



Wrangell, Alaska  
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# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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## Borough eyes price cut for former hospital property

By CAROLEINE JAMES  
Sentinel reporter

The borough assembly is moving toward lowering the asking price for the former Wrangell hospital by almost half and hiring a real estate agent to sell the property.

The assembly at its Nov. 22 meeting accepted an ordinance to reduce the asking price and set a public hearing on the ordinance for Dec. 20, at which time members could vote on the proposal.

The Bennet Street lot has been vacant since the South-East Alaska Regional Health Consortium's new medical center opened in February 2021. The borough has been looking actively - and unsuccessfully - for a buyer for about seven months.

After attracting no offers during a 30-day bidding period last June, the borough listed the property on a surplus website at the direction of the assembly, which preferred the method over Borough Manager Jeff Good's recommendation that it enlist the assistance of a real estate agent.

The website is used by government agencies across the nation to sell old police cars, school buses, office equipment and real estate. The borough had sold the former National Guard armory for \$110,000 using this method, but it has not seen similar success in its attempt to sell the hospital property on the website.

Letting the property sit vacant is a costly endeavor. Heating, insuring and maintaining the building costs the municipality \$8,000 per month - nearly \$100,000 yearly. And as long as the property is borough-owned, it does not generate tax revenue.

The building's original price tag was \$830,000, encompassing the full appraised value of the land and structure. Since hazardous materials including asbestos are in the 50-year-old building's roofing, tiles, wall-board and fire-rated doors, demolition would be costly. The property "very likely has a negative value," said borough Economic Development Committee member Jacob Hale at an Oct. 19 meeting. "It costs more to fix than it's actually valued at."

The new asking price up for assembly consideration is \$470,000, which is the appraised value of the land only. The borough may entertain

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## A harrowing ordeal

Point Baker resident survives 24 hours on rock after skiff sinks; Arne Dahl missing and presumed dead

By CAROLEINE JAMES  
Sentinel reporter

After a boating accident near Point Baker last week, former Wrangell resident Kelsey Leak spent 24 hours on West Rock before being rescued by a fishing boat. Her boyfriend, 27-year-old Arne Dahl has not been found and is presumed dead.

The morning of Nov. 27 was bright and clear. Leak and Dahl set out from their Point Baker homestead at 11 a.m. to collect firewood aboard Dahl's wooden fishing vessel, the Randi Jo. The pair had been living off-grid at Point Baker, where Dahl was raised, since October, when Leak left her job as a physical therapist at Wrangell Medical Center to join him.

Leak brought her golden retriever, Mili, and her pet Caique parrot, Petrie, along for the ride. After purchasing Petrie from a bird store in Oklahoma seven years ago, Leak and her bird were rarely apart. She named the parrot after "Panicky Petrie," the anxiety-ridden pterandon from Universal's "The Land Before Time" series. Unlike her namesake, Petrie was an outgoing, sociable creature, who liked to make nests



PHOTO COURTESY KAREN LEAK

Kelsey Leak and Arne Dahl moved to Point Baker earlier this fall from Wrangell. Leak was rescued the day after a Nov. 27 boating accident near Point Baker, but searchers were unable to locate Dahl.

out of strangers' hair and observe the world from the comfort of Leak's shirt pocket.

After finishing their errand, Leak, Dahl and their pets headed home around 2 p.m. Leak ate a burrito she had packed for the trip and curled up to take a nap. "I was full and happy and we were just cruising," she said.

The next thing she knew, she was slammed face-first onto the deck. "I busted my nose and my lip," she said. "I was bleeding everywhere."

When Dahl came over to comfort her, she asked him what had happened. He explained that the boat had hit the reef, but everything would

probably be fine. "He was kind of nonchalant about it," Leak recalled.

However, Dahl's confidence left him when the engine wouldn't turn over. "We lifted up the (hatch) and it was already knee-deep in water down there," she said. The couple decided to evacuate to the skiff that they were towing behind the Randi Jo. Leak brought Millie and a bag of survival gear onto the skiff while Petrie rode on her jacket. She and Dahl ran the skiff to the front of the boat and saw a massive gash in the wooden vessel. The collision "split the bow," Leak said.

Before pulling away, Dahl

decided to return to the Randi Jo to get some paperwork - "all of his receipts and everything," she recalled. While he was inside, Leak pulled the skiff up alongside the Randi Jo, but it got stuck under the lip of the larger boat's railing. "(The skiff) started taking on water before Arne could get back on," she said. "It just sank right underneath us."

Leak, Dahl the survival gear and the couple's entire livelihood were submerged under the cold water. Leak abandoned the raincoat where Petrie had been perched because it was

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## Wrangell's attempt to net state volleyball title spiked in third match

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

An incredible run of wins took the Wrangell High School girls volleyball team all the way to the state championship playoffs at Palmer High School last Thursday and Friday.

Even with their signature ability to come back from losses and overcome the competition to win matches, it wasn't enough for the Lady Wolves, whose bid for the state title ended after three hard-fought games.

### Wrangell versus Dillingham

Play started Thursday morning with Wrangell facing the Dillingham High School Wolverines. Early on, it was evident the kind of competition Wrangell

would face the rest of the tournament. Dillingham started outpacing Wrangell, despite Wrangell's cohesive play and good communication. No matter what Wrangell served up, Dillingham's defense was able to return it. The first set ended 25-21, with Dillingham the victor.

The second set had both teams trading point for point until disarray in the Dillingham squad gave Wrangell the confidence to surge ahead. The Lady Wolves showed what made them Southeast regional champs, landing a series of points to lead by 10 points. They eventually clenched the win, 25-12.

Wrangell's win in the second set was enough to motivate Dillingham in the third set. The Wolverines scored first and began moving slowly ahead. The Lady

Wolves had to work hard to slowly come from behind, eventually getting close, but it wasn't quite enough as Dillingham won the set 25-18.

"We've had that problem all year," head coach Alyssa Allen told the Ketchikan Daily News. "We jump out to a lead and then let off the gas."

That loss in turn motivated Wrangell to start off the fourth set focused and powerful to take the lead. Even though they kept a decent lead, Wrangell had to work hard and put up a solid defense to keep ahead. Aubrey Wynne slammed the ball for point 24 in the final moments, and it was an out-of-bounds hit from Dillingham that gave Wrangell the win, 25-19.

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## WCA member households eligible for \$2,000 in pandemic aid funds

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Tribal members of the Wrangell Cooperative Association are eligible to receive funding from another round of COVID-19 federal pandemic relief under the American Rescue Plan Act.

The WCA is accepting applications through Dec. 16 to distribute \$2,000 per member household to help with things like fuel, groceries and utilities. "Wrangell Cooperative As-

sociation realized this can be a tough time of year for people and wanted to offer some assistance to our tribal citizens," said Esther Reese, WCA tribal administrator.

"All WCA members must fill out a form certifying there have been no changes to their household information" since the last relief aid distribution, the WCA said in its information sheet.

Once an application is approved, members can choose \$2,000 in assistance in any combination of \$1,000 in fuel

assistance from Petro Marine for household heating or boat fuel; \$1,000 in fuel assistance (\$500 each at L&M and Alpine gas stations) for vehicle and boat fuel; \$1,000 in utility assistance; and \$1,000 in grocery assistance (\$500 each at Wrangell IGA or City Market).

Or households can choose to receive the \$2,000 in a single category. Members must reside in Wrangell to receive the assistance.

"These distributions are household-based, so a few members may live in the same

household and fall under one application," said Alex Angerman, CARES Act coordinator for WCA.

Applications can be obtained by emailing Angerman at carescoord.wca@gmail.com, visiting the WCA website at wcatribes.org, or picking one up at the porch of the WCA office from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, at 1002 Zimovia Highway (across from Alpine Mini Mart). Applications

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## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

- Wednesday, Dec. 7:** Mercedes Angerman Sr., Twyla Nore; Anniversary: Bill and Marlene Messmer.
- Thursday, Dec. 8:** None.
- Friday, Dec. 9:** Tammie Kirschner.
- Saturday, Dec. 10:** Sara Aleksieva, Hermine Gruner, Tarren Legg-Privett.
- Sunday, Dec. 11:** Tammi Meissner, Rob Rooney.
- Monday, Dec. 12:** Lana Johnson, Katie Ann M. Neyman.
- Tuesday, Dec. 13:** Adrian Kohrt; Anniversaries: Randy and Toni Marie Oliver, Steve and Beverly Angerman.
- Wednesday, Dec. 14:** Bill Messmer, Matt Wilsie.

## Senior Center Menu

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

### Thursday, Dec. 8

New England clam chowder, Danish salad, half a ham and tomato sandwich

### Friday, Dec. 9

Ground beef and Spanish rice, brussels sprouts, carrot raisin salad

### Monday, Dec. 12

Beef vegetable soup, fruit salad, half a cheese sandwich

### Tuesday, Dec. 13

Chinese fruited pork oriental, veggies, cucumber and onion salad, steamed rice

### Wednesday, Dec. 14

Flaky turkey pot pie, broccoli, pineapple with cottage cheese, roll

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

## Ferry Schedule

### Northbound

- Saturday, Dec. 10**  
Kennicott, 8:30 a.m.
- Friday, Dec. 16**  
Kennicott, 4:45 p.m.
- Friday, Dec. 23**  
Kennicott, 8:45 p.m.
- Friday, Dec. 30**  
Kennicott, 4:45 p.m.

### Southbound

- Friday, Dec. 9**  
Kennicott, 4:45 p.m.
- Monday, Dec. 12**  
Kennicott, 5 a.m.
- Monday, Dec. 19**  
Kennicott, 9 a.m.
- Monday, Dec. 26**  
Kennicott, 8:15 a.m.

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

## Tides

	High Tides		Low Tides	
	AM	PM	AM	PM
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Dec. 8	00:57	14.7	12:34	17.2
Dec. 9	01:36	14.4	01:07	16.7
Dec. 10	02:13	14.0	01:40	16.1
Dec. 11	02:50	13.5	02:13	15.4
Dec. 12	03:27	13.1	02:48	14.6
Dec. 13	04:08	12.7	03:27	13.7
Dec. 14	04:54	12.5	04:15	12.8

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**SCHOOL CONCERT** by middle and high school students will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday in the high school gym.

**SALVATION ARMY** Christmas food baskets and Angel tree sign-up is open and runs through Friday. Sign up at the Salvation Army. Distribution day is Dec. 16. Call 907-874-3753 for more information.

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

**WRANGELL COMMUNITY CHORALE** Christmas concert is at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Nolan Center.

**PIZZAS FOR PAWS** will have Zak's turning out pizzas for the benefit of St. Frances Animal Rescue. Four varieties will be available Saturday, at \$20 a pizza. Pizzas can be picked up from 5 to 7 p.m. at the downtown pavilion and from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the Nolan Center Holiday Market.

**SANTA and MRS. CLAUS** will be at the downtown pavilion during Midnight Madness from 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday, with a break during the tree-lighting ceremony. Kids will still be able to say hello, get their pictures taken and receive a treat. Kids can put a letter in the mailbox at the event to be mailed to the North Pole.

**NOLAN CENTER THEATER** is showing retro movie "A Christmas Story," a 1983 film rated PG, at 4 p.m. Sunday; the comedy family film runs one hour and 33 minutes. Free. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. No movie on Friday or Saturday.

**WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD** will hold a work session to discuss the strategic plan review at 6:30 p.m. Monday in Evergreen Elementary School, Room 101. Although a quorum of the board may be present, no formal action will be taken.

**WCA MEMBERS** can apply for a winter 2022 COVID assistance distribution. Applications must be submitted by Dec. 16; late applications will not be accepted. To receive an application, email carescoord.wca@gmail.com, visit wcatrue.org, or applications can be picked up on the porch at the WCA office 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

**CHRISTMAS TREE LANE** bidding for tabletop trees, large trees and holiday table runners closes at 5 p.m. on Dec. 16 at the Nolan Center, so that winners can take their items home for the holidays. Each entry goes up for a silent auction bid. Half the proceeds go to treemaker and the other half to Hospice of Wrangell (Harriet's Helpers). For more information, call Alice Rooney 907-305-0007.

**AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** will be held Dec. 17. Contact Bonnie Demerjian if you are knowledgeable about birds or would like to be paired with someone who is to participate in this important survey. Feeder watchers are also needed. Contact Bonnie at 907-796-9632 or bonniede@aptalaska.net.

**COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DINNER** will be held at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 18 at the Nolan Center. Everyone is invited; no charge. Bring your favorite side dish and enjoy moose roast prepared by Jake Harris, of the Stikine Inn. There will be an auction, with the proceeds going to the Nolan Center.

**PARKS and RECREATION** is offering high-intensity interval training and cardio classes from 9 to 10 a.m. on Saturdays during the month of December, led by Lucy Robinson. Rally for a challenging, body weight workout that will fire up your heart rate and improve your Saturday. Movements can be modified to fit your fitness level. Bring a water bottle and towel. \$5 fee, waiver and gym shoes are required. Call 907-874-2444 or visit the website www.wrangellrec.com for more information.

**SWIMMING POOL** is closed for maintenance; reopening Jan. 9, pending no setbacks. The weight room and cardio equipment will be open for continued use, although there will be one week where the entire facility is closed while carpet cleaning. The locker rooms will be off-limits when the tile floors are being grouted. For more information visit www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

**FREE HOME, HEALTH, FOOD PRESENTATION CLASSES** presented by Wrangell Cooperative Association, University of Alaska Fairbanks and RurAL CAP. Register by emailing igapcoord.wca@gmail.com or call 907-874-4304, extension 103.

**Friday:** Drop off your pressure canner gauge for testing from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; testing and question-and-answer session from 2 to 3:30 p.m.; smoking fish demonstration from noon to 1:30 p.m.; make Christmas ornaments from 2 to 4 p.m.; at the carving shed.

**Friday:** Family workshop on making wild pickles; learn to make refrigerator pickles from your wild vegetable harvest from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Stikine Middle School kitchen.

**Saturday:** Home food preservation: pickling, dehydrating, canning (fruit, veggies, meat and fish from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for Part 1 of the class, and 2 to 7 p.m. for Part 2, at the Stikine Middle School kitchen.

**Sunday:** Home skills workshops (natural cleaning, energy efficiency, etc.) from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the carving shed.

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

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

### Dec. 7, 1922

A local business change took place Tuesday when F.E. Gingrass retired from the Wrangell Machine Shop, having sold his interest to W.R. Nevill. Mr. Gingrass had been with the business for the past 11 years. In April, 1920, Bert Harvie, of Petersburg,

became a partner in the business and since that time the business has been conducted under the name Gingrass & Harvie. The style of the new firm will be Harvie & Nevill. Mr. Nevill came north last February to visit his father and brother, and liked the country so well that he decided to locate here. He is a machinist of wide experience. He is a young man of energy and push, and will be a valuable asset to the community.

Hosea Sarber and the Petersburg Shrimp King, Earl Ohmer, who is also chairman of the Alaska Game Commission. (At the banquet Mr. Ohmer will eat Wrangell shrimp.) The dinner is an annual occasion when Wrangell's sportsmen get a chance to "razz" federal game officials - and no one has gone away irate yet. It is an evening of traditional fun and good food.

### Dec. 8, 1972

Starting today, Wrangellites will be able to obtain up-to-the minute weather reports by dialing 3232. This service is being provided by the National Weather Service in cooperation with General Telephone. Information on weather conditions and weather forecasts for the Wrangell and Petersburg areas and marine forecasts for inside waters will be available. A spokesman for the National Weather Service said these reports will be revised twice daily, at approximately 7:45 a.m. and 4 p.m.

## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Dec. 7	8:08a	3:12p	07:04h
Dec. 8	8:10a	3:12p	07:02h
Dec. 9	8:11a	3:12p	07:00h
Dec. 10	8:12a	3:11p	06:58h
Dec. 11	8:14a	3:11p	06:57h
Dec. 12	8:15a	3:11p	06:56h
Dec. 13	8:16a	3:11p	06:54h

### Dec. 5, 1947

The seventh annual game dinner of the Stikine Sportsmen's Association will be held tomorrow night at the Red Men Hall beginning at 6:30 p.m. The dinner is scheduled to start with Toastmaster F.G. Hanford introducing the guests, followed by a welcome by Stikine Sportsmen's Club President Lee Ellis. Mr. Ellis donated the venison, which will be served barbecued for the dinner. From Petersburg are due Wildlife Agent

# Senior repairs the bears from all the wear and tear

By MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Cassady Cowan had a grand plan for her senior project to bring some vibrancy to Wrangell.

Although her original plan didn't float, her backup plan bears repeating.

When Cowan, 17, was trying to figure out her high school project, her focus was on the killer whale mural on the retaining wall facing the water behind the Stikine Inn.

"I was going to make it brighter and make it look newer," she said about the mural. Ultimately, "it would cost too much (because of) the cracked paint. The temperature was not right, and the weather wasn't playing out."

Cowan began thinking about a new project. She was working as a server assistant at the Stikine Restaurant at the time. During her shift, BearFest organizer Sylvia Etefagh was having dinner and asked her if she would like to take on the task of repainting the bear statues that are placed around town from late spring until early fall.

Over the years, the bears have become weathered and faded, chipped and damaged. Although Cowan can't repair the damaged bears, she can repaint the others. All the statues of standing and sitting bears and bear cubs are made of fiberglass.

"So far, I painted the three little sport bears: Wrestling, basketball and volleyball," Cowan said. "I touched up the SEARHC bear (dressed in a Tlingit robe and holding a paddle), and I did the BearFest 2010 bear. Those are the ones I received and finished."

With four of the bears finished, Cowan has turned her attention to writing her proposal and finishing her presentation, which includes time-lapse video of her doing the work on the bears. However, she said, as other bears are brought in, she will continue to work on them. Senior projects require a minimum of 20 hours of work, but Cowan estimates she's put in 50-plus hours on the bears so far.

"On certain ones, I'm touching up (the paint)," she said. "On others, I'm painting the whole thing. On the 2010 bear,

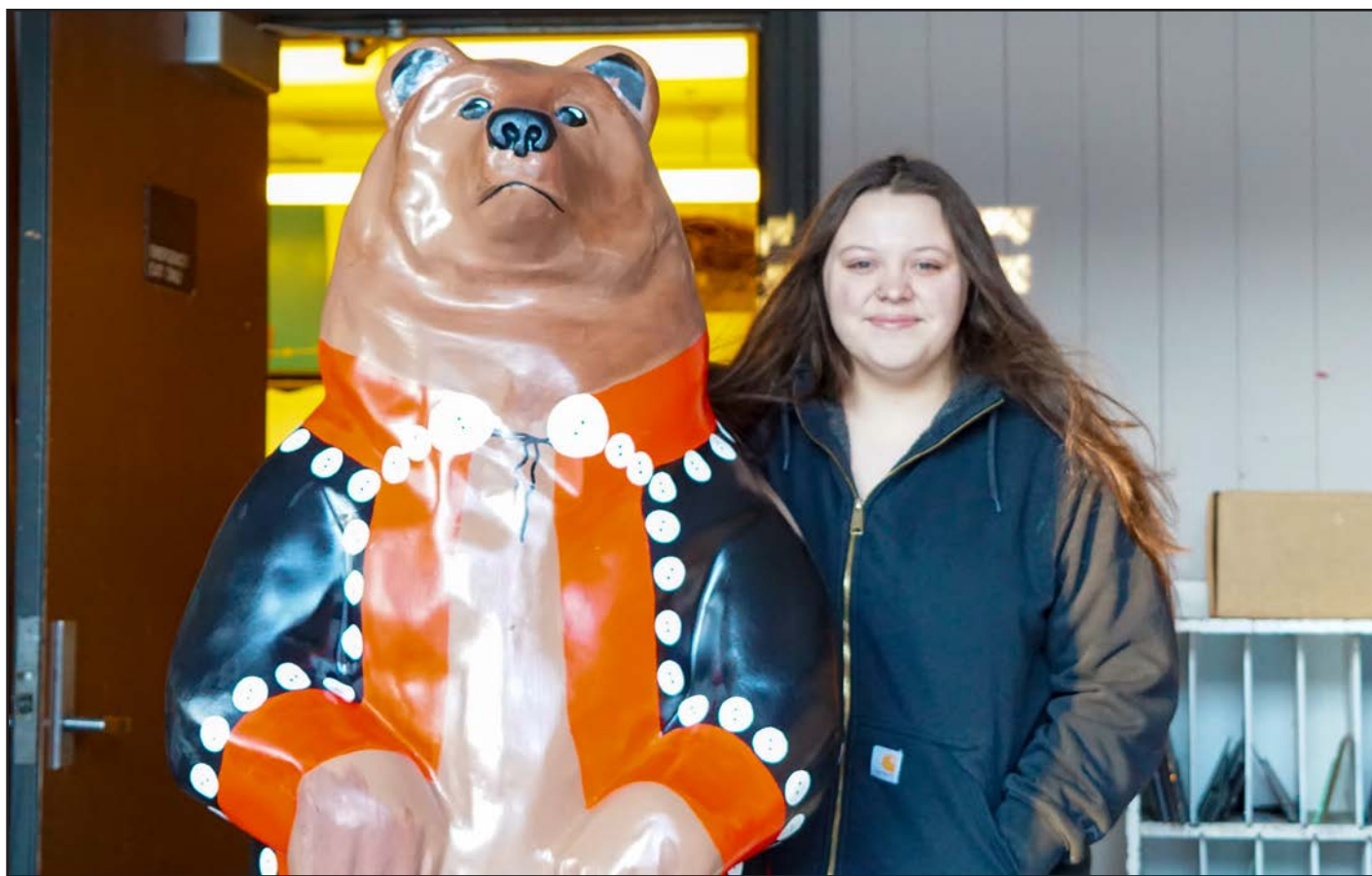


PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Cassady Cowan stands with the SEARHC bear, one of many BearFest figures the high school senior has touched up or completely repainted. Cowan chose to repaint the bears for her senior project at the suggestion of Sylvia Etefagh, who organizes BearFest and distributes the statues every spring.

I had to redo that one. I didn't measure any paint and I had five different blues on that bear. I taped off some of the sea creatures (the bear is decorated with an ocean theme) that are big with a lot of detail. Then I painted the whole bear blue."

She then took off the tape and let the paint dry. After that step, she outlined the animals that she had taped off. She took pictures of the other creatures, so that she could paint over them and recreate them from the photos she took. "I would look at my phone and sketch the sea creature on the bear where (the original was). It looks better than it did before."

The biggest challenge Cowan has faced for her project is finding the time to paint between schoolwork and working part-time as a housekeeper at the Stikine Inn. When she does find the time to paint, whether during school hours or after school, she finds inspiration in her music.

"Cassady really loves making art," said art teacher Tasha Morse, who has given the senior a little advice, but is otherwise impressed with her student's talent and work ethic. "She can be found after school rocking out to some music while revitalizing the bears."

When it comes time to graduate, which

Cowan admits is getting here faster than she thought it would, she will take one of two roads. She will either continue to train as a certified nursing assistant, a class she's taking through SEARHC at the hospital, or she will go to culinary school. She's in no rush to leave the island.

For now, she's content to keep working on the bears and finishing school.

"She has done an excellent job at matching paint colors and recreating the artwork that is on the bears to start," Morse said. "She is also working to patch cracks that have developed, and overall, I'm really proud of her hard work."

## Federal money will help expand tribal broadband network in Southeast

By CAROLEINE JAMES  
Sentinel reporter

Next year, Wrangell will become the first community with access to Tidal Network, the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska's new broadband internet service. And thanks to a recent influx of federal funding, other communities across Southeast won't be far behind.

On Nov. 17, the Central Council announced that it had received a \$50 million grant for broadband infrastructure. The funds were awarded through the Tribal Connectivity Program, which increases access to affordable internet on tribal lands as part of the 2021 federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Tidal Network will be available to tribal and non-tribal citizens.

The latest grant money will not be headed to Wrangell because the community doesn't need it, explained Chris Cropley, network architect for Tlingit and Haida. Wrangell is the site of Tidal Network's pilot program, which is funded using federal pandemic aid. This program was already in the works when the Central Council received its recent federal grant.

"The good news for Wrangell is, not only are they completely funded, but if we need more money for Wrangell to buy more years of internet, we have it," said Cropley.

