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Wrangell will receive additional \$1.2 million in federal aid

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Adding to the millions of dollars in federal pandemic relief aid already provided to the borough, Wrangell has been notified that \$1.23 million more is on its way in a final round of assistance.

The community can use the money for pretty much anything that benefits its residents. It will be up to the borough assembly to appropriate the money.

Borough Manager Jeff Good said he expects the assembly at its March 28 meeting will discuss the possibility of putting the money toward constructing a new pipeline to move water from the upper reservoir directly into the treatment plant.

The borough already has \$2.08 million from a 2022 federal grant for the project, but the latest estimate for the work came in at \$3 million, Good said last Thursday. The additional federal pandemic relief aid could solve

the funding shortfall, eliminating the need to spend any local money.

Running a pipeline directly from the upper reservoir would resolve the current setup that requires siphoning water from the upper to the lower reservoir, which has the only pipe to the treatment plant. The project, which would make it easier to perform maintenance work at the lower reservoir and enhance dependability of the community's water supply, has been a priority for the borough.

The latest federal aid of \$1.23 million is the last piece of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. In that law, Congress appropriated \$2 billion for additional payments to eligible counties (including boroughs) and tribes nationwide spread over this year and next.

Under a debatable interpretation by the U.S. Treasury of the definition of eligible boroughs, which was challenged by the Alaska Municipal League and the state's

congressional delegation, Wrangell and three other Alaska municipalities — Sitka, Juneau and Anchorage — were excluded from the program when it was announced last fall.

Congress in December added a provision to this year's federal spending bill to fix the problem, and Treasury officials released the Alaska numbers last month.

In addition to Wrangell's \$1.23 million, spread over two federal fiscal years, Sitka will receive \$2.87 million, Juneau will get \$2.64 million and Anchorage is in line for \$453,000. The aid formula is based on the acreage of federal land within each borough and also community poverty numbers.

Last December's congressional action "resolves the errors that made it harder for those communities to access and use those funds," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski in an official statement on the budget bill.

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Legislators consider multiple PFD proposals amid growing interest to solve the problem

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

A crowded field of proposals to address the annual debate over the amount of the Permanent Fund dividend became even more so on Friday as the Senate Finance Committee proposed a new formula for setting the payment.

In the first 60 days of the 2023 legislative session, lawmakers have introduced six different proposals to set a new dividend formula in either state law or the constitution.

Four other bills or resolutions would substantially affect the amount of money available for dividends without specifically setting a new formula.

Legislators say none are likely to pass this year, but any one of the ideas being discussed now could emerge as the leader next year to fix the problem that has bedeviled the Legislature and the state for seven years.

Bills that fail to pass in the first year of the two-year legislative session remain alive for consideration in the second half.

"I think we all realize that resolving the fiscal plan, resolving the Permanent Fund dividend, is crucial," said Senate President Gary Stevens, of Kodiak. "We have an opportunity this year to do that with the cooperation of the governor and also the House. Hopefully we get to that point."

Until 2016, the state relied on a dividend distribution formula from the 1980s, one that relied on the net income of the Alaska Permanent Fund, totally detached from the state's budget situation.

When Permanent Fund earnings boomed in the 2010s, it created an odd disparity: The state was running huge budget deficits but paying large dividends.

Lawmakers worried about uncontrollable spending from the Permanent Fund weakening the savings account for future generations. In 2018, they voted to set up an annual, multibillion-dollar transfer from the Permanent Fund to the state treasury, effectively setting a withdrawal limit. The annual

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Declining revenue leaves chamber struggling to raise operating funds

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

It's been seven years since the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce operated in the black. Each year since, it's run a budget deficit covered by savings.

Declining membership renewals and falling revenues from other sources has left the organization struggling to operate, and its board is working to find funding solutions.

In 2016, the chamber's revenues totaled \$266,169 and its expenses were \$205,502, producing \$60,667 in income to add to savings. Since then, operating expenses have

been higher than income, with the nonprofit in the red thousands of dollars each year through 2020, the most recent year that IRS tax filing information is available.

The accumulated losses have cut deeply into savings.

Decreased pull-tab sales and Fourth of July fundraising are the two biggest reasons for the struggles, stemming in great part from the effects of the COVID-19 shutdown in 2020.

Brittani Robbins, executive director of the chamber, said pull-tab sales are down 50% in the past couple of years.

In its 2021 filing with the

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So close ...



PHOTO BY MARC LESTER/ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Tikigaq's Joelian Lane heads to the hoop past Wrangell's Ethan Blatchley in state tournament action last Thursday in Anchorage.

Boys varsity team wins fourth place at state tournament

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

After three days of intense play, the Wrangell High School boys varsity basketball team won fourth place in the state Division 2A championship in Anchorage. It was the first time the team went to state since 2015.

The Wolves defeated Petersburg at regionals a week earlier to secure a second-place finish, giving them a spot at state. Petersburg was selected in a wild card draw after the loss to Wrangell, also giving them a spot at state last week. In the end, Wrangell finished higher up than the Vikings.

The Wolves started the tournament against No. 3 seed Tikigaq on Thursday. Both teams took a bit to warm up and the first points weren't put on the board until senior Devlyn Campbell was fouled and made one of two free throws. Tikigaq's Benjamin Lane im-

mediately answered with a three-point basket.

In turn, senior Jacen Hay landed a three-pointer, followed by two points from sophomore Daniel Harrison. The scoring went back and forth, with the first period 21-16 for Tikigaq. The school is in Point Hope, on Alaska's North Slope.

Wrangell rebounded in the second period, taking a solid lead. The Wolves' defense held Tikigaq to only four points during the period, while Wrangell rallied, ahead 32-25 at the half. It seemed Wrangell had figured out their strategy to best the Harpooners.

But thanks to the speed and shooting accuracy of Tikigaq's Joelian Lane, the team was able to sail ahead of Wrangell, moving ahead at the end of the third period, 43-34.

Tikigaq scored first in the fourth period, using swift fakes and fast passes. Wrangell held on and

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Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Wednesday, March 22: Willa Franks, Rachel Stough.

Thursday, March 23: Vickie Winslow Amdt.

Friday, March 24: Jenika Miller.

Saturday, March 25: Ernie Campbell, Charlie Nelson, Taylor Rose Young.

Sunday, March 26: Anniversary: Tony and Kerry Byford.

Monday, March 27: None.

Tuesday, March 28: Trevor Guggenbickler.

Senior Center Menu

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

Thursday, March 23

Chicken chop suey, peach salad, steamed rice

Friday, March 24

Spaghetti with meat sauce, peas and carrots, garden salad, fry bread

Monday, March 27

Closed for Seward's Day

Tuesday, March 28

Tuna salad sandwich, broccoli and cheese soup, tossed salad

Wednesday, March 29

Egg salad sandwich, minestrone soup, fruit salad

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

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, March 24
Columbia, 3:45 p.m.
Friday, March 31
Columbia, 6:15 p.m.
Friday, April 7
Columbia, 2:45 p.m.
Monday, April 10
Columbia, 12:15 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, March 27
Columbia, 4:45 a.m.
Monday, April 3
Columbia, 5:30 a.m.
Sunday, April 9
Columbia, 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 12
Columbia, 5 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	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Mar. 22	02:02	18.7	02:20	18.3	08:03	-1.8	08:18	-1.7
Mar. 23	02:38	18.9	03:03	17.5	08:44	-2.2	08:53	-0.6
Mar. 24	03:13	18.6	03:45	16.3	09:24	-1.9	09:28	0.8
Mar. 25	03:48	17.8	04:27	14.8	10:04	-1.1	10:03	2.4
Mar. 26	04:23	16.6	05:12	13.2	10:46	0.0	10:39	3.9
Mar. 27	05:00	15.2	06:07	11.7	11:33	1.4	11:22	5.4
Mar. 28	05:47	13.8	07:25	10.6	12:30	2.6

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

WRANGELL CONVENTION and VISITOR BUREAU public meeting at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, March 23, at City Hall to introduce the draft Tourism Best Management Practices program.

FAMILY GAME NIGHT, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, March 24, at the community center. Free food and bouncy house. All are welcome. Hosted by The Salvation Army. Call for more information, 907-874-3753.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER no movie Friday. "Cocaine Bear," rated R, at 7 p.m. Saturday, March 25, and 4 p.m. Sunday, March 26. The comedy thriller runs 1 hour and 35 minutes; tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 17 (parent or guardian required).

BAHA'I NEW YEAR FESTIVAL, Naw-Ruz, 5 to 7 p.m., Saturday, March 25, at the community center. Everyone is invited for a potluck dinner, celebration and games. Contact Kay Larson (907-209-9117) if you want to share your own live music, a cooperative game or another activity for all to enjoy.

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

KINDERGARTEN enrollment is now open for the 2023-2024 school year to any child that will be 5 years old by Sept. 1, 2023. Call Kendra at 907-874-2321 or stop by the Evergreen Elementary School office.

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

LITTLE LEAGUE VOLUNTEERS needed for coaching, umpiring, scorekeeping, concessions, pitching machine runners, field upkeep and more. Volunteer applications can be picked up at the Chamber of Commerce or filled out online at <https://bit.ly/3KO1ivZ>.

LITTLE LEAGUE REGISTRATION is open for kids 4 to 16 years old until April 1; 4-year-old participants need to be accompanied by a responsible adult to all Little League games and practices. Registration fees: \$40 for a single participant; \$60 for a family. Applications can be picked up at the chamber of commerce in the Stikine Inn or filled out online with payment at <https://bit.ly/3KO1ivZ>. The season runs the first week of April through June 10.

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

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

FREE TAX RETURN PREPARATION Saturdays through April 15 at the Nolan Center. Sponsored by the AARP TaxAide Foundation. Open to all, regardless of age. IRS-certified volunteers will prepare and e-file your return at no charge. Refunds can be direct-deposited into your bank account. By appointment only. Call Paula at 907-874-3824 or 907-305-0309.

STORY TIME AT THE LIBRARY, 10 to 11 a.m. Fridays. Come enjoy the stories, crafts and snacks at the Irene Ingle Public Library. Call 907-874-3535.

VOLLEYBALL OPEN GYM, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Sundays at the community center gym until April 9. Open to 14 years and up. \$5 drop-in fee. Must bring gym shoes. For more information and to register online visit www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

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

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

March 22, 1923

The Wrangell Shellfish Cannery, F.E. Gingrass owner, started operations yesterday morning when a crew went to work picking shrimp. This new enterprise is one that is welcomed by the community, and there is every reason to believe that it will prove a financial success.

March 23, 1973

The decision on whether or not Wrangell will be selected as the site for the Forest Service administrative headquarters may not be forthcoming for about two weeks, it was learned this week. The Forest Service proposes to divide the North Tongass National Forest into two administrative areas and plans to locate the headquarters for the southern section in either Wrangell or Petersburg. Rolland Curtis of Wrangell said he spoke recently with Vincent N. Olson, supervisor for the North Tongass National Forest in Juneau. He was told by Olson that he "hopes to have a decision in about 15 days." City Manager. Herb McNabb told the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce last week that the 25 additional jobs here, should the Forest Service select Wrangell as the site for the headquarters, would mean an additional \$259,000 in annual payroll.

March 19, 1998

Wrangell fishermen were busy the latter part of last week gearing up and getting their fishing boats ready for the halibut opening, which began at noon, Sunday, March 15. Local fishermen expressed their concerns over transportation problems with the ferries, and also with federal regulations that limit their unloading time to 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. If the boat has started unloading before 6 p.m. they are allowed to finish even if it means going past 6 p.m. Also, the fisherman must call six hours prior to landing to set up a delivery time. According to the National Marine Fisheries Services in Juneau, enforcement is the reason for restricting the unloading time. The NMFS needs the six hours to be able to get to the processor to monitor the loading and unloading, if necessary. NMFS does not have the funds or manpower available to monitor 24 hours a day.

March 19, 1948

At its meeting last night at City Hall, a letter from Highway Patrolman Adolph Lubcke was read in which Mr. Lubcke made recommendations for improving the town's traffic situation. It was moved by Councilman Barlow and seconded by McCormack that the city furnish materials for street signs recommended by Highway Patrolman Lubcke and contact Superintendent George Fabricius at Wrangell Schools to see if the signs could be made by the training department.

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WEEKLY FARE SALES



FREIGHT FOR LESS

WCA to hold e-waste collection and recycling event

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Since the Wrangell Cooperative Association started offering e-waste recycling around 2016, IGAP technician Kim Wickman has been surprised to see growing demand for the service.

"We thought we would have less," she said, after a few major purges cleared most of the backlog of old electronics off the island. "But minus the COVID year, we've had a bit of a steady increase as people are realizing the importance of it. We get a lot of phone calls over the year about when our next e-waste event is."

Residents with old electronics crowding their closets and garages won't need to wait much longer. The WCA's upcoming e-waste event is scheduled for March 30 and 31 from noon to 5 p.m. and for April 1 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the WCA Cultural Center — also known as the carving shed — on Front Street.

In the past, the recycling effort was funded through donations and the Indi-

an General Assistance Program (IGAP), but this year, the WCA is charging 25 cents per pound. The proceeds will all go toward shipping and processing the collected materials.

But if the cost is prohibitive, the organization is willing to be flexible. "We're hopeful to get 25 (cents), but if people don't have it, we're not going to turn anyone away," said Wickman. "The real push is to collect as much as we can and get it off the island."

Old answering machines, audio players, cameras, CD-ROMS, computers, game consoles, modems, tablets, photocopiers, printers, radios, speakers, TVs, typewriters and video players or recorders are all eligible for recycling. "We're accepting everything with a brain or a cord," said Wickman.

One of the most common items she collects are flat-screen TVs, which have been appearing more frequently at e-waste recycling events in recent years. "Unfortunately, they don't have the life that the big tube TVs had, so they seem

to be burning up pretty quickly," she said.

There are some exceptions to the brain-and-cord rule. "White goods," including kitchen appliances like refrigerators and microwaves, are ineligible. The same goes for vacuum cleaners and medical equipment, which the drive does not have the capacity to handle.

To dispose of medical equipment, Wickman recommends reaching out to the Public Works Department to learn more about their requirements for dealing with possibly hazardous waste.

Once WCA collects materials, it will begin its complex processing and shipping procedures. "Any form of recycling in Wrangell is going to be a very hard and usually very drawn-out process," said Wickman. "With e-waste, it's very expensive to have it processed."

Laptops, for example, must be wiped clean and disposed of properly to ensure that owners' private information is safe. "We go through and depending on what it is ... we will rub it down with a

large magnet and clip any wires that are exposed."

To aid in processing, community members should remove ink or paper from their printers, snip wires and tape a piece of cardboard over any broken screens to ensure that IGAP workers don't get injured during handling.

The waste will be sent to Total Reclaim recycling center in Kent, Washington. To help Total Reclaim's workers, Wickman organizes Wrangell's e-waste into pallets by type, so that computer towers are packed on one pallet and screens on another. The recycling center will remove any valuable materials in the waste, like gold or other precious metals, then shred or melt the rest.

According to estimates from the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. businesses and consumers discarded 2.37 million tons of e-waste in 2009. Only 25% of it was recycled. The majority ended up in landfills where its valuable components could not be recovered.

Assembly considers rate increases across all enterprise funds

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

To keep pace with inflation and ensure its ability to cover future costs, the borough is considering rate increases across all enterprise funds — electric, water, port and harbors, wastewater and garbage. If the proposals are adopted, rates for the self-supporting funds would increase an average of 10%, effective with the start of the new fiscal year in July.

The borough assembly will consider the rates at its March 28 meeting.

The 15% wastewater rate increase would be the steepest rate hike; the 5.5% increase for trash pickup services would be the lowest.

The rate adjustments were proposed at a work session March 14, when assembly members met with Finance Director Mason Villarma to discuss the borough's financial sustainability. The goal of the hikes, he explained, is not to profit the borough but to ensure that it can continue providing essential services.

"The key of all this is sustainability," said Villarma. "How do we get each these enterprise funds sustainable for the next 40 years, the next 100 years, passing off the torch a little better than we received it."

Last year, the borough assembly instituted an annual review of its rates and fees. In past years, rates did not keep pace with inflation, leaving the funds insufficient to replace or repair aging infrastructure, like vacuum trucks, utility poles and the water treatment plant.

The purpose of the review is to help the borough cover its costs, decrease its reliance on federal aid and bolster its ability to afford repayment on bonds for possible major repair, rebuilding or construction in the future.

Since major improvements are needed at the wastewater utility, the fund has the highest proposed rate increase, at 15%. Residential users' monthly payments would go from \$49.30 to \$56.70, for an annual boost of \$88.74.

Three costly projects are driving the proposed rate increase. The borough needs to update sewage lift stations on Shoemaker Loop and prepare to install wastewater utilities at the former Wrangell Institute property, which the borough plans to redevelop as the Alder Top Village (Keishangita'aan) subdivision.

In addition, to comply with new federal requirements, the borough must add a disin-

fection step to its wastewater treatment processes. Current estimates place the project at around \$5 million.

"This (rate) increase gets us to be able to afford these capital expenditures," said Villarma. It would also better prepare the Public Works Department to handle emergency costs, like sewage line breaks.

The Port and Harbors fund is "the worst in terms of depreciation," Villarma said. Though Wrangell's port and harbors generate significant net income, the cost of repairing or replacing aging facilities vastly outpaces that income, forcing the borough to rely on uncertain federal funding.

"We've got to get closer to being somewhat financially independent from the state and feds. When is the faucet going to get shut off? That's what scares me," Villarma told the assembly.

Since achieving sustainability for the fund appears unlikely in the short term, he hopes to generate enough net income to handle debt service and prepare for unforeseen circumstances. "If the travel lifts go down, one or two of them

in the next five years ... we've got to have sufficient reserves to go buy them again. We can't just shut down. That's the bread and butter of the whole operation."

Under the proposed 11.1% harbor rate increase, a 58-foot stall rent would increase \$270 yearly, from \$2,434 to \$2,704. The Port Commission approved the proposal at its March 10 meeting, sending the new rates to the assembly for its consideration.

"The water fund is our worst performing enterprise fund and the biggest one that worries me in the future," said Villarma. The water fund is also facing expensive upcoming projects, such as the water treatment plant upgrades, reservoir dam stabilization project and likelihood of repairs to aging water lines.

Under the proposal, residential users would pay \$67.43 monthly, up from the current \$61.30 rate. The annual increase would total \$73.56.

The proposed electricity rate hike would be one cent per kilowatt hour, about an 8.5% increase for most residential

users and about 7.5% for most businesses.

The 5.5% proposed rate hike for garbage pickup would add \$32.74 to the annual cost for residences, allowing the fund to keep pace with inflation and contribute to the upcoming loading dock project at the trash station and the purchase of a new garbage truck.

"Mathematically, I understand all of this," said Mayor Patty Gilbert. "And I know it needs to be done. But emotionally, it's tearing at my heartstrings because I know we've all experienced this massive inflation and I don't see it getting better any time soon."

Correction

The Sentinel incorrectly reported in its March 15 edition the cost of a ticket to the KSTK art auction, planned for 6 p.m. Friday at the Nolan Center. The cost is \$25 per person.

KSTK Art Auction

Friday, March 24th
Nolan Center

Doors Open At 6, Auction Starts at 7

Tickets are \$25 and include appetizer and a ticket that can be redeemed for 1 beverage or entered into a door prize raffle.

Bid on a variety of beautiful Art - paintings, prints, ceramics, fabric art and more!

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Legislative voices of reason are talking louder

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

After years of legislative debate over the size of the Permanent Fund dividend, reasonable voices are starting to grow louder, maybe even hopefully strong enough to outvote the irresponsible catcalls for an unaffordable dividend.

It's a welcome change.

A bill in the House would restore dividend sanity by setting the free-money check at a percentage of the annual draw of Permanent Fund earnings, producing about a \$1,300 PFD this year and growing from there. That would be about equal to the average dividend of the past decade, before the election-year mega-PFD of last year.

The Senate Finance Committee was scheduled to hear a similar bill this week, also writing into state law that the dividend shall be set at 25% of the annual draw on Permanent Fund earnings.

The two proposals are known as 75/25. That's 75% of the earnings draw for public services in the budget and 25% for the PFD.

It's still early in the legislative process, with a lot more committee hearings, attempted amendments, floor votes, social media outrage and misleading and even dishonest math to come, but the fact that more legislators are stepping forward to responsibly confront the issue is encouraging.

The amount of the PFD has long dominated state politics, especially in the past seven years since then-Gov. Bill Walker in 2016 made the correct decision — though a politically fatal move — to reduce the dividend because the amount approved by legislators would have broken the bank. And neither the FDIC nor any other federal agency was going to step in and save the bank.

Since that year, lawmakers have debated the amount of the dividend until the final hours of adjournment, just as predictable as spring break-

up, the start of king salmon fishing and the first cruise ships.

The fact that fiscally responsible dividend proposals are actually being heard in committee is encouraging, particularly in Senate Finance, which is in charge of writing the state budget.

And it's somewhat encouraging that detractors, while still calling for at least a 50/50 split, have not yet convened news conferences to denounce the proposals. That doesn't mean they accept 75/25, but it's an indication that big-dividend advocates are losing strength. Freshmen comprise one-third of this year's Legislature, and many of them can do the math.

Meanwhile, oil prices are losing strength, which is a big factor in how much the state budget can afford for a long list of needs — not just the PFD.

Cratering oil prices, down about 45% since last June, may help steer more lawmakers to the reality that the state can't promise a PFD so big that the checks crowd out needed services, such as schools. Oil generally is the second-largest source of revenue for the state, after Permanent Fund earnings. It all goes into the same checkbook, and there is no overdraft protection.

The budget numbers tell us that legislators can't fund a much-needed increase in state spending on schools, rebuild the university system and state ferry fleet and fix all the roads if one-third of all general fund dollars go to the dividend, as Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposes with a PFD that would be three times the size of the 75/25 plan. His arithmetic is based on non-existent state revenues, taking more money out of the state's dwindling savings, and ignoring needs for community services.

The math of the 75/25 plan works, providing enough money for schools, community projects and a reasonable PFD. The numbers add up.

The budget numbers tell us that legislators can't fund a much-needed increase in state spending on schools, rebuild the university system and state ferry fleet and fix all the roads if one-third of all general fund dollars go to the dividend.

Boys basketball

Continued from page 1

made plenty of solid plays to begin closing the point gap, but it wasn't enough. Tikigaq won 64-51, sending the Wolves to the consolation round.

Wrangell on Friday faced the Cordova Wolverines, who had lost to No. 2 seed Metlakatla.

Cordova's Jaykob Thorne put the first points on the board, and it seemed at first the Wolverines would run away with the game, keeping Wrangell from scoring, stealing the ball and scoring again.

Wrangell's Kyan Stead quickly showed their opponents what the Wolves are made of by sinking a three-point basket, and Hay followed quickly with his own three-pointer. Team captain Ethan Blatchley made his own three-point play by landing a two-point basket, getting fouled and sinking a free throw. The first period ended with Cordova close behind, 13-10.

Both teams nailed three-pointers in the opening moments of the second period, with Thorne being a thorn in the side of the Wolves. Though Cordova kept up as much as they could,

Wrangell led at the half, 31-24.

Wrangell pulled further ahead in the second half, with younger players adding to the board. Lucas Schneider scored one point with a free throw and Boomchain Loucks hit a three-point basket. The Wolves kept up the defense, speed and accuracy to defeat Cordova, 61-47.

The final day of play on Saturday had Wrangell pitted against the Unalakleet Wolfpack, who lost to Petersburg the first day of play but beat Hooper Bay on Friday to advance and meet Wrangell in the consolation round.

It took around nearly two minutes before either team could get points on the board, with Blatchley landing two points. Unalakleet's first point came from a free throw, which Stead rebounded and answered with a three-point bucket. The end of the first period was 9-5, Wrangell.

The second period began with a series of three-pointers from Harrison, which would dictate the rest of the game, as Wrangell outscored Unalakleet continuously. Campbell, Hay and Stead all added to the points, with

Wrangell in the lead 33-17 at the halftime buzzer.

Try as they might, Unalakleet couldn't catch up to the Wolves, adding only six points in the third period, while Wrangell added 13. The period ended 46-23, Wrangell.

With a significant point spread in the fourth period, Wrangell's seniors were replaced on the hardwood with younger players, closing out their high school basketball careers. Fresh on their feet, throwing everything they had at the final opponent for the weekend, Wrangell's young squad gave a preview of the next few years of play.

Wrangell beat Unalakleet 60-31, winning fourth place at state. Unalakleet ended up in sixth. The small school is on the Bering Sea coast, southeast of Nome.

No. 1 seeded Ninilchik, from the Kenai Peninsula, went undefeated during state play, first beating Unalakleet, then Petersburg and finally Tikigaq to take the 2A state championship. Tikigaq placed second, Metlakatla third and Petersburg fifth.

EDITORIAL

Federal pandemic relief aid made big difference in Wrangell

Wrangell's economy has been in decline since long before the COVID-19 pandemic erupted three years ago. But the economy — meaning jobs, businesses and families — would be a lot worse off if not for federal assistance.

Oppose federal spending if you want, but the \$30 million or so in pandemic relief aid that the U.S. Treasury poured into Wrangell the past few years for the borough, schools, businesses, individuals and the tribal government made a huge difference in people's lives.

Criticize the IRS and income taxes if it makes you feel better, but the community received more in federal dollars the past three years than residents paid to the Treasury.

The pandemic relief aid certainly helped Wrangell get through a tough time of poor health and an ill economy.

That \$30 million total includes direct payments to individuals, extended unemployment benefits, tribal assistance payments for food and utilities through the Wrangell Cooperative Association, millions of dollars to help businesses make payroll, about \$1 million that the school district has used to help cover budget shortfalls, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in rental and mortgage assistance for more than 1 in 10 Wrangell households.

Money for the commercial fishing industry and help for nonprofit organizations also were on the list, along with millions of dollars for the borough to help cover pandemic-related costs, lost sales tax and port revenues, and a strong dose of a couple million more the community can use to repair its economy and make improvements.

The borough is looking at using the last round of federal aid dollars to help pay for improvements to the community water system, specifically a new pipeline from the upper reservoir to the water treatment plant, to ensure adequate and consistent supply.

There were not a whole lot of government strings attached to the pandemic aid dollars, particularly for the financial assistance that went to businesses, the WCA and government, other than to do good things with the cash, keep track of the money, don't waste it, and help build a better community.

To put that \$30 million or so into perspective, it's more than 60% of all the wages paid out in Wrangell in 2019, the last pandemic-free year. It's about five times the size of the school district's general fund operating budget for a year.

It's almost three times the total revenue of Wrangell's maritime industry in 2021. That includes seafood processing, commercial fishing and all the work at the Marine Service Center and other service providers.

And \$30 million is about equal to what it cost SEARHC to build the Wrangell Medical Center, which opened in the middle of the pandemic in 2021.

Just as the new hospital will have lasting benefits for the community, so too will the federal aid. At least as far as Wrangell is concerned, it was money well spent.

— Wrangell Sentinel

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

New year begins for Baha'i both as festive, spiritual time

Naw-Ruz? What is Naw-Ruz? Naw-Ruz (Persian language) is the Baha'i new year. It's the first day of the Baha'i calendar year, and one of 11 holy days for adherents of the Baha'i faith. It occurs each year on the vernal equinox on or near March 21.

Baha'u'llah (which means the Glory of God in the Persian language), the founder of the Baha'I faith, adopted this lunar calendar made up of 19 months of 19 days each and the use of Naw-Ruz as a holy day. This day follows the Baha'i month of fasting (a daily 12-hour fast for 19 days).

Baha'u'llah's son, Abdu'l Baha, (the Servant of God) explained the significance of Naw-Ruz in terms of spring and the new life it brings. He explained that the equinox is a symbol of the manifestations of God (messengers) who include Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohammed, The Bab, and

Baha'u'llah, and the message they proclaim is like a spiritual springtime, and that Naw-Ruz is used to commemorate it.

Naw-Ruz is a festive time, when Bahi's get together with family and friends to celebrate. Usually, there is a potluck dinner, a brief program to commemorate the holy day. There is also singing, reading from the writings, prayers and games for all.

Abdu'l Baba wrote, "The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir yourself, and magnify before the entire creation, the name of God. And celebrate God's praise, in such wise that all created things may be generated and made new."

The new year begins once more, with Baha'is striving to fulfill their purpose for being, "to know God, love God, and to help create an ever-advancing civilization."

— Karen Morse

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Pandemic aid

Continued from page 1

The original distribution list last year included the Ketchikan Gateway Borough at \$4.1 million, Petersburg at \$1 million and Haines at \$621,000. The total distribution in Alaska came in at \$27 million, before the congressional action that produced \$7.2 million for Wrangell,

Sitka, Juneau and Anchorage.

The money can be used for "any governmental purpose" except lobbying. It's the last batch of federal aid payments that began with the start of the pandemic in 2020.

Alaska Municipal League Executive Director Nils Andreassen suspected the Treasury Department was

confused about Alaska's borough form of government, rather than traditional counties, particularly unified city-and-borough municipalities such as Wrangell. However, several municipalities nationwide were also left off last year's list. The National Association of Counties, National League of Cities and other local governments joined Alaska in advocating for the change.

PFD legislation

Continued from page 1

draw goes toward dividends and public services in the budget.

That transfer, worth more than \$3 billion, is the state's largest source of general-purpose revenue, more important than oil taxes to the state budget.

Most proposals for a new Permanent Fund dividend formula involve splitting that transfer in some way, reserving part for dividends and part for public services.

In 2021, Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposed a 50-50 split, half for dividends and half for services, though his current draft budget relies on the obsolete 1980s formula to set the dividend.

That 1980s' formula, if it were used today, would consume about 71% percent of the earnings transfer in the fiscal year that begins July 1. Balancing the budget in that scenario would require steep budget cuts, spending from savings or abrupt tax increases. The governor proposed spending from savings to cover the gap; key lawmakers have said they're unwilling to do that.

For the past seven years, ever since then-Gov. Bill Walker vetoed half of the payment called for under the old formula, legislators and governors have set the dividend by political negotiation during the budget process.

Disagreements over the proper size have dragged out the state's annual budget process, sometimes taking the state to the brink of a government shutdown. Those same disagreements have stymied efforts to set a new formula.

In 2021, a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators created the framework of a plan to resolve the debate.

They concluded that the Legislature should work toward a 50-50 split, a constitutionally guaranteed dividend, adopt a "a broad-based revenue measure" — a term frequently used as a euphemism for tax increases — work toward budget cuts and tighten the state's spending cap.

"There is a financial or fiscal problem we're trying to solve, and there's a political problem sitting on top of it," said Rep. Ben Carpenter, a Niskiski Republican. "The fiscal policy

working group report is an attempt to solve both of those."

In the House Ways and Means Committee, which Carpenter chairs, lawmakers have been discussing various concepts for a new formula, including one that would set the PFD at \$1,000, and a bill from Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz that would split the annual draw on Permanent Fund earnings with 25% for the PFD and 75% for services. That would produce a dividend this year of about \$1,300.

Anchorage Sen. Bill Wielechowski has proposed one in a constitutional amendment for a 50-50 split, which would generate a PFD at about \$2,700 per recipient this year but also would push the state into a budget deficit.

Several legislators and the House Ways and Means Committee have independently proposed constitutional amendments guaranteeing a dividend paid according to an as-yet-unwritten formula in state law. Putting the guarantee in the constitution would require legislators to follow the formula, whatever it is, though they could change the formula if it proves ineffective.

The House Ways and Means Committee also proposed an amendment guaranteeing a 50-50 dividend or a dividend paid using the 1980s' formula, whichever is higher.

Changing attitudes and interests are contributing to a new picture and giving some lawmakers hope that a solution can be found. At the recent Anchorage Town Hall meeting, none of the attendees in a standing-room-only auditorium suggested that the dividend was a top priority.

"It's really concerning where our state is headed, and people want to see something talked about other than just the size of the dividend," said House Minority Leader Calvin Schrage, of Anchorage.

The Senate Finance Committee was scheduled to hold a hearing on its plan on Tuesday. The House Ways and Means Committee has not yet scheduled its next dividend-related hearing.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.

Chamber finances

Continued from page 1

state, the chamber reported about \$85,000 in net income from pull-tabs and the Fourth of July fundraising raffle, after prizes and expenses. Most of the net income was from the Fourth raffle ticket sales.

Pull-tabs are used as fundraisers by Alaska nonprofits, selling for \$1 apiece, with payouts generally anywhere from \$1 to \$500 for winning tickets, depending on the games.

After expenses and paying out prizes, the chamber makes 70% of what's left from the sale of pull-tabs, whereas the sellers, Totem Bar, Rayme's and the Marine, make 30%.

Aaron Powell, owner of the Totem Bar, said he used to sell pull-tabs for three nonprofits, including the chamber, but business is down since the pandemic.

"Business this winter is a lot slower than it was in the past, so it's definitely a part of it," he said. "The pull-tab guys are pretty regular. They'll come in, have a beer and get pull-tabs, but business for the bar is slower."

Powell said he hears from customers and other residents that they can't spend as much as they used to and are dealing with tighter budgets. "Every day, some customers will mention the cost of freight going up."

In another declining source of revenue for the chamber, membership renewals are

running at only about 64%, Robbins said. "The community is struggling and so are our businesses," she said. "We can't change inflation or an economic recession."

The chamber's annual royalty contest raises funds to pay for the next year's Fourth of July celebration. Last year's fundraising raffle ticket sales totaled \$56,260. The chamber needs about an additional \$30,000 to cover costs associated with the event. In 2016, \$126,408 was raised, the highest ever.

Fewer people are signing up to compete in the royalty contest by selling raffle tickets. Only one ran last year.

"Having one or two contestants doesn't make for a strong fundraiser," Robbins said.

To help compensate for the funding shortfall from 2022, the chamber is selling hoodies and other swag, and holding a raffle with a prize of \$10,000. Tickets are \$50 each.

Robbins said the lack of funds could mean a "change-up" in the chamber's two employed positions and a scaled back fireworks display during the Fourth of July festivities.

"We're going to see differences," she said. "I don't think we're going to see anything huge. ... We're still planning on fireworks, hopefully. That's our most expensive endeavor."

Fireworks have averaged \$9,000 to \$12,000 in costs each year. The Wrangell Fire Department sets up and runs the display, and Fire Chief Tim Bunness said the department

still plans on doing the same this year.

At its board meeting last week, the chamber scheduled a work session meeting for 2 p.m. Friday in the Stikine Inn, next to the chamber office to the left and down the hall from the front desk. The board

will discuss ways to raise additional funds, including asking businesses to sponsor different Fourth events. Robbins said the public is encouraged to attend to give input.

"I'm not big on the idea of failure," Robbins said.

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizen."

the Bahá'í Faith

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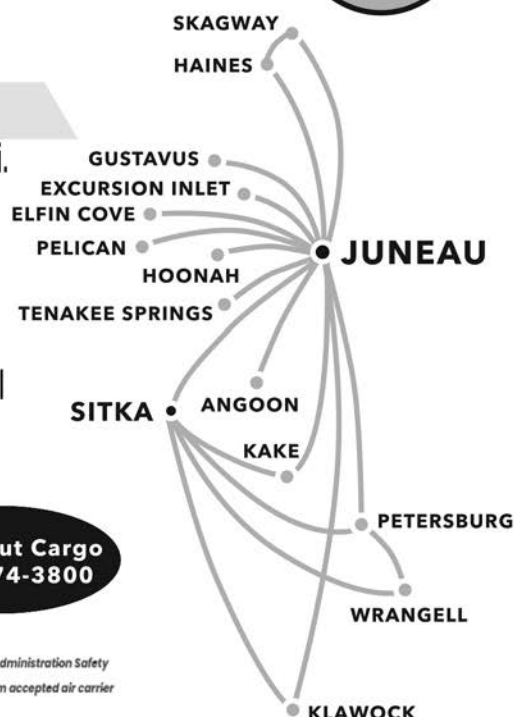
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Wrangell readers recommend a wide range of favorite books

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

National Reading Month is in its final week, and some of the community's literature lovers are sharing their favorite books for anyone who wants to add to their list — this month, or any month.

The month was first celebrated in March of 1994 to commemorate the contributions of author and illustrator Dr. Seuss, who helped foster enthusiasm for reading in American youth by producing children's books that were engaging despite their simple language. Every year in March, readers celebrate by picking up their favorite novels, visiting their local libraries, starting book clubs and swapping recommendations.

Local poet Vivian Faith Prescott savored "The End of Drum Time," by Hanna Pylväinen, in small portions, one or two chapters at a time. She didn't want the story to end. "It was one of those books where you close the book and you sit with the story and you realize that this is a book that changes you," Prescott said.

The 2023 novel is a love story between a Lutheran minister's daughter and a native Sámi reindeer herder in a remote village on the Scandinavian tundra. Its title, Prescott explained, is taken from a historical text about Christian missionar-

ies in Scandinavia and their attempts to convert the Sámi.

"(Missionaries) made it illegal to have drums and practice their religion," she said. The book, which takes place in 1851, depicts "a clash of cultures and religions. It follows characters in a small town in Finland during this time where the people were being forced to go from a nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary lifestyle."

But Prescott wasn't only drawn to the novel's historical context — she "fell in love with (Pylväinen's) sentences." While reading, she felt like her reality was suspended and she was immersed in a world of negative-40 winters, sparking snows and herds of reindeer.

Anna Tollfeldt, development director at KSTK, recommends Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Braiding Sweetgrass" to anyone and everyone. "I think that everybody should read it ... no matter what walk of life you're in," Tollfeldt said. "I think it's an important book."

In this 2013 nonfiction work, Kimmerer draws on her background as a biologist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation to lead readers toward a more meaningful connection with the natural world. Using a combination of scientific knowledge and indigenous wisdom, Kimmerer demonstrates how people can develop a reciprocal relationship with

the ecosystems they inhabit.

"Her writing is just beautiful," said Tollfeldt. "It's poetic, colorful. I couldn't help but feel like I was there with what she was describing. ... Every chapter had something to offer." When she gets a chance between work and school, she plans to read some of Kimmerer's other books, like "Gathering Moss" from 2003.

When she was a senior in high school, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Brittani Robbins couldn't decide on a book for her school project on multi-cultural literature. Her dad, a big John Grisham fan, recommended Grisham's 2001 novel "A Painted House," which remains a favorite of Robbins' to this day.

Though Grisham is known for his page-turning legal thrillers, the kind that populate airport bookstores, "A Painted House" is a departure from his typical fare. Inspired by his childhood in rural Arkansas, it chronicles the struggles of a cotton-farming family in the 1950s through the eyes of its youngest son, Luke Chandler. Because of their low social class, the Chandler home has never been painted.

"It was probably one of the only non-crime, non-thriller novels he's ever written," said Robbins. "That's part of what made it so unique."

The novel provided Robbins with a

window into another time and way of life. "It takes place in the South," she said. "I was just feeling like, 'wow, this is so interesting and so telling and so culturally different. ... I do really enjoy learning about other cultures.'"

When she was in elementary school, Tracey Curtis spent a whole summer reading virtually nonstop, from the entire Nancy Drew series to the Hardy Boys books to the Black Stallion saga. Her dedication won her the Irene Ingle Public Library's summer reading prize. Now Curtis is based in Oregon, but the love for reading that she developed growing up in Wrangell has continued in her adult life. The same is true for her love of mysteries.

Agatha Christie's 1937 detective novel "Death on the Nile" is one of Curtis' all-time favorites. Investigator Hercule Poirot, a dignified and fastidious little man with a distinctive mustache, boards a steamer ship at the request of a wealthy socialite, who wants him to prevent her former friend from stalking her. When murder and mayhem ensue onboard, Poirot must summon his detective skills and crack the case.

"It has some romance, some mystique, some mystery — you don't really find out until the end," said Curtis. "She's a stunning author."

Large increase in state funding for schools clears its first legislative committee this year

By IRIS SAMUELS
Anchorage Daily News

The Senate Education Committee on March 13 advanced a bill to increase state funding for public schools, clearing the bill's first legislative hurdle.

The bill to increase the base student allocation, the per-student formula used to calculate school funding, heads next to the Senate Finance Committee.

The Senate bipartisan majority has named increasing public school funding as one of their top goals for the legislative session, and the measure has support from a broad coalition of education advocacy groups who are warning that districts will be forced to close schools or cut programs without a sizable boost to state funding.

Senate Education Committee Chair Sen. Löki Tobin of Anchorage has said she worked with members of the governor's administration and the state House to build support for the policy before advancing it out of her committee.

A controversial education policy proposed by Gov. Mike Dunleavy earlier this month has been called a "distraction" by advocates of a school funding increase, who worry the governor's proposal could take the focus away from the looming budget crisis many school districts have forecast.

Even if the Senate bill clears the remaining

hurdles in that chamber — as it is expected to do — it faces pushback from some members of the mostly Republican House majority, who have questioned the validity of the years-old formula used to calculate public school funding and have shown more openness to Dunleavy's policy proposals.

The Senate's bill would increase the base student allocation by \$1,000 for the 2023-2024 school year, which would translate to an increase of \$257 million in state spending on K-12 education.

The measure would produce more than \$600,000 in additional state funding for Wrangell schools, a significant increase for the district's operating budget of about \$5 million. The Wrangell School District has been using federal pandemic relief aid and savings to balance its budget the past few years.

The state funding formula has not increased in six years.

The Senate bill would increase the funding formula the following year too, for an additional boost of \$89 million in state spending — and another \$200,000 or so for Wrangell each year.

The measure would also create new reporting requirements for school districts, which Tobin has said could make the bill more palatable to Dunleavy and conservative House members who have pushed for increased accountability measures for school districts.

Obituary

Randy Churchill Jr. started running his first boat at 13

Randy William Churchill Jr., 39, of Wrangell, passed away on Feb. 22, 2023, after a logging accident.

Randy was born on Dec. 27, 1983, to Carol and Randy Churchill Sr. at Wrangell General Hospital. After graduating from Wrangell High School in 2002 he went on to study welding at the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) in Seward, and graduated in May 2003 with welding technology and pipe welding technology certificates.

After graduating, Randy started his first welding job in Bellingham Washington, and later moved back to Wrangell, where he had a small welding business. "Randy was a fisherman. He started at 13 running his first boat and eventually became one of the best hand trollers and longliners in Wrangell," his family wrote.

In 2004, "Randy married the



RANDY WILLIAM CHURCHILL JR.

love of his life, Celsee Churchill," in Paradise Cove. "Randy and Celsee eventually started a family and had three beautiful children," Randy Churchill III, Della Churchill and Titan Churchill.

Randy was preceded in death by his grandmother, Johanna Rinehart, and grandfather Chet Powell Sr. He is survived by his parents, Randy and Carol Churchill Sr.; siblings Letitia Benson, Harry Churchill and Christy Good; his wife, Celsee; and children Randy, Della and Titan; along with many aunts, uncles and cousins.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in care of First Bank in Wrangell.

A memorial service for Randy was held March 5 at Wrangell's Harbor Light Church.

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SENTINEL SPORTS

Wrangell AAU girls team nets first place at home tournament

Sentinel staff

While the high school state championship tournament in Anchorage was attracting a lot of hoopla, the Stikine Hoops Invitational was netting plenty of its own excitement back home, including a big win.

Team Wrangell Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Girls Basketball Club hosted teams from Petersburg, Ketchikan and Juneau and won first place in the A Team category over the weekend.

Three teams competed in each the A and B divisions, which were set up as a round-robin, double-elimination bracket. Wrangell and Ketchikan had teams in both the A and B divisions, while Juneau had a team in the A division and Petersburg had a team in the B division.

The tournament was originally planned for Thursday through Saturday, but travel delays kept Ketchikan from getting to Wrangell until Friday, condensing play into two days instead.

Wrangell's A team placed first in their division, with Ketchikan in second place and Juneau in third. Ketchikan's B team placed first in their division, while Petersburg won second and Wrangell won third.

The winning teams each received a trophy, certificate and shirt for the players and coaches.

Along with the tournament games, there was a three-point shooting competition, which was won by Lorraine Zapanta of Ketchikan. A free-throw shooting competition was won by Devyn Flint of Petersburg. Each received a medal.

An all-tourney game was played in each division, comprised of

players from each team in the division. The members of the all-tourney A team were Alana Harrison, Sydnie Young and Alexis Easterly of Wrangell; Kanita Kaljisi and Lorraine Zapanta of Ketchikan; and Cassie Chenowith of Juneau. The B team was comprised of Evelyn Robbins, Rylee Lynch and Cereneti Buendia of Ketchikan; Cadence Flint and Mette Miller of Petersburg; and AJ Roundtree of Wrangell.

AAU team players are middle-school age girls, and each game is divided into two 20-minute halves.

Everyone that helped set up and work the tournament were volunteers and parent-volunteers, said Wrangell AAU coordinator Penny Allen.

"Between running the clock, keeping scorebooks, refereeing, running concessions, printing tournament shirts and manning the entry table, there were 184 time slots of an hour and 20 minutes each that were filled," she said, which equated to 245 volunteer hours. "And that is just for the game times. There were countless hours put into organizing it, and time spent by other community members involved in housing teams, getting the gyms ready, cleaning up afterward, and just lending a hand where needed."

Thirty-eight local sponsors helped support the event. Allen said the number of sponsors and people who turned out to help that aren't related to the players shows the community's strong support.

Wrangell's AAU teams are scheduled to compete at the Mike Jackson Memorial Tournament in Juneau this Wednesday through Saturday.



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Amura Roher (24) dribbles the ball down the court with a Ketchikan player and Kaiya Roher (45) in pursuit during a B team game last Saturday in Wrangell.

Kake varsity boys cap undefeated season with 1A state championship

JOSH REED

Anchorage Daily News

The last time the Kake high school boys basketball team appeared in a state championship game was more than two decades ago.

The team was competing in Division 2A and current head coach Anthony Ross, who went by Anthony Dolan at the time, was on the team that came up short in a 10-point loss to Angoon in the 2000 state title game.

In its first trip back to big stage since the turn of the century, Kake ended a nearly four-decade title drought by blowing out the Aniak Halfbreeds 67-49 in Division 1A play on Saturday afternoon at the Alaska Airlines Center in Anchorage.

The last time the Kake Thunderbirds won a state title was in 1987.

"It feels amazing to make history," senior Ethan Kadake said.

Last year, Kake was in position to potentially end the title drought after qualifying for the 2022 1A state tournament, but after the whole team came down with COVID-19 they weren't able to make the journey to Anchorage for a chance to compete.

Winning state this year "completely made up for everything," Ross said.

The resounding win against Aniak marked the team's 24th straight victory. "Going undefeated was just icing on the cake," the coach said.

After having to come from behind late in the fourth quarter the night before to beat Tri-Valley and keep their record unblemished and championship

hopes alive, the Thunderbirds were expecting a more competitive game. But thanks to Kadake and his 25 first-half points, they were able to coast to victory against Aniak.

Even though Kadake didn't join his four teammates on the all-tournament team, he did receive player of the game honors. In the final game of his prep ca-

reer, the senior finished with a game-high 31 points.

"It feels amazing to come out and play in front of all my family and friends that paid lots of money to come here," he said. "It felt good to get MVP of the game that mattered." Kake has a population of about 500 people.

The whole experience was especially meaningful for Ross,

who got to help his son, Dominic, a member of the team, reach a goal that he fell short of reaching 23 years ago.

Being on the journey with his father has been a dream come true. "It's been amazing," Dominic Ross said. "We hoop at night, we hoop in the morning, and we hoop at lunchtime."

As a junior, he can't wait to get

back to work and prepare to defend the title, and his father hopes that this triumph will be the first of many championships to come.

"There was a standard set in Kake for a long time to being winners and being state champions," Anthony Ross said. "I think we set the new standard of being a state champion and also being undefeated."

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Mini Mart gets new ownership ahead of busy summer season

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Alesa McHolland is having a surreal life moment.

While waiting to receive freight on March 15, the new co-owner of the former Alpine Mini Mart never quite expected to be where she is.

"It's kind of surreal because I never thought anything like this would happen," she said. "I never thought I would have enough assets to do this kind of thing. When you work in Wrangell, there aren't a lot of options for jobs."

On March 8, McHolland and her husband Wayne signed the papers and became the new owners of the establishment, which they renamed TK's Mini Mart.

Before taking over, McHolland worked for the previous owners, Steven and Cori Prunella, for about two years. She worked at the Wrangell Police Department for 10 years before coming to work for the Prunellas. However, before that, she worked for C&E Bradley for five years, the company that owned the mini mart before the Prunellas bought it in 2002.

In the summer of 2022, she said the Prunellas announced their plans to sell the Zimovia Highway business.

"(Wayne) was surprised," after she told him about the plans to sell the business, McHolland said. "All I did was mention they were selling it. I didn't suggest buying it or anything."

Wayne McHolland, the lead operator



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Alesa McHolland, the new co-owner of TK's Mini Mart, formerly known as Alpine Mini Mart, waits to serve customers one week into taking over operations.

for the Wrangell water plant, ruminated on the idea of buying it and the couple decided to move forward with the plan.

"We had thought about selling Alpine for about six months but never advertised it," said Cori Prunella. She said after the McHollands expressed interest in purchasing the business, "it moved fast from there."

Other than the name, the only change McHolland said they are planning is to

attach the storage area to the main building. Right now, inventory is held in containers across the parking lot from the mini mart. Having an attached storage would make restocking inventory easier.

"So far, that's the only thing we've talked about changing ... to make it easier on our employees," she said.

Along with Alesa McHolland working in the store, two other employees help run

things: Avril Rhoades, who has been there almost a year, and Joe Hommel Jr., who has worked there almost three years.

As the summer season approaches, the new owners anticipate they will extend their hours "because it doesn't make sense not to have longer hours when everybody is running around," which will require more employees. "It's a little easier because you get a lot of college students who don't want to be here in the winter," McHolland said.

During the off-season, the average number of customers ranges from 150 to 170 per day. In the summer months, that number can get as high as a few hundred, McHolland said. They see an uptick in traffic for people going out the highway to camp or recreate, so they stop in for supplies, buying everything from one or two snacks to grocery bags full of items. The most popular item, she said, are energy drinks, with all other beverages coming in second.

There is plenty of room to expand inventory, she said, and they welcome suggestions as to what customers would like to see them carry.

Prunella said she will miss the people she would see every day and running the mini mart.

"It was great to build something that you love and put your heart into," she said. "It's definitely been bittersweet to be done, but it's time for new owners to take the reins."

Ferry system short more than 100 crew to put Kennicott to work

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The Alaska Marine Highway System is short more than 100 new crew to safely and dependably put the Kennicott to sea. Without enough onboard workers, the state ferry system will start the summer schedule in six weeks with its second-largest operable ship tied up for lack of crew.

Though management has said they could put the Kennicott into service if they can hire enough new employees, filling all the vacancies would represent more than a 20% gain in current ferry system crew numbers, setting a very high hurdle to untie the ship this summer.

The state would also need to wait on Coast Guard licensing and onboard training before they could use the new crew to operate the ferry.

Without the Kennicott, there will be no service this summer to Prince Rupert, British Columbia, a popular and lower-cost option for travelers to connect with the highway system rather than the much longer and more expensive run to Bellingham, Washington.

The crew shortage is extensive and has lasted more than two years as resignations and retirements have exceeded the count of new hires.

With the Matanuska out of service for millions of dollars of extensive steel repairs and asbestos abatement work, the rest of the fleet's crew requirement comes to 496, plus a 20% buffer, totaling 595, reported Department of Transportation spokesman Sam Dapceвич in an email on Saturday.

Currently, there are approximately 450 crew positions filled, he said.

The 20% buffer allows for sick leave and other absences, and to avoid overtime and holding crew for double shifts to keep the ships running.

"If we remove the Kennicott and Tazlina from the mix (as currently planned), the crew requirement drops to 383, plus a 20% buffer, for a total crew need of 459," Dapceвич explained. That matches the ferry system's current summer schedule, which will hold the two vessels out of service for lack of crew.

Even without the Kennicott and Tazlina on the job, the state is "approximately nine positions short of an ideal crewing level for the ships that are operating," Dapceвич said.

That shortage would jump to more than 100 crew if the ferry system wanted to return the Kennicott to ser-

vice, with an adequate buffer of employees to cover all contingencies, he said.

Running the system without a crew buffer "could be compared to driving the Dalton Highway (North Slope Haul Road) without a spare tire."

The Alaska Marine Highway System continues to recruit new applicants "through job and career fairs, targeted social media advertisements, union halls, maritime academies and more," Dapceвич said. "We are also ... making it possible for entry-level hires to start drawing a paycheck right away, rather than losing recruits while they wait for U.S. Coast Guard credentials to come through."

The onshore employee count at ferry terminals and operations offices is not as stressed as onboard staffing levels. The ferry system had 20 of 148 shoreside positions vacant as of last week, Dapceвич said.

However, several of those vacancies are in middle-to upper-level management positions at the system's Ketchikan headquarters, acting general manager Tony Karvelas reported to the Alaska Marine Highway Operations board on Friday.

The office has lost nine people since the start of the calendar year, Karvelas told the public advisory board.

Call for Proposals to Change Federal Subsistence Hunting and Trapping Regulations Deadline: April 12, 2023

The Federal Subsistence Board is accepting proposals through April 12, 2023 to change Federal regulations for the subsistence harvest of wildlife on Federal public lands for the 2024-2026 regulatory years.

Submit proposals by any of the following methods:

Electronically: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <https://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter Docket number FWS-R7-SM-2022-0105. Then, click on the Search button. On the resulting page, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, check the Proposed Rule box to locate this document. You may submit a comment (proposal) by clicking on "Comment."

By mail: Submit by U.S. mail or hand delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R7-SM-2022-0105; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: PRB (JAO/3W); Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

At Council Meetings: You may deliver a hard copy to the Designated Federal Official attending any of the Council public meetings.

You may call the Office of Subsistence Management at 800-478-1456 or email subsistence@fws.gov with your questions.



State recommends transgender girls be excluded from girls sports

By IRIS SAMUELS
AND SEAN MAGUIRE
Anchorage Daily News

In an unannounced move, the State Board of Education unanimously passed a resolution March 14 that urges the Alaska Department of Education to limit the participation of transgender girls in girls school sports.

The resolution, which is non-binding, encourages the department to adopt a policy that would ban transgender girls from competing alongside girls who are cisgender — meaning their gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth — in school sports. The resolution asks the department to create two sports divisions: one exclusively for students whose sex assigned at birth is female, and another that would be open to all students of all genders.

The resolution was added unexpectedly to the agenda, on the tail end of the board's three-day meeting in Juneau, which con-

cluded March 16.

Billy Strickland, executive director of the Alaska School Activities Association, said the resolution closely mirrors a policy he discussed with members of Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy's administration last month. Strickland said members of the governor's administration approached him to discuss banning transgender athletes from competing alongside cisgender athletes altogether, with the idea of creating three divisions: one for girls, one for boys and one coed division that could accommodate transgender athletes.

Strickland said there aren't enough transgender athletes for a third division. He said that in his nine years directing the organization that oversees high school sports in Alaska, he has heard of only one transgender athlete, but he also said that the association does not track the number of transgender athletes in the state.

Spokespeople for the governor's office declined to respond to a list of emailed questions, including whether Dunleavy instructed the Department of Education to adopt the policy outlined in the board's resolution.

"The governor believes ... girls playing in single-sex leagues should be playing against other girls. It is age and sex, not gender-identity, that divide athletics into competitive categories. If a person who was born a male but feels out of place playing a sport in a league with boys only due to their gender identity, the solution isn't to allow them to compete against girls, but to increase co-ed opportunities," a spokesman for the governor said by email.

Under existing regulations, it is up to individual school boards and districts to adopt and implement policies pertaining to transgender athletes' participation in school sports. Most districts don't have a policy at all, and only the Matanuska-Susitna School District board has adopted rules limiting the participation of transgender athletes in teams that align with their gender identity, Strickland said.

It took a full day after the state board meeting for the department to distribute its resolution

Policy for Letters to the Editor

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

The Sentinel reserves the right to edit any submissions.

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

WRANGELL SENTINEL

Letters are run on a space-available basis.

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Ph: 907-874-2301 • wrgsent@gmail.com

Continued on page 12

Senior gets dressed up and fired up for graduation project

BY MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Vying for state titles in three different sports is behind him, but Ethan Blatchley still has to blaze a trail to finish his senior project before he graduates.

And though training and competing in cross country, wrestling and basketball might have been challenging, he faces his biggest challenge yet: Dressing up like a dalmatian and teaching fire safety to kids. There is no medal for this kind of bravery.

Blatchley will aid the Wrangell Fire Department in its annual safety training for elementary school students while wearing the Sparky the Dog costume. Sparky is the mascot for the National Fire Protection Association. He got the idea for the project from his mom, Fire Capt. Dorianne Sprehe.

The safety presentation is usually held in October, but due to Blatchley's busy sports schedule and the travel involved, Sprehe said they are waiting until April.

"Historically, the kiddos will come up to the fire hall for a presentation, and we'll walk through what the fire department is about," she said. "Then we talk about how to keep themselves and their family safe."

Kids will learn about things like stop, drop and roll, checking doors to see if they are hot, having an exit route and meeting place, and what to say when calling 911, among other things.

A safety trailer is used to simulate a house fire that kids can escape from, adding a practical application on what they've learned.

"You have to get real low and cov-



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Senior Ethan Blatchley will turn to his graduation project, helping conduct fire safety presentations to elementary school students, now that his high school sports career is completed.

er your mouth with these clothes that they have in there, then escape through a window," Blatchley said, remembering when he was an elementary student and went through the safety class.

Along with being Sparky and demonstrating what the kids have to do, he will be charged with calling the school and scheduling each class

for their fire department field trip. Whereas younger grades learn all the basics, fourth and fifth grade students will also learn about the use of fire extinguishers and cooking safety.

Each safety course for the kids will take about an hour and 15 minutes, Sprehe said, but her son will also have to complete the training course that will allow him to present the ma-

terial. It will add up to the 20 hours he needs to fulfill the senior project time requirement.

Sprehe has been running the safety course for many years, long enough that Blatchley isn't her first child to help her out. In the middle of a group, she had to leave on an emergency call. Her older son was dressed as Sparky, but couldn't speak — one of the rules when playing the mascot.

"(Ethan's) older brother actually took over for me (one year)," she said. "He was here, volunteering to be Sparky. He did the rest of the presentation with his hands and did a phenomenal job."

Blatchley hasn't tried on the Sparky costume yet, so he's unsure of how hot the task might be, but he has tried on the head of Wolfie, Wrangell High School's mascot.

After he graduates, he plans on attending Western Welding Academy in Gillette, Wyoming, to become a certified welder. He will practice that trade for a year or so, then he plans to become a certified electrician.

"Last year I was in welding class and I always thought stick welding is fun and the electrician thing is good to know," Blatchley said.

He will miss the friends he's seen almost every day for the past 18 years, and playing the sports he loves.

"That's going to be different ... going from three sports a year down to nothing," he said. "I'll go up to the basketball court every once in a while to mess around, but that's about it."

What won't he miss about school?

"Having to ask to go to the bathroom," he said.

Workshop will teach how to advocate for federal subsistence rules

BY CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

The federal subsistence management program aims to protect rural Alaskans' subsistence lifestyle while maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations on federal lands. However, this multi-agency governmental apparatus can be daunting for rural residents to navigate. Representatives of the Wrangell Cooperative Association, U.S. Forest Service and Sitka Conservation Society are partnering to bring a workshop to the community, intended to empower residents to engage with the complexities of the Federal Subsistence Board process.

Attendees will learn about state and federal regulations, how to write a proposal to the board that regulates fish and game on federal lands and waters in Alaska, how to raise concerns regarding subsistence resources in their communities and more.

"There aren't a lot of opportunities for folks to be able to learn these systems," said Ashley Bolwerk, subsistence fish biologist for the Forest Service. "A lot of folks find this process very intimidating. The intimidat-

ion factor is the biggest barrier we're trying to break down."

The workshop will be held 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. April 2 in the Nolan Center. Bolwerk and Heather Bauscher of the Sitka Conservation Society will host the event. Attendance is free and no registration is required.

Before the workshop begins, there will be a potluck meal at 1 p.m., so people planning to attend the potluck should bring a dish to share.

The first hour will be a presentation that outlines "the nuts and bolts of the process," said Bolwerk. "If you can only come to one hour, come to this one." The remaining three hours will give attendees the opportunity to ask questions and build their skills while participating in a variety of activities. This time will be informal, interactive and discussion-based. "Four hours of presentations would kill anybody," she said.

Bolwerk and Bauscher encourage residents to drop in and out of the workshop at their convenience — attendees are not obligated to attend for the full four hours.

The management process is a "wonder of inter-agency cooperation," Bauscher said. When

she attended her first Federal Subsistence Board meeting seven years ago, she was amazed at the opportunity to see change happening in real time. "I don't think there's anywhere else in the country where an individual can have this much say about how resources are managed."

Alaska residents have tremendous power, she explained, but they have to know how to harness it. That's where the workshops come in — the goal is to drive public participation and give Southeast residents the tools to make their voices heard.

The pair already presented the workshop in Sitka in February and will visit other Southeast communities including Petersburg and Kake before their presentation in Wrangell next

month.

At the Sitka workshop, they received positive feedback from members of the federal regional advisory council and local Alaska Department of Fish and Game advisory committee who were "really excited for the opportunity for lots of communities all over Southeast to be able to engage."

The Federal Subsistence Board process was set up after the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. This legislation represented a new approach to federal Indian policy. It eliminated Alaska Native land claims in the state, paying almost \$1 billion and authorizing the transfer of 45 million acres of federal lands to newly created for-profit regional and

village corporations that Native people would hold shares in.

The act "effectively removed fishing and harvest rights of tribes," said Bolwerk, but "there was this understanding that subsistence as a way of life would be provided for in that agreement."

Subsequent legislation set up the federal subsistence management program to ensure that subsistence rights are protected, particularly when fish and game resources are limited and harvests need to be reduced. The program was designed to "make sure that folks who are practicing subsistence and live in rural communities have access to these resources," she said. "Rural communities rely on this way of life."

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House committee holds first hearing on governor's parental-rights bill

BY MARK SABBATINI
Juneau Empire

The first legislative hearing on Gov. Mike Dunleavy's proposal to restrict discussion of sex and gender in schools included testimony from only two invited public guests, both supportive of the measure.

The bill, which Senate leaders say is unlikely to pass that

chamber, got enthusiastic backing from those invited to testify during the House Education Committee meeting March 13. Aside from two top state Department of Education officials who provided details of the bill, testimony was limited to two retired teachers supportive of conservative causes who invoked their religious faith in advocating for the bill.

"Schools should not be a place where the teachers are pressuring students against their morals, or spiritual upbringing," said Kristine Gugel, a Chugiak resident who has taught public school, homeschooled her children and been a faith-based drug recovery counselor for female prison inmates. "Schools should not be a place of indoctrination on matters of deviant sexual identity, or behavior, or other such sensitive matters."

The governor's proposals, House Bill 105 (and its companion Senate Bill 96), contains similarities — and some differences — to the so-called "don't say gay" law enacted in Florida last year and being considered by Republican-led political bodies in numerous other states.

Dunleavy's proposal prohibits sex and gender discussions before the fourth grade, requires parental permission for such discussions for other grades, requires written parental permission for a child to be addressed by a different name or pronoun and requires students to use locker rooms and restrooms according to their biological sex.

While key members of Alaska's Republican-led House majority are supportive of the bill — including Educa-

tion Committee Chairperson Jamie Allard, an Eagle River Republican — Senate President Gary Stevens, a Kodiak Republican, said there does not appear to be enough support in the upper chamber's majority caucus of nine Democrats and eight Republicans to pass the bill.

Meanwhile, the legislation is scheduled for further consideration by the House Education Committee.

One comment during the House committee hearing on March 13 that advocates on both sides agree with is that focusing on gender pronouns and such issues distracts from more important educational priorities.

"It's sad to think we've allowed our youth to diminish their value of who they are to a pronoun or what they perceive as their sexuality," said Lisa Stewart, a retired teacher in Wasilla. "When did our sexuality become our identity? Our sexuality is merely a sliver of who we really are."

But while opponents of what Dunleavy calls a parental-rights bill argue it inhibits a youth's freedom of self-determination and ability to confide in educators without risk of harm from parents, Gugel and Stewart

echoed the arguments of supporters who said parents should be fully informed about their children's mental and physical status.

"They know their child best, and they alone have the God-given responsibility for the morals, spiritual, and sexual and medical condition of their children, and they alone will answer for these things as they carry out that responsibility," Gugel said. "These things are not the purview of public education until and unless the parents request it be so."

Stewart said age limits exist for things such as military service and drinking alcohol, and should similarly exist for sex and gender issues so public schools aren't tolerating or even encouraging what may be a damaging social setting.

"This portion of the bill may provide the safety net needed for students who may be under pressure for acceptance or simply in need of attention as a basic human need, or for students who may need an adult to set boundaries for them to feel safe and give them the wherewithal to reflect on their own boundaries," Stewart said.

Police report

Monday, March 13

Motor vehicle accident.
Citizen assist: Vehicle unlock.
Traffic stop.
Disturbance.

Tuesday, March 14

Dance permit.
Dog at large.
Report of suspicion of driving under the influence.
Welfare check.
Dog complaint.

Wednesday, March 15

Motor vehicle accident.
Citizen assist.
Agency assist: Ambulance.

Thursday, March 16

Agency assist: Ambulance.
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits.

Friday, March 17

Citation issued for dog at large.
Domestic violence order served.

Saturday, March 18

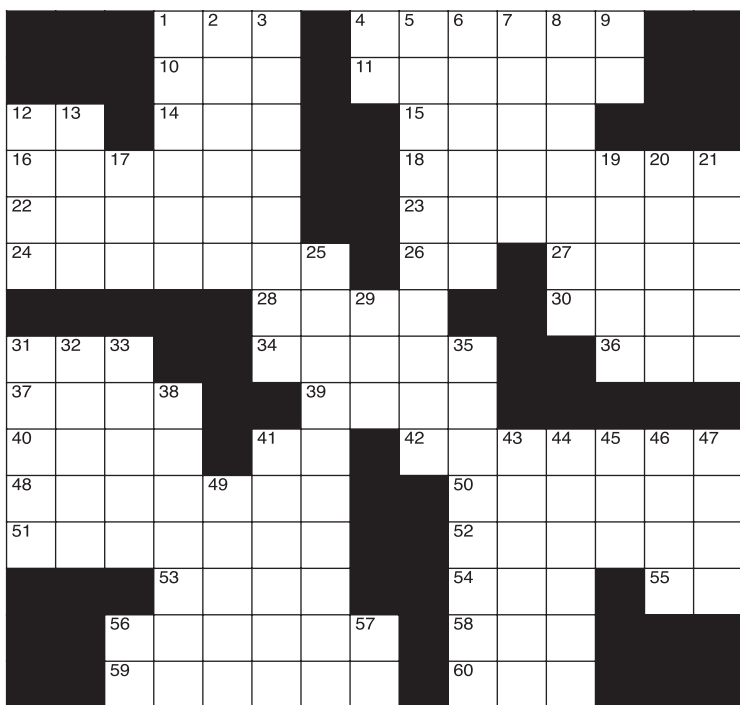
Nothing to report.

Sunday, March 19

Traffic stop: Citation issued for diving in violation of provisional license.
Bird complaint.
Criminal mischief.
Civil issue.
Civil standby.
Traffic stop.

Crossword

Answers on Page 12



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Belonging to a thing
- 4. Pass or go by
- 10. Partner to cheese
- 11. Subjects
- 12. U.S. State (abbr.)
- 14. Bits per inch
- 15. Forest-dwelling deer
- 16. Illinois city
- 18. A salt or ester of acetic acid
- 22. Wholly unharmed
- 23. Cuddled
- 24. Bane
- 26. Global investment bank (abbr.)
- 27. Oh my gosh!
- 28. Arrive
- 30. Famed Spanish artist
- 31. Home of "Frontline"
- 34. Group of quill feathers
- 36. Keyboard key
- 37. Army training group
- 39. Detail
- 40. Pole with flat blade
- 41. Football play
- 42. Makes unhappy
- 48. Island in Hawaii
- 50. Back in business
- 51. Of an individual
- 52. Painful chest condition
- 53. Tropical American monkey
- 54. Matchstick game
- 55. For instance
- 56. Even again
- 58. Popular beverage
- 59. Evaluate
- 60. Time units (abbr.)

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Stain one's hands
- 2. Nocturnal hoofed animals
- 3. Back condition
- 4. Popular movie alien
- 5. City of Angels
- 6. Peaks
- 7. Infantry weapons
- 8. Left
- 9. Atomic #99
- 12. Told a good yarn
- 13. Vale
- 17. Resistance unit
- 19. Aquatic plant
- 20. Bluish greens
- 21. About some Norse poems
- 25. Reinforces
- 29. Egyptian mythological goddess
- 31. Supportive material
- 32. Subatomic particle
- 33. Expired bread
- 35. Cereal grain
- 38. Goes against
- 41. Walkie _
- 43. One who does not accept
- 44. Beliefs
- 45. Indicates near
- 46. Brazilian NBA star
- 47. Grab quickly
- 49. Romantic poet
- 56. College dorm worker
- 57. Set of data

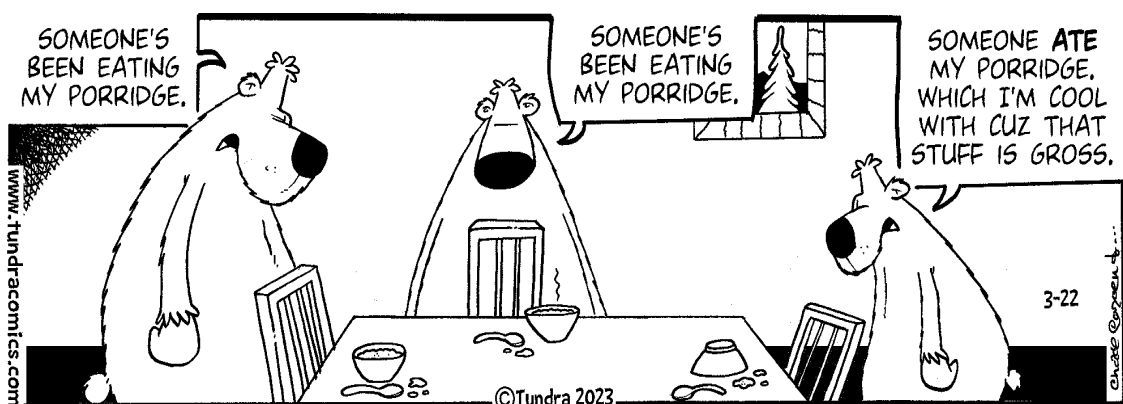
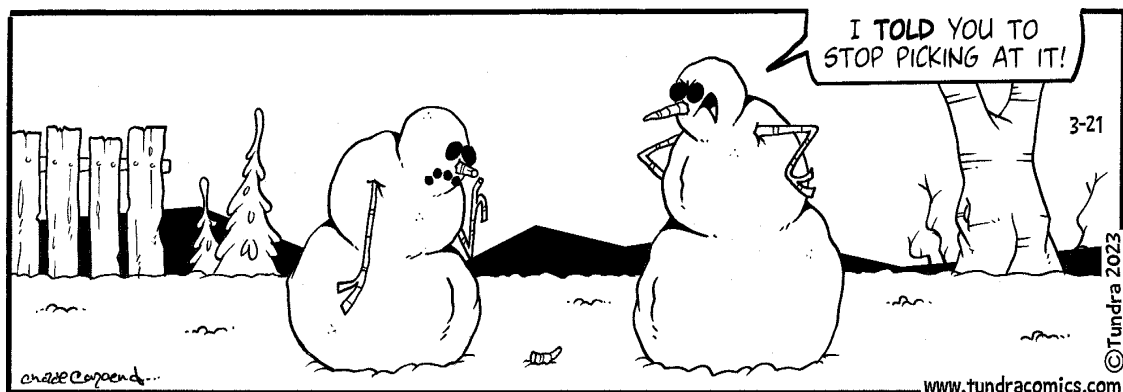
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Not all North Slope Natives support \$8 billion oil project

By MARK THIESSEN
AND MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE (AP) — The Biden administration's approval last week of the biggest oil drilling project in Alaska in decades promises to widen a rift among Alaska Natives, with some saying that oil money can't counter the damages caused by climate change and others defending the project as economically vital.

Two lawsuits filed almost immediately by environmentalists and one Alaska Native group are likely to exacerbate tensions that have built up over years of debate about ConocoPhillips' Willow project.

Many communities on Alaska's North Slope celebrated the project's approval, citing new jobs and the influx of money that will help support schools, other public services and infrastructure investments in their isolated villages. Just a few decades ago, many villages had no running water, said Doreen Leavitt, director of natural resources for the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope. Housing shortages continues to be a problem, with multiple generations often living together, she said.

"We still have a long ways to go. We don't want to go backwards," Leavitt said.

She said 50 years of oil production on the petroleum-rich North Slope has shown that development can coexist with wildlife and the traditional, subsis-

tence way of life.

But some Alaska Natives blasted the decision to approve the project, and they are supported by environmental groups challenging the approval in federal court.

The acrimony toward the project was underscored in a letter dated earlier this month written by three leaders in the Nuiqsut community, who described their remote village as "ground zero for industrialization of the Arctic." They addressed the letter to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, a member of New Mexico's Laguna Pueblo and the first Native American to lead a Cabinet department.

They cited the threat that climate change poses to caribou migrations and to their ability to travel across once-frozen areas. Money from the ConocoPhillips project won't be enough to mitigate those threats, they said. The community is about 36 miles from the Willow project.

"They are payoffs for the loss of our health and culture," the Nuiqsut leaders wrote. "No dollar can replace what we risk. ... It is a matter of our survival."

But Asisaun Toovak, the mayor of Utqiagvik, the nation's northernmost community on the Arctic Ocean, told the AP that she jumped for joy when she heard the Biden administration approved the Willow project.

"I could say that the majority of the people, the majority of our community and the majority of the people were ex-

cited about the Willow Project," she said.

Willow is in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, a vast region on Alaska's resource-rich North Slope that is roughly the size of Maine. It would produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day at peak production in the next decade, adding to greenhouse gas emissions, according to a federal environmental review.

The Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic, Sierra Club and other groups that sued March 14 said Interior Department officials ignored the fact that every ton of greenhouse gas emitted by the project would contribute to sea ice melt, which endangers polar bears and Alaska villages. A second lawsuit seeking to block the project was filed March 15 by Greenpeace and other environmental groups.

For Alaska Natives to reconcile their points of view with one another, it will take discussions. "We just continue to try to sit at the table together, break bread and meet as a region," said Leavitt, who also is the secretary for the tribal council representing eight North Slope villages.

ConocoPhillips said the \$8 billion project would create jobs and generate billions of dollars in royalties and other revenues to be split between the federal and state governments.

The project has had widespread support among lawmakers in the state. Alaska's bipartisan congressional delegation met with Biden and his advisers in early

March to plead their case for the project, and Alaska Native lawmakers also met with Haaland to urge support.

Haaland visited the North Slope last fall, just hours after state Rep. Josiah Aullaqsruaq Patkotak, a whaling captain along with his brother on their father's whaling crew, harvested a roughly 40-ton bowhead whale and spent hours pulling it on the ice from the Arctic Ocean at Utqiagvik. He left the ice around 7 a.m. to be ready to meet with Haaland just two hours later.

For him, the juxtaposition of those activities on the same day underscored the dual life led by Alaska Natives on the North Slope and highlights the choices that communities make every day for their survival.

"That's the walk our leaders have to walk," said Patkotak, who supports Willow. "We maintain our culture and our lifestyle and our subsistence aspect where we're one with the land and animals, and the very next hour you may be having to conduct yourself, you know, in a manner that you're playing the Western world's game."

Patkotak met again with Haaland this month in Washington, D.C., where he extended an invitation to leaders in the White House to visit Utqiagvik, "because it's our duty to tell our story so that we're able to strike that balance of both worlds."

"That's a reality for us," he said.

Opponents seek court order to block work on ConocoPhillips oil project

ALEX DEMARBAN
Anchorage Daily News

Conservation groups have asked a federal judge for a preliminary decision to stop construction work this winter at the Willow oil field on Alaska's North Slope, days after the Biden administration approved the \$8 billion project.

ConocoPhillips had begun building an ice road but agreed to delay activity associated with gravel mining and road building — putting dozens of jobs on hold — while the court considers the request, according to paperwork filed in the case.

The Biden administration early last week approved the controversial project that

would produce oil for three decades. Multiple Alaska groups and lawmakers support the project to boost the state's struggling economy, but conservation groups contend that Willow would accelerate global warming.

Several conservation groups last week filed two lawsuits in U.S. District Court in Anchorage against the Biden administration to stop the project, arguing that its impacts on the environment have not been fully considered, nor have project alternatives that could reduce its potential harm.

In one case, the groups suing include Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic, the Alaska Wilderness League and others. The Arizona-based

Center for Biological Diversity and other national groups have filed suit in a similar case.

In their requests for a first-step decision to stop road construction and gravel mining, the groups said the activity would cause irreparable harm, such as mine blasting and traffic that would displace caribou and affects Alaska Native hunters who rely on them.

The U.S. Department of Justice, representing the Interior Department and other agencies, asked the judge for a quick ruling on the preliminary decision, between March 28 and April 3.

ConocoPhillips began building an ice road just after the project was approved.

The road would take about a week to build and lead to the surface mine where gravel will be extracted to build a 3-mile gravel road from an existing oil field.

ConocoPhillips has agreed to halt any construction that would impact the surface of the ground until April 4, to allow the court to review the request for a preliminary injunction, the Justice Department filing said.

The full Willow project is expected to take six years to build, creating about 2,000 construction jobs.

This winter's short con-

struction season is expected to end April 25, the Justice Department said. Major North Slope construction in the oil patch occurs in winter, until the ice and snow that protects the tundra begin melting.

ConocoPhillips and the Arctic Slope Regional Corp., representing Alaska Natives from the North Slope, have intervened in the court dispute on the side of the federal government. The North Slope Borough, encompassing eight villages, is also seeking to intervene on the government's side.

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with any questions. Closing date is March 28.

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Wrangell Cooperative Association is seeking a Tourism Coordinator. Complete job description and application form available at the Wrangell Cooperative Association office at 1002 Zimovia Highway or www.wcatribe.org. Contact Esther Ashton at 907-874-4304

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CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC HEARING PUBLIC NOTICE

During the Regular Assembly Meeting of Tuesday, March 28, 2023, starting at 6 p.m., there will be a **PUBLIC HEARING** on the following item(s):

a. **RESOLUTION No. 03-23-1761** of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, approving the Amended Fees and Rates Schedule as required in WMC 5.14.025.

b. **ORDINANCE No. 1038** of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending Sections 13.05.010 Permitted Encroachments and 13.05.040, Pre-Existing Encroachments in Chapter 13.05, Encroachments in the Borough Right-Of-Way, and establishing a new process for these rates and fees in the Wrangell Municipal Code by adding the fees to the established Fee and Rate Schedule.

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

Publish March 22, 2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mark Galla is making application for a new Common Carrier License AS 04.11.180 liquor license doing business as Alaska Peak and Sea's located in Alaskan waters.

Interested persons should submit written comment to their local governing body, the applicant, and to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board at 550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1600 Anchorage, AK 99501 or alcohol.licensing@alaska.gov.

Publish March 22, 29; April 5, 2023

THANK YOU

I was a patient at the Wrangell SEARHC hospital before being medevaced to Seattle. Dr. Lynn Prysunka, the nurses, CNAs and support staff all went above and beyond what was required for

my well-being. The EMTs were also very efficient and caring. Wrangell is very fortunate to have so many people who take such good care of us. Thank you so much!

Jean Brown

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL JOB ADVERTISEMENT Library Director

The City and Borough of Wrangell is seeking candidates for the position of Library Director. The Library Director position will remain open until filled. The position will be posted for no less than 21 days. Applications will be reviewed as soon as April 5, 2023.

The Library Director is a department head position that ensures the efficient and effective delivery of comprehensive library services and systems by planning, directing and integrating the operations of a central, full-service library that serves the community as well as outlying areas. Further, the Library Director organizes, develops and directs a Library staff engaged in customer service activities such as circulation, reference, interlibrary loan and various technology activities.

This is a salaried and fully benefited position that begins at Grade 24, Step 1 on the Permanent Non-Union Wage & Grade Table (\$5,385.06/month).

Applications and job descriptions are available online at <https://www.wrangell.com/jobs>. Completed applications may be returned to Robbie Marshall at City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929 or via email at rmarshall@wrangell.com.

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

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

Publish March 22 and 29, 2023

CDC study finds Alaska Natives have highest colon cancer rate in the world

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

Alaska Natives continued to have the world's highest rates of colorectal cancer as of 2018, and case rates failed to decline significantly for the two decades leading up to that year, according to a newly published study.

The study, by experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, compared colorectal cancer rates among Alaska Natives with those of other populations in Alaska, the Lower 48 and other parts of the world.

The 2018 colorectal cancer rate for Alaska Natives was 61.9 per 100,000 people, said the study, published in the International Journal of Circumpolar Health. Of the other countries used for comparison, only Hungary — which is consistently ranked as the nation with the highest colorectal cancer rates — had rates rivaling those for

Alaska Natives, at 51.2 per 100,000 people.

Colorectal cancer rates among Alaska Natives sharply differ from those for other Alaska demographic groups, the study said. From 2014 to 2018, the Alaska Native colorectal cancer rate was over twice that for Alaska's white population and over three times that for Alaska's Asian/Pacific Islander and Black populations, it said.

The rates vary within Alaska, with some regions far worse. Rates of colorectal cancer in parts of rural Alaska are up to 2.5 times as high as the state average, and patients in those rural areas appear to be getting diagnosed so late that the cancers are well advanced before they are identified, according to a report issued by the state Department of Health.

The report, issued last month by the department's Alaska Cancer Registry, tracks rates of various types of cancers and their occurrences in different regions of the state from 2015 to 2019, the most

recent years for which data is available. It updates a similar report released in 2020.

For colorectal cancer, rates were highest in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region, the report showed. The region has a case rate calculated at 102.4 per 100,000 people over the five-year study period, compared to the state average of 41.3 per 100,000, the report said.

The colorectal cancer rate in Southeast Alaska was slightly below the statewide average.

The results point to a need for more early screening in those rural areas, the state report said. "Effective screening programs should result in more cancers being found early, thus late-stage cancer rates should decrease."

Colorectal cancer rates were much lower among other Indigenous groups in the United States than those for Alaska Natives, the CDC study found. The 2018 statistics showed that Alaska Native rates nearly twice as high as the next highest group, those in the Southern Plains region, and over five times that of the lowest group, which was in the Indian Health Service East region.

The study also tracked an apparent lack of meaningful progress in reducing colorectal cancer rates among Alaska

Natives. While rates declined significantly for white Alaskans from 1999 to 2018, by 2.2% percent, the 1.05% decline over the same period for Alaska Natives was not considered to be statistically significant.

The Alaska Native colorectal cancer gender gap was small, with rates of 63.6 per 100,000 people for men and 59.8 per 100,000 for women.

Exactly why Alaska Natives have such high rates of colorectal cancer remain unclear. Among the possible factors being studied is a diet that is low in fiber from fruits, vegetables or whole grains. Another possible factor is the higher rates of tobacco use.

The high incidence of colorectal cancer among Alaska Natives has been a concern for several years. It has spurred health providers to recommend earlier and more frequent screenings for their Alaska Native patients. The ANTHC and Alaska Native Medical Center recommend that colorectal cancer screenings start at age 40, compared to the CDC recommendation of screening starting at 45 for the general population.

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium has been running a public service

campaign this month, advising: "Don't wait any longer for your colon cancer screening! Early detection saves lives."

The CDC and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium study shows the need for such screening, lead author Donald Haverkamp, a CDC epidemiologist, said by email.

"The important message here is that colorectal cancer affects both men and women and that colorectal cancer screening can help with both prevention and early detection of colorectal cancer. Screening tests can find polyps so they can be removed before developing into cancer. Screening also helps find colorectal cancer at an early stage when treatment works best," Haverkamp said.

The 2018 statistics were the most recent available at the time the study was written, he said, and the authors used information from the International Agency for Research on Cancer's Global Cancer Observatory, among other sources. Rates cited in the study were adjusted for age.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.



Bahá'ís believe in ...

- One God
- The oneness of humankind
- Independent investigation of truth
- The essential harmony of science and religion
- Equality of men and women
- Elimination of prejudice of all kinds
- Universal compulsory education
- Spiritual solutions to economic problems
- A universal auxiliary language
- Universal peace upheld by a world federation

For Information Call:
Karen Morse
907-874-2088



Transgender policy

Continued from page 8

to legislators. In the resolution, the board urged the education department to adopt regulations creating two sports divi-

sions to protect "the integrity of high school girls' sports."

The eight-member board passed the resolution unanimously. The board's student

adviser, Maggie Cothron, of Anchorage, abstained.

Before it was approved, the board amended the measure to include middle school sports, Fields said, reasoning that children begin going through puberty — with corresponding differences between the physical abilities of boys and girls — in middle school. Middle school sports are not governed by the Alaska School Activities Association.

"We're making a statement of keeping girls' sports safe and competitive and fair, that's all," Fields said in a brief interview after the vote.

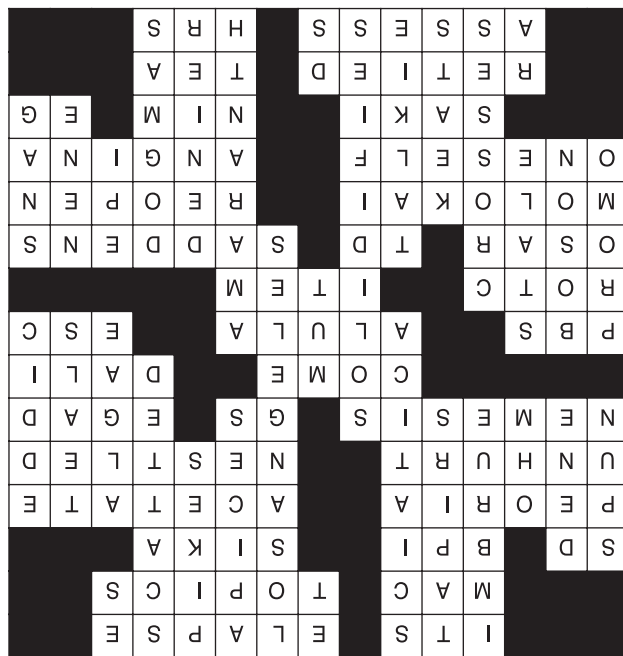
Fields said Friday that it would be up to the Alaska School Activities Association, the department or the Legislature to take up the recommendations based on the resolution, and that he had no preference as to which body would take action to create binding requirements for schools.

Anchorage Democrat Sen. