it, she said, it could not provide the same experience as running outdoor therapy expeditions in the Inside Passage.

The tribe had a positive relationship with Crossings, and the program's graduations were held at the tribe's cultural center, Reese said. Every year, the tribe organized a welcome ceremony with clan leaders at Chief Shakes house. Crossings guides would request permission to be on Shtax'heen Kwáan land.

During the welcome ceremonies, the leaders would gift a phrase to the guides, and the staff: "yee gu.aa yáx x'wán - Have strength and courage, all of you."

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# Ferry funding

Continued from page 1

state with the most qualifying marine highway system miles — which is Alaska.

The state is also set to receive \$73 million from \$342 million in grants aimed at

ferry vessel and terminal construction through an existing capital program, according to Murkowski's office.

The Alaska Marine Highway System has had an annual operating budget of roughly \$140 million in recent years.

Alaska Department of Transportation Commissioner Ryan Anderson said the state will be "aggressive" in its pursuit of the federal funds.

According to Alaska's congressional delegation offices, the new programs should be

established by Oct. 1, the start of the next federal fiscal year, but the timelines will depend on agency rule-making procedures.

Meanwhile, the state is starting to use other federal funds available from the infrastructure bill to replace the 57-year-old Tustumena that serves Southcentral and Southwest Alaska communities on some of the longest, harshest runs in the system.

The \$200 million to \$250 million Tustumena replacement vessel has been designed since 2016, but construction of the 330-foot ferry had been on hold as Alaska struggled to deal with budget deficits.

Anderson said a 30% to 40% increase in annual federal highway capital project funds to the state — approximately an additional \$1 billion over five years — makes now the time to move on the new ferry.

Another key provision (of the federal bill) allows federal highway money formerly restricted to capital projects on roads and ferries to be used for ferry operations, which has been at the center of the debates between Dunleavy and

legislators over the budget.

Venables said he and other coastal community leaders are concerned politics will cause much of the ferry money to be used for short-term budget fixes instead of forward-looking investments. Coastal legislators are concerned that the federal aid will be used to replace state funding, at no net gain in services.

"There's an unprecedented amount of funding available to the Marine Highway System, but it needs to go toward the new Marine Highway System, not the old concepts and models of the last 50 years," Venables said.

Cordova Mayor Clay Koplín, an outspoken advocate for changing and investing in the state's ferries, said he's skeptical the funding will lead to significant improvements in ferry service and reliability unless bigger, structural changes are made to the system's governance.

"I hate to say it but I'm somewhat pessimistic that we're going to see real change going forward," Koplín said.

# COVID-19 impacts

Continued from page 1

face-to-face conversations with a person who had it. The second time was spending time with a person in the same room, but not up close.

"When I'm looking at the (case counts), it really seems to have exploded the week after New Year's Eve when there was a lot of gathering," Robbins said.

Since closing the office for a couple of days, Robbins now keeps the door locked to keep too many people from entering the chamber space in the Stikine Inn. "We don't want lots of people coming in here, so messaging or calling ahead (works) or we'll let (visitors) in if no one else is in here, but it's not a free-flowing doorway."

Robbins also said she is not sending her children to school due to the increase in active cases. Both children have health issues that put them at risk, so she's been homeschooling them.

The schools are also faced with uncertainty in day-to-day operations and in extracurricular activities.

"I had to cancel a trip for the girls volleyball (team) to state because of COVID right at the last minute," said Bob Davis, assistant principal of the high school and middle school. "Everything (students) work and struggle for can be taken at any point."

Most recently, boys and girls basketball games that were scheduled for last Friday and Saturday were postponed by the visiting team from Haines.

"Since we've already had some experience with the COVID basketball season last year, we prepare as best we can, knowing that the possibility of canceling could be high," said Christina Good, head coach of the girls team. "If we get canceled, we just start preparing for our next opponent."

In this case, the next games are scheduled for a tournament in Anchorage this Saturday.

Good said the coaching staff will try to bolster the team's outlook as well. "As coaches, we know how they are feeling, so validating how they feel helps them get through each day," she said. "Also, telling the girls only to focus on what they are in control of."

The teams are still attending regular practice, following the school district's mitigation plan, which includes regular testing of student-athletes who are traveling for upcoming games. Activities Director Trisa Rooney said she administers 40 to 46 antigen and some PCR tests for basketball players and coaches every week.

Since the district began testing last fall for COVID-19, Rooney said 725 tests have been given, with 11 positive results between students and

staff. She said the spike in cases led to last week-end's basketball cancellations.

"In discussions with Haines and the previous cancellation of teams from Craig (where schools were closed), it caused Haines (which also has a COVID spike) to suggest that we reschedule the games so that everyone can participate," Rooney said.

The inconsistency that increased cases can cause can also have a toll on mental health.

"My biggest concern is the lack of consistency for our kids," said Addy Esco, school counselor. "I tell folks that one of the greatest things they can do for their children or any student in their life is to provide a predictable and consistent environment. COVID disrupts this exponentially. On any given day, based on a positive case, close contact, etc., our students' entire routine is thrown into a bit of chaos."

Esco said such uncertainty can lead students to disengage from school and activities because it suddenly doesn't seem worth it to pursue. "The work that students pour into practice and training in order to compete as a team is suddenly gone depending on COVID status."

Reme Privett, who has owned Rayme's Bar on the corner of Front Street and Case Avenue for 15 years, said two of his bartenders tested positive for COVID-19 after New Year's Eve.

"What I ended up doing was just closing the bar down. Kind of a precaution thing," he said. "At the beginning of this they told you that if you have close contact, you have to close for three days."

Privett decided to close for four days, then opened for the morning and day shifts, closing at 6 p.m. for a few nights since one staff member was still under the weather. The business has returned to normal hours — 10 a.m. to 2 a.m., seven days a week — but clientele is cautious in returning.

"With COVID, it's all a little different. Everything is a little slow. Every time we get an uptick, people hunker down and stay home," he said.

Once cases began to climb, borough staff took action to prevent spread as much as possible.

"The response to the uptick in cases is that we have gone back to mask mandates in public buildings," said Borough Manager Jeff Good. "We are also taking a look at our return-to-work policy after travel."

He said regular borough operations haven't had to be put on hold due to a lack of staff, but if that were the case, he's making sure there are options.

"I have also had discussions with the borough manager of Petersburg to ensure both communities are willing to assist each other if staffing shortages do arise."

# Enrollment

Continued from page 1

Wrangell's school-age children comprise about 19% of the community's population, which is on par with the rest of the state.

Declining school enrollment isn't just a concern to the amount of state funding the district receives, it affects the opportunities the district can provide to the kids that are attending school.

The lower student count in recent years has cost the district a few hundred thousand dollars in state funding each year. State funding covers about 65% of the district's general fund budget.

"For almost my whole career here, we've been losing students to a large degree," Davis said. "What that means is we have to eventually reduce staff. But what we try to do when we reduce staff is we don't reduce programs and opportunities for kids. Teachers are doing more with less. It's getting to the point, in my opinion, that that can't continue. Teachers are working their tails off."

He went on to say staff can do a lot, but doing those things well is difficult when teachers have too much on their plates. "So, if you had more people, you could focus and offer more programs and they'd be more in-depth. It takes more money, it takes more staff."

Burr said there was a drop-off in enrollment after COVID-19 hit the community in 2020. "Last year was around 200 (students) and the current year, we bud-

geted on having 225 students." The actual count surpassed that number, bringing some relief to the school district budget.

Enrolled students are tallied during the district's count period, which is late September through late October, Burr said. "This is then run through the state of Alaska's foundation formula, which considers a number of factors that are factored into the district average daily membership, then multiplied by the base student allocation," he said. The base student allocation equals \$5,930 per student, with additions for high-cost areas, special-needs students and other factors.

"Those that aren't in school hurts (state) funding and opportunities, but more than that, for those kids who aren't getting a good education, that we don't have eyes on, part of it I'm worried about some of those kids' physical safety," Davis said. "All the data shows abuse and neglect skyrocketing."

Though there aren't any ready solutions other than getting more kids enrolled, Davis believes hard decisions must be made.

"It's time to take a look at the whole system and say what elements are we going to be exceptional at and what elements are we going to have to give up," he said. "I don't know what those elements should be, but we continue to come up with these great ideas and keep saying, 'Yes, yes, yes,' but we've never cut, cut, cut."

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# Schools adopt shorter isolation requirements in COVID plan

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

The school board on Monday approved changes to the district's COVID-19 mitigation plan that would allow staff and students to return to school sooner after close contact with infected individuals or positive test results.

Changes reflect the latest guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and in some cases cut isolation times in half. Masking and social distancing will still be required at all Wrangell schools.

Schools Superintendent Bill Burr said the revised plan took effect Jan. 7, with staff and parents notified by letter.

"Due to changes in the CDC's guidance and the emergence of the Omicron variant, the (Wrangell Public Schools) mitigation plan has had some changes in accordance with new isolation and quarantine requirements," Burr wrote in his report to the school board. "This is the first significant change to guidance since the summer of 2021."

Though there was an uptick in cases among staff and students in the first couple of weeks of January, the guidelines call for fewer days in isolation and less time away from school. If a person tests positive for COVID-19, the mitigation plan recommends they isolate for five days and return to school on the sixth day rather than the previously suggested 10 and 11 days, respectively, if they have had no symptoms for 24 hours.

If a person is unable to test but is still exhibiting symptoms, it is recommended they isolate for 10 days and return to school on the 11th day if no symptoms are exhibited after 24 hours.

Those who are not vaccinated or who were vaccinated more than five months ago with Pfizer or Moderna and two months ago with Johnson & Johnson and have not received a booster shot will need to quarantine for five days after their last contact with a positive case. Staff or students can return to school "on day six with a negative test result on or after day five if no symptoms appear; or if student/staff provide medical documentation of COVID plus recovery the previous three months to the school, they will not need to quarantine during this time."

Students and staff who are fully vaccinated and have received the booster shot and have had close contact with a positive case should mask themselves for symptoms, according to the district policy. If symptoms appear, they should follow the protocols for unvaccinated individuals. If no symptoms appear, they can continue coming to school, but masking should continue for 10 days and they should be tested three to five days from their last exposure with the positive case.

Protocols for fully vaccinated students and staff returning from travel have changed to include the booster shot reference.

"Upon return to Wrangell, fully vaccinated and boosted staff, or students who are fully vaccinated should test, mask, return to work or school and maintain as much social distancing as possible until negative test results are received, as long as they are

not symptomatic," the revised mitigation plan reads.

Increased cases have put a strain on Wrangell's school staff, but Burr said the district has been able to keep campuses open instead of moving to online learning.

"We are always looking at possibilities, with school in session being ideal," he said. "Staffing is the biggest factor, and through the current staff and administration we have so far been able to keep our doors open and learning happening."

Two students addressed the board at Monday's meeting, asking members to reconsider the masking mandate.

"Have you noticed you get

kids to wear masks at school, but right when they step out the door of the school, they take off their mask and go to their friend's house," said student Clara Carney. "Please reconsider this rule since it has been almost two years since it has been started."

Fifth grade student Charlie Nelson said he felt masks should be optional.

"I feel like they aren't helping to spread of COVID. I've been getting a headache every day after wearing a mask," Nelson said. "I haven't seen my friends' faces in two years."

Other schools in Alaska are adopting the CDC guidelines

as well, though in some cases they have returned to online classes amid a surge in new infections.

As of late last week, students in Kodiak had returned to virtual learning after the borough's active case count reached 711. Three hundred students and staff were absent last week due to isolation and quarantine, radio station KMXT reported.

"We did not want to do this, we've been doing everything possible to keep the schools open and to fight that battle," said Superintendent Larry LeDoux. "But you have to have staff and you have to have principals in the hallway

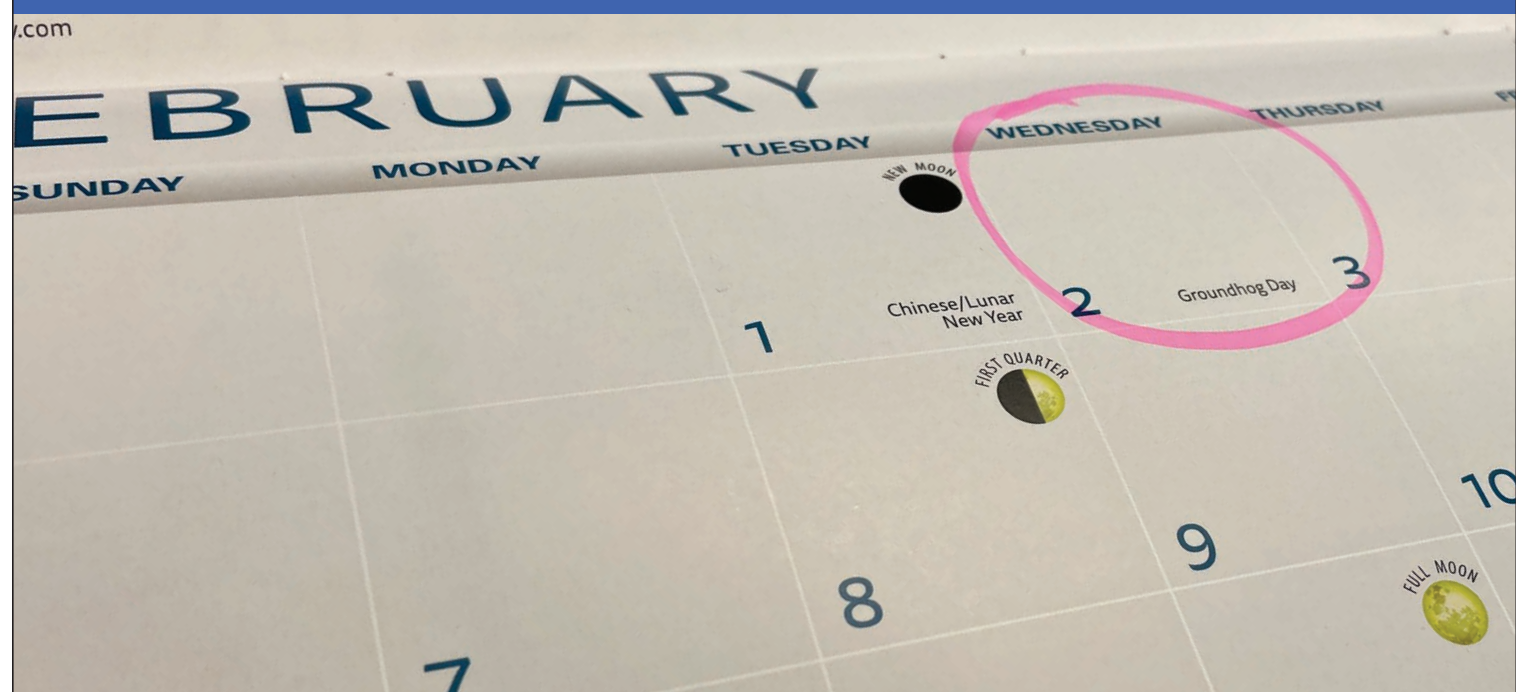
with kids instead of teaching classes and you have to have aides there to help people achieve their goals. And you have to have a safe environment for kids."

The Anchorage School District continued in-person classes at the start of this week, despite 1,023 active cases as of last Friday. The district is continuing to require face masks in all buildings.

"My priority is keeping our schools open and safe with in-person learning and not to revert back to virtual learning," Superintendent Deena Bishop wrote in a letter to parents.

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# Utility needs to boost line capacity out of power plant for future needs

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

Wrangell's generating plant has an eight-megawatt line out the door but needs to go up to 12 megawatts if it wants to fully serve the power needs of the community during shortages, according to the head of the utility department.

This need, while known for a couple of years, was starkly illuminated by two back-to-back events, said Superintendent Rod Rhoades at Wrangell Municipal Light & Power. The first was a Nov. 30 windstorm that severed the Southeast Alaska Power Agency's feeder lines in town, followed by a cold snap this month.

"We were seeing, regularly, the (power) demand of the community above 9.5 megawatts," Rhoades said Friday. "If those lines, SEAPA's lines, had been severed during the cold snap, we would not have been able to supply enough power to keep the community all lit all at once. It's the result of two events right on the heels of one another. The unthinkable happened, therefore we need to be more aggressive about addressing this possibility."

Borough Manager Jeff Good raised the concern at the borough assembly's Jan. 11 meeting.

When temperatures are at or above 40 degrees, the utility sees a draw of 6.5 megawatts, Good told the assembly. When temperatures drop, like they did earlier this month, Wrangell's power needs go up to 9.5 megawatts. With two of the utility's five generators down (Generator 1 was getting maintenance, Generator 5 is being repaired), Wrangell itself can generate 6 megawatts.

That's a problem.

"If we lose SEAPA right now, we are short on power," Good said.

SEAPA, which operates the Tyee Lake hydroelectric project, provided Wrangell and Petersburg a peak load of 23 megawatts during the cold snap.

"Anything above 21, our guys were going on standby. We'd start up the generator. We alternated with Pe-



PHOTO BY SARAH ASLAM/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Rod Rhoades, shown here monitoring a generator while Wrangell was on emergency power Dec. 1, has said the community's standby diesel plant needs a wiring upgrade to move more electricity into the grid during peak demand or in case of emergencies.

tersburg. We were two days on, they were two days on, just to make sure we met the loading. That's where we are at. During the cold temperatures we ran the generator for 14 hours to supplement SEAPA," Good said.

As of Monday, Generator 1 had been brought back to service. Once Generator 5 is returned to the lineup, all five generators could provide 11 megawatts of power. The problem is the utility facility's internal wiring was designed for eight megawatts and can't support the generators' potential output.

"Down the road, we need to develop the overall cost

to get the internal wiring to match what we can actually produce and what the demands are of the city," Good told the assembly.

Rhoades said the utility will have to replace the two-megawatt transformers in Municipal Power & Light's distribution system. There are four transformers. One was upgraded last July to a \$50,000 three-megawatt transformer, but the remaining three units need to be swapped out, still, which will take Municipal Light & Power to 12 megawatts, Rhoades said.

To upgrade the remaining ones may cost well north of \$150,000, estimated the superintendent, due to rising costs in the increasingly volatile supply chain.

"The cost of copper is fluctuating almost daily," Rhoades said. "About six months ago, we bought a ... (0.1 megawatt) transformer for \$30,000. We just had to quote another one and the price doubled. The delivery time went from six weeks to 50 weeks. These are real impacts to us. They all come together to paint a financial narrative that I don't have enough visibility on yet," Rhoades said.

The utility is an enterprise fund, meaning electrical rates charged to customers are supposed to cover operating costs, though other municipal funds can be directed to improvement projects.

Good said he spoke with Petersburg's borough manager about entering into a mutual aid agreement to have something in place, from a financial standpoint, "if we needed assistance from each other."

The borough's next steps to meet capacity needs are to develop the scope of work, with Rhoades, Mark Armstrong, electrical line supervisor at the utility, and Capital Facilities Director Amber Al-Haddad, getting together to nail down the cost, Good said. But it won't be before this winter is over with.

"The goal is to have everything developed by late spring, then bring it before the assembly with the cost to give them an overall scope of work," Good said.

## Borough continues to gain from online sales tax revenues

By SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

Since first beginning to collect sales tax on online orders sold by out-of-town merchants such as Amazon in 2020, the borough continues to see an increase in revenues.

In fiscal year 2021, which ended last June 30, the borough collected \$180,000 in sales tax from what are called remote sellers, said Mason Villarma, the borough's finance director. The finance department projects \$200,000 in such sales tax revenues for fiscal year 2022, which ends June 30.

At \$200,000, the revenues would be about 7% of Wrangell's total sales tax col-

lections this fiscal year.

The new revenues come through the Alaska Remote Sellers Sales Tax Commission, a statewide effort established by the Alaska Municipal League to ensure remote retailers collect and remit the correct taxes. Wrangell was one of the initial 15 members.

By working together and sharing the costs, the intent is that participating cities and boroughs can collect more than they could earn on their own.

"We currently have 49 cities, boroughs and municipalities that have joined the commission," Clinton Singletary, statewide municipal sales tax director at the

Alaska Municipal League, said Monday.

The first collections under the AML program were in February 2020, after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June 2018 allowed states and municipalities to enforce their sales tax codes on out-of-town sellers, such as Amazon and other online, mail-order, phone or catalog merchants.

The Wrangell borough collected \$30,581 in fiscal year 2020, reflecting the short period the new rules were in effect that year.

All sales tax revenues are allocated per Wrangell's municipal code, Villarma said. The general fund receives 68% of the money, health, sanitation and education receive 28%, and 4% goes to street paving.

Brittani Robbins, executive director at the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce, said collecting tax from online sales is "a really important thing." Supporters have long argued that collecting sales tax on goods shipped into town lessens an incentive for shoppers to avoid local merchants.

"I think it's a good thing to tax purchases online and remit it to the city," Robbins said.

"There was an attempt a few years ago to raise the city sales tax. There has to be a way for us to supplement as a city," she said. "Collecting city sales tax, especially on those big sales, it's vital for the city and borough of Wrangell."

## Permanent Fund board chair defends firing of executive director

By JAMES BROOKS  
Anchorage Daily News

Under questioning from a bipartisan legislative committee on Monday, the chairman of the Alaska Permanent Fund defended the board's decision to fire former executive director Angela Rodell but declined to answer substantive questions about the reasons for the action.

Chairman Craig Richards said the board had years of "trust problems" with Rodell. Citing the confidentiality of board discussions and the possibility of a lawsuit by the ousted director, he refused to answer questions about the source of those problems, and he declined to say whether he or other board members have been in communication with Gov. Mike Dunleavy about the firing.

"We're not here, prepared

today to go into an in-depth, detailed analysis of here's everything she did right and everything she did wrong," Richards told the Legislature's Budget and Audit Committee.

"That's most unfortunate, because you had a month to prepare," said Committee Chair Sen. Natasha Von Imhof, of Anchorage.

Legislators have been concerned that Rodell's firing on Dec. 9 was the result of political pressure from the governor, who has appointed or reappointed five of the board's six trustees. All five voted to fire Rodell; the sixth did not.

Richards said state law gives the board the right to hire and fire the fund's executive director for any reason.

"Just because you can doesn't mean you should — and that's

what we'd like to find out, is whether you should," said Anchorage Rep. Chris Tuck, the committee vice chair.

