

Tortoise available
to munch on garden
weeds, Page 3



Wrangell, Alaska
May 29, 2024

WRANGELL SENTINEL

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PHOTO BY BECCA CLARK / WRANGELL SENTINEL

The Anchorage pullers arrived at Petroglyph Beach on May 23 for a canoe naming ceremony. One of the canoes they will paddle to Juneau was dedicated to Wrangell's Marge Byrd, Kiks.adi matriarch Shaawat Shoogoo. The canoe's name is Xixch' dexi (Frog Backbone).

Canoes start 150-mile journey to Native Celebration in Juneau

BY BECCA CLARK
Sentinel reporter

A canoe with 16 paddlers from Wrangell and at least four more canoes from other communities were scheduled to push off Wednesday morning toward Juneau, roughly a 150-mile journey to Celebration, the biennial Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultural festival.

The paddlers are scheduled to arrive in downtown Juneau at 11:30 a.m. June 4. Celebration will run June 5-8.

The Wrangell canoe planned to leave from the Reliance Float.

The theme for this year's event is "Together We Live in Balance," and the festival's featured dance group is the Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Dakhká Khwáan Dancers (People of the Inland).

In recent years, more than 2,000 Southeast Alaska Native dancers have participated in each Celebration, according to the Sealaska Heritage

Institute. Two dance groups from Wrangell will perform this year.

Since 2008, people have been paddling from their home communities throughout Southeast to attend the event, marking the unofficial start of Celebration with traditional canoe landing ceremonies.

This will be the first time in 10 years that a Wrangell crew will make the journey, and the first time Kasaan has planned a canoe journey in modern history, said Eric Hamar, who is organizing the canoes out of the Prince of Wales Island community of Kasaan.

Over the past week, canoes and paddlers from other communities made their way to Wrangell in anticipation of the start of the journey.

Anchorage pullers arrived in Wrangell with two canoes May 23, and departed for Juneau on May 25 to allow time for subsistence hunting and fishing

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School board postpones decision on contract for remote counselor

BY MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

The school board has tabled until next month a proposal to contract for remote counseling services for Wrangell students next year, instead of hiring a full-time counselor to work in the schools.

The board voted May 20 to table the motion after hearing concerns from faculty and a board member.

Schools Superintendent Bill Burr said the decision to contract for a remote K-12 counselor wasn't an intentional change of direction. "We posted the position and then we looked at the applicants," he said. "The hiring committee looked at the best all around."

The district's current counselor left the job at the end of the school year.

Board member Brittani Robbins moved to approve a contract with Lindsay Pinkelman, of Find a Way Consulting, based in Delta Junction, 95 miles southeast of Fairbanks, which was seconded by board member Liz Roundtree. The district would pay Pinkelman \$70,000 for the 2024-2025 school year.

Pinkelman's LinkedIn page lists her as a counselor for IDEA Homeschool, a correspondence program run by the Galena City School District, and as a host and producer of the Voices of IDEA Homeschool podcast.

The proposed contract stipulates that any travel to Wrangell by Pinkelman, who is a quadriplegic, would be reimbursed by the district to include caregiver and travel expenses as well as room and board when travel is requested by the district.

Teachers Mikki Angerman, Heather Howe, Laura Davies and her husband Winston Davies all spoke at the school board meeting against remote counseling services.

"This choice is not in the best interests of our children, especially given everything our community has gone through this year," Angerman said, referring to last year's November landslide. "After such a traumatic event, the need for in-person social and

Continued on page 12

Fourth royalty ticket sales start Friday, with two contestants

BY BECCA CLARK
Sentinel reporter

When Alisha Armstrong and Kayla Young heard there were no royalty candidates this year, they both decided they had to step up for the community.

The chamber of commerce now has two candidates running for Fourth of July royalty this summer: Armstrong and Young.

Armstrong graduated high school earlier this month, and Young will be a senior next year.

Raffle ticket and food booth sales will kick off Friday, May 31, at 6 p.m. at the downtown pavilion.

The duo volunteered after concerns over zero royalty candidates — no one had signed up for the competition by the first deadline this month or the extended deadline May 17. Both candidates turned in their paperwork on May 23. This



Alisha Armstrong



Kayla Young

will be the first time in a few years that Wrangell will have more than one fundraising candidate.

The chamber of commerce sponsors the Fourth festivities and depends on royalty candidates to sell tens of thousands of raffle tickets. The candidates earn a percentage of their ticket sales for all the work they and their supporters put into

fundraising, and the chamber uses its share of the proceeds to pay for fireworks and other parts of the holiday celebration.

Both candidates are scrambling to make plans, as they are about a month behind in planning, said Josh Young, Kayla's father and food manager.

The two candidates plan to meet to coordinate their

events so that there are no scheduling conflicts.

Though it is a competition, both candidates are excited the other is running.

"Neither (candidate) wants to see the Fourth falter," said Josh Young. "They are looking to get together and conquer rather than succeed alone." A win would be to raise the most money ever raised, together, he added.

"The community is really the team that makes this happen," Mark Armstrong, Alisha's father said, adding that the candidates are really just the rallying points for the community.

The late start is going to be an added challenge for the candidates — typically weeks of planning would have already gone into the contest at this point.

Both Young and Armstrong have store accounts and bank accounts at First Bank set up

Continued on page 4

Group continues with fundraising to cover student travel costs to state competition

BY MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

The Wrangell Athletic Club expects to have raised about \$22,000 in donations by the end of June to reimburse the school district, which advanced about \$34,000 this past school year to cover the cost of student travel to state competition.

Volunteers created the nonprofit organization last year to raise money for state travel after the school board said it could not afford to cover the expenses.

Club president Chris Johnson said they will send the district whatever funds it has raised by next month.

In her latest financial report to the school board, district business manager Kristy Andrew estimated

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Senior Center Menu

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

Thursday, May 30

Herbed lime chicken, mixed vegetables, sunshine salad, au gratin potatoes

Friday, May 31

Ham sandwich, tomato soup, honey mustard slaw

Monday, June 3

Shelf-stable meal delivered on Friday, May 31

Tuesday, June 4

Crispy baked chicken, Brussels sprouts, Texas slaw, boiled potatoes

Wednesday, June 5

Spaghetti with meat sauce, peas and carrots, berry cup

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

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

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Sunday, June 2

Kennicott, 8:15 p.m.

Sunday, June 9

Kennicott, 4:45 p.m.

Sunday, June 16

Kennicott, 7:45 p.m.

Sunday, June 23

Kennicott, 2:15 p.m.

Southbound

Wednesday, June 5

Kennicott, 5:45 a.m.

Wednesday, June 12

Kennicott, 5 a.m.

Wednesday, June 19

Kennicott, 4:45 a.m.

Wednesday, June 26

Kennicott, 5 a.m.

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

Tides

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
May 29	05:10	14.6	06:43	13.5	11:51	0.1	.....	...
May 30	06:23	13.7	07:47	14.2	00:17	5.0	12:51	0.8
May 31	07:47	13.2	08:47	15.2	01:35	4.3	01:54	1.3
June 1	09:08	13.3	09:41	16.4	02:51	2.9	02:58	1.8
June 2	10:18	13.8	10:31	17.5	04:01	1.1	03:59	2.1
June 3	11:20	14.5	11:19	18.3	05:01	-0.6	04:57	2.3
June 4	...	...	12:16	15.0	05:54	-2.1	05:49	2.5

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

May 29, 1924

For the first time in the history of the Wrangell schools, the entire high school graduating class was composed of all boys. Such an occurrence is thought to be without parallel. Six boys graduated from Wrangell High School Monday evening at the exercises held at Redmen's Hall and received diplomas entitling them to enter the universities of the states. There were no girl members of the class. Neil Grant, as class salutatorian, cited incidents in the life of the class and told of some of the trials and pitfalls into which any high school student may fall. Donald Sinclair then recited the class poem; a poem full of enthusiasm and hope for a brilliant future.

May 27, 1949

With the tourist season upon us, our attention has been called to the condition of the Shakes Island approach which spans the water between the road and the island. Last night's tourists, with cameras in hand, walked down to the island. Upon reaching the bridge, they were faced with a sign that warned them that they crossed the approach "at their own risk." And indeed, it looked a perilous crossing in the structure's rickety condition and without handrails. It is hoped, eventually, to obtain the property for the city from the Interior Department, as that department has no funds for its upkeep but, in the meantime, it seems it would be to the

advantage of the town to find some way of keeping this outstanding attraction in a more presentable shape for tourists and our own enjoyment.

May 31, 1974

Wrangell's Port Commission has begun work tearing down the old cold storage building at the head of Front Street. The city plans to fill the area and rent it out for parking, according to Port Commission Chairman Leonard Campbell. The building and lot were purchased, upon approval from city voters, nearly two years ago from the McCormack family, which had owned it since the late 1800s. Port employee Al Riehle is doing the demolition work. Due to

limited funds, the city's original plan was to contract someone to tear down the building in return for the materials. But Campbell said the city could not find anyone willing to take the job on those terms. Campbell stressed that an effort is being made to maintain the appearance of the building during its destruction. "We're going to make every effort to keep it cleaned up and acceptable looking from a tourist's standpoint," he said.

May 27, 1999

Those big white sacks being offloaded at the airport each day, that we dream to be full of gold, may not be coveted much longer. The gold mine just over the mountain in British

Columbia, called the Snip Mine, is closing. Old Bristol freighters have been making daily flights since 1990 from the mine just east of Wrangell, bringing pallets of gold dust and dirt into the Wrangell airport for shipment south. Now, with the mine's existing ore reserves dwindling, the operation is decommissioning and the land reclamation will commence. Much of the buildings and equipment will simply be buried due to the added cost of moving or maintaining them. Pilots flying over the area in about five years will find it difficult to imagine that the area was once a busy mining site with multiple facilities.



ALASKA AIRLINES CLUB 49 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

SUMMER READING PROGRAM FOR KIDS at the Irene Ingle Public Library now open for registration. Open to children entering kindergarten through ninth grade in the fall. Register at the library. The reading program runs through Aug. 3. More than 100 prize drawings and a pool/pizza party for everyone who completes the program. Call 907-874-3535 for more information.

ROLL ON THE ROCK roller skating 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Fridays at the TouchPoint Ministries rink on Bennett Street. Children 9 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Skaters must complete a registration form.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER "Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes," rated PG 13, at 6 p.m. Friday through Sunday, May 31 - June 2. The action adventure sci-fi runs 2 hours and 25 minutes; tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Next weekend's movie: "IF".