Two COWs — or "cells on wheels" — have been ordered for Wrangell and are slated to arrive in mid-December, but won't be installed until next

year. "We still need a place to stand them up and we're still in the process of purchasing property," Cropley said of the portable cell towers.

Since cells on wheels are easy to set up, they are perfect for rural or hard-to-access areas. COWs were used to provide emergency service after Hurricane Katrina, for example.

Wrangell's network was supposed to be fully functional in spring 2022, but supply chain and other issues delayed its implementation. "It has been hard to nail down," Cropley wrote in an email. "Permitting and property acquisition is a moving target." He anticipates that the network will be available sometime in 2023.

Tidal Network will offer a minimum speed of 25 megabits per second for downloading and 3 megabits per second for uploading. Though Tidal Network's speeds may be considerably slower than broadband in urban areas or on established networks like GCI and AT&T, competition was never the program's goal. "We're really focused on getting people from zero to 25," Cropley explained in an interview with the Sitka Sentinel. "At 25 (megabits), you can do video conferencing, stream high-definition videos and do everything you want to do."

The goal is to provide "the most service to the most people for the lowest price for the longest time," he said. The program is "working very closely with our partners at GCI and AT&T. It's not a competitive situation, it's a partnership."

The median download speed for metropolitan areas in the

United States was 74.6 megabits per second in 2022.

Individuals and families who already have broadband access will likely not switch to Tidal Network, Cropley acknowledged. The new network will cater to "the unserved and underserved first" by focusing on areas of the Wrangell community that have limited or no access to high-speed internet. Households at the end of Zimovia Highway may be among those to benefit the most.

The anticipated cost of Tidal Network is \$75 per month for the base program. The service will be free to households at or below 200% of the poverty line through the federal Affordable Connectivity Program.

The Central Council plans to implement the network in Sitka next before working its way around Southeast. Communities with the greatest need and fewest logistical roadblocks will be connected to the Tidal Network soonest. "External factors like 'does it take more than six months (longer) to buy land somewhere than another place,'

they're going to get their towers sooner," he said.

In its Nov. 17 announcement, the Central Council outlined the unique challenges of implementing broadband in Southeast, since communities and tribes are spread across 35,138 square miles of land, much of which is off the road system. "There are huge swaths of unserved territory," the announcement read. "The region has some of the nation's most costly broadband prices too."

It could be six to eight years before many rural Alaskans benefit from the program, explained state Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development project manager Lisa Von Bargen in a previous interview. Communities with no preexisting high-speed internet access, like Kasaan, Thorne Bay, Whale Pass, Coffman Cove and

Kupreanof will likely experience longer wait times.

"I think it's hard for people to understand how long some of this stuff takes," Cropley added in a previous interview. "You have to buy property, do radio engineering, get steel — it has to be American steel. Just getting (the Federal Communication Commission) to acknowledge the lease is going to take a month or two."

Despite Tlingit and Haida's recent broadband cash influx, the Wrangell Tidal Network pilot program remains a priority. "We're very excited to work with the Wrangell Cooperative Association, the city of Wrangell, and the people of Wrangell," Cropley said. "Our priorities have not changed because of this grant. If anything, it has accelerated Wrangell because we want to get it done sooner."

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

## Alaska needs to accept that the world is changing

By LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

The world will continue to need liquid fuels refined from crude oil for decades. But it likely will need less in the decades ahead as it transitions to renewable energy sources in hopes of stemming the damages caused by a warming planet. Which means oil companies generally are looking for the least risky projects, the environmentally smartest ones, the ones with the quickest pay-back to recover their investment.

No producer wants to sink billions into a new development, only to find that delays, cost overruns and political or permitting problems turn the good prospect into a bad investment just as demand for their product is in decline.

Which is some of the reasoning behind the fact that no major oil producer, not even a small oil producer, bid on the 2021 federal lease sale for exploration acreage in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge.

But that didn't stop the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority from writing a check for millions of dollars to lease a few hundred thousand acres. Not that the state agency itself plans to explore for oil. AIDEA figured it would spend the public's money in the hope that someday, someone somehow somewhere might come along to take the expensive risk to drill on the state's acreage. Then the state could make some money.

It's an investment that makes cryptocurrency look good.

No surprise, but no one has appeared to bail out the state investment. Besides, a new federal

environmental review of oil drilling in ANWR has been delayed half a year, into spring 2003. Any work is stalled until the review is completed and then until litigation plays out.

All the while, the world will continue its long-term energy transition. And all the while, the state will keep making annual lease payments on oil leases that at best could not produce any crude until the 2030s, if then. That's not a gamble, it's a sucker's bet to make a political point that Alaska wants to remain an oil state.

Alaska will remain an oil state for a long time. ConocoPhillips and Oil Search are spending serious money on their respective North Slope projects, both of which could add substantial flow to the trans-Alaska oil pipeline this decade. The key point being this decade, not maybe sometime in the 2030s.

State leaders would be smarter to look ahead to the 2030s, 2040s and beyond, thinking what Alaska can do to become a player in the energy transition rather than putting millions of dollars of chips on the ANWR square at the roulette table. Hydrogen production, carbon sequestration, tidal power come to mind. Spending money on any of those could produce better returns than paying more in annual lease fees on ANWR acreage no one wants.

The best thing AIDEA could do now to recover its investment would be to offer to sell back its loser leases to the federal government and put the money into something real that would help Alaskans, not a dream. At least then, in the 2030s, we would have something to show for the millions. Not just a stack of leases of no value.

## Boating accident

Continued from page 1

weighing her down. "When I was under the water, that's when Petrie drowned," she said.

Leak swam for West Rock, a small craggy stone protrusion with a cement block and navigational aid on top, a "couple hundred yards" north of Joe Mace Island, according to Sgt. Cody Lister of the Alaska State Troopers.

Behind her, Dahl struggled against the currents. The tide had peaked around the estimated time of the accident. The pair made it to the rock and sat side by side, shaking, for "I don't know how long," said Leak. "A few minutes." Mili, who had beat them to the rock, survived, but Petrie was gone.

The sun was beginning to set. Looking out over the water, Dahl could see no sign of his boat. The Randi Jo and everything in it had disappeared in a matter of minutes and he was seized with a sudden urge to do something. "He looked over at Joe Mace Island," Leak said. "It looked so close. It looked doable."

Dahl suggested that they swim to safety and Leak prepared to follow him into the water. Before she could get in, he stopped her. "Don't get in," Leak remembered him telling her. "You stay, I'll get help. You stay. You stay, stay, stay."

As she watched him swim away, she "felt like there was an anchor through my gut holding me to that rock." She called after him, telling him to swim hard.

Dahl set out just before sunset, around 3:30 p.m. Leak watched the current pull him farther and farther along the shore until he was obscured by the glare of the setting sun.

She couldn't tell whether he reached the island or not.

Temperatures dropped swiftly, reaching a low of 27 degrees by 9 p.m., according to Wrangell weather data. She was grateful for her analog watch, which was still functioning after her swim. It chimed every hour on the hour.

She was grateful for her dog, who intimidated the sea lions circling the rock, trying to reclaim their territory. The rock was cold and rough and smelled strongly of sea lion urine. She was grateful for these discomforts, too, since they helped her stay awake. Wilderness first-responder training had taught her that falling asleep might mean succumbing to the cold.

"When you're living moment to moment, every little sound means something," Leak recalled. "When the tide changes, when the wind changes." Planes flew overhead and boats cruised by in the dark. She tried not to get discouraged when they passed. "That's what it's going to feel like to get rescued," she'd tell herself. "So we've got to hold on to that."

As the hours crawled by and the northern lights flickered overhead, she thought about food, about her family and about the surprising variety of expressive sounds a sea lion can make, from a hiss to a burp to a growl. She thought of her community in Wrangell, which had felt "more like home than Kansas ever did in the 30 years I was there." She thought about Dahl and what an amazing boyfriend he was.

She was on the rock for 24 hours.

On Monday afternoon around 2 p.m. on Nov. 28, Port Protec-

tion resident Breanna Miethe, her boyfriend, Oliver Johnson, and his friend Devon Harding headed home after a deer hunting trip. As their fishing vessel, the Dell II, passed West Rock, Johnson noticed a lone figure frantically waving at the boat. Harding took a skiff out to investigate and brought Leak aboard.

The hunting party heated up soup, cocoa and grilled cheese for Leak and started making radio calls to boats in the area. The Point Baker community rallied about 10 boats to assist in the search.

The state troopers were notified of the accident at 2:15 p.m. that day. The U.S. Coast Guard mobilized two helicopters and searched the area from 4:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., when "it was determined that the search efforts were saturated and exhausted," said Petty Officer Ian Grey. The Wrangell Fire Department also sent a plane to the area, but could not find any sign of Dahl. Almost two tide cycles had passed since his disappearance and weather conditions had worsened since Leak's night on the rock.

"U.S. Coast Guard models show that Dahl could not have survived this length of time given the current environment," trooper spokesperson Tim DeSpain told an Anchorage TV station. "He is presumed deceased."

Leak spent the days after the accident grieving Dahl alongside their friends and loved ones in the Point Baker community. "It's truly incredible how many lives he touched in his 27 years," she said. "I'm so grateful for the time I got with him. He was truly one of a kind."

## EDITORIAL

## Borough wants your ideas for former mill property

The borough has scheduled a public forum for 5:30 p.m. Dec. 14 at the Nolan Center to discuss a \$2.5 million question: What would the community like to see done with the 6-Mile sawmill property which the borough purchased this summer?

Sell the 39 acres, lease it in whole or in part, put public money into the development or let private dollars carry the cost of whatever may happen at the site are among the options.

Tourism, industry, fisheries, storage — maybe some future use no one has ever really considered.

Whatever may happen, next week's public forum is the community's opportunity to learn more about the property, hear ideas from neighbors and share their opinions with public officials. Nothing fancy, just an open-agenda town hall to discuss the future of the borough's \$2.5 million investment.

When the borough purchased the lots from the owner of the former sawmill at the site, the intent was to keep the property intact, rather see it sold off piece by piece. The assembly feared that such a piecemeal sale could reduce the chances of a substantial investment by a private developer. The idea was to buy the entire property to preserve the options for a future use that could bring jobs and economic development to town.

Now the assembly wants to hear from the community on possible next steps.

Development at the former mill site will not be easy, or cheap. A 2016 report by a structural engineering firm out of Bellingham, Washington, noted a lot of problems with the aging steel bulkhead at the property. The report said the bulkhead is "severely corroded and has failed over a significant portion of its length ... the bulkhead will need to be completely replaced if a vertical face at the waterline is needed for future functions."

The conditions report doesn't mean it's hopeless for turning the property to a new and productive use. It just means someone will need to spend substantial money. The borough's hope is that private dollars will take on the job. But first, Wrangell needs to decide the best path toward attracting a private developer or maybe a partner with the municipality.

The property is "one of the last existing deepwater industrial sites available for development options in Southeast Alaska," according to the borough. That alone is an attraction.

The forum is an effort to learn "what the community would like to see out there," borough Economic Development Director Carol Rushmore said when she announced the meeting last month. It would be good to see a full room at the Nolan Center next week, with people learning and sharing ideas respectfully between neighbors who all want the best for the community.

— Wrangell Sentinel

## Hospital price

Continued from page 1

even lower offers, according to a staff presentation to the assembly, but such offers would have to create economic development opportunities for the community.

All assembly members except Jim Debord voted to advance the price reduction and the hiring of a real estate agent at the Nov. 22 meeting, setting up a final decision for Dec. 20.

"I'm afraid it'll be stripped and dumped," Debord said in an interview after the meeting, explaining his no vote. "Whoever buys it is going to get in over their head

and strip the place and leave us with an eyesore."

Though he thinks the reduced price is too cheap, he would support "giving (the property) away under the stipulation that they would tear it down and have a good building site." Debord worked in the building as a therapist until construction of the new Wrangell Medical Center.

"We believe that listing for the land-value of the (Wrangell Medical Center) will elicit serious buyers for the property," Good wrote in the ordinance's summary statement.

## Pandemic aid

Continued from page 1

can be returned via the email address or dropped off at the porch.

There are an estimated 504 WCA members residing in Wrangell and \$4.7 million in relief aid has been distributed since the federal funded community assistance program started.