The Permanent Fund's earnings provide two-thirds of Alaska's general-purpose state revenue, and under Rodell's tenure the fund outperformed similar wealth endowments. Rodell herself gained international renown as the chair of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds, and days after her firing the Permanent Fund was named by a trade magazine as one of the top places to work in finance.

The board has a responsibility to deliver maximum returns, said Senate President Peter Micciche, of Soldotna. "A lot of this sort of reeks of something else," he said of the dismissal.

At points during his testimony, Richards pushed back against legislators, saying that they themselves are politicizing the firing by holding a committee hearing on it. "What is best for the fund is to move on," he said.

In 2018, the Alaska Legislature passed a law limiting annual withdrawals from the Permanent Fund to ensure its continued growth. Dunleavy has previously proposed temporarily breaking that limit to pay out larger dividends to Alaskans.

Rodell, following resolutions passed by the Permanent Fund board, frequently testified at legislative hearings against breaking the limit, advising lawmakers should follow a

"rules-based approach" when spending from the fund.

Rodell has said her firing was "political retribution" by the governor's appointees, though she said she does not have proof. She did not respond to a text or phone call seeking comment Monday.

"I believe my removal to be political retribution for successfully carrying the board's mandate to protect the fund and advocate against any additional draws over the (percent of market value) spending rule ... which is contrary to Governor Dunleavy's agenda," Rodell said in an earlier letter to the Budget and Audit Committee.

Dunleavy has repeatedly said he had no role in the firing.

Richards told lawmakers that Rodell's argument doesn't make sense because the board has passed resolutions in support of the annual withdrawal limit and against overspending.

Last June, however, Revenue Commissioner Lucinda Mahoney advocated the Dunleavy plan and its one-time overdraw from the fund.

Mahoney is the vice chair of the fund's board and was in charge of Rodell's performance review this year.

Testifying Monday, Richards described long-term tensions between the board and the executive director. At a meeting this fall, Rodell and Mahoney argued over a proposed bonus program for Permanent Fund employees. There was "visible tension" during that meeting, Richards said.

Rodell's 296-page personnel file, released last week after a public records request filed by the Anchorage Daily News, includes several years of performance reviews, and from 2018 through 2021 those anonymous evaluations show board members losing trust in Rodell.

"It often feels as if the board is being managed to the (executive director's) agenda, as opposed to the ED trying to internalize and achieve the board's agenda," a board member wrote in 2018, before Dunleavy came into office.

"In my opinion, the (executive director's) relationship with the board of trustees is broken," said a board member's comment in 2019.

"Does not embrace the vision of the board but instead tries to control the board to achieve her own vision and points of view," one board member wrote in December.

It isn't clear from the personnel file whether specific actions drove these and similar comments. No board member's name is attached to them, and Rodell still received raises — her latest coming at the start of 2021.

Richards declined to answer questions from legislators about the source of the comments but did say that the evaluations formed only part of the basis for the board's decision to fire Rodell.

As Monday's meeting concluded, Von Imhof and other legislators said they intend to hold further meetings on the issue.

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# Library extends hours, hires assistant with grant

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Patrons of the Irene Ingle Public Library will now have more time to peruse the aisles, take advantage of the free Wi-Fi and check out their favorite books.

Thanks to a grant through the American Rescue Plan Act, last year's federal pandemic aid spending bill, the library is extending its hours to six days a week. The funds have also made it possible to hire a third person to help with the pages of responsibilities.

Library Director Margaret Villarma said the \$14,040 grant is through the Institute of Museum and Library Services and was secured with the help of the Wrangell Cooperative Association. The library will now be open Monday through Saturday, with Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday hours noon to 5 p.m., and Tuesday and Thursday open noon to 7 p.m.

In addition to the extended

hours, a third, part-time staff member has been hired to help out for 15 hours a week. Holly Padilla started on Monday, thanks to the grant.

"She's going to take on some training. She'll be checking books in and out, shelving books and helping patrons," Villarma said. "As time goes on, we'll be teaching her how to catalogue books, catalogue magazines, do overdue notices, do the mail. She'll learn all that stuff."

Both Villarma and Assistant Librarian Sarah Scambler said there are a multitude of little tasks that need to be handled each day and a third person on staff will help immensely. Some of those tasks go beyond the typical things associated with library duties, such as helping people with their iPhones, "with their tablets, laptops and printing," Scambler said.

As soon as the extended hours were announced on Jan. 11, Scambler said she was getting

feedback from library patrons.

"We've had a lot of good feedback so far," she said. "I just called someone to tell them their books were ready and they said, 'Congratulations on the new hours!' We'll be able to help more people."

Library patron Michael Bania comes to peruse the books once a week, checking out three or four at a time.

"It's been great to have two extra days," she said. "The library is fantastic. There's a lot of people that really love to come here. What's really great is that you have your own login number, so you can see every book you've ever read."

Bania, who is retired and has been using the library ever since she moved to Wrangell 12 years ago, said she reads three or four books a week. When the library was closed due to COVID-19, she said the ability to go online, reserve books, then come by to pick them up with curbside ser-



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Assistant Librarian Sarah Scambler helps patron Michael Bania with her selection of books to check out from the Irene Ingle Public Library last Friday. The library has extended its hours thanks to a grant.

vice was helpful.

The grant money will cover Padilla's position and the ex-

tended hours until October.

"It will be nice to be open those six days again," Villarma said.

# Forest service gets ready to hire for slew of positions

BY SARAH ASLAM  
Sentinel reporter

The U.S. Forest Service is hiring.

Tory Houser, acting district ranger, is looking to hire for four positions at the Wrangell Ranger District. A recreation manager, a wilderness and recreation technician, an Anan Wildlife Observatory crew manager, and a fisheries biologist.

The recreation manager is a permanent position. "That's the person who will go and maintain cabins and campsites and help with trails and help us get a lot of those projects done," Houser said.

The biologist will be working on fish streams and habitat, and work with the Wrangell Cooperative Association to develop a partnership to work on the

Stikine River.

All of these positions come with benefits, Houser said. The recreation manager job would pay between \$24 to \$29 per hour, the forestry technician and Anan crew manager would be paid \$19 to \$24 per hour, the fisheries biologist \$29.43 per hour.

In the meantime, Houser is sorting interviews for positions advertised last fall, including hires at Anan, some interns and a researcher. She's getting someone to help with visitor-use monitoring, and trail crews.

Houser said the Wrangell Ranger District will also be getting a wilderness fellow from the Wilderness Fellowship program. "They are usually really high-end. The last one came from Yale."

The four positions of recreation man-

ager, recreation technician, Anan crew manager and fisheries biologist will be posted on usajobs.gov, Houser said. She's hoping to fill those by spring.

There is also potential for two archeology positions — an archeologist and an archeology technician — but those decisions are pending.

The archeologists would help with the ranger district with its environmental reviews, including tribal consultation and engaging with the State Historic Preservation Office.

An archeologist would make \$29.43 per hour, and \$24 per hour for an archeology tech.

Houser said the Forest Service is looking at, including the interns, about 22 to 25 hires in total for the Wrangell district

this year. It's been a long time since they were able to hire this much, she said.

Sandra "Punky" Moore is the public affairs and partnerships staff officer at Tongass National Forest. "Alaska communities may notice a trend in increased Forest Service hiring," Moore said on Friday.

"This trend aligns with the agency's priorities and funding sources from new legislation. This historic legislation gives us more of the funding we need to ensure that the people and communities we serve get all the benefits they want and need from Alaska's national forests."