MUSKEG MEADOWS will hold the Stikine Sportsmen Association nine-hole best-ball tournament: 5:30 p.m. Friday, May 31, register by 5 p.m. The Greg Scheff Memorial sponsored by R&M Engineering - Ketchikan 18-hole tournament starts at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 1, and the nine-hole best-ball tournament is Sunday, June 2, register by 9:30 a.m.

COMMUNITY MARKET 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, June 1, at the Nolan Center. \$10 a table for vendors. Register with jarnold@wrangell.com or awade@wrangell.com, or call 907-874-3770.

JAM BAND 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, June 4 and 18, at the Sourdough Lodge. Bring your guitar, banjo, fiddle, harmonica, bass, spoons or whatever you play, or sing or just come listen. Will circle up and share music around the room. Any experience level is welcome.

STATE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE will be in Wrangell on Thursday, June 12. Immunizations, birth control and STD screening, well-child exams for kids up to age 6, TB screening and medication, Narcan kits and medication disposal bags will be offered. The Public Health Center is in the Kadin Building, 215 Front St. Call 907-723-4611 to make an appointment in advance so the nurse knows what immunizations to bring.

CAMP LORRAINE, a Christian summer camp for kids between the ages of 8 to 16, is planned for June 16-23. The camp is located on Vank Island. The cost is \$199. Applications available at www.alaskacamps.org.

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

- **SWIM LESSON** Monday-Friday starting June 3. Multiple two-week sessions with variable times available. Contact Parks and Rec for more details. Ages 5-12. \$40 fee. Registration required.
- **FREE HELMET GIVEAWAY** 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 4, at the community center multipurpose room sponsored by Southeast Alaska Independent Living. Bike and ATV helmets will be available for children. Materials will be available for decorating and to apply a protective sealant to shield decorated helmets from rain and inclement weather. Registration is required.
- **FOREST EXPLORERS** 10:30 a.m. to noon Tuesdays from June 11 through Aug. 6 with Clarie Froehlich of the U.S. Forest Service. For ages 7-13; ages 6 and under must be accompanied by a guardian 14 or older. Meet at Volunteer Park. \$50 fee. Registration required.
- **ART CAMP** 10:30 a.m. to noon Fridays from June 7 through June 28 at the community center multipurpose classroom. \$50 fee. Registration required.
- **'NESSE' for ADULTS** 5:30 to 7 p.m. Friday, June 14. No registration required. \$5 per person. For ages 18 and up.

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FREIGHT FOR LESS

Tortoise can munch a bunch for lunch while clearing weeds

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

Wrangell's tortoise and turtle lover is looking for a few good yards for grazing this summer.

A few weeks ago, Charity Hommel posted on Facebook that she was looking for residents willing to open their yards to grazing for some of her tortoises, especially her Sulcata tortoise Atlas.

Hommel's inquiries were born out of a need to provide more food for the 3-year-old tortoise, who she rescued here in town when Atlas was less than 4 months old. Atlas already weighs 12 pounds and is a little larger than a football. "And she'll just continue to get big," she said, adding that with proper husbandry, Sulcata tortoises can live up to approximately 100 years.

Atlas eats about three pounds of grass and hay every day. "My little lawn is not very big," she said of her small, fenced-in backyard of grass. "I have a lot of moss in my yard, which they don't get any nutrients from, so dandelions, chickweed, clover, those are all good staples for these guys."

Hommel said she has already connected with residents who have suitable lawns and are willing to let her tortoise graze over the summer. "Several of my friends and locals offered lawns that they know don't have any pesticides or chemical enhancements," she added. "That way I know it's safe for my tortoise to graze."

It can take up to five years to



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Charity Hommel's Sulcata tortoise Atlas will graze in the yards of several residents this summer.

positively determine the gender of turtles and tortoises. While Hommel knows the gender of her other reptiles, Atlas is just getting to where the shell shape and other physical indicators suggest the gender as female. "I chose Atlas because it's kind of a gender-neutral name," she said.

Also known as the African spurred tortoise, the Sulcata tortoise is originally from the southern edge of the Sahara Desert in Africa. Some were brought to America in the 1960s and 1970s and have since flourished, primarily in arid locations like New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California.

However, in colder locations like Wrangell, they need extra care. "Their shells are like solar panels, so any type of light will actually help to heat them up right away, so when it gets really nice and sunny out, she'll get almost overheated if I'm not careful."

Hommel has been raising and rescuing the shelled reptiles for over 20 years since her chil-

dren returned from a friend's birthday party with two unexpected party favors — turtles Ebony and Boxer. Her tortoise and turtle pens now take up an entire wall of her living room and hold the 11 which reside in her home, including Bibbles, Vern, Albert, Zuzu Petals, Bowser, Blue, Katie and Jewels.

Also in the enclosure is a rescued gecko lizard missing a tail appropriately named Mr. Stubs.

She explained the differences between tortoises and turtles: The former are land-based herbivores with short, stubby feet, while the latter are water-based omnivores with webbed feet. "Tortoises are dry,

turtles are wet," she said with a laugh.

As tortoises and turtles can be quite territorial, Hommel is careful to keep them apart in their pens, even separating them in enclosed spaces when they're out in the backyard. "They can see each other, but they can't hurt each other," she said.

Another turtle named Fred has a spacious, well-lit tank in her office at Alaska Marine Lines.

Once Atlas grows past 50 pounds and two feet across, Hommel won't have enough space for her at home and will likely relocate her somewhere south. "I'm thinking I might have maybe another four or five years with her before I need to make a drastic move."

As many of her pets have long lifespans, Hommel's daughter, who lives in Corvallis, Oregon, is one of her options for relocating them when she becomes unable to care for them. Also, after many years of raising and rescuing reptiles, she has connections with many people across the country who work in zoos and do research on tortoises and turtles. "I have a bountiful amount of people that could help me rehome if I ever needed to."

Federal review will decide if king salmon should be listed as an endangered species

By NATHANIEL HERZ
Northern Journal

The Biden administration says that listing numerous Alaska king salmon populations under the Endangered Species Act could be warranted, and it now plans to launch a broader scientific study to follow its preliminary review.

Citing the species' diminished size at adulthood and spawning numbers below sustainable targets set by state managers, the National Marine Fisheries Service announced its initial conclusion in a 14-page federal notice on May 23.

It said a January 2024 listing request from a Washington state-based conservation group had met the legal criteria to advance the agency's examination of Gulf of Alaska king salmon populations to the next stage, which is a rigorous scientific review expected to take at least nine months.

Endangered Species Act experts said the initial hurdle is typically an easy one for advocacy groups to clear, while the second stage can take much longer — with the courts often brought in to settle disputes over delays and scientific conclusions.

"The review really starts in earnest now," said Cooper Freeman, Alaska director for the Center for Biological Diversity, a conservation group that isn't involved in the king salmon proposal but frequently petitions and litigates for protections for other species. The preliminary decision, he added, is "part of the process, but the initial finding in no way predetermines an outcome."

The listing petition was submitted by the Wild Fish Conservancy, which has previously filed Endangered Species Act lawsuits to protect other populations of Alaska and Washington salmon and steelhead.

The group's previous efforts threatened to close down the longstanding king salmon commercial troll fishery in Southeast Alaska and drew broad condemnation from fishermen, state wildlife managers and even conservation groups last year.

The decision announced May 23 is preliminary and comes with no proposed limitations on fishing or other activity.

But experts said that a final decision to list

king salmon as endangered or threatened could have broad impacts. Those could include not just restrictions on salmon fishing in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska, but also on activity in those regions that affects river habitat, like road and residential construction.

Other fisheries that accidentally scoop up Gulf of Alaska kings in their nets — a type of unintentional harvest known as bycatch — could also be in the crosshairs.

If the species is listed, "anywhere you've got human caused mortality of kings, or impacts on their habitat, will be under a microscope over time," said Eric Fjelstad, an Anchorage-based attorney who's worked on Endangered Species Act cases, typically on behalf of oil and gas and mining companies.

"This isn't like turning on a light switch. But it will happen over time, as all those management regimes come into place one by one," he said.

A formal proposal by the federal government to list the Gulf of Alaska king salmon would not come until the end of the rigorous scientific review. That process is legally required to be finished within a year of the filing of the listing petition, though it often takes longer.

As an initial step, the fisheries service said that it's opening a 60-day public comment period and soliciting information about the king salmon's status from the public, government agencies, Alaska Native groups, scientists, industry and conservation groups.

The conservancy's 67-page petition targets all king salmon populations "that enter the marine environment of the Gulf of Alaska." That includes an area stretching more than 1,000 miles, from the Alaska Peninsula to south of Ketchikan, including populations that spawn on the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island, in the Matanuska Valley, in the Copper River and across Southeast Alaska.

The petition cites "significant declines in productivity and abundance" compared to levels two or more decades ago. It blames global warming and competition with hatchery-raised fish in the ocean as the "major causes," but it also refer-

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Happy 80th, Mom!

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Ironing out all the answers in life

BY LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

A longtime friend who is just a couple of years younger than me called recently to ask some advice. I'm always flattered when someone seeks my opinion. It makes me feel wise and useful, which is more uplifting than my usual specialties of old and opinionated.

But rather than some in-depth inquiry into public policy, finances, taxes, politics or journalism, his question made me feel nostalgic, like remembering my younger life of scrubbing whitewall tires, the low-cost joy of replacing a simple key before expensive programmable fobs took over the world, and the readable pleasure of installing a new typewriter ribbon.

He asked: "What is starch?"

My friend was going to a wedding and needed to wear a dress shirt — not a common occurrence for this guy. He had taken the shirt to the laundry to get it washed and pressed and the clerk asked a question that has been around for hundreds of years: "Starch or no starch."

My friend had no idea, but guessed at no starch and then, puzzled at the question, called me to ask. I reassured him that he got it right. I probably explained way more about starched collars than he wanted or needed to know, but that was my fault. My mind works like a Google search — I just spew out what I know, without thinking that all the person needs is a simple yes or no.

I consider myself somewhat of an expert on the subject (shirts, not Google). I have been ironing my own shirts for 60 years, since high school, when I expressed dissatisfaction with my mom's ironing quality and she threw the shirt back at me and said, "Iron it yourself!" I guess you call that a teaching moment.

A couple of days after the starch question,

while I was still basking in the warm nostalgia of my first steam iron, I read a news story that stiffened — without starch — my belief that I live in another era. The Wall Street Journal cited a report that said the median age of MSNBC cable news viewers is 70. It's 69 for people who watch Fox News on cable, 67 for CNN viewers and 66 for ABC. The pre-Medicare crowd flocks to CBS, where the median age of viewers is a spry 64.

And if you think the old-age affliction is infecting only news programming, you'd be as misguided as someone who orders heavy starch for their shirts. The median age of MTV cable viewers is 51, according to data from Nielsen data researchers. The average MTV viewer is almost a decade older than the channel itself. If this keeps up, MTV should start soliciting ads for AARP and Medicare supplemental insurance to match its audience.

The data reaffirms what we already know about the preferences of younger people: Cable is the past; streaming is the future. Same as print newspapers are struggling, while social media is thriving. Talking on the phone is in decline as texting and messaging are on the rise.

Out with the old and in with the new seems irreversible.

None of this is intended to make fun of senior citizens. We're an essential part of any community. Seniors volunteer, vote and probably eat their vegetables more than younger people. It's merely a reminder that we live in a different world. Seniors have memories and years of experience, while younger people are still adding to both categories. They just do it differently than seniors. Not wrong, just different.

But until they know all the answers, feel free to call me anytime. And remember: Starch belongs on our dinner plate, not shirt collars.

EDITORIAL

School counselor needs to be in the building

It's no surprise that the applicant pool was limited when the Wrangell School District advertised for a new counselor to serve elementary, middle and high school students. It's a big job for one person to work with 260 students. That includes providing career guidance, making health and psychological referrals, helping to manage student testing and assessments, and building relationships with staff, parents and the community.

That's a lot to ask of one person, but that's the reality of the district's tight finances.

A small pool of applicants is not just a Wrangell problem. The challenge of hiring for school jobs across Alaska is similarly bleak. Several districts have been recruiting teachers from overseas to fill vacancies. At the start of the past school year, there were about 500 teacher vacancies across the state — up 20% from a year ago.

"We are struggling in the worst crisis Alaska has ever seen in terms of turnover. We can't recruit teachers," Lisa Parady, executive director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators, told legislators this past session.

After just two years on the job, the Wrangell schools counselor opted not to return for next year, adding to turnover and requiring the district to recruit for a replacement. The administration last week recommended the school board approve a contract for remote counseling services in lieu of hiring a full-time, in-person staff member.

The hiring committee determined that the contractor candidate, most recently a counselor for a homeschool correspondence program who lives in Delta Junction, southeast of Fairbanks, was the best option.

Regardless of the hiring committee's determination that Lindsay Pinkelman, who does business as Find a Way Consulting, was the most qualified applicant for the Wrangell job, an online, Zoom, phone and email counselor could never provide the same level of support and connection with students, staff and parents as someone living and working in Wrangell.

Citing those exact reasons, several parents and teachers passionately spoke at the May 20 school board meeting against a contract counselor.

While it's essential to have a new counselor on the job before classes start in August, it's just as important to get it right. The school board wisely tabled the proposed contract and will take more public comment at the June 3 board meeting.

Probably the immensity of the job, the low salary compared to other districts, the scarcity of available housing in Wrangell and other shortcomings are making it hard to recruit a counselor. But the May 20 contract proposal was giving up too much far too soon for students.

Regardless of the tight timeline before school starts, the school district needs to try harder and longer to find a good applicant for the counselor job who will live and work in Wrangell. The board should reject the contract proposal June 3.

— Wrangell Sentinel

Endangered salmon

Continued from page 3

ences growing threats from warming stream temperatures during spawning and incubation.

A table from the Wild Fish Conservancy's Endangered Species Act listing petition shows how rivers and creeks leading into the Gulf of Alaska have missed king salmon spawning goals in recent years.

The Stikine River is included in the table compiled from Alaska Department of Fish and Game statistics. The table shows the escapement goal for spawning kings to enter the Stikine River is between 14,000 and 28,000 salmon. Actual escapement 2016-2021 averaged just under 10,000 kings per year.

The fisheries service said in its notice that the conservancy's petition contains "numerous factual errors, omissions, incomplete references and unsupported assertions" — including omission of some recent data that show improved spawning

numbers.

However, the agency said the petition nonetheless had enough information "for a reasonable person to conclude that the petitioned action may be warranted."

Alaska fish and wildlife managers have aggressively challenged other proposed Endangered Species Act listings in the state, and they have previously expressed skepticism about the conservancy's king salmon petition.

Fjelstad has personally witnessed the species' steep population declines and said he thinks political "agitation" about it is merited. But he described the Endangered Species Act listing as a blunt instrument that would ignore economic considerations and "fundamentally shift oversight and management" of king salmon to the federal government from the state.

The problem, he added, is that the drivers of the species'

decline appear to be so varied — from fishing pressure to climate change to hatchery competition to bycatch — "you can't look at any one of these and say we've got a silver bullet here."

This article was originally published in the Northern Journal, a newsletter from Alaska journalist Nathaniel Herz.

Fourth royalty candidates

Continued from page 1

in their names for donations. They are also currently working on donation lists, sponsorship letters, menus, events and gathering volunteers, which Josh Young said can make or break the event.

Kimberley Szczałko, chamber treasurer, said both candidates plan to sell raffle tickets and set up food booths downtown.

Young, whose family owns J&W, is planning to sell some dinners and late-night food out of the restaurant in addition to her downtown booth where she will sell lunches.

Raffle tickets will sell for \$1 each, and per

state gaming regulations no tickets will be given in exchange for donations or volunteer hours.

First prize for the raffle is \$2,500, second is \$1,500 and third prize is \$1,000. The winning raffle tickets will be drawn on July 4.

The candidate with the highest gross revenue will win the royalty competition.

Any candidate who raises over \$50,000 will receive a bonus totaling 30% of their net profits. In years past, bonuses have been based solely on ticket sales.

Both Young and Armstrong are planning to put their earnings toward college.

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Southeast fisherman pleads guilty for ordering crew to shoot whale

BY JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

A Southeast Alaska fisherman has agreed to plead guilty to a federal misdemeanor after admitting that he directed a crew member to shoot a sperm whale northwest of Sitka in March 2020.

According to federal court filings, Dugan Daniels, 54, also tried to ram the whale with his fishing boat, the Pacific Bounty.

The whale died, according to the court filing.

In addition, Daniels agreed to plead guilty to a felony for lying about a sablefish catch in fall 2020, according to the text of the plea deal.

The charges and the plea deal were filed by federal prosecutors earlier this month and were first reported by Court Watch, a newsletter that monitors federal legal filings nationwide.

Under the terms of the agreement covering all the charges, Daniels will pay a \$25,000 fine and be sentenced to no more than six months in prison, with the exact term to be set by a judge.

He also will perform 80 hours of community service, and if he owns, operates or manages a commercial fishing boat in the future, it must be monitored by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Daniels is a board member of the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, which oversees fish hatcheries in southern Southeast. He had been appointed to the board to fill a vacancy, and had been serving since January.

In testimony about Southeast king salmon harvests before the Alaska Board of Fisheries in March, Daniels listed his hometown as Coffman Cove.

Reagan Zimmerman, spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's office in Alaska, said the office is "unaware of any prior criminal case involv-

ing the taking of a sperm whale in the District of Alaska, so this is a first of its kind case."

The case was investigated by the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, she said. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is the parent agency of the National Marine Fisheries Service.

According to the plea deal, Daniels recounted his encounter with the whale, "specifically, his crew shooting the sperm whale, his efforts to ram the whale with the vessel and coming within five feet of doing so, and his desire to kill the sperm whale," in text messages to multiple people.

The incident occurred in the Gulf of Alaska about 30 miles west of Yakobi Island, near Pelican, according to court filings in the case.

Sperm whales can be more than 50 feet long. They've been listed as an endangered species since 1970. Decades ago, sperm whales learned to pluck commercial fishermen's catch from their gear, gaining an easy meal but costing fishermen a day's work and ruining gear.

The plea deal explains the sablefish charge: Daniels falsified fisheries records so that it appeared his boat caught more than 12,000 pounds of sablefish — also called black cod — in federal waters. In reality, federal prosecutors said, he caught the fish in state waters of Clarence Strait and Chatham Strait, where the fishery is tightly regulated to only permit holders. Daniels did not have a harvest permit.

Court records show Daniels is scheduled to appear in court at Juneau on June 6 to be arraigned and formally enter his guilty plea.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com. The Anchorage Daily News contributed to this report.

WCA tests find elevated toxin levels in shellfish at City Park, Shoemaker

BY BECCA CLARK
Sentinel reporter

Wrangell Cooperative Association's most recent test for paralytic shellfish toxins in blue mussels at two sites in town showed unhealthy levels.

"Paralytic shellfish toxins (PST) levels are above the FDA regulatory limit. ... PSTs cause paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), and eating wild shellfish from these sites may increase the risk of PSP," WCA published in a report May 17 after tests from shellfish at City Park and Shoemaker helipad came back with elevated levels of toxins.

The toxins are caused by Alexandrium, a type of phytoplankton. When Alexandrium multiply quickly,

or bloom, the shellfish that feed on the plankton can become contaminated. Cooking or freezing contaminated shellfish does not make them safe to eat.

According to Southeast Alaska Tribal Ocean Research, the toxins can temporarily paralyze a person, even causing death in serious cases by making it impossible to breathe. Early symptoms include numbness and tingling in the lips and fingertips.

Symptoms can develop either immediately or several hours after consuming contaminated shellfish. With medical care, patients with PSP can recover fully in hours or days.

WCA typically collects blue

mussels for testing every two weeks, said Kim Wickman, WCA Earth Branch tech. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska conducts the testing and it usually takes about a week to get results back.

Since the most recent test showed elevated levels of toxins, WCA will test weekly until they have three tests in a row with safe levels. They will then collect butter clams and cockles for testing as well, as those species tend to hold on to toxins longer, Wickman said. Butter clams can hold PST toxins for two to four years, she added.

The phytoplankton blooms that cause the toxins typically last about a week, but can be unpredictable, Wickman said, adding that although they usually occur during warmer months, they can happen any time of year.

To ensure safe consumption of shellfish, Wickman said individuals should collect shellfish from City Park or the Shoemaker helipad, the same sites WCA tests, around the same time WCA collects. Individuals should process and freeze the shellfish and wait to eat any until tests come back clear. If the tests come back with elevated levels, Wickman said people should dispose of the shellfish.

Individuals can also contact WCA to arrange for testing of their shellfish.



PHOTO COURTESY U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Work on the new staircase and lower viewing platform at the Anan Wildlife Observatory is scheduled for completion this week. The upper deck was rebuilt in 2022.

Forest Service will raise Anan fees starting next year

BY BECCA CLARK
Sentinel reporter

The U.S. Forest Service is preparing for another busy season at Anan Wildlife Observatory, one of the biggest visitor attractions around, just 30 miles south of town.

This summer, the daily fee to visit the bear observatory during the permit-only season of prime bear watching July 5 through Aug. 25 will remain at \$10.

Starting in 2025, however, the fee will increase \$10 per year, raising next summer's fee to \$20 per day. The fee will increase every year until it reaches \$50 in 2028. The increased fee will go toward maintenance and improvement at the observatory, like the new viewing platform under construction this month.

Throughout the viewing season, the observatory gets more than 3,000 visitors through guided and unguided tours. It is limited to 60 daily visitors on guided tours, with a dozen daily slots set aside for unguided visitors who get there on their own.

This summer, Anan will see six new guide operators including Seawind Aviation and Rytful Adventures out of Ketchikan, Adventure Alaska Southeast of Thorne Bay, Kruger Sea Corp. of Washington state and Alaska Legacy Charters and Chrome Chasers from Wrangell. They will join the longstanding Wrangell operators that provide transportation and tours at the site.

It will be a new learning experience this summer and there might be some growing pains, said Tory Houser, Wrangell district ranger. But new tour operators means diversifying Anan's business, she said.

Houser is looking forward to this summer at Anan, though she added that everything depends on the weather, fish and berries.

The bears may take a little while to get accustomed to their new environment, she said. A new viewing platform is being installed and should be complete by May 30.

Rainforest Contractors is installing the new platform and also the new Anan Bay cabin, which will hopefully be completed by the end of June, Houser said. If it's not complete by the peak bear-viewing season, construction of the new cabin will be finished after the season, so as not to disturb wildlife.

A wind-fallen tree destroyed the old cabin in an early 2023 storm.

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PHOTO BY TOMMY WELLS

Honoring those who served

Steve Murphy was among the veterans who placed flags at the city cemetery on Sunday, May 26, in preparation for Memorial Day on Monday. The national observance in honor of U.S. military personnel who died in service dates back to 1868.

Multiple summer activities for children start next week

By BECCA CLARK
Sentinel reporter

The Nolan Center, Irene Ingle Public Library and Parks and Recreation have teamed up to keep kids entertained this summer.

Starting June 3 and running through Aug. 16, there will be morning and afternoon activities Monday through Friday like open swim, open gym, art classes, movies, Forest Explorers and reading activities.

Parks and Recreation will host open swim at the pool from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Open gym will be held at the community center Monday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Regular drop-in rates will apply at the pool and community center.

At the library, there will be summer reading program help available Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Kids can also attend a craft and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) session at the library Thursday afternoons from 1:30 until 3 p.m. Both activities at the library will be free of charge.

The Nolan Center will show a different movie at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday afternoons. The movies will be announced every week on the community Facebook page and posted around town, and will be shown free of charge. The concession stand will be open.

Claire Froelich, interpretation and conservation education specialist with the U.S. Forest Service, will host Forest Explorers at Volunteer Park Tuesday mornings from 10:30 a.m. until noon.

Participants should register ahead of time on the Parks and Recreation website; the cost of the program is \$50 for the summer.

Forest Explorers will include a wide range of outdoor activities including berry harvesting, natural clay processing, outdoor survival skills, leave-no-trace principles, local ecology, animal tracks and beach exploring. Froelich said a lot of the activities will focus on creating ornaments for the Tongass National Forest Christmas tree that will be displayed at the U.S. Capitol this year.

Froelich said she tries to focus on activities that are accessible for everyone, adding that Wrangell has very rich natural resources to utilize. She also has a background in nutrition and food systems and hopes to combine that knowledge with foraging to create some recipes with kids.

Reading with a Ranger Thursday mornings at the library will also be hosted by Froelich, where she will read, lead crafts and bring animal hides to display.

To finish off the week, Tawny Crowley will teach an art class Friday mornings from 10:30 a.m. until noon June 7-28, with another class July 5-26, at the community center multipurpose room. Registration for the class is available on the Parks and Recreation website, and costs \$50 for the month.

The summer activities are open to kids of all ages, but children 6 years old or younger should be accompanied by a guardian who is at least 14 years old. Advance registration is only required for Forest Explorers and the art class.



city of wrangell

summer weekly schedule

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri
10:30am-12pm open gym @ community center	10:30am-12pm forest explorers @ volunteer park <small>registration required at www.wrangellrec.com</small>	10:30am-12pm summer reading program help @ library	10:30am-12pm read with a ranger @ library <small>Begins June 13th</small>	10:30am-12pm art class @ community center <small>registration required at www.wrangellrec.com</small>
1:30pm-3pm open swim @ pool	1:30pm-3pm movie @ nolan center	1:30pm-3pm open swim @ pool	1:30pm-3pm craft/stem @ library	1:30pm-3pm open swim @ pool

June 3 - August 16

children 6 and under must be accompanied by a guardian 14 years or older

Loan program could help residents who want to build on subdivision lots

BY LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

It'll be early fall before the borough offers for sale 20 lots at the new Alder Top Village (Keishan-gita.'aan) residential subdivision upland from Shoemaker Bay, but residents interested in buying and building a home on the property can start lining up financing.

In addition to conventional lenders such as banks, credit unions and the Alaska Housing Finance Corp., Haa Yaḱaawu Financial Corp., which works with the Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority, offers a couple of different home loan programs, including one with below-market interest rates for qualifying borrowers.

Haa Yaḱaawu has made about 120 loans around Southeast and is looking to grow, said Shaun Guthrie, manager of the Juneau-based operation.

"We serve the hard to serve," he said. "We're not here to make a buck. We're here to put money back in the community."

For people looking to buy one of the subdivision lots to build a new home, Haa Yaḱaawu can provide financing that allows 18 months for construction from loan approval to project completion, Guthrie said. They require detailed building plans, a budget and an appraisal, the same as a similar home loan.

The lender added new construction financing to its portfolio last year.

Both of its loan programs have income limits. Households earning no more than the area's median income — \$114,000 for Wrangell — can borrow money at a fixed rate, Guthrie said, which was at 6% a week ago, about a full percentage point below the market rate charged to borrowers who exceed the income limit.

The reduced-rate offering under a U.S. De-

partment of Agriculture program is limited to Alaska Natives and American Indians, he said.

For households earning less than 80% of the area's median income — a \$79,600 limit in Wrangell, Guthrie said — Haa Yaḱaawu can offer loans as low as 4%. "That's where we get creative with the interest rates."

That program is open only to Alaska Natives and American Indians.

Other advantages of the lower-rate program include no down payment required, no mortgage insurance required to cover the debt (property insurance is required), and Haa Yaḱaawu can be flexible in structuring a deferred loan on top of a conventional long-term loan, allowing borrowers to stretch out their payments.

The lender limits its loans to owner-occupied residences; no rental properties allowed. It does not finance undeveloped land, but the land costs can be included in the financing for new construction, he said.

The 20 subdivision lots likely will go on sale in September or October, Kate Thomas, the borough's economic development director, said May 24.

Roadwork at the site has been completed but the borough wants to wait until water, sewer and electrical services are installed before allowing prospective buyers to walk the lots in advance of the sale, she said.

The borough plans to sell 10 lots to the highest bidders in an online auction, while selling the other 10 lots by lottery.

The 10 front lots that will go on sale by auction will start at between \$53,000 and \$70,000 each. The 10 back-row lottery parcels will be sold at a fixed price of between \$45,000 and \$60,000 each.

State travel fundraising

Continued from page 1

the state travel fund deficit is around \$34,000 — the gap left after collecting a \$400 travel fee from each participating student.

Wrangell sent athletes to several state championships this past school year, including girls volleyball, boys basketball, wrestling and cross country.

Thus far, the club has raised over \$12,000 and expects \$10,000 from two other contributors before June 30, the end of the district's fiscal year, but Johnson stressed the group is under no obligation to cover the entire deficit, as their work is strictly voluntary.

He said he felt confident the club would eventually raise more money, based on verbal commitments of some substantial donations, "but they're not going to come in by this deadline."

Schools Superintendent Bill Burr said the district will keep the negative account balance on the books so that the club can eventually catch up. "They'll pay at the level that they can," he said, adding that whatever the club cannot pay this year will roll over into the next one.

The club, which came together last fall, raises money for school sports and activities at the state level. "The school (district) does all the booking," Johnson said, "They get a major discount from hotels and Alaska Airlines because they're a school."

Much of their focus has been on large corporate donors. "It's a little harder to get (donations) in the beginning of the year from companies that are just getting going," he said. "We're just laying off of the smaller, local businesses. ... We've made a conscious decision to try to target the big guys first, see where we stand and then (determine) what more needs to be done after that."

He added the club wants to be able to eventually raise enough money so that the district could cut the annual travel fee to \$200 per student. "\$400 is too much for families that have three kids that may qualify for three sports a year," Johnson said. "That could be pretty expensive."

Young Alaskans sue to block proposed natural gas pipeline project

BY JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

A group of young Alaskans, backed by a nonprofit legal firm, is suing the state of Alaska and the state-owned Alaska Gasline Development Corp. in an attempt to block construction of the corporation's long-planned but economically questionable North Slope natural gas pipeline.

In a complaint filed May 22 in Anchorage Superior Court, the eight plaintiffs argue that the corporation's founding laws are unconstitutional because the gas pipeline would result in so much climate-alter-

ing greenhouse gas that it would endanger their constitutionally guaranteed ability to access Alaska's fish, wildlife and other natural resources.

The plaintiffs, who range in age from 11 to 22, are supported by Our Children's Trust, an out-of-state nonprofit that has supported climate-related lawsuits in state and federal courts across the country.

Two years ago, the Alaska Supreme Court ruled against plaintiffs in a broader but similar lawsuit supported by the group. That suit, filed by 16 youth, argued that the state's policy on fossil fuels violates

their constitutional rights. Some of the plaintiffs in that case are parties to the new one.

The decision in the prior case was 3-2 against the plaintiffs, and two of the judges who ruled in favor of the state have since retired.

Last year, the Montana Supreme Court ruled in favor of youth plaintiffs in a similar lawsuit filed in that state.