This is the fifth round of relief funding distributed by the

tribal council, which includes subsistence community assistance, Angerman said. This is the second round of funding under the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act. Previous pandemic relief payments were funded through the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and 2020 CARES Act.

Angerman said the latest round of relief funding is budgeted at \$660,000.

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# Transboundary river protectors seek recognition by British Columbia

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

A Southeast advocacy group dedicated to protecting the transboundary rivers that flow from Canada through Alaska to the sea want the British Columbia government to work with Alaska Indigenous people on mine permits the same as tribal members on the other side of the border.

The group's immediate concern is permitting of mines in British Columbia in the watersheds of the Stikine, Unuk and Taku rivers. The group fears any mine pollution will flow downriver, harming fisheries and other habitat.

Under a 3-year-old law in British Columbia, the province has agreed to abide by the standards set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That means government seeking active consent from Indigenous communities when making decisions, rather than merely consulting with them, Bruce McIvor, a principal at First Peoples Law, an indigenous rights law firm in Vancouver, said when the law passed.

In June, the province signed its first

agreement under the 2019 law, governing the proposed Eskay Creek gold and silver mine, about 75 miles east of Wrangell. The agreement with the Tahltan Central Government sets up a process for "the first mining project to have permits authorized by an Indigenous government," according to the project developer, Skeena Resources.

The law also is important to Tlingit and Haida tribal citizens in Alaska, said Guy Archibald, executive director of the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission.

"We've put them (British Columbia) on notice" that the transboundary group and its tribes want the same status as the Tahltan in provincial review of mining permits, Archibald said.

An intent of the British Columbia law is to recognize that the traditional lands of Indigenous people don't necessarily conform to national borders, he said. It's clear that Tlingit and Haida traditional lands straddle the U.S.-Canada border and, as such, Alaska tribes should have a role in permitting decisions in British Columbia that could affect their lives,

Archibald explained.

"The question is how is that going to be implemented for Southeast Alaska tribes," he said. "B.C. really has no idea" how they are going to accept or accommodate any cross-border decision making, he said. The 9-year-old Indigenous Transboundary Commission represents 14 Southeast tribes, including the Wrangell Cooperative Association.

"I'm anticipating a fight," Archibald said, though he also added, "It's looking hopeful."

He further explained that the British Columbia law does not grant veto power over permits to tribes. Rather, it requires that the government include them as active participants in the permitting process, which could include writing mitigation plans and ongoing monitoring of mining operations.

Eskay Creek operated from 1994 to 2008 as an underground mine. The developer wants to restart operations as an open pit mine. The company has completed its feasibility study and is working through permitting issues and the project's economics before making an invest-

ment decision.

The agreement with the Tahltan is the first such "consent-based agreement for decision-making ever to be negotiated" under the 2019 law, Murray Rankin, provincial minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, said when the deal was signed in June.

"Together, the Tahltan Central Government and the province are leading the way toward a new model for advancing free, prior and informed consent."

The Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission and individual tribes have been increasingly active in pushing U.S. and Canadian authorities to recognize their concerns and include them in permitting decisions.

"The Taku, Stikine and Unuk transboundary rivers are the lifeblood of Southeast Alaska," Ketchikan Indian Community President Trixie Bennett wrote in a Nov. 28 letter to the U.S. Secretary of State. The Ketchikan tribe called for an international framework "to resolve and prevent future transboundary water pollution" from British Columbia mines.

## No congressional earmarks proposed for Wrangell in federal budget

By CAROLEINE JAMES  
Sentinel reporter

Sen. Lisa Murkowski has requested \$490 million for more than 130 Alaska projects in congressional appropriations bills under consideration in Congress. None of the money would be headed to Wrangell, though the community could benefit indirectly from statewide programs.

Congress is working this month to approve spending on projects and government operations for 2023.

When Murkowski visited Wrangell on Sept. 11, Borough Manager Jeff Good gave her a tour of the borough's ongoing capital projects. They visited the water reservoir dams, Public Safety Building, former 6-Mile sawmill site, power plant and former Wrangell Institute property (proposed for the Alder Top Village, or Keishangita, a residential subdivision). They also discussed the community's other infrastructure needs, including road improvements, water, stormwater and sewer.

The Public Safety Building likely houses too wide a variety of services to qualify for a congressional earmark, Good explained. "Because it's a multipurpose building ... it doesn't fit into a funding program that's already out there."

Appropriations bills are separated by topic — there is a bill for agriculture, for defense, for financial services and general government. The Public Safety Building, which houses the jail, court system, police

department, fire department and more, doesn't fall neatly into any of the 12 categories.

The reservoir dams' stabilization project is likely too early in its planning processes to qualify. "We don't have anything concrete yet," said Good.

In the previous fiscal year, the borough received \$2.08 million in directed federal funds for a connection pipe between the upper reservoir and water treatment plant. "She did give us one last year," Good said. "That might be why we're not on the list" this year.

Typically, appropriations bills do not earmark funds for the same community for a similar type of project two years in a row.

Murkowski succeeded in winning congressional approval for \$230 million in Alaska projects for the 2022 fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30.

Since Alaska Rep. Mary Peltola was elected after the congressional deadline to submit earmark requests for 2023, and Rep. Don Young died just weeks before the deadline, no requests for funding were made in the House, which explains why Murkowski's budget request was so large. "When he suddenly passed and wasn't there to advocate for any, it did put more of a burden on my back," Murkowski told the Anchorage Daily News last month.

Alaska's other U.S. senator, Dan Sullivan, did not request any earmarks this year. He was one of 34 Republican senators who declined to submit targeted requests to budget negotiators.

Statewide projects in Murkowski's 2023 request list, like \$230,000 to train youth peer mentors through the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, \$3 million to the Alaska Native Justice Center and \$2.5 million to expand the Alaska Primary Care Association's community health worker program into rural areas could have positive impacts on Wrangell.

Earmarks, another term for congressionally directed spending, have been criticized for facilitating backroom deals and political favoritism. Among the most famous examples is Young's \$230 million "bridge to nowhere," which he earmarked in 2005. The project, which was meant to connect Ketchikan to its airport on Gravina Island, was canceled in 2015 after \$39 million had already been spent.

In 2011, the House cracked down on earmarks by prohibiting members from using them to direct money. Congress restored the earmark process in 2021.

Despite past controversies, Murkowski defends the legitimacy of earmarks. "I am one who believes very strongly that it is the prerogative of Congress to take seriously the role of appropriations rather than cede that to the agencies," she told the Anchorage Daily News.

"Most of the people working in these agencies have no idea what the needs of Kotzebue are, don't understand what it means to be in a community that is not connected by road and what it means to be in a community where you get your fuel delivered twice a year by barge."

## Volleyball

Continued from page 1

With two wins each, the fifth set was a tiebreaker. Wrangell came on strong early, scoring first. Dillingham answered, but Wrangell again took the lead. A series of strong serves, strong defense and being prepared for whatever Dillingham threw at them allowed Wrangell to stay ahead. Only after some missteps on Wrangell's part was Dillingham able to catch up. It wasn't enough and Wrangell went on to win the set, 15-11. Wynne was awarded with the player of the match for the squad.

### Wrangell versus Tri-Valley

Winning their first match, Wrangell would face the Tri-Valley High School team out of Healy. The Warriors proved right away they'd be a force to reckon with by surging ahead. Wrangell slowly closed the point gap but could never get within two points of the competition. Tri-Valley seemed to notice Wrangell's mistakes and took advantage where they could, eventually winning the first set, 25-21.

Brodie Gardner started the second set with strong serves, giving Wrangell the lead. It was a close game but increased effort from the Lady Wolves and the infamous spikes from Kiara Harrison kept them on top, winning the set, 25-18.

Both teams paid close atten-

tion to their opponent, using missteps and lack of communication to their advantage. When Tri-Valley's play started to unravel, Wrangell could tie the game. When Wrangell would make mistakes or stumble in their communication, Tri-Valley was on top of it. A tight series of plays landed the game at a 23-23 tie, making it anyone's set, but it ended up with Tri-Valley securing the win, 26-24.

Wrangell needed to win the fourth set to stay in the championship rounds. Tri-Valley's ability to control the ball and cover the court instinctively gave them an early 5-point lead. Wrangell was able to get points on the board, usually by capitalizing on Tri-Valley's errors. The Warrior's solid defense and ability to return the ball no matter where it was aimed won them the set, 25-13, and the match, three games out of four.

The defeat sent Wrangell to the playback round to face the Susitna Valley Rams on Friday evening. Harrison's killer spikes and strong gameplay from the back of the court earned her the player of the match.

### Wrangell versus Susitna Valley

Friday's game was do or die for Wrangell. If they wanted to have a shot at the state title, they would need to overcome Susitna Valley, who proved to be a strong opponent from the

start. Though Susitna Valley's ability to return the ball and cover the net was stronger than Wrangell's previous opponents, it was Wrangell's netted serves and out-of-bounds shots that gave Susitna Valley a series of points.

Play was interrupted several times throughout the match as errant balls from the adjoining games kept intruding.

Susitna Valley powered ahead, winning the first set, 25-14.

It was evident by the second set that Susitna Valley had power, but that proved to be a downfall for the Rams on several occasions when serves would land in the net or overshoot Wrangell's court to go out of bounds.

Susitna Valley's Alana Barron was on top of the ball, covering the net like she was in three places at once, blocking returns and spiking the ball into Wrangell territory on numerous plays, much to the Lady Wolves dismay. Play was tighter in the second set, but the win went to the Rams, 25-23.

In the third set, Wrangell's Addy Andrews stepped up her kills, continually giving Susitna Valley a taste of their own strategy. That effort motivated the rest of the Wolves to work harder against Barron and her team. Wrangell's coverage of the net caught Susitna Valley unaware,

giving Wrangell a small lead. It was a serving ace that gave Wrangell their first victory of the match, 25-22.

With the championship goal on the line, both teams came into the fourth set aiming to win. Each side answered the opponent's points with their own. The score stayed close until the Rams broke an 11-11 tie to pull ahead. From that moment on, Wrangell couldn't catch up as Susitna Valley outscored them at every turn. The Rams won the set, 25-17 and the match, 3 to 1. Christina Johnson was awarded player of the match for the Lady Wolves.

### State title

Susitna Valley then went on to face Tri-Valley in the semi-final competition. Tri-Valley beat the Rams and continued on to the championship round to face the Craig High School Panthers, whom Wrangell beat to win the Southeast regional title.

The equally matched Tri-Valley and Craig faced each other for four sets, with Craig winning the first set, 25-22, Tri-Valley winning the second and third sets, 26-24 each, and Craig winning the fourth set, 25-21. Craig ran away with the tiebreaker 15-6, winning the state championship title.

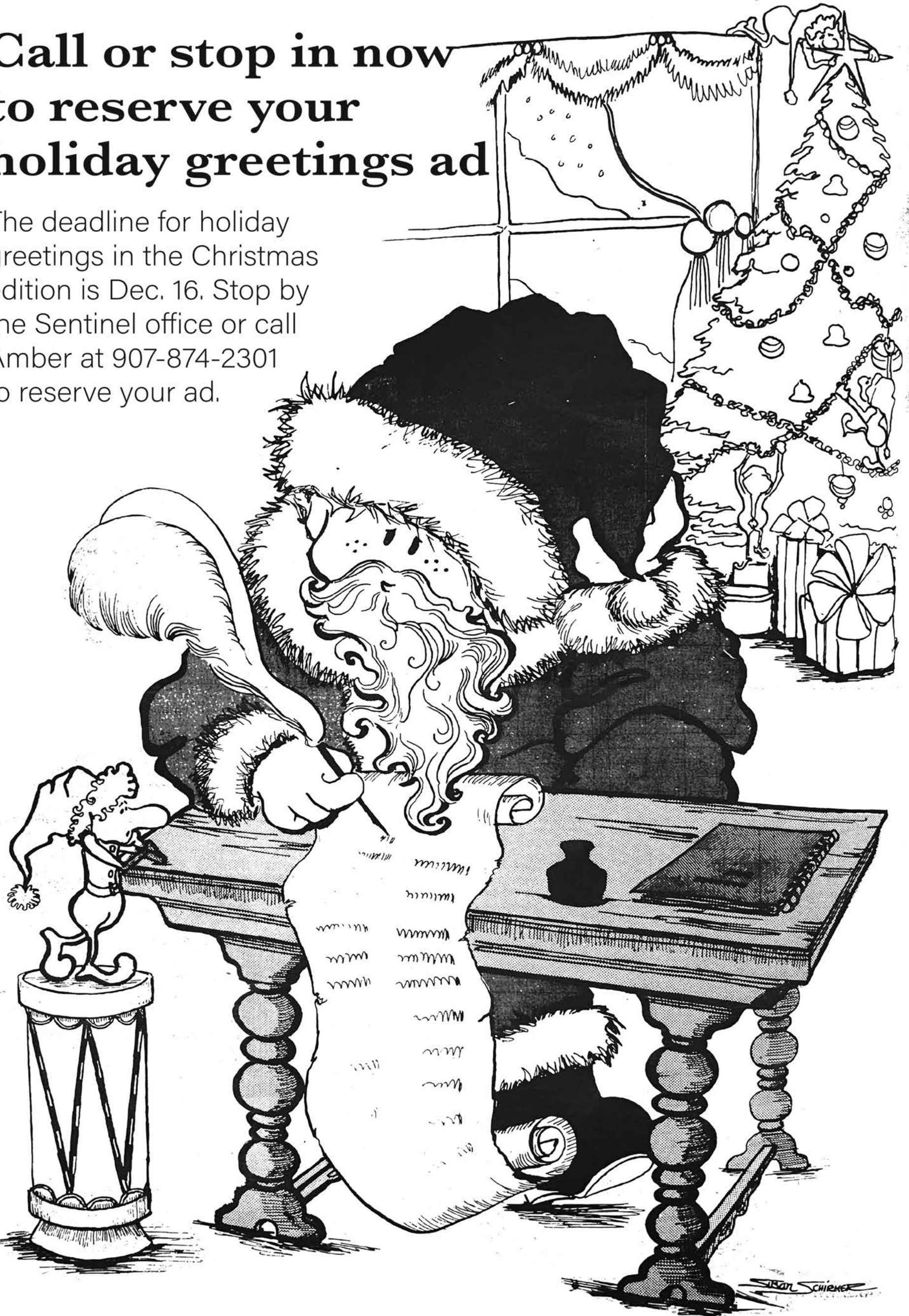
**Harvey Gross,**  
93, passed away  
on November 30th  
at the SEARHC  
Wrangell Medical Center.

*An obituary will follow.*

# THE ANNUAL SENTINEL CHRISTMAS GREETINGS ISSUE WILL BE PUBLISHED DEC. 21

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# SENTINEL SPORTS

## Boys basketball hitting the hardwood for new season

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

This year could look very different for the Wrangell High School boys basketball team.

Already, the team is comprised of anywhere from 17 to 20 players, allowing coaches to modify their training routine. But first, many of their players have to finish wrestling, making it the first challenge the team faces this year.

"We have ... kind of a big group that are still wrestling," said head coach Cody Angerman. "The crossover is tough on both (programs). It's tough on the wrestling program because you have kids itching to play basketball, and then you've got a lack of athletes for (basketball) practice. It's hard to do anything you want to do the first couple of weeks."

One of the pluses to being a smaller school, Angerman said, was students don't have to endure tryouts like bigger schools. Those who want to play, can. "The reality is, we as a small school need all of our kids to not just show up for basketball, but to play all these other sports and multiple programs, otherwise, we wouldn't be able to do them."

Last year's team had around 14 players, making training harder, Angerman said. He would have to put fresh-faced freshmen with seasoned seniors, which wasn't a fair matchup to either group. With more players, Angerman and assistant coach Robbie Marshall will be able to split up players into groups of their own skill levels. "It's going to be really nice to run different drills and different practices," he said. This year's team is made up of roughly one-third of the high school student body.

Angerman believes his team has a good shot at vying for regional and state titles this year thanks to a core group of senior athletes that have been playing together for most of their lives. "Jacen Hay, Leroy Wynne, Devlyn Campbell, Ethan



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Assistant coach Robbie Marshall, right, watches members of the Wrangell High School boys basketball team as they run drills last Thursday. The team is working on defensive maneuvers and passing plays. About seven team members are still competing in wrestling and will join the squad once that season is finished.

Blatchley, Randy Churchill: All those kids playing sports together, competing and being teammates, it's kind of fun," he said. "It's neat having a core class doing this a long time together."

Wynne, who was unable to play last year because of torn ligaments in his ankle, sees a lot of talent in the team.

"I'm excited. Our sophomores are stepping up nicely. We've got a lot of older guys that have been playing a long time together, so chemistry is pretty good," Wynne said during practice last Thursday night. "And we have a full schedule, which we haven't had since my freshman year. The last two years have been pretty different from most."

The team will be working on actively passing, zone defense and man-to-man coverage. The coaches will also be looking at new plays to see what works and what doesn't. For several years, Angerman used a side out-of-bounds play that was so effective, they used it against many opponents.

"We practiced it and ran it successfully against Petersburg. We've ran it against Craig. We ran it until a (Metlakatla) coach texted me one day and said, 'I found this side out-of-bounds play you guys run. I think I'm going to steal it,'" Angerman said. "I've got a kid who's probably scored a career 60 points off that one play. We can't even run it anymore against those teams."

Other teams, such as Petersburg, recognize the play almost immediately. The Wolves will have to switch up their playing if they hope to beat main rival Petersburg this year. Wrangell made it to regionals last year, only to be knocked out by the Vikings, ending their hopes to at least be the second of two Southeast teams going to state.

Wrangell played Petersburg five times in three weeks, which Angerman believes affected Wrangell's performance.

"At (the regionals) tournament, we

played (Petersburg) the second game and lost," he said. "Then we went into the losing bracket and had to play them again. So, five or six times within a couple weeks. It didn't work in our favor but they're a good team and are always going to be tough."

Wynne said he's still not over the loss to the Vikings last year.

"I'm still pretty upset we lost to Petersburg in regionals last year," he said. "I'm hoping we can get some revenge. Metlakatla is going to be tough, if not the toughest in the state. They've got a lot of tall guys, a lot of good shooters."

Wrangell has plenty of height advantage as well, Wynne added. He pointed out that since a lot of the players are also active in other sports, they are healthy and ready to play.

"We're going to be ready for whoever," Angerman said. "For us, we've got our own really good core group. We've got the potential to do some great things."

## Wrangell wrestlers face plenty of competition in Petersburg

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Grapplers from all over Southeast traveled to Petersburg over the weekend to compete in the Viking Rumble tournament. Eleven different schools met on the mat, but incomplete round robins made it hard for the Wolves to earn first-place finishes.

Wrestlers from Craig, Hoonah, Hydaburg, Ketchikan, Metlakatla, Mt. Edgecumbe, Sitka, Skagway, Thunder Mountain in Juneau and Wrangell high schools competed in Petersburg across various weight divisions. Katelyn Gillen was the only Wrangell wrestler to place first in her weight class, which she won by forfeit.

The Wolves had the most pins as a team at 22 in a total of 35:30. Petersburg had 21 pins in 30:12. Ketchikan came in third with 20 pins in 46:30.

Head coach Jack Carney said the tournament was a round robin-style competition but wasn't finished.

"It was a weird weekend," he said. "They didn't finish either round robin, so the only finished brackets were those with one other person, like Katelyn."

Carney said Wrangell teamed up with Skagway as part of a dual tournament and beat Sitka 45-33. Though there was plenty of competition during the weekend, he said it wasn't any different than the squad has previously faced.

"The competition wasn't any tougher than usual," Carney said. "It's just everyone is getting aligned for the region and state (tournaments), getting their grades up and whatnot."

He added that the Wolves weren't aggressively seeking mat time, in order to risk any

"last-minute injuries, so the kids got a couple matches trying something new."

Gillen didn't compete in the first round, won by forfeit in the second round against Taylor Bloomstrand of Mt. Edgecumbe and received a bye in round three.

### Results

Boomchain Loucks (112) placed fourth, scoring eight team points. In round one, he had the most pins (two) with the least time (1:30). In round one, he pinned Brendan Moncibaiz of Skagway in 59 seconds. In round two, he pinned Roger McKeehan of Metlakatla in 31 seconds.

Devlyn Campbell (119) placed third, scoring two team points. In round two, he pinned Jack Styles of Ketchikan in 3:04.

Kyan Stead (119B) placed third and was pinned by Sam Davis of Sitka in 3:09.

Lucas Schneider (125B) placed third, falling in the first round to Titan Linne of Ketchikan in 5:21 and falling in the second round to Jackson Bennett of Craig in 3:51.

Jackson Powers (130) placed fourth and scored six team points.

He pinned Gavin Cole of Thunder Mountain in the first round in 1:15, and fell to Kai Davis of Sitka in the second round in 58 seconds.

Ian Nelson (135) placed third, scoring two team points. In the first round, he fell to Evander Elixman of Sitka in 1:51. In the second round, he pinned Alexander Gilley of Ketchikan in 5:45.

Elias Decker (140) placed fourth and scored six team points. He pinned Peter Griggs

of Mt. Edgecumbe in the first round in 1:05. He fell to Hunter Cowan of Ketchikan in the second round in 2:41.

Ethan Blatchley (171) placed fourth and scored six team points. He pinned Richard Didrickson of Mt. Edgecumbe in the second round in 2:54.

Cody Barnes (215B) placed third and scored two team points. He fell to Kyle Biggers in the first round in 1:36, but pinned

Micha Bergtold of Metlakatla in 41 seconds in the second round.

In the girls division, Della Churchill (114) placed third and scored two team points. She pinned Min Thou Vo of Ketchikan in the second round in 3:25.

Vanessa Johnson received a bye in round one with a guaranteed third place.

The wrestlers are scheduled to compete at regionals in Ketchikan on Friday and Saturday.

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**WRANGELL SENTINEL**

# Organizers bring back holiday potluck after pandemic hiatus

By CAROLEINE JAMES  
Sentinel reporter

Residents will gather for a "Christ-moose" potluck at the Nolan Center at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 18 to celebrate the holiday season through food and fellowship. All are welcome to the free event, which will feature moose meat prepared by Jake Harris of the Stikine Inn. Attendees are encouraged to contribute their favorite side dish to the spread.

The potluck is the first of its kind in three years, explained event organizer Lovey Brock. A similar event was held in 2019 — before pandemic fears hit — and boasted around 150 attendees, plus a wide array of homemade dishes, desserts and salads. After a two-year pandemic hiatus, Brock hopes the dinner will once again provide a space for the community to come together to enjoy good food and good company.

"Hopefully, people will come and eat and visit, enjoy the beginning of the

holidays and just have fun," she said.

There will be an auction during the event to help pay for the Nolan Center space. In the coming weeks, Brock will solicit donations of auction items from local businesses. She will also accept donations from community members.

The moose meat is from illegal moose taken by Wrangell residents. Chris Guggenbickler, who runs a distribution program for illegal moose meat, explained that the potluck is part of an effort to share meat equita-

bly throughout the community. The meat not consumed at the potluck will be distributed through pre-existing charitable organizations, including the Salvation Army, Head Start and the Senior Center.

"We chose to go through ... charities that the community had previously designated as worthy causes," Guggenbickler said. The program will prioritize elders, food-insecure community members and children.

# New safety regulations recommended for Ketchikan flightseeing tours

By ZAZ HOLLANDER  
Anchorage Daily News

The National Transportation Safety Board is calling for new federal regulations to safeguard Ketchikan flightseeing tours following years of deadly crashes, several of them involving cruise ship passengers and bad weather.

Seven flightseeing crashes in and around Ketchikan since 2007 have killed 31 people and seriously injured 13 others despite a longstanding voluntary safety program signed by flight companies, according to a 20-page report the NTSB released Nov. 29.

The agency wants the Federal Aviation Administration to replace the voluntary program with special rules for Ketchikan requiring weather training for pilots, including how to assess conditions while they're flying.

The board is also calling on the National Weather Service to work with the FAA to develop a regulation for flightseeing operators that imposes weather minimums — limits addressing visibility and ceiling height —

even more conservative than federal law requires.