Moore said the funding sources are the Great American Outdoors Act, the Southeast Alaska Sustainable Strategy and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

# Libraries working to put decades of Wrangell Sentinels online

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel staff writer

It's taken awhile to turn decades of Sentinel pages into digital images, easily accessible for online searches, but the state and Wrangell libraries are about halfway there.

Issues of the Wrangell Sentinel from its founding in 1902 through 1956 are now available in free online databases, where users can look through the pages. The websites allow people to search the pages by keywords, such as looking for any news stories about their family members.

The Irene Ingle Public Library has Sentinels — and its predecessors The Stikine River Journal (1898-1899), Fort Wrangell News (1898) and Alaska Sentinel (1900s) — available online (to access: [bit.ly/3rk4B2M](https://bit.ly/3rk4B2M)) from the first issue Nov. 20, 1902, through 1920.

The state library, working with the Library of Congress, starts its Sentinel database (to access: <https://bit.ly/3fzT3CU>) in 1909 and runs through the end of 1957. It's part of an effort to add as many Alaska newspapers as possible to the national project, said Anastasia Tarmann, of the state library in Juneau.

The Alaska State Library is seeking additional grant funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the next work phase to extend its online offerings of Wrangell history through 1963, along with other newspapers from around the state.

In addition, the Wrangell library is continuing to fundraise to expand its online database, in hopes of eventually bringing it current to 2021, and then adding to it each year.

The Wrangell Cooperative Association started the local effort in 2018 when it obtained a federal grant of \$8,250 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services so that the Irene Ingle Public Library could begin turning rolls of microfilm into digital files that could be loaded online for researchers, historians, families — anyone who wants to learn more

about the town's past.

Those funds have run out, and the library continues the work as best it can with donations.

Library Director Margaret Villarma said they hear from researchers fairly frequently, inquiring about the accessibility of past issues of the newspaper online. For the years not yet online, the library still has mi-

crofilm and film readers available for use.

The Library of Congress website, called Chronicing America, provides searchable databases of tens of thousands of newspapers from communities nationwide. The digital images on the site date back as far as 1777.

Work adding the Wrangell Sentinel and other Alaska pa-

pers to the Chronicing America project has been underway since about 2017, Tarmann said.

Even before the push to put Alaska newspaper history into digital files, the state library in the 1990s embarked on the Alaska Newspaper Project to put the pages on microfilm — the technology of the day 30 years ago.

Continued on page 10

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# Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH  
Fisheries columnist

## Kodiak Tanner crabbers getting \$8.10 per pound to start

Kodiak fishermen are getting an advance price of \$8.10 per pound for Tanner crab in the fishery that opened Jan. 15.

High crab prices have led all other seafoods during the COVID-19 pandemic as buyers grab all they can to fill demand at buffet tables, restaurants and retail counters around the world.

"Our strategy was to get a price before the season even started. It's simply bad business to go fishing without a price," said Peter Longrich, secretary of the 74-member Kodiak Crab Alliance Cooperative which negotiated the deal with local processors.

Crabbers will drop pots for a combined total of 1.8 million pounds, with 1.1 million pounds earmarked for Kodiak, 500,000 pounds for the South Alaska Peninsula and 200,000 pounds at Chignik.

The price compares to \$4.25 paid in 2020 for a 400,000-pound harvest and \$4.40 in 2019 for 615,000 pounds. No Tanner fishery occurred in 2021 as crabbers waited for more mature male crabs to grow into the fishery, the only ones that can be retained for sale. The legal crabs weigh over two pounds on average.

The waiting paid off.

Local biologists have been tracking one of the largest cohorts of Tanners ever seen since 2018 throughout the westward region. It appears to be two big year classes with a broad range of sizes that could support several years of fishing, said Nat Nichols, area manager for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at Kodiak.

"A Tanner crab is getting to be legal size around age 4 or 5 and then they start

to die of natural causes or age out of the population by around 7 or 8. Once they start to become legal, we can expect them to hang around for potentially three years, and there'll be more small crab behind them. So you can kind of think of this as the front edge," Nichols said.

Fishing is expected to go fast depending on three factors: the number of boats, good or scratchy hauls and weather. A total of about 85 boats signed up for the fishery at Kodiak, 47 at the South Peninsula and 14 at Chignik. Nichols said the opener could be as short as three days or it might last about a week.

Crabbers can expect a lot of measuring, he said, adding that a large group of crab are going to be "just short of the stick this year."

"Those are next year's crabs and we want to handle them carefully and get them back in the water," he said. "There will be a lot of sorting and if a pot has 30 or 40 legal male keepers in it, it may have 300 or 400 sub-legal males and females mixed in there."

The crab association also plans to try and market the catch as Kodiak Tanner crab, highlighting the facts that it is bigger than Tanners from other Alaska regions.

### Fisheries Board meeting

The state Board of Fisheries meetings are not only dealing with COVID-related derailments, but also by conflicts from fishery openers. Increasing COVID infection rates caused the board to postpone its meeting set for Jan. 4-15 in Ketchikan, where it planned to ad-

dress 157 Southeast and Yakutat fish and shellfish proposals and move it to March 10-22 in Anchorage.

Those dates occur at the same time that halibut, sablefish and herring fisheries will be underway, and as the busy Southeast troll fishery for winter king salmon is wrapping up.

"It leaves trollers with a really no-win choice of staying in town or going to Anchorage or getting that last trip in between the 10th and the 15th of March, which last year was the most lucrative trip of the winter season," Matt Donohoe told radio station KFSK in Petersburg.

To accommodate the tail end of the troll fishery, the Fisheries Board will take up salmon-related commercial, sport, subsistence and personal use proposals March 18 - 22.

The tentative order to accommodate other fishing openers is March 10-13 for herring and March 14-17 for groundfish and shellfish.

In recognition of the difficulties for some Southeast residents to travel to Anchorage, the board will take remote public testimony at select ADF&G Southeast offices. Locations will be announced before the meeting but people wanting to testify remotely must sign-up by March 3. An online registration platform will soon be posted on the Fisheries Board meeting page.

### Seafood again sets sales records

Sales of frozen and fresh seafood in the U.S. hit all-time highs in 2021, primarily

driven by inflation.

SeafoodSource reports that retail sales surpassed 2019 and 2020 as more Americans opted for seafood due to its proven health benefits.

Data from market trackers IRI and 210 Analytics showed fresh fish sales climbed 6.4% in 2021 compared to 2020 and a whopping 25.5% versus 2019, topping \$7 billion. Fresh shellfish sales rose 0.5% versus 2020 and 37.6% from 2019.

Frozen seafood sales rose 2.8% compared to 2020 and soared by nearly 41% from 2019, reaching \$7.2 billion.

Sales of canned or other "shelf-stable" seafood declined 11.4% in 2021; however, the category still produced \$2.5 billion for the year.

Frozen seafood prices rose 4.2% per unit and 5.7% per volume for the year. Fresh seafood prices increased 6.8% in 2021 and dollar sales increased 1.8%.

"Robust demand got fresh seafood very close to the 'new record' finish line and inflation pushed it to new records," said Anne-Marie Roerink of 210 Analytics.

### Fish watch

The largest harvest ever of 45,164 tons (90.3 million pounds) is set for the 2022 Sitka Sound sac roe herring fishery, which typically opens in March. Likewise, a record 65,107 tons of roe herring (130.2 million pounds) can be taken at Togiak in Bristol Bay, the state's largest herring fishery that usually begins in May.

## OBITUARY

### Billie Foust known for her years on KSTK and jokes, dies at 65

Billie Foust, 65, died Jan. 14 in Ketchikan, where she had lived the past couple of years.

She was born April 1956 in Arcata, California, to Ethel Miller and Bill Foust.

Billie spent most of her life in Wrangell. She went to high school in Wrangell, then left town for a short time in Hoopa, California, and Shelton, Washington, before returning in her

20s to Wrangell.

"Candy, or 'Babe' as she was called, leaves behind many friends and family who will remember her as the voice of KSTK, where her

words would carry over the airwaves while she played a blend of modern and classic rock," her family wrote.

"She was full of terrible jokes, a big heart and an inner strength that defied the odds."

Billie is survived by her three children, Diana, of Olympia, Washington, Danielle, of San Diego, California, and Michael, of Camas, Washington; and grandchild Teagan; along with many cousins, aunts and uncles by relation and friendship.

Her family wrote that Billie would like her friends to listen to the songs "Rainbow Connection," by Kermit the Frog, "Gold Dust Woman," by Fleetwood Mac, and "Ripple," by the Grateful Dead, while they



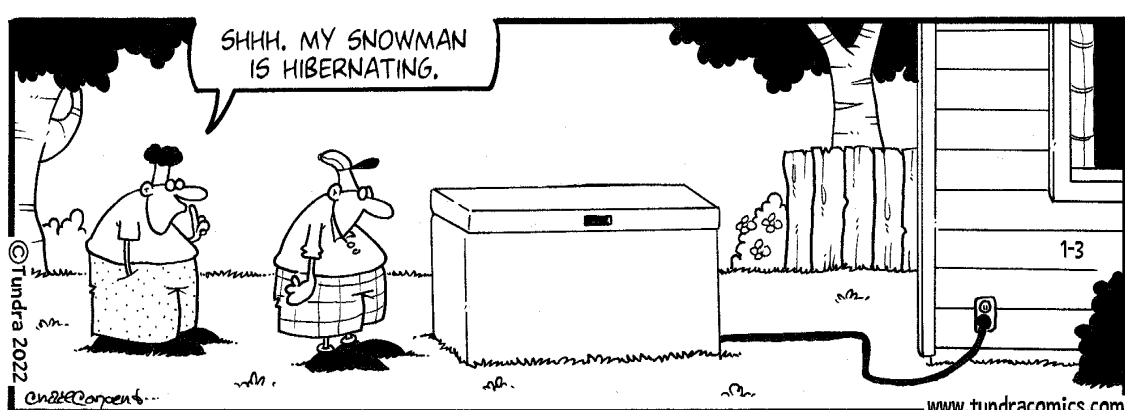
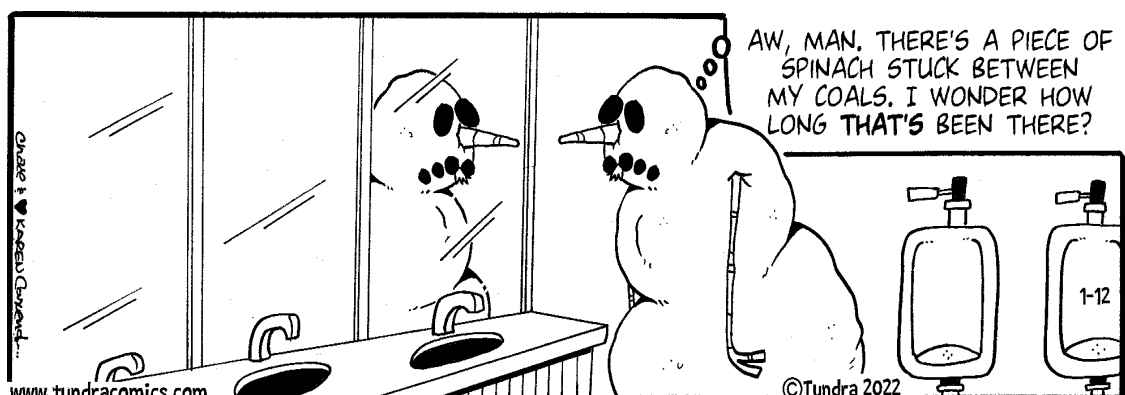
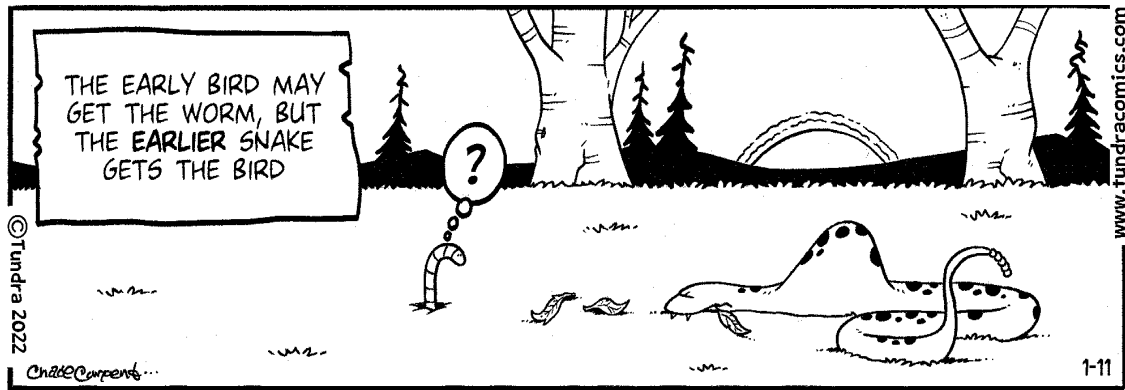
BILLIE FOUST

think of her.

Services will be scheduled later in Wrangell.

## Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



## Digital copies

Continued from page 9

Turning those microfilm pages into digital files includes state library staff and a contractor converting the microfilm into even-sharper images that show more detail, then turning those images into pdf files that can be posted online, showing each page

of each issue of the newspaper.

And while the Sentinels currently are available on two separate websites, "It'd be ideal to have it all in a single place," Villarma said.

That will depend on funding for the two efforts, and then sharing their digital files.

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# Disaster declaration will help Southeast towns buried by snow

JUNEAU (AP) — Parts of Southeast Alaska are receiving assistance from the state after getting up to six feet of snow.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy on Jan. 13 issued a disaster declaration for the Yakutat, Juneau, Haines and Skagway areas, his office said in a statement.

The declaration activates emergency response options and a disaster recovery program, including possibly financial help, for those affected by the storm.

For a four-day stretch ending

Jan. 11, up to six feet of snow fell in parts of the disaster area. That was followed by warmer temperatures and rain, which disrupted power and damaged structures in Yakutat and Juneau.

Officials in Yakutat requested assistance from the Alaska National Guard to clear snow and ice from public, tribal and governmental facilities. A task force flew to Yakutat on Jan. 12 to assist local crews.

Yakutat's newly completed health clinic was forced to close

after four to five feet of heavy snow caused an estimated millions of dollars in water damage to the building and equipment, Borough Manager Jon Erickson told the Alaska Public Media radio network.

"It seems to be a roof failure," Erickson said of the \$11 million facility. "It's because of ice and snow and snow load."

"Numerous structures within the (Yakutat) borough have sustained, or are in imminent danger of sustaining, significant

damage," according to the governor's disaster declaration.

A carport at Yakutat's public safety building collapsed into a trailer set up for emergency calls, and a broken pipe flooded the community's Head Start building, according to the public radio report.

In Juneau, roofs collapsed on two commercial buildings — one in the Lemon Creek area and an empty warehouse downtown — under extreme snow loads. No one was injured. The borough on Jan. 11 advised residents to check their roofs for deep, heavy wet snow.

Juneau closed its public

schools for three days last week, citing "hazardous road and sidewalk conditions." Riverbend Elementary School in the Mendenhall Valley, however, suffered extensive water damage from frozen pipes and is closed indefinitely.

Klawock issued a water conservation notice after leaks and a blockage caused water tank levels to plummet. Repair efforts were hampered because the access road was "sheer ice" and required the city administrators to call for help on Facebook for residents with snow-machines, according to public radio reporting.

## Police report

### Monday, Jan. 10

Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Agency assist: Alaska State Troopers.

### Tuesday, Jan. 11

Paper service.  
Agency assist: Welfare check and paper service.  
Agency assist: Public works

department.

### Wednesday, Jan. 12

Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Dog at large.  
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.  
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

### Thursday, Jan. 13

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.  
Found property.  
Traffic stop.  
Harassment.  
Traffic stop.

### Friday, Jan. 14

Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Agency assist: Harbor department.  
Traffic stop.  
Motor vehicle accident.  
Citizen assist.  
Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance.

### Saturday, Jan. 15

Agency assist: Welfare check.  
Traffic stop.

### Sunday, Jan. 16

Agency assist: Fire  
Citizen assist.

## CLASSIFIED/LEGALS

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and fuel/oil filters included. \$319,000. Trailer included. Call Ron at 907-518-1180.

### FOR SALE

5 boxes of quart canning jars with lids, \$10 per box. Weber BBQ with two tanks, \$80. Cufflinks, \$10. Call Marline at 907-874-4414.

### 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.

### CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING Police Officer

Wrangell Police Department is accepting applications for Police Officer. This position is open until filled.

Wrangell Police Officers must be capable of all aspects of law enforcement to include patrol and emergency response, interviewing and investigations, evidence collection and processing. Applicants must possess problem-solving abilities and have the written and oral communication skills. Applicants will need to learn, understand and apply criminal laws and effect arrests if warranted. Applicants need to have the ability to work under pressure and be able to maintain control in combative situations. Applicants must have the ability to work flexible hours and shifts and be able to work with minimal supervision.

Applicants must successfully complete and pass a background investigation, medical and psychological examinations, and drug screening. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age, possess a High School Diploma or GED equivalency. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen and possess a valid Alaska Driver's License or the ability to obtain one within 10 days of hire.

Applicants must meet the minimum standards for Police Officer per the Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC) and must possess an APSC certificate within 12 months of hire. Officers holding an APSC basic certification or higher is preferred, however the Wrangell Police Department encourages applicants who are motivated, friendly, self-starting and a team player to apply and we will assist you in obtaining the required certification.

Benefits include accrued vacation time, accrued sick leave time, state PERS retirement, optional deferred compensation plan, medical coverage for employees and family with a small copay, paid holidays and a quarterly uniform allowance. Further details can be found in the City & Borough of Wrangell Personnel Policy located on the City & Borough of Wrangell website.

To be considered, submit a cover letter, resume and completed employment application via email to [rmarshall@wrangell.com](mailto:rmarshall@wrangell.com), or submit in person to City Hall, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, AK 99929.

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

**Publish Jan. 20, 27 and Feb. 2, 2022**

### CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

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

Ordinance No. 1015 of the Assembly of the City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending Section 3.05.020, Order of Business, to repeal and reenact Section 3.05.100, Reconsideration, of the Wrangell Municipal Code.

Ordinance No. 1016 of the Assembly of the City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, Sections 15.12.192, 15.12.200 and 15.12.215 in Chapter 15.12, Electricity, in the Wrangell Municipal Code.

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

**Publish Jan. 20, 2022**

### PUBLIC NOTICE STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

An application package for an Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, under Alaska Statute 46.04.030 and in accordance with 18 AAC 75, has been received by the Department of Environmental Conservation. The details are as follow:

Applicant:	Power Systems & Supplies of Alaska, LLC PO Box 772 Ward Cove, Alaska 99928
Proposed Activity:	Review of a plan renewal application package for an Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan that is required to commit adequate resources to meet all planning requirements for prevention and response for a realistic maximum discharge from the operations of the non-crude tank vessels, the M/V Spirit and the M/V Remote Supplier. The greatest planned tank vessel capacity is 95.2 barrels of non-crude petroleum products.
Location:	Southeast Alaska
Potential Results:	A potential risk exists of oil spills entering the lands or waters of the state as a result of this operation.
Activity identified as:	State Contingency Plan Number 21-CP-5125

Any person wishing to submit a request for additional information or provide comments regarding this application may do so electronically via our public notice site at <https://dec.alaska.gov/comment/>. If you are unable to submit comments via this site, you may submit them in writing to Rachael Krajewski, Department of Environmental Conservation, SPAR/PPRP, P.O. Box 111800, Juneau, AK 99811-1800, 907-465-6648 (phone), 907-465-5245 (fax), or [rachael.krajewski@alaska.gov](mailto:rachael.krajewski@alaska.gov). The full contents of all submitted comments are considered public records and will be posted online in full during the public comment period. Comments submitted in writing directly to the Plan Reviewer will be uploaded to the public comment site. It is preferable for commenters to submit directly through the public comment site.

The public comment period for this application begins on January 21, 2022, and ends at 11:59 p.m. on February 20, 2022. Requests for additional information and comments must be received by 11:59 p.m. on February 20, 2022. It is the responsibility of the commenter to verify that facsimile and email submissions are received by the deadline. An additional comment period may be provided in accordance with 18 AAC 75.455(d).

Copies of the application package are available for public review at the following locations: the department's office at 410 Willoughby Ave, 2nd Floor, Juneau, AK 99801; and the department's website at <http://dec.alaska.gov/Applications/SPAR/PublicMVC/IPP/CPPlansUnderReview>.

The department will hold a public hearing on the plan application if it determines that good cause exists. Residents in the affected area or the governing body of an affected municipality may request a public hearing by writing to the Department of Environmental Conservation, at the above address prior to February 5, 2022. The State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you are a person with a disability who may need an accommodation in order to participate in this public process, please contact Brian Blessington at (907) 269-6272 or TDD Relay Service 1-800-770-8973/TTY or dial 711 prior to February 10, 2022, to ensure that any necessary accommodations can be provided.

**Publish Jan. 20, 2022**

# Sealaska's investment in kelp foods part of its focus on ocean health

By NATHANIEL HERZ  
Alaska Public Media

Bull kelp is found up and down the Pacific Coast, can grow as long as 100 feet, and is edible in products like salsa and hot sauce. It's also part of the future for Sealaska Corp., which in 2020 bought a stake in a Southeast-grown company, Barnacle Foods, that sells kelp products across the country.

Sealaska Chair Joe Nelson, who is Tlingit, grew up hunting and fishing in Yakutat. He'd harvested seaweed. But not kelp — this was a foreign object to him.

"Like, literally from 'Aliens,' the movie," Nelson said, pondering the kelp's fronds and rubbery, tubular stalks on a harvest boat trip last fall. "I wouldn't have thought to eat it."

While Nelson was new to kelp harvesting, he's been eating it for years, as an early and avid buyer of Barnacle's salsa.

Barnacle was founded in 2016 by a Juneau couple with a shared love for Southeast Alaska lands and waters, and their bountiful harvests. The company has grown spectacularly, and is on track this year to sell more than \$1 million of its largely kelp-based foods.

Sealaska and its more than 20,000 Indigenous shareholders are now helping to fuel that growth.

The company's investment in the relatively climate-friendly kelp industry highlights a shift in its business philosophy that's played out over the past eight years.

For decades, the Native-owned regional corporation sustained its business with profits from logging old-growth timber from lands it received through the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which turned 50 years old last month. It also invested in other, far-flung businesses with little relevance to Sealaska shareholders.

The vast majority of Sealaska's hundreds of millions of dollars in yearly revenue still comes from its comparatively unglamorous holdings in seafood processing and environmental services like maritime drilling and construction.

But its investment in Barnacle, while small, is a potent symbol of the corporation's new vision. In the past few years, Sealaska has announced that it's selling its old-growth logging business. It has sold carbon credits on its remaining uncut timber. And it has narrowed the focus of its other businesses around the theme of "ocean health," an acknowledgment of global warming's growing impact on Sealaska's ancestral lands and around the world.

Sealaska is not the only Native corporation to take similar steps into conservation and sustain-



PHOTOS BY LOREN HOLMES/ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Sealaska Board Chair Joe Nelson pulls bull kelp from Saginaw Channel near Juneau on Sept. 14, 2021.

ability. At least two others have gotten into the carbon credits business, and another, in the Bristol Bay region, has struck a nearly \$20 million deal with a conservation group to place Native corporate lands out of reach of the proposed Pebble mine.

Sealaska officials are careful not to tout their new ideas as a prescription for other corporations, some of which remain heavily invested in extractive industries like oil and gas and mining.

But Sealaska leaders seem to agree that, after nearly a half-century of struggle to meld Indigenous values with their for-profit business, the corporation has finally hit on a formula that works for them.

The corporation, Nelson said, has moved away from what he describes as "false paradigms" embedded in the land settlement — that, as Natives, "we're going to be Indigenous culture bearers on the weekends, but from Monday to Friday, we're going to be in the boardroom doing business, capitalists."

Native people, Nelson said, are "not here all for pure resource extraction or pure conservation. Sustainability is built into our thinking."

### Polarizing timber harvests

Sealaska was born out of the 1971 Native claims settlement act, which granted the corporation what it says is less than 2% of shareholders' traditional homelands: 360,000 acres, a tiny slice amid the 17 million-acre Tongass National Forest that stretches across much of Southeast Alaska.

After the act's passage, Seal-

aska and Southeast Alaska Native village corporations got into the timber business.

Indigenous Alaskans outside the region also benefited, as the land claims settlement requires each regional Native corporation to redistribute 70% of their natural resource revenues to the other corporations.

The harvests were polarizing, pitting the Native corporations against conservationists and tribal groups, and even family members against each other. Critics objected to the damaged salmon streams and threatened deer populations that clear cuts could sometimes leave behind.

With a finite amount of timber to cut, Sealaska looked to diversify its business, with investments in industries like limestone mining, gaming and wireless communications. But those efforts produced mixed results.

Anthony Mallott said that in their early decades, Sealaska and other Native corporations had a "heavy mantra" that Indigenous values should be kept at arm's length from business decisions.

"Your fiduciary duty was just to make money — don't let the community stuff or the value stuff get in the way," Mallott said in an interview. "We called it hiding behind the fiduciary shield."

Nelson, Sealaska's chair, arrived on the board in 2003, after Sealaska had invested in a plastics business. The manufacturing enterprise had facilities in Mexico, Alabama and Iowa, making products like Brita water containers and laundry detergent caps.

Nelson grew up spending a month at a time off the grid at fish camp. He lived in Southern California during college and law school, going to the beach and eating organic food. He said he arrived back in Alaska with a "different level of consciousness" that gave him other ideas about Sealaska's direction.

"All my life, I saw plastic washing up on the beaches, and it didn't work for me personally. Philosophically, it didn't fit," he said. "But I never won any arguments based on my philosophy, really, in the boardroom."

Ultimately, business imperatives forced Sealaska into a restructuring. In 2013, it reported \$35 million in losses, largely attributable to a heavy construction subsidiary in Hawaii that underbid a major project. The plastics investment and others had underperformed, and Sealaska had cut down almost all of its easily accessible timber, Mallott said.

### A changing model

The 2014 financial crisis, Mallott said, gave Sealaska leaders a "full mandate" to change the corporation's business model.

Mallott said nearby all of the corporation's other lines of business — roughly a dozen — were sold off, with logging a notable exception.

The board began developing a new vision around Haa Aani, their ancestral homelands. The "ocean health" theme for Sealaska's businesses emerged from the threats posed by climate change, and the corporation expanded into seafood, an industry that Mallott describes as "relevant and meaningful" to board members and shareholders — many of whom are fishermen themselves.

The timber business, however, gradually became less viable amid a decline in Southeast Alaska's logging industry, Mallott said. Instead, over the past few years, Sealaska has been paid more than \$100 million to keep its timber unharvested, for use as carbon offsets.

By 2019, a few years into Sealaska's pivot, the owners of Barnacle, the kelp foods company, had already identified the corporation as their best-case business partner and investor when a chance dinner encounter set off formal discussions.

Inside Barnacle's commercial kitchen, in a warehouse not far from Juneau's landfill, employees first scrubbed and sanitized equipment. Then, they used an industrial-sized food processor to chop frozen kelp — collected locally — and mixed it with garlic and fermented serrano pepper in a huge kettle to cook.

In a few hours, they'd bottle it as "bullwhip" hot sauce.

Barnacle co-founders Lia Heifetz and Matt Kern, who are engaged, both grew up in Juneau and left for college. When they returned, they reconnected around locally harvested foods.

Barnacle started with kelp salsa, which Heifetz and Kern first encountered as a distraction from slow fishing: If nothing's biting, at least you can come home with something else to eat. Each year, they found themselves bringing larger and larger vessels to fill with more kelp for home cooking parties.

"To the point where we were bringing out Rubbermaid totes and 50-gallon barrels and filling up our kitchen with jars and overflowing the cupboards into cabinets and garages," Kern said.

### Sealaska teams up with Barnacle

Heifetz, Kern and business partner Max Stanley are not Native, and they're not Sealaska shareholders. But they had worked on projects with Southeast Alaska tribal organizations. The vision for their business — elevating Southeast Alaska's environment and culture through sustainably harvested foods — also seemed to dovetail with Sealaska's new direction.

Nelson, the Sealaska chair, was one of Barnacle's first customers at a local food festival. And in its first year operating, Barnacle won a \$40,000 economic development grant from a Sealaska-funded group, Spruce Root.

The company's salsas and pickles made it a quick sensation with locals and Juneau tourists. It has since expanded into larger markets, with attractive labels and wild ingredients that have helped Barnacle's business double or triple every year after its founding.

Eventually, owners Heifetz, Kern and Max Stanley realized they needed an investor to finance Barnacle's growth, and Sealaska was at the top of their list. Conversations started after Heifetz ran into the corporation's chief operating officer at a downtown Juneau pub.

Barnacle's relatively small size meant that it wasn't a perfect match for a Sealaska investment. But everything else about it seemed to fit, Nelson said.

The start-up came with potential local jobs, out on the water, for Sealaska shareholders. It helps boost Southeast Alaska's regional economy, aligns with Sealaska's ocean health theme and taps into a sustainable resource from the ocean, Nelson said.

In 2020, Sealaska bought a 30% stake in Barnacle for \$1.5 million, which the company's founders say will be invested directly into its growth, and equipment and processing capacity.

While it's a tiny sum on the scale of Sealaska's overall operations — it reported \$697 million in revenue in 2020 — leaders say it's an important symbol of the corporation's direction and vision.

*This story is part of a 2021 reporting collaboration between Alaska Public Media, the Anchorage Daily News and Indian Country Today on the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Funding for the project was provided by the Alaska Center for Excellence in Journalism.*



Production manager Rosa Spaeth watches as Marco Martinez pours Bullwhip Kelp and Serrano Hot Sauce into a filling machine at Barnacle Foods' Juneau plant.