In the new Alaska lawsuit, plaintiffs contend that the Alaska Constitution contains an implicit right to a livable climate. That issue was raised as a hypothetical in 2022 by the two Alaska Supreme Court jus-

tices who dissented from the prior climate lawsuit.

"The right to a climate system that sustains human life, liberty and dignity is both necessary for and foundational to the explicitly enumerated rights reserved by the Alaska Constitution," the lawsuit says in part. "Without a climate system that sustains human life, liberty and dignity, Youth Plaintiffs cannot grow to adulthood in safety, live long healthy lives, provide for their basic human needs, safely raise families, learn and practice their religious and spiritual beliefs."

"AGDC is directed by Alaska statute to commercialize North Slope natural gas because of the substantial environmental, economic and energy security benefits it unlocks for our state," Tim Fitzpatrick, a spokesperson for the corporation, said by email.

"On its face, we can see that it is an attempt to block the development of Alaska's natural gas reserves based on a purported environmental safety rationale. It is a misguided effort," Attorney General Treg Taylor wrote in an email.

"We are confident that the courts will uphold the Alaska Legislature's laws providing for the development of an LNG project in Alaska."

The lawsuit arrives at a key moment for the proposed \$40-billion-plus gas pipeline project. State legislators have become increasingly skeptical of AGDC's plans for a large pipeline that ends in an export terminal, and a plan to defund AGDC was narrowly defeated in this year's state budget process.

AGDC now appears to be pivoting toward a plan that would involve construction of a smaller \$10-billion-plus gas pipeline for in-state use, with a larger pipeline and export terminal to come later.

Either idea would be dependent upon the availability of construction funding, and to date, neither the state nor any private-sector funders have said they are willing to pay for construction.

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Full U.S. embargo on Russian seafood now in effect

BY JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

A full-fledged embargo of Russia-sourced seafood took effect in the United States on May 22, with importers prohibited from buying Russian products, even if they were processed in another country.

The next day, a delegation of Alaska businessmen and local government officials, all with ties to the fishing industry, met with Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and other federal officials in an attempt to expand that boycott internationally.

"Russia is the No. 1 problem when it comes to our fishing industry," said Alaska Sen. Dan Sullivan, who coordinated the visit. "Right now, the Russians have essentially admitted they're not just at war in Ukraine, they're at war with the American fishing industry."

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian economy — and by extension its war effort — has benefitted from a huge surge in seafood exports.

In 2022, the U.S. started sanctioning Russian seafood, but products sent from Russia to another country for processing were exempted until President Joe Biden

issued an executive order in December. It took months more for federal agencies to fully implement that order.

But despite the American ban, Russian seafood exports globally appear to be surging. The European Union has taken little action to stop Russian imports, and even countries that have restricted direct imports, like Canada, haven't gone as far as the United States.

With Russia selling vast amounts of seafood cheaply, Alaska fishermen are suffering. Extraordinarily low prices, coupled with rising labor and supply costs, are hammering the industry. The low prices are largely, but not entirely, due to the glut of Russian seafood.

Luke Fanning, CEO of the Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association, participated in the May 23 meeting and spoke to reporters afterward, as did other participants.

He said the Pribilofs and the Aleutians have seen five fish processing plants close in the past four years. That has ripple effects throughout the region.

Mayor Vince Tutiakoff of Unalaska, another attendee, said his community is looking at a loss of \$3 million in tax revenue

in the next 12 months due to reduced fishing.

The town, America's largest fishing port by volume, is in the middle of a costly dredging project and is now consolidating schools because there are fewer children in town.

Alvin Osterback, mayor of the Aleutians East Borough, said raw fish taxes pay for local services across his region, and right now, "we're down more than 60% of our revenues."

"This is really a huge problem for the communities. We do not have other forms of work or factories or anything else we can go to. We are 100% fishing communities," he said.

The Alaska visitors, with the support of the state's delegation in Congress, want the federal government to pressure American allies to join a stronger seafood embargo.

Limiting the market for Russian seafood would eliminate competition for Alaska fishermen, driving up prices and alleviating some of the problem.

But convincing international fish buyers to switch away from Russian fish may not be easy.

Among the participants in the meeting was Trident Seafoods CEO Joe Bundrant, who has advocated stronger embargos for years.

Meanwhile, Trident itself hasn't been able to avoid buying Russian fish.

Earlier this year, its European subsidiary Pickenpack Seafoods said it would resume buying Russian pollock after stopping for more than a year amid a company-wide push.

When asked by Northern Journal reporter Nat Herz about those purchases, Bundrant said that in some cases, Russian pollock is being sold at \$1,000 per ton below cost.

"Our mission every day is to wake up and drive value from Alaska seafood, and it pains me greatly to make that decision. But until there's some support from G7 countries, it's an economic necessity for survival," he said, referring to the forum of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.S. and U.K., plus the European Union.

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Lawmakers leave fiscal plan, other issues for another year

BY JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

Though legislators passed dozens of bills during the two-year legislative session that ended May 15, they left behind multiple big issues for future consideration.

Lawmakers were not able to finalize any part of a plan intended to bring the state's revenue in line with expenses over the long term.

In 2022, a bicameral, bipartisan working group recommended changes to the Permanent Fund dividend formula, an effective state spending cap, new taxes and constitutional changes to guarantee the dividend and limit spending from the Permanent Fund.

While the state Senate passed a new formula for the Permanent Fund dividend in 2023, the House did not take up the Senate bill.

The Senate's proposed for-

mula would have split the annual transfer from the Permanent Fund to the state treasury 75%/25%, with the larger share paying for public services and 25% for dividends. The formula could have changed to a 50/50 split if lawmakers enacted substantial new taxes or other revenue measures.

While legislators approved a 75/25 split in 2023 and 2024, they did so as a budget item, which is good only for the one year, not as a new formula in law.

The House failed to pass a proposed constitutional amendment guaranteeing the Permanent Fund dividend, and no new major taxes or spending cap proposals received a final vote in the House or Senate.

The House and Senate also failed to pass a bill or constitutional amendment addressing the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp.'s concern that the fund may run out of spendable money

within a few years, but the state budget contains a measure that reduces the amount of Permanent Fund earnings that will be transferred into a constitutionally protected account, effectively buying more time to address the issue.

Though the fund's total value as of April 30 financials stood at \$78.5 billion, about 87% of the money is counted as principal and cannot be spent without a constitutional amendment.

The state Senate voted to revive a pension program for state, municipal and school district employees, part of an effort to attract workers to vacant public service jobs, but the House declined to take up the bill.

Back in March, lawmakers passed a multipart education bill with bipartisan support, but Gov. Mike Dunleavy vetoed it and House Republicans declined to vote in favor of a veto override despite supporting the original

bill.

The bill would have permanently increased the state's per-student funding formula, among other components. A one-time increase in funding for K-12 education was included in the state budget.

Republican members of the House prioritized a bill that would have banned transgender girls from girls sports teams, but as expected, the Senate declined to take up the bill before the legislative session adjourned.

Elements of the bill, which limits membership on girls school sports teams to students who were female at birth, have already been passed into regulation by the state school board. The Alaska School Activities Association has been enforcing that regulation since last year.

There are no transgender girls openly competing in school sports within Alaska.

Six days before the Legislature adjourned, the House voted to cut the state's tax on marijuana and switch it from a wholesale, per-ounce tax to a sales tax paid at the retail level.

Alaska's marijuana tax, set during the 2014 ballot measure that legalized recreational marijuana in the state, is the highest in the nation, and industry officials have asked for tax relief, saying that current tax rates are driving growers out of business and contributing to the survival

of black-market sellers.

After the Senate balked at the House's original bill, House lawmakers added the marijuana tax changes to an anti-smoking, anti-vaping bill written by Senate President Gary Stevens. The Senate declined to take up the combined bill. Stevens said he killed the bill because the Senate hadn't had the time to consider the marijuana tax issue.

After the state Senate passed a bill removing some public notices from Alaska newspapers' print editions, the state House failed to take a final vote on the bill, causing it to fail.

Anchorage Rep. Stanley Wright proposed a bill restricting interest rates on payday loans, and while the bill passed the House, the Senate Finance Committee failed to hear it in committee, and it died when the Legislature adjourned.

Anchorage Sen. Forrest Dunbar had several bills die at adjournment, but "the one that really bothers me" was the failure of a bill that would have given more funding for the Alaska Legal Services Corp., which provides legal help to low-income Alaskans dealing with issues in civil court. The bill passed the Senate but not the House.

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Alaska lawmakers approve phase-out of 'forever chemicals' firefighting foams

BY YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

For the second time in two years, the Alaska Legislature has passed a bill requiring a phase-out of firefighting foams with contaminants called "forever chemicals."

The chemicals, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances that are commonly known as PFAS, have become notorious for their persistence and widespread presence in the environment.

Known for their resistance to flames and degradation, PFAS chemicals — which number in the thousands — have been used since the 1950s in a wide variety of products, from consumer goods like clothing and cookware to industrial materials like paints, sealants and drilling fluids.

The chemicals have spread over time into soils, waterways, drinking water supplies and people's bodies. The chemicals have been linked to developmental delays in children, reproductive problems in adults, increased cancer risks, weakened immune systems and other health problems.

Firefighting foams, the subject of the bill passed by the legislature this month, Senate Bill 67, are the most common source of PFAS pollution in Alaska

and in other U.S. states.

The bill requires a switch to PFAS-free foams by the start of 2025. It also authorizes a program to remove PFAS firefighting foams from villages with fewer than 2,000 people.

A bill last year that included similar provisions was vetoed by Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

Preventing more PFAS pollution, which has already proved costly to address, is the bill's goal, said the sponsor, said Juneau Sen. Jesse Kiehl.

Numerous villages around the state in the past received special "Code Red" kits: portable firefighting units that included PFAS foams. Most of those kits are no longer operable, but the foams in them remain a hazard, Kiehl said.

There is firefighting foam containing PFAS stored at the Wrangell airport, Shannon McCarthy, Department of Transportation spokesperson, said in a May 23 email. It's there "because we are still required by federal law" to have a backup supply for refill of the firefighting truck at the airport, she explained.

"We do not discharge (the foam) for any reason

Continued on page 9



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Wrangell Behavioral Health – 333 Church St

opioids.alaska.gov




Cancer-prevention measures win legislative approval

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

Alaska bar patrons will see new signs warning about the link between alcohol and cancer, and women at elevated risk for breast cancer will no longer have to pay extra money for more detailed examinations that go beyond routine mammograms, if bills passed by the Legislature are signed by the governor.

Both measures were proposed initially in stand-alone legislation but wound up combined with related bills that passed late in the session and now await the governor's decision.

The proposal for signs warning about the alcohol-cancer link was originally in a bill sponsored by Anchorage Rep. Andrew Gray. It was later bundled with a different alcohol-related measure, House Bill 189, that would allow workers between the ages of 18 and 21 to serve alcohol.

That underlying bill, sponsored by Wasilla Rep. Jesse Sumner, was seen as important to restaurants and other businesses coping with a labor shortage.

Gray, a physician assistant, introduced his bill to raise public awareness about how alcohol consumption increases cancer risks. While surveys show that public awareness of the connection is low, cancer experts say alcohol consumption ranks near the top of modifiable cancer-causing behaviors and conditions, along with the better-known factors of tobacco use and obesity.

Legislative approval of the alcohol-cancer signs was approved narrowly.

Gray's legislation was crafted so that only one new sign would be required at each establishment.

The House passed the amendment inserting it into Sumner's underlying bill on May 6 by the narrowest of margins, 21-19.

Sumner's bill was important to the business community, Gray said, even if that community "may not have been very amenable to my bill," which might cause people to buy less alcohol.

"In a way, this was probably the only vehicle to get this legislation across the finish line," he said.

Gray, on the day after the session ended, praised and thanked Sumner.

"There are certain brave people who are willing to think for themselves, regardless of how the party may view their actions. So I think Jesse Sumner is a conservative politician, but he is absolutely willing to be independent from the party. And that's what I needed. Because this is not partisan policy; this is just good health policy," he said.

As with the alcohol-cancer signage proposal, there had been a standalone bill concerning diagnostic breast examinations.

That measure, House Bill 285, was introduced by Anchorage Rep. Zack Fields, after he and others were contacted about the issue by the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

As introduced by Fields, the bill aimed to bar private insurers from requiring patients to chip in for the costs for diagnostic mammograms, which are often required after routine mammograms show trouble spots, or other advanced examination technology such as magnetic resonance imaging, known as MRI, or ultrasounds.

It is estimated that 15% of women are at high enough risk for breast cancer that they need the more advanced screenings, Fields said. Ultrasounds are also sometimes used to detect breast cancer in men.

That bill wound up being folded into a different health-insurance measure, Senate Bill 134, that concerned insurance data privacy.

While routine mammograms are fully covered by insurers, a requirement under the Affordable Care Act, the more detailed diagnostic examinations can be costly to patients. Often, the costs of copayment for such screening can be seen as prohibitive, discouraging many patients from getting them, according to Fields.

A study published in 2019 by the Susan G. Komen Foundation found that nationally, the median out-of-pocket costs range from \$234 for a diagnostic breast mammogram to more than \$1,000 for an MRI.

With passage of Senate Bill 134, Alaska joins the majority of U.S. states that have enacted or are considering legislation barring private insurers from charging co-payment fees for diagnostic breast examinations.

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Alaska lawmakers support federal investigation into Native boarding schools

By CLAIRE STREMPLE
Alaska Beacon

Alaska lawmakers have overwhelmingly voted to support a federal proposal that would investigate and document the forced assimilation of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian children in government-funded boarding schools.

The legislative resolution acknowledges the trauma Indian boarding schools inflicted on Indigenous communities in Alaska and across the country, said the bill's sponsor, Bethel Rep. CJ McCormick.

There were more than 100 government-funded, church-run Alaska Native boarding schools in Alaska from the late 1800s through the 1960s, according to research presented by his office and the Alaska Native Heritage Center. They separated young children from their families and forcibly immersed them in Euro-American traditions and the English language.

McCormick said the legacy of abuse and intergenerational trauma continues to haunt Alaskans and requires acknowledgement.

"I think a lot of my colleagues were honestly kind of taken aback by the extent of these atrocities," he said and described how research and testimony changed their minds.

The Senate unanimously approved the resolution and it had overwhelming support in the House. Wasilla Rep. David Eastman was the lone vote against it.

The resolution puts Alaska lawmakers in support of a U.S. Senate bill that would direct a federal commission to gather evidence of assimilation practices and human rights violations in the nation's boarding schools for Indigenous children. Alaska Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski has led the bipartisan effort, which had 32 cosponsors as of earlier this month.

Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, a staff member who worked on the bill for McCormick's office, shared that her grandfather and most of the elders in her family attended the Aleknagik Mission School in Southwest Alaska, where she is from. She noted that the buildings and memories are present, but largely unacknowledged in official records.

"This is a phenomenon I've known about my whole life. And I can just look across the lake and look at the Mission School," Chythlook-Sifsof said.

While first-person accounts of boarding school abuses are becoming more common, official documentation is scarce.

Rosita Worl, president of Sealaska Heritage Institute and a community leader in Southeast, shared the story of how she was taken from her home in Petersburg and taken to an orphanage and Alaska Native boarding school in Haines, without the knowledge of her family members. She said she was ridiculed for speaking Tlingit instead of English and tearfully confirmed that sexual abuse took

place there.

"Another memory that haunts me is seeing girls who are almost comatose. They would walk without ever talking or smiling. They would walk like zombies. I often wondered what happened to them, for one day I would see them and then the next day I wouldn't," she said.

Worl recalled being rented out by the Haines House for various jobs as an underage, unpaid laborer. She said on good days her grandparents would "rent" her and take her berry picking instead of forcing her to work.

Walkie Charles, now the director of the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, recounted being stripped of his name and reidentified by a number at Wrangell Institute where he was taken for boarding school.

"The kids in the generation before me were so beat up that upon their return home to their communities, they either couldn't speak their heart language anymore, or refused to, because they were ashamed enough to choose the language of our oppressors," he said.

Charles now teaches Yup'ik, the language the boarding school tried to erase.

Even as the resolution moved through the legislative process, researchers found documentation that reinforces the memories of boarding school survivors.

Alaska Native Heritage Center Indigenous Researcher Benjamin Jacuk offered lawmakers a history of Alaska Native boarding schools in the state, and evidence of abuses that took place in them. He said Alaska was "ground zero" for national boarding school policies.

"There is not one Alaskan Native alive today who has not been directly or indirectly affected by this history," he said. "It still walks with us."

He found evidence of the unpaid labor Worl recounted in previous testimony. "We actually found contracts, which they would have parents — who at the time did not know English — sign, that are labeled as 'indentured servanthood children,' from infants to 14 years old," he said. "Making the conversation not only about assimilation, but also for all intents and purposes, slavery."

Jacuk said that revealing the darker truths of abuse within the state's boarding schools is essential to moving forward.

"In order to understand what healing even looks like, we first need to know the truth," he said.

"And when we understand the truth, and we're able to actually tell it, it brings healing to not only the people that are here today, or even the next generation, but also that to bring healing to the stories of those who came before us who are never able to tell their story."

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Forever chemicals

Continued from page 8

other than an emergency situation such as an aircraft fire. We are working on a statewide plan to convert our trucks to a non-PFAS containing firefighting foam," McCarthy said.

The governor vetoed last year's legislation, citing concerns about the state burden of removing PFAS foams from communities. This time around, Kiehl said, instead of having the state conduct the actual PFAS collection from rural villages and dispose of it, the state will reimburse rural communities for the costs, Kiehl said.

The statewide cost of the is estimated at \$2.55 million.

Dunleavy has not yet taken a

position on this year's legislation, said a spokesperson.

Contamination of drinking water has been a concern nationally. The Environmental Protection Agency in April made final the nation's first enforceable limits on six types of PFAS compounds.

Within Alaska, there are nearly 500 sites that the state Department of Environmental Conservation has identified as being contaminated with PFAS compounds. They range geographically from the old airstrip near it on the northern outskirts of Utqiagvik to the Ketchikan airport to Shemya Island, site of a former U.S. Air Force station, near the western tip of the Aleutians.

Airports have been common sources of PFAS pollution, as their firefighting units were required by the federal government to use PFAS-containing fire-suppression foams.

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 that was signed into law on May 23 by President Joe Biden includes establishment of a \$350 million fund to reimburse airports across the nation for costs of replacing PFAS-using firefighting equipment. The fund will also pay for disposal of PFAS chemicals.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com. The Sentinel contributed to this story.

Alaska legislation would eliminate co-pay for birth control

By **CLAIRE STREMPLE**
Alaska Beacon

Lawmakers have sent to the governor legislation that would increase insurance coverage for birth control.

A large bipartisan majority of the Senate approved the measure on May 9. Alaskans may access up to 12 months of contraceptives at a time and without a co-pay from pharmacies in the state if Gov. Mike Dunleavy signs the bill into law.

The House approved Senate amendments to the bill on May 10.

House Bill 17 requires health insurance companies to cover contraceptives without a co-payment and to retroactively cover existing prescriptions

when Alaskans sign up for new insurance coverage.

Current law limits Alaskans to 90 days of birth control, which is a barrier to access, said the bill's sponsor, Fairbanks Rep. Ashley Carrick.

Anchorage Sen. Löki Tobin carried the bill in the Senate and said the change is important because many Alaskans cannot readily access pharmacies when they need to refill their prescriptions for birth control.

"We have folks who go off on fishing boats, who spend time on the North Slope, who are in communities that don't have consistent mail access. Additionally, we have folks who go off to fish camp in the summer and may need their partic-

ular contraception for medical needs and necessity," Tobin said.

The bill exempts some religious employers, and lawmak-

ers removed all references to emergency contraception that were in the original bill.

Tobin said other lawmakers have pushed for similar legisla-

tion since 2016.

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Police report

Monday, May 20

Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to stop at stop sign.

Reckless driving.

Agency assist: Harbor Department.

Reckless driving.

Civil paper service.

Civil paper service.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for faulty equipment.

Tuesday, May 21

Dog complaint.

Dog complaint.

Wednesday, May 22

Threats.

Lost firearm.

Traffic stop.

Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance.

Thursday, May 23

Citizen assist: Vehicle unlock.

Traffic stop.

Domestic violence order service.

Friday, May 24

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for speed.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for four-wheeler title requirements.

Warrant arrest: Violation of conditions of release.

Trespass.

Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance; verbal warning for expired registration.

Bar check.

Saturday, May 25

Intoxicated person.

Motor vehicle accident.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits.

Sunday, May 26

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving in violation of provisional license.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits.

There were three agency assists for the Hoonah Police Department and three ambulance requests.

Crossword

Answers on page 12

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
14				15					16					
17				18					19					
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71						72						73		

CLUES ACROSS

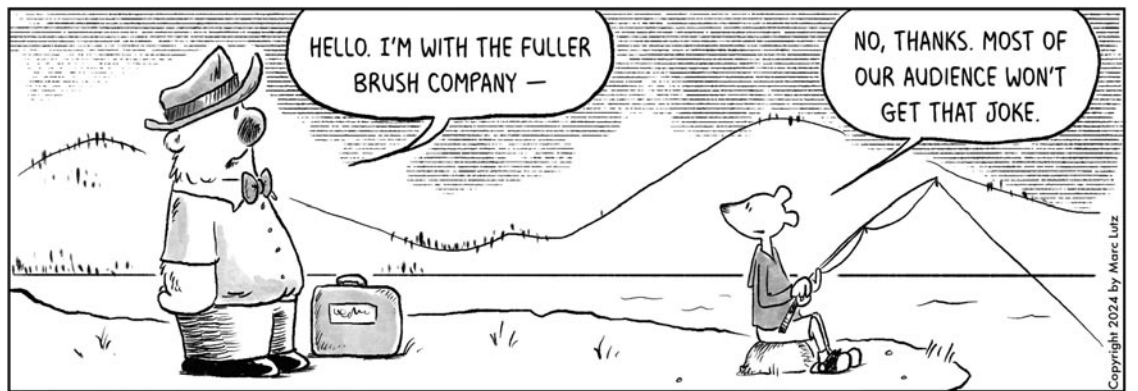
- 1 Opposite of neither
- 5 Protect
- 10 "Four and twenty blackbirds baked in ---"
- 14 On the ocean
- 15 Publish
- 16 Route
- 17 Via
- 18 Serviced
- 20 Cotton Club setting
- 22 Jamboree
- 23 Up
- 25 Intelligence agency
- 26 Not traded on a stock exchange
- 28 Top guns
- 30 Ethnic
- 35 In favor
- 36 Adeptness
- 38 State animal of Maine
- 39 The Sultan of Swat
- 41 Talent seeker
- 43 Shuttle operator
- 44 Behaved
- 46 Wished
- 48 Beat
- 49 Accidental dive
- 51 Feeble
- 52 Some foreign Government heads
- 53 Except
- 55 Comic --- Martin
- 57 Light metal
- 62 Knuckleheads
- 65 Suspension
- 67 Duration
- 68 First to die in the Bible
- 69 Untrue
- 70 Egyptian dancing girl
- 71 Dabbling duck
- 72 Absquatulates
- 73 Drip slowly

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Tub
- 2 Workplace regulation agency
- 3 Unglazed brownish-red earthenware
- 4 Pulls
- 5 Ingenious sales devices
- 6 World's largest economy
- 7 Expression of incredulity
- 8 Scrap
- 9 Despise
- 10 Parched
- 11 Small lake
- 12 U N nuclear watchdog
- 13 Swirl
- 19 Warning signal
- 21 Touchdown forecasts
- 24 German state
- 26 O founder
- 27 Temporary peace
- 29 Single-masted sailboat
- 31 Electrically charged particle
- 32 Maritime refugees
- 33 Tea-growing Indian state
- 34 Inclines
- 37 Southern hemisphere constellation
- 40 "He'd make a lovely corpse" (Dickens: "Martin Chuzzlewit")
- 42 1,000%
- 45 Kind of card
- 47 Artificially-colored
- 50 Went on the lam
- 54 Like Mayberry
- 56 Travel stamps
- 57 "I --- my wit's end"
- 58 Projecting part of the brain
- 59 Common fertilizer ingredient
- 60 Shopping center
- 61 Height of Denver
- 63 Dull
- 64 Sudden
- 66 Employ

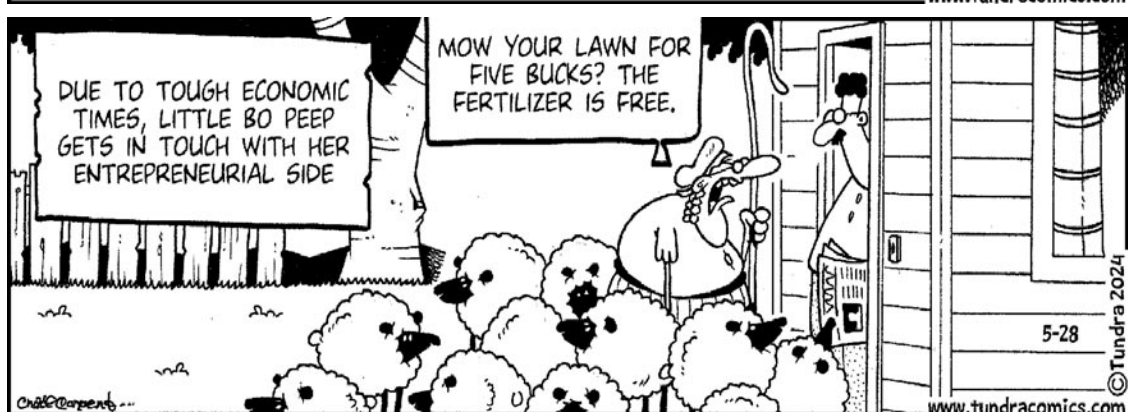
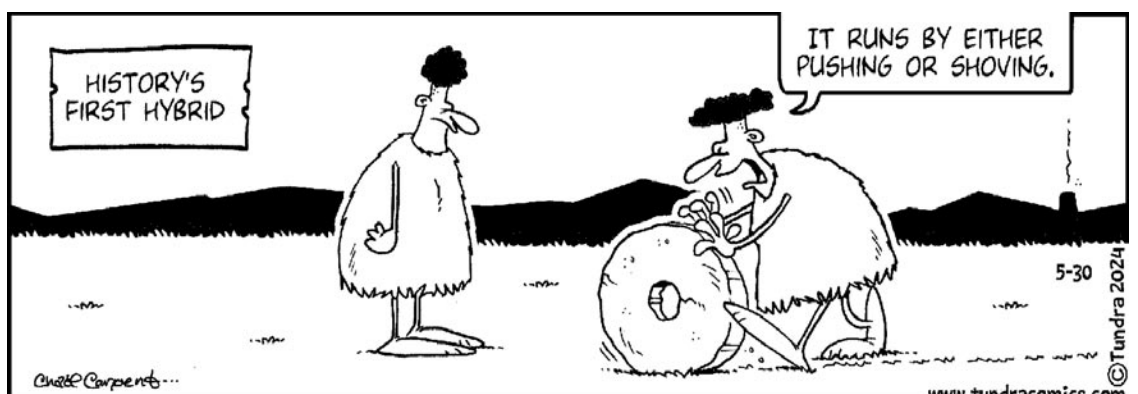
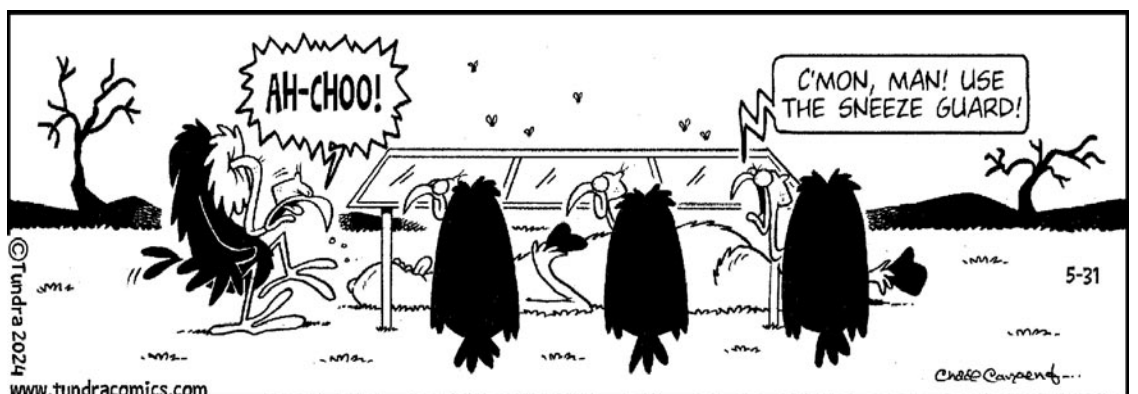
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Legislature approves support for missing and murdered Indigenous cases

By CLAIRE STREMPLE
Alaska Beacon

State lawmakers have added protections to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people in Alaska, a move celebrated by activists who have devoted years to a campaign for equity.

Senate Bill 151 passed with a combined 57-1 vote earlier this month.

Under the new law, the state must employ two full-time, dedicated investigators to pursue cold cases and must include cultural training in police officer training. It also establishes a

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Review Commission and requires that state public safety officials consult with tribes for a statewide needs assessment.

Charlene Aqqik Apok, director of Data for Indigenous Justice, a nonprofit database that tracks missing and murdered Indigenous people in Alaska, remembers when it was hard to get lawmakers to agree to a meeting about the issue of violence against Alaska Native people, let alone influence policy. So when the Alaska Senate passed legislation aimed at doing just that, Apok felt the significance when their 9-year-old son said, "Oh my god, you're about to pass a law!"

"It's almost unbelievable and I feel a range of emotions. It's such a huge thing to be celebrated," Apok said. "It also is just

a starting point, we have so much more to do. But I'm so excited to celebrate it. And I'm ready to see what else we can get done."

Apok lost close family members to violence — mother, auntie and cousin — which makes the work personal. They said it was important to see so much Indigenous-led collaboration.

Golovin Sen. Donny Olson, who is Inupiaq, proposed the legislation to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people that affects communities across the state. Coincidentally, he and Apok are from the same village of fewer than 200 people.

Joel Jackson, president of the Organized Village of Kake, was one of the testifiers in support

of the bill. He said the move is a long time coming. "Our Indigenous communities have been long overlooked for too long," he said. "It's time to be treated equally."

Jackson was among advocates who came to the Capitol to advocate for changes intended to make law enforcement and justice equitable for Alaska Native communities.

Public Safety Commissioner James Cockrell advocated for the legislation, and he said lawmakers should be proud of the direction the state is going in regard to making sure Alaska Native people have equal access to justice. He said the state has struggled with the issue for years and he is pleased by the commitment in law to support

a council to address it.

The bill takes effect next January, but Cockrell said his department already has most of its new requirements in place. Cockrell currently has four MMIP investigators on staff, double what the new law requires, and is planning how to structure research for the report that will be due in a few years.

"I think my ultimate goal is that, whatever we set forth, that it will outlast me — and the next commissioner will have to continue the progress so it won't go away," he said of the new regulations.

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New state task force would look at rules for psychedelic medicines

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

The Alaska Legislature passed a couple of bills aimed at improving health care services. The measures are now headed to Gov. Mike Dunleavy for his consideration.

House Bill 228 would set up a state task force to recommend regulations for use of psychedelic medicines that the federal government is expected to approve soon. The first of those medicines expected to be approved, called MDMA, is considered useful for treating post-traumatic stress disorder. Approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is anticipated within months.

Anchorage Sen. Forrest Dunbar, who carried the bill on the Senate side, pointed out that it does not legalize or take any position on psychedelic medicines.

"Instead, it creates a task force designed to prepare Alaska and our regulatory framework should the FDA approve the medical use of these substances, which some folks are anticipating could happen as early as August this year," he said.

Alaska is well-positioned to benefit from psychedelic therapies, Dunbar said. Among all U.S. states, Alaska has the highest percentage of military veterans, some of whom have suffered post-traumatic stress, he said. Alaska also has high rates of suicide and large numbers of residents who have endured domestic violence and other traumatic events that lead to mental health prob-

lems, he said.

Psychedelic-assisted therapy "can help some of those people. Not everyone, but some. And that means everything in the world," he said.

The Senate passed the bill by an 18-1 vote. The House passed the bill by a 36-4 vote.

A second health bill approved by lawmakers would allow nurses with lapsed state licenses to be granted temporary state permits valid for up to six months.

Such temporary permits are already granted to nurses who are applying for their initial state licenses, lawmakers pointed out. Giving the same opportunity to nurses who previously had licenses will help encourage some to return more quickly to service in Alaska from retirement or other breaks, they said.

The measure, House Bill 237, is a technical fix to "a problem that we should have addressed a long time ago," said Wasilla Sen. David Wilson, who carried the bill on the Senate side, where it was approved unanimously.

Granting a temporary license to those seeking reinstatement of lapsed licenses poses no more risk to the public than does the current temporary licensing of first-time applicants, he said in floor comments.

The bill is one way the state can address its nursing shortage, Wilson added.

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CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING FINANCE DEPARTMENT Borough Controller

The City and Borough of Wrangell is recruiting a Borough Controller to join the Borough's Finance Department. Applications will be accepted beginning Thursday, May 16, 2024, through Friday, June 19, 2024. If there are no applicants hired for the Borough Controller position during this time frame, the Borough will consider the position open until filled.

The Controller is a senior management position that is responsible for exercising direction and control over Borough accounting and financial reporting functions. This includes implementing and monitoring internal controls over financial reporting and compliance and working with the Finance Director to disseminate accurate and timely financial information to users. The Borough Controller will also perform a full range of complex management, accounting, technical, administrative, supervisory and financial duties and provide overall planning, coordination and accountability for large complex projects. Additionally, the Borough Controller will work with the Finance Director to integrate accounting operations, systems and controls that prevent, detect and/or correct the underlying accounting for business transactions.

The position typically requires a bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, business administration or a closely related field and eight years of experience in accounting systems and operations, treasury, financial reporting or audits, including three years in a leadership capacity. Experience in governmental accounting is preferred. An active CPA or CMA certificate and/or a master's degree in business administration may substitute for some experience.

This is a full-time, salary grade position with full benefits, paid at Grade 30 ranging from \$6,873.92 to \$8,683.18 per month. The full job description and employment application can be found online at www.wrangell.com/jobs. This position will require a successful pre-employment background check and drug screening.

To be considered, submit a cover letter, résumé, and completed employment application via email to rmarshall@wrangell.com, or in person to City Hall, 205 Brueger St., Wrangell, AK 99929.

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

Publish May 22, 29, June 5 and 12, 2024

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HELP WANTED

Wrangell Cooperative Association Transportation (WCAT) is seeking two road/trail maintenance laborers. Complete job descriptions and applications are available outside the Wrangell Cooperative Association office at 1002 Zimovia Highway. Positions are open until filled. Contact Lizzy Romane at 907-874-3077 with any questions.

HELP WANTED

Johnson's Building Supply is accepting applications for the following positions:

Customer Service: Duties include counter sales, freight handling, customer deliveries, stocking and inventory. Full-time position; will require working Saturdays. Valid Alaska driver's license, must be able

to lift 50 lbs., forklift experience a plus, starting pay is DOE. Stop by Johnson's for an application.

HELP WANTED

Wrangell Public Schools is accepting applications for the following positions for the 2024-2025 school year:

- Baseball Assistant Coach
- Middle School Boys Basketball Assistant Coach
- Elementary Student
- Council Adviser
- Middle School Student Council Adviser
- Freshmen Class Adviser
- Elementary Drama Adviser

For more information and a job description, please contact the District Office at 907-874-2347. Positions are open until filled. It is Wrangell Public School District's policy to not discriminate based on age, race,

color, national origin, sex or disability.

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Canoe journey

Continued from page 1

along the way. They will join the rest of the canoes departing from Wrangell near Read Island, north of Petersburg, said Ken Hoyt, one of the organizers of Wrangell's canoe family.

The Kasaan crew arrived in town May 25 after paddling from Coffman Cove in three cedar dugout canoes after weather forced them to alter their original departure.

Wrangell pullers are paddling a 39-foot canoe provided by SEARHC that arrived in town from Sitka on May 21, along with paddles, dry bags and other gear.

A diverse group of paddlers are working together to make their way to Juneau — Native and non-Native, with various levels of experience in canoes and on water. But the journey is structured in a way that allows anyone to join — a support boat will accompany the canoe and provide navigation and a ride in case of rough weather or if anyone needs rest.

Though the journey will last



PHOTO COURTESY VALERIE MASSIE

Community members worked together to get a 39-foot canoe provided by SEARHC out of its shipping container and into the water May 21. The 1,000-pound canoe traveled to Wrangell from Sitka by barge and will be used for the journey to Juneau for Celebration.

a week, Wrangell paddlers and community members have been preparing for months.

Paddlers have been meeting a couple times a week to practice and get in shape for the

upcoming journey, learning paddling techniques and how to keep their strokes in sync.

Equipment like tents, sleeping bags and rain gear was collected and borrowed from around town to help keep paddlers relatively dry and comfortable in all types of Southeast weather.

Community members also rallied together to contribute and cook traditional foods and help with the potluck hosted for paddlers at the Nolan Center on May 28.

Parks and Recreation opened the doors at the community center to provide a place for paddlers from other communities to sleep and shower.

A GoFundMe raised over \$1,400 for the journey from Wrangell to cover things like food and fuel for the support boat.

Even though the entire community can't join pullers in the canoe, the journey would be impossible without the help of friends, family and community members, said Hoyt.

Virtual counseling

Continued from page 1

emotional support is more critical than ever. No matter how skilled a virtual counselor, it cannot replace the empathy and understanding that comes from face-to-face interaction.

Winston Davies said he felt "blindsided" by the proposed contract when teachers were informed at a staff meeting on May 13.

"There was no input from the staff. ... We would have had a heads-up had there been a teacher on the hiring committee, which is not a practice anymore," he said, adding that there was a teacher on the hiring committee when he was hired 16 years ago, and he sat on similar committees over the years. "We've gotten away from that somehow, and I'm not sure why."

Wrangell's past in-person counselor also taught classes, and Laura Davies expressed concerns as a parent how a change to remote counseling could put other classes at risk.

"I know the school board has a really hard choice in what to do to get a counselor, but I'm advocating for having a human body in the building," she said.

With her young daughter perched on her hip, Howe expanded on how an in-person counselor generally takes on additional duties integral to the functioning of the schools.

"At the high school level alone," she said, that includes helping students who want to apply to college, organizing the annual award ceremony, "and making connections with the community to provide exposure to career opportunities for our students."

That work will fall onto other staff members, she said.

Howe and Winston Davies both commented on the \$70,000 contract amount. "A teacher with 10 years of experience earns \$69,545 in our district," Howe said. "While it is acknowledged that the contractor would not receive benefits, this discrepancy

still raises concerns."

"It took me a long time to reach that amount," Winston Davies said.

Angerman described the current practice of having a counselor on site as "vital" to advise on academic matters. "This requires a deep understanding of our students, teachers and families," she said. "Knowledge that a virtual counselor, unfamiliar with our community, cannot possess."

Howe also felt that the duties and goals as laid out in the contract weren't clearly specified. Student meetings weren't explicitly listed as part of the duties listed in the contract. "This omission is concerning, as direct contact with students is fundamental in effective counseling."

Also, the counselor would be able to set their own work hours, which Howe said could hinder their ability to engage with students and staff.

When school board president Dave Wilson opened the discussion to board members, John DeRuyter, a clinical psychologist, said: "I've worked with families and children for 25 years, and never did any distance work or video counseling until COVID," he said. "The quality of care, just because of the dynamics of it ... significantly decreased."

DeRuyter added that while remote counseling may provide a level of convenience, "there's a huge number of problems that come with it, that compromise the ability to do good care," adding that one of a school counselor's primary goals is to support the mental health of students to maximize their academic performance. "From that perspective, I simply can't support a distance school counselor."

After hearing the perspectives of the teachers and DeRuyter, the board voted unanimously to table any action on the contract

until the next school board meeting.

To accommodate a quorum, the school board meeting originally scheduled for June 17 has been rescheduled for Monday,

June 3, in Evergreen Elementary School Room 101, beginning at 7 p.m. A public hearing to collect input on the virtual counseling contract will precede the meeting starting at 6:30 p.m.

PUZZLE SOLUTION

P	E	S	E	S	E	L	F	A	L	E	T	A	L	E	P
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N	S	P	A	N	M	U	R	O	T	A	R	A	M	O	R
S	T	O	I	D	I	M	U	N	I	M	U	L	A	L	A
E	V	E	S	T	S	R	A	B	A	R	B	A	R	B	A
S	M	P	Y	N	P	R	E	A	D	E	H	A	E	H	A
N	A	T	D	E	P	O	H	D	E	T	C	T	C	A	A
A	S	A	N	U	O	C	S	O	T	H	R	U	R	U	A
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A	S	N	A	S	N	I	T	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A
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E	A	P	A	R	D	G	U	A	H	O	T	H	O	T	E

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