"Ketchikan is no stranger to the Alaska NTSB. We've been down there for many years involved in very similar accidents," said Clint Johnson, the agency's Alaska region chief. "We've made recommendations before. Some of those recommendations have been adopted, some have not. This is raising the bar even higher for the tourism industry and for weather minimums in the area for the tour operators."

During Ketchikan's busy air tour season between April and September, about a dozen operators conduct air tours for passengers. Several Ketchikan flightseeing operators contacted Nov. 29 said they were still reviewing the recommendations and declined to comment.

On any given summer day, cruise ships can disgorge thousands of passengers, some looking for a quick trip into the thickly forested, fjord-laced Misty Fjords National Monument just beyond town before

their ship heads out.

One 2015 crash in Misty Fjords killed eight cruise-ship passengers and the pilot of a Promech Air flight tour. A mid-air collision in 2019 involving two planes carrying passengers from the same cruise ship left six dead and another 10 injured.

Most recently, a Southeast Aviation de Havilland DC-2 Beaver left Misty Fjords in August 2021 and crashed in steep, forested terrain, killing the pilot and all five passengers from the cruise ship Nieuw Amsterdam.

In August, the families of four of the Southeast Aviation passengers filed suit against Holland America Line, the air tour company and the pilot's estate, alleging the cruise company pressures excursion operators to take unnecessary risks to meet cruise schedules and doesn't warn passengers of dangers.

Federal investigators determined the probable cause of last year's Southeast Aviation crash to be the pilot's decision to keep flying into deteriorating weather. A series of passenger photographs later collected from their phones showed clouds obscuring mountainous terrain near the crash site.

The new NTSB report cites the importance of weather training for pilots, given the rapidly changing and localized conditions due to Ketchikan's "persistent onshore wind from the southwest that carries abundant moisture from the Pacific Ocean" as well as weather systems that can funnel wind and precipitation into valleys.

The recommendations stem from a review of fatal air tour crashes in Ketchikan from 2007 to 2021, NTSB officials say. The board reevaluated the effectiveness of 13 air-tour safety recommendations issued to the FAA between 2008 and 2017.

The FAA's response to many of the recommendations involved voluntary actions either no longer in effect or ineffective at mitigating the hazards of rapidly changing weather in mountainous terrain, the report states.

It specifically references a long-standing voluntary agreement among Ketchikan air tour companies for the congested Misty Fjords area that among other things calls for specific flight paths and radio frequencies — but not weather minimums.

Southeast Aviation signed the

agreement but the company's plane was not following one of the standard routes last year. Investigators later determined the FAA's reliance on voluntary compliance with the agreement was a contributing factor in the crash.

FAA officials have also emphasized their use of Medallion Foundation training programs to help pilots navigate changing weather conditions, as well as new pilot training before every season, the report states. But Medallion closed in 2019, and NTSB officials say the FAA can't oversee training effectively because it's not required.

The new report suggests special regulations like those put into place after a string of fatal accidents in the Grand Canyon and Hawaii. Those regulations included establishing minimum flight altitudes, enhanced equipment safety requirements and airspace limitations for certain geographic areas.

The NTSB is not a rule-making agency and can only make recommendations. The FAA, which can issue air safety regulations, is not bound to adopt the recommendations.

# EPA proposes veto of any Pebble mine plans

By MARK THIESSEN  
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE (AP) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Dec. 1 proposed restrictions that would block plans for a copper and gold mine in Alaska's Bristol Bay region that is home to the world's largest sockeye salmon run.

A statement from the regional EPA office said discharges of dredged or fill material into the waters of the U.S. within the proposed Pebble Mine footprint in southwest Alaska would "result in unacceptable adverse effects on salmon fishery areas."

The rarely employed agency action would effectively veto the project before the permitting stage.

Blocking a permit for the mine "would help protect salmon fishery areas that support world-class commercial and recreational fisheries, and that have sustained Alaska Native communities for thousands of years, supporting a subsistence-based way of life for one of the last intact wild salmon-based cultures in the world," regional EPA administrator Casey Sixkiller said in a statement.

The decision whether to block permitting will now be forwarded to the EPA Office of Water for the final determination. That office has 60 days to affirm, modify or rescind the recommendation.

The EPA regional office also proposed to restrict the discharge of dredged or fill mate-

rial for any future proposal for Pebble Mine that would be similar in size or bigger than what is currently proposed.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy issued a statement Dec. 1, asserting that the state is poised to sue the EPA if it finalizes the veto.

Mine developer Pebble Limited Partnership, owned by Canada-based Northern Dynasty Minerals, called the EPA's decision a preemptive veto. It described the decision as political and without legal, environmental or technical merit.

"We still firmly believe that the proposed determination should have been withdrawn as it is based on indefensible legal and non-scientific assumptions," Pebble CEO John Shively said in a statement.

"Congress did not give the EPA broad authority to act as it has in the Pebble case. This is clearly a massive regulatory overreach by the EPA and well outside what Congress intended for the agency when it passed the Clean Water Act," Shively said.

The debate over the proposed mine in an area of southwest Alaska known for its salmon runs has spanned several presidential administrations. The EPA has said the Bristol Bay region also contains significant mineral resources.

"After twenty years of Pebble hanging over our heads, the Biden administration has the opportunity to follow through on its commitments by finalizing comprehensive, durable protections for our region as soon as possible," Alannah Hurley, executive director for the United Tribes of Bristol Bay, said in a statement.



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# Increasing federal effort helps return bison to tribal lands

By MATTHEW BROWN  
Associated Press

BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK, S.D. — Perched atop a fence at Badlands National Park, Troy Heinert peered from beneath his wide-brimmed hat into a corral where 100 wild bison awaited transfer to the Rosebud Indian Reservation.

Descendants of bison that once roamed North America's Great Plains by the tens of millions, the animals would soon thunder up a chute, take a truck ride across South Dakota and join one of many burgeoning herds Heinert has helped reestablish on Native American lands.

Heinert nodded in satisfaction to a U.S. Park Service employee as the animals stomped their hooves and kicked up dust in the cold wind. He took a brief call from Iowa about another herd being transferred to tribes in Minnesota and Oklahoma, then spoke with a fellow trucker about yet more bison destined for Wisconsin.

By nightfall, the last of the American buffalo shipped from Badlands were being unloaded at the Rosebud reservation, where Heinert lives. The next day, he was on the road back to Badlands to load 200 bison for another tribe, the Cheyenne River Sioux.

Most bison in North America are in commercial herds, treated no differently than cattle.

"Buffalo, they walk in two worlds," Heinert said. "Are they commercial or are they wildlife? From the tribal perspective, we've always deemed them as wildlife, or to take it a step further, as a relative."

Some 82 tribes across the U.S. — from New York to Alaska — now have more than 20,000 bison in 65 herds — and that's been growing in recent years along with the desire among Native Americans to reclaim stewardship of an animal their ancestors lived alongside and depended upon for millennia.

European settlers destroyed that balance when they slaughtered the great herds. Bison almost went extinct until conservationists including Teddy Roosevelt intervened to reestablish a small number of herds largely on federal lands. Native Americans were sometimes excluded from those early efforts carried out by conservation groups.

Such groups more recently partnered with tribes, and some are now stepping aside. The long-term dream for some Native Americans: Return bison on a scale ri-



AP PHOTO/MATTHEW BROWN

Margaret O'Connor describes how to trim fat from a piece of bison that was shot and butchered at the Wolakota Buffalo Range on the Rosebud Indian Reservation last month near Spring Creek, South Dakota.

valing herds that roamed the continent in numbers that shaped the landscape itself.

Heinert, 50, a South Dakota state senator and director of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, views his job in practical terms: Get bison to tribes that want them, whether two animals or 200. He helps them rekindle long-neglected cultural connections, increase food security, reclaim sovereignty and improve land management. This fall, Heinert's group has moved 2,041 bison to 22 tribes in 10 states.

"All of these tribes relied on them at some point, whether that was for food or shelter or ceremonies. The stories that come from those tribes are unique to those tribes," he said. "Those tribes are trying to go back to that, reestablishing that connection that was once there and was once very strong."

Bison for centuries set rhythms of life for the Lakota Sioux and many other nomadic tribes that followed their annual migrations. Hides for clothing and teepees, bones for tools and weapons, horns for ladles, hair for rope — a steady supply of bison was fundamental.

At so-called "buffalo jumps," herds would be run off cliffs, then butchered over days and weeks. Archaeologists have found immense volumes of bones buried at some sites, suggesting process-

ing on a major scale.

European settlers and firearms brought a new level of industry to the enterprise as hunters, U.S. troops and tourists shot bison and a growing commercial market used their parts in machinery, fertilizer and clothing. By 1889, few bison remained: 10 animals in central Montana, 20 each in central Colorado and southern Wyoming, 200 in Yellowstone National Park, some 550 in northern Alberta and about 250 in zoos and private herds.

"We wanted to populate the western half of the United States because there were so many people in the East," U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American cabinet member, said in an interview. "They wanted all of the Indians dead so they could take their land away."

The thinking at the time, she added, was "if we kill off the buffalo, the Indians will die. They won't have anything to eat."

The day after the bison transfer from the Badlands, Heinert's son T.J. sprawled flat on the ground, his rifle scope fixed on a large bull bison at the Wolakota Buffalo Range. The tribal enterprise in just two years has restored about 1,000 bison to 28,000 acres of rolling, scrub-covered hills near the Nebraska-South Dakota border.

Pausing to pull a cactus paddle from

the back of his hand, Heinert looked back through the scope. The 28-year-old had been talking all morning about the need for a perfect shot and the difficulty in 40 mph winds. The first bullet went into the animal's ear, but it lumbered away a couple hundred yards to join a larger group of bison, with the hunter following in an all-terrain vehicle.

Two more shots, then after the animal finally went down, Heinert drove up close and put the rifle behind his ear for a final shot that stopped its thrashing. "Definitely not how it's supposed to go," Heinert kept repeating, disappointed it wasn't an instant kill. "But we got him down. That's all that matters at this point."

Coinciding with widespread extermination of bison, tribes such as the Lakota were robbed of land through broken treaties that by 1889 whittled down the "Great Sioux Reservation" established in 1851 to several much smaller ones across the Dakotas. Without bison, tribal members relied on government "beef stations" that distributed meat from cattle ranches.

The Rosebud Sioux are intent on expanding the reservation's herds as a reliable food source.

Others have grander visions: The Blackfeet of Montana and tribes in Alberta want to establish a "transboundary herd" ranging over the Canada border near Glacier National Park. Other tribes propose a "buffalo commons" on federal lands in central Montana where the region's tribes could harvest animals.

With so many people, houses and fences now, Haaland said there's no going back completely. But her agency has emerged as a primary bison source, transferring more than 20,000 to tribes and tribal organizations over 20 years, typically to thin government-controlled herds so they don't outgrow their land.

Horn Bear, 73, said when he was very young his grandparents told him creation stories revolving around bison. But then he was forcibly enrolled in an Indian boarding school — government-backed institutions where tribal traditions were stamped out with beatings and other cruelties. The bison were already gone, and the schools sought to erase the stories of them too.

"It's like coming home to a way of life," he said.

# Senators Murkowski, Sullivan vote to protect same-sex marriages

By JAMES BROOKS  
Alaska Beacon

Alaska's two U.S. senators joined 10 other Republicans on Nov. 29 in voting to advance legal protections for same-sex and interracial marriages.

The Respect for Marriage Act, which passed the Senate in a 61-36 vote, now goes to the House, which passed a different version of the bill earlier this year.

The votes of both senators were expected; each senator had voted in favor of a procedural motion to advance the bill toward final passage two weeks ago.

In a prepared statement, Alaska's senior senator, Lisa Murkowski, said she was proud to vote in favor of the bill. Murkowski has been a longtime supporter of same-sex marriage rights and had signaled support for the bill earlier this year.

Dan Sullivan, Alaska's junior senator, said earlier this month that he does not believe the bill is necessary but because it expands legal protections for churches that decline to support same-sex weddings, he was willing to vote for it.

Speaking Nov. 29 on the floor of the Senate, Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah said he was grateful for Sullivan, who worked behind the scenes to allow Republican-proposed amendments to come to a vote. Those amendments failed to pass, and the House is expected to approve the Senate's bill, allowing President Joe Biden to sign it into law.

The bill was inspired by a comment from Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, who said the court should re-examine its 2015 decision legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide. A similar legal rationale was part of a 1967 deci-

sion striking down laws barring interracial marriages.

If the court overturns the 2015 same-sex marriage decision, the new bill would require all states to recognize pre-existing same-sex marriages. If states then choose

to ban same-sex marriages, they would be required to recognize same-sex marriages conducted in other states.

Alaska has a 1998 state constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage, though in

2014 a federal judge ruled the ban unconstitutional. If the U.S. Supreme Court overturns its 2015 decision, Alaska's constitutional amendment could again become binding law, and the state could again prohibit same-sex marriage.

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# Alaska Native corporations in court over resource revenue sharing

By NATHANIEL HERZ  
Northern Journal

A new lawsuit threatens to upend a landmark, four-decade-old revenue-sharing pact that has guided the distribution of more than \$2.5 billion among Alaska's Native corporations.

The litigation stems from the 121-page, 1982 settlement agreement that has long defused financial disputes between the 12 regional Native corporations. That deal successfully outlined how the companies should share income from developing resources like forests, but didn't specifically contemplate what should happen with money earned by preserving them.

The new lawsuit, filed in October, hinges on a major new revenue stream that has generated more than \$100 million for three of the regional corporations since 2016.

Juneau-based Sealaska Corp., Copper River Valley-based Ahtna Inc. and Gulf of Alaska-area Chugach Alaska Corp. have all put tracts of timber holdings into California's carbon credits markets, which allow forest owners to get paid for keeping lands unharvested for 100 years.

The plaintiffs, which are other Alaska Native corporations, ar-

gue that the 1982 agreement and a 1971 federal law — the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act that underpins it — require 70% of those carbon credit revenues to be shared among the rest of the regional corporations.

The 1982 agreement calls for revenue-sharing disputes to be handled by a private, three-member arbitration panel. But after a unanimous panel decision in July that found the carbon credit revenues not subject to sharing, the three plaintiffs — Nome-based Bering Straits Native Corp., Kotzebue-based NANA Regional Corp. and Bethel-based Calista Corp. — appealed their case to the state court system.

They're asking Anchorage Superior Court Judge Jack McKenna to either award them a portion of the carbon credits money under the 1982 agreement or, if he rules that the pact doesn't apply, to invalidate it altogether.

"ANCSA is clear regarding the requirements for revenue sharing: 70% of all revenues received by each ANCSA regional corporation from their timber resources and mineral resources are subject to revenue sharing," Matt Findley, an attorney representing Calista, said in a prepared statement.

A Sealaska spokesman declined to comment on the lawsuit. Officials at Ahtna and Chugach, the two other defendants, didn't respond to emailed requests for comment.

As part of settling Alaska Native lands claims, federal lawmakers in ANCSA transferred some 10% of the acreage in the state to the 12 newly formed, Native-owned regional corporations, as well as to more than 150 smaller village corporations.

Lawmakers originally wrote the revenue-sharing requirements into the bill to address disparities between the 12 regional corporations. Some, like Arctic Slope Regional Corp., NANA and Sealaska, had valuable oil, minerals and timber on their lands. Other corporations, like Calista, obtained acreage that wasn't as profitable.

The relevant section of the law, 7(i), was just two sentences and said only that 70% of "all revenues" from timber and subsurface resources should be shared among the regional corporations. That left ample room for interpretation, particularly about how companies could deduct their costs from those revenues. Lawsuits over the details proliferated.

"Early in the process of inter-

preting what 7(i) meant, virtually every regional corporation was suing one another," Roy Huhndorf, a former chief executive of Anchorage-based regional corporation CIRI Inc., said in a phone interview.

After a decade of disputes over that section, the companies signed the court-approved, 121-page agreement in 1982 that elaborates on how sharing of oil and gas, timber and mineral revenues should work. Its sections more precisely define the types of revenue that qualify for sharing, deductions that are allowed and disallowed, reporting requirements and the arbitration process for resolving disputes.

The pact succeeded in nearly eliminating legal disputes over 7(i) revenue sharing, which has since distributed more than \$2.5 billion between Native corporations. Disputes have occasionally arisen, but they have been rare.

The new lawsuit could invalidate the 1982 agreement and launch a new era of disputes and litigation.

In their 44-page complaint launching the lawsuit, the plaintiff companies say that leaving the carbon credit revenues unshared "eviscerates" a key element of ANCSA and will cause "severe economic hardship" to Native people in different regions of Alaska.

The problem, they add, is especially urgent given that carbon markets "stand to become increasingly robust and profitable as efforts to combat climate change take on increased political salience."

The roots of the current conflict date back to 2016, when Ahtna, Chugach and Sealaska — along with a few smaller village corporations, which aren't required to share revenues — began developing their carbon credit projects.

The exact amount the companies have earned since then is omitted from the lawsuit; attorneys have blacked out dollar values from legal documents at the request of the defendant corporations.

But Sealaska executives have said that their company alone has been paid more than \$100 million for carbon credits.

The dispute, as required by the 1982 agreement, went to the arbitration panel before moving to the court system. Calista filed the initial request for arbitration in 2018, and eight other regional corporations subsequently joined the claim — all of them except Ahtna, Chugach and

Sealaska.

Three arbitrators were chosen to consider the case. After pandemic-related delays, the arbitration panel heard closing oral arguments in Seattle in February. The panel returned their unanimous decision in July, saying that Sealaska, Ahtna and Chugach do not need to share their carbon credit revenue.

The decision has not been released publicly. But in October, three of the original nine corporations that asked for arbitration — Bering Straits Native Corp., Calista and NANA — filed their subsequent appeal to the court system and included passages from the arbitrators' ruling in their complaint.

The arbitrators, in their ruling, cited two federal court decisions from the 1970s in determining that Ahtna, Chugach and Sealaska could keep their carbon credits income because they did not dispose of any interest in their timber resources, the complaint says.

Alaska judges typically give arbitration decisions ample weight in appeals to the courts.

In the subsequent lawsuit, the plaintiff corporations argue that the carbon credit revenues are "plainly shareable."

"Defendants are using a key ANCSA resource — their timber — and monetizing it, by agreeing to let this timber stand in exchange for payment from the carbon credit program," the complaint says. "It makes no difference whether defendants received revenue from cutting their timber or whether the revenue is received from agreeing not to cut the timber. Either way, defendants receive revenue that is solely attributable to the existence of their timber resources."

NANA, whose massive Red Dog mine has produced huge revenues that it shares with other corporations, indicated in a prepared statement that the lawsuit is about fairness.

"NANA is one of the largest distributors of revenue under 7(i) due to Red Dog Mine," spokeswoman Beth Rue wrote in an email. "Therefore, our board felt that it was important to challenge the arbitration decision."

McKenna, the judge in the case, has not yet scheduled a hearing.

*This article was originally published in Northern Journal, a newsletter published by journalist Nathaniel Herz. The article was distributed by the Alaska Beacon and is republished here with permission.*

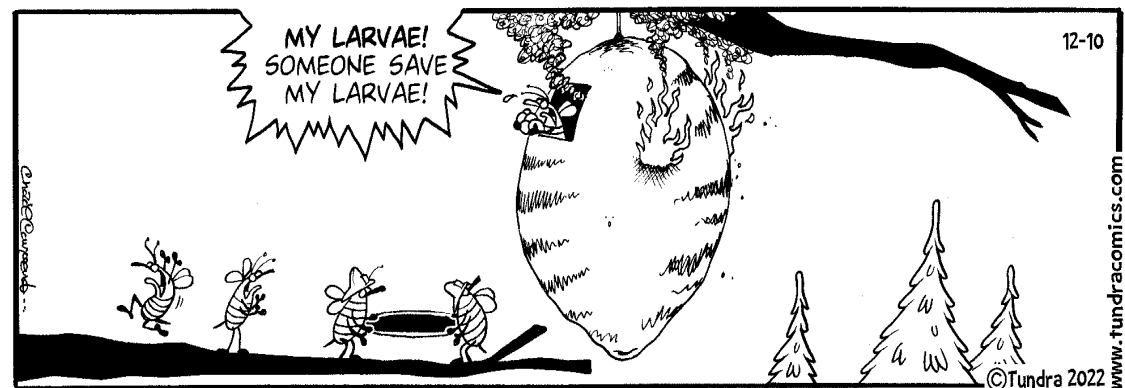
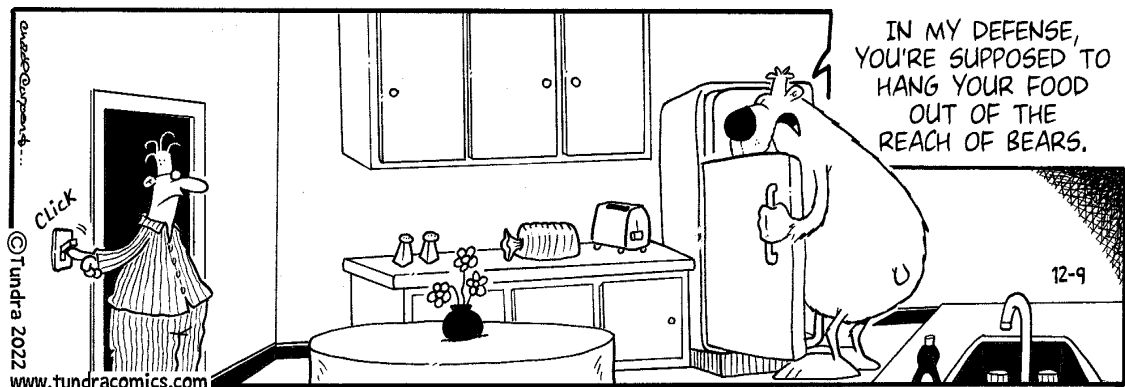
## Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



## Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



## Police report

**Monday, Nov. 28**  
Found property.  
Welfare check.  
Civil issue.  
Welfare check.

**Tuesday, Nov. 29**  
Welfare check.  
Agency assist: Pretrial.  
Agency assist: Pretrial.  
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.  
Criminal mischief.  
Suspicious person.

**Wednesday, Nov. 30**  
Agency assist: Transportation Security Administration.  
Harassment.  
Citizen assist.

**Thursday, Dec. 1**  
Agency assist: Nolan Center.  
Warrant arrest: Failure to appear.

Suspicious activity.

**Friday, Dec. 2**  
Agency assist: Petersburg Police Department.  
Vehicle unlock.  
Civil issue.

**Saturday, Dec. 3**  
Alarm.  
Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.  
Citizen assist.  
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.  
Agency assist: Municipal line crew.

**Sunday, Dec. 4**  
None.  
During this reporting period there were five subpoenas served and four traffic stops.

# Biggest salmon processor in Haines will not operate for third year in a row

By MAX GRAHAM  
Chilkat Valley News, Haines

The biggest fish processing plant in the Haines borough will stay closed next summer for the third straight season, OBI Seafoods' Excursion Inlet plant manager Tom Marshall said last week, citing a low pink salmon forecast and the company's ability to handle the regional load at its Petersburg plant.

The continued suspension of processing at Excursion means the borough will see another year of low raw fish tax revenue. Haines averaged about \$200,000 in taxes on fish landed locally in the five years prior to the Excursion plant's closure, compared to \$37,240 the first season the plant didn't process.

It's similar in Wrangell, where the loss of the Trident Seafoods plant — which has not operated since 2019 — has cut into fish tax receipts for the borough. Trident has cited weak chum returns for its decision to keep the Wrangell plant closed.

The state shares 50% of fish taxes back to the municipalities where the catch is brought to shore.

Although OBI Seafoods won't be processing at Excursion, the company still plans to send tenders into Lynn Canal to buy fish for delivery to the Petersburg plant, as it has the past two seasons, and to provide basic services at its facility — ice, net storage and fuel.

Marshall said the company is making decisions about Excursion on a year-to-year basis. He declined to comment on the company's long-term plan for the cannery or on whether there is a timeline for when a permanent decision might be made about its future.

As for the upcoming season, he said "the general level of all the fisheries combined is just not enough to warrant us opening there." He added that OBI has "enough production capacity in Petersburg" to cover the region next year.

The Southeast Alaska pink salmon harvest forecast released earlier this month also played a role in the decision,

Marshall said.

Next year's harvest is projected to be weak, according to federal and state researchers who base projections on sea temperature models and trawl surveys in Chatham and Icy straits.

The forecasted harvest is 19 million fish — about 39% of the average catch in past 10 odd-numbered years. The last odd-year harvest was more than 48 million fish. The pink run has a two-year cycle, with odd-year harvests usually well above even years.

Marshall called the weak forecast "really surprising" considering how much lower it is than the 2021 catch. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologists said their trawl survey results — which showed a low abundance of juvenile pinks last summer — were "unexpected given generally robust escapements in most of the region in 2021," according to the Nov. 8 forecast announcement.

The scientists theorized that a long cold

spell in early 2022 might have "negatively impacted developing embryos, but we do not know for certain what caused the low juvenile abundance." Lynn Canal pink runs have declined since they peaked about a decade ago.

The effects of climate change on the local runs are not fully clear. "I would say we don't really know what is going to happen for Southeast pink salmon over the long-term and for the short term it really depends on year-to-year environmental conditions in Southeast and in the Gulf of Alaska," state fishery biologist Andrew Piston said in an email.

In addition to pinks, OBI Seafoods also processed chum and sockeye salmon at Excursion Inlet. Two years ago, the Lynn Canal chum salmon fishery collapsed. The plant processed only about two million pounds of fish that year, Marshall said last summer. Historically, a poor season might've seen about 12 million to 15 million pounds come through the plant, Marshall said. A good year might've seen up to 30 million pounds.

# Will Palin become 'old news' or find new role after losing bid for U.S. House?

By BECKY BOHRER  
Associated Press

JUNEAU (AP) — Republican Sarah Palin re-emerged in Alaska politics over a decade after resigning as governor with hopes of winning the state's U.S. House seat. She had a lot going for her: unbeatable name recognition, the backing of former President Donald Trump in a state he carried twice, an unrivaled ability to attract national media attention.

But she struggled to catch fire with voters, some of whom were put off by her 2009 resignation, and ran what critics saw as a lackluster campaign against a Republican endorsed by state party leaders and a breakout Democrat who pitched herself as a regular Alaskan and ran on a platform of "fish, family and freedom."

Palin lost two elections for the House seat Republican Don Young held for 49 years before his death in March — an August special ballot to determine who would serve the remainder of his term and the Nov. 8 general election for a full two-year term. She lost both races to Democrat Mary Peltola, a former state legislator from Bethel.

The other Republican in both races, Nick Begich, cast the former governor as a quitter and self-promoter.

Jim Lottsfeldt, a political consultant affiliated with a super PAC that supported Peltola, said the elections to many looked like "easy layups" for Republicans.

Palin, the 2008 Republican vice-presidential nominee, could have "run away" with them but didn't seem focused, he said. He cited as missteps Palin's trips outside Alaska,

including one to New York days before the general election, and "goofy" events at home, including one put on by a political action committee that was sparsely attended and featured a James Brown tribute performer.

With the losses, Lottsfeldt said, the one-time conservative sensation becomes "sort of old news."

Republican strategist Brad Todd said Palin "had a lot of the characteristics that President Trump had before President Trump came along. And now there are plenty of imitators of President Trump." He said that poses a challenge for someone like Palin, who has "a lot more company in her lane than she had 12, 14 years ago."

"One challenge, and President Trump will have this challenge as well, is if you're going to be the sort of like mercenary sent to fight big battles, you need to win," Todd said.

But he said the "anti-elite" mantra common in the Republican party comes naturally to Palin, and two election losses won't "stop her from being a very powerful surrogate for some people if she wants to."

Palin has pledged support

since the election for an effort aimed at repealing a system approved by Alaska voters in 2020 that replaced party primaries with open primaries and instituted ranked-choice voting in general elections. This year's elections were the first held under the system, which Palin began railing against before the first votes were cast.

Art Mathias, a leader of the repeal effort, said Palin has a "huge audience" and will be "invaluable" in efforts to advance it.

Palin told reporters on Election Day she wasn't sure what she would be doing in two years if she lost but said "my heart is in service to Alaskans." The comments were similar to those she made in 2009 when she resigned as governor. Palin attributed her decision to step down to ethics complaints that she said had become distractions.

Palin, a former mayor of her hometown Wasilla, made a splash in conservative politics after bursting onto the national stage in 2008 with her folksy demeanor and zingy one-liners. She wrote books, hit the speaking circuit, appeared on reality television programs, spent time as a Fox

News contributor and formed a political action committee that has since disbanded.

While she largely stayed out of Alaska politics after leaving the governor's office, Palin was an early supporter of Trump's 2016 run and made headlines this year with an unsuccessful libel lawsuit against The New York Times.

In a June interview, she bristled at critics' suggestions she had left Alaska behind, saying she lives in the state, has raised her kids here and is "so Alaskan" she had recently hit a moose while driving.

Palin has been making videos through Cameo, a site where people can pay for personalized messages from celebrities. Hers are advertised at \$199.

Palin revived her 2008 mantra, "Drill, baby, drill," during the House race in calling for more oil production, and while she and Peltola

were friendly, Palin argued the ranked voting system had "produced the travesty of sending a Democrat to Congress to represent Alaska, one of the reddest states in the country."

Andrew Halcro, a former Republican state lawmaker who ran for governor against Palin and was among the 48 candidates in the House special primary in June, said he doesn't think Palin "really understood and recognized the high percentage of voters who just don't like her." Palin didn't take steps to win them over or to attract Begich supporters, he added.

But Halcro said he doesn't see Palin disappearing from the stage. "My question is, when have people like Palin or Trump ever walked away after they've lost? ... They've just ratcheted up their rhetoric," he said.

## CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC HEARING PUBLIC NOTICE

During the Regular Assembly Meeting of Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022, starting at 6 p.m., there will be a **PUBLIC HEARING** on the following item(s):

**ORDINANCE No. 1033**, a non-code ordinance of the assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, authorizing the sale of public land in conformance with Wrangell Municipal Code Chapter 16.12, Specifically, Lot A, Block 54, WMC replat, Plat 2016-6, Wrangell Recording District, and repealing Resolution No. 04-1690.

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

Publish Dec. 7, 2022

## CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the City and Borough of Wrangell Code, Sec. 3.04.080, notice is hereby given that the regular assembly meetings of the assembly shall be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month and shall begin at 6 p.m.

If any such Tuesday shall fall on a legal holiday as defined by the laws of the State of Alaska, the meetings scheduled for that day shall be held at the same hour on the next succeeding day which is not a holiday. Separate notice for the regular assembly meetings shall not be required. There will be no regular meetings the second Tuesday in July and August and fourth Tuesday in December.

If a work session is scheduled preceding the regular assembly meeting, publication shall be made on the website and posted at City Hall and the post office that the regular assembly meeting shall begin at 7 p.m.

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

Publish Dec. 7, 2022

## CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING WRANGELL CAPITAL FACILITIES DEPARTMENT Facilities Maintenance Specialist

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

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

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

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

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

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

Publish Dec. 7, 14 and 21, 2022

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# Rescuers carry out moose after it fell through a window and into Soldotna basement

By ALENA NAIDEN  
Anchorage Daily News

Rescuing a moose that fell into a Soldotna basement was not something that Kenai Peninsula firefighter Gunnar Romatz expected on his shift Nov. 20.

Nonetheless, that's just where Romatz found himself — helping extract a young moose from the lower level of a home, where the animal became trapped after falling through a window.

"Like any curious human being, I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I really want to be there for this because there's no way anybody's gonna believe this,'" he said a few hours after the rescue. "I can't even believe it."

Romatz was one of seven firefighters with Central Emergency Services, along with three biologists from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and two Alaska wildlife troopers, who responded to a call in the Soldotna area at around 10:30 a.m.

Two residents heard a noise at night and stepped outside to look down at their below-grade basement, Romatz said. What they saw was a moose that had fallen through the well of a window.

The basement window is surrounded by metal grating, which hold the ground away from the window and forms an opening no more than 3 feet

wide, he said. "Well, the moose fell into that. Its back legs went through it, and then it just continued sliding into their basement."

The intruder found itself in the basement bedroom with the door shut, Romatz said.

Firefighters say it's the second time a moose fell into the window well at the home, though the first time the animal didn't drop all the way inside.

Joseph Morris with Alaska Wildlife Troopers said the situation is not that uncommon, especially when the weather gets colder and moose are actively searching for food. "It's not as rare as you think that the moose makes it inside of a home," Morris said.

The Fish and Game biologists sedated the animal so it could be transported easily.

The responders rolled the moose onto a tarp with handles usually used for transporting unconscious patients. The moose scooted over to the center of the tarp. "Luckily, he was conscious enough to honestly help us out a little bit," Romatz said. "Luckily, it wasn't a full-grown moose."

Carrying the animal through a set of stairs, into the garage and outside, Romatz said he was a little nervous about the tight angles, but everything went smoothly.

"All the while, this moose

# Wrangell rallies around Kelsey



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kelsey Leak holds up signs created by friends and community members to welcome her back to Wrangell. Kristen DeBord organized the welcoming the day before by reaching out to Leak's friends on Facebook. The crowd gathered at the old hospital on Bennett Street to greet Leak as she was coming from the airport on Monday. "Obviously, everybody loves Kelsey," DeBord said. "It's easy to get the town to rally behind anybody, so I knew it wasn't going to take a lot of effort." Leak said she was happy to be surrounded by the love of the community.

is just picking its head up, and you're two inches away from this moose, you know?" he said. "So we're like, 'How are you?' And it just kind of looked at us, 'Haven't been in this situation before, you know.' Us either!"

Outside, responders put the animal, still on the tarp, on the

ground, and the biologists got to work. They attended to minor lacerations on the back of the moose's legs and administered medication to reverse the effects of the sedative.

Romatz said within 10 or 15 minutes, the moose was running without limping. The ani-

mal initially took off toward the side of the house with the broken basement window.

"They were like, 'Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no!' But it just ran off back into the tree line," Romatz said. "We got a video of it, and it was happy, healthy — and a job well done, apparently."

# Alaska Permanent Fund holds small exposure to cryptocurrency traders

By JAMES BROOKS  
Alaska Beacon

On Nov. 28, the cryptocurrency bank BlockFi filed for bankruptcy, the announcement coming less than three weeks after the financial implosion of FTX, one of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchanges.

The collapse of free-wheeling and unregulated crypto-

currencies is having an impact on investors who were at the bleeding edge of finance, but the impact on the \$76.7 billion Alaska Permanent Fund has been muted, according to public records and statements from officials at the corporation that governs the fund.

"For a while, we were getting a lot of letters saying that it was crazy we don't own any crypto-

currency," said Marcus Frampton, chief investment officer for the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., speaking in an August interview.

"Those letters have slowed down a little bit," he said at the time.

While the corporation's publicly listed assets don't include cryptocurrency, the fund has invested in companies that fa-

cilitate the trading of cryptocurrencies.

Most of those investments are filed in the corporation's \$15.3 billion private equity and special opportunities portfolio.

With private equity, the corporation invests Permanent Fund money into companies that haven't yet begun selling stocks on the open market. The intent is to buy part of a compa-

ny that will grow and be much more valuable by the time the corporation "goes public."

The fund typically invests in third-party firms that pick companies to invest in, and one of those firms put APFC money into FTX, said Paulyn Swanson, the APFC's communications director.

"The Alaska Permanent Fund has an indirect exposure of approximately \$4 million to FTX through our private-equity program," she said in an email.

All of the fund's cryptocurrency investments combined are a tiny sliver of the private equity portfolio.

"Altogether, APFC's private-equity program, including venture capital, has invested approximately \$20 million into crypto-related investments, has investments with a current value of ~\$70 million, and has received distributions of ~\$70 million," Swanson said. "While the current valuations of these investments may come under pressure in the future, overall, this sector has been a profitable (albeit small) area of investment for APFC."

Asked for details about the fund's successful investment, Swanson said the corporation was an early investor in Coinbase, a cryptocurrency exchange.

Two venture capital investments made on behalf of APFC resulted in significant gains when Coinbase began selling stock publicly, Swanson said.

"These investments have distributed \$67.6 million back in gains. Public records show the corporation still holds some Coinbase stock, but the value of that stock was small, about \$250,000 as of Sept. 30.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. [Alaskabeacon.com](http://Alaskabeacon.com).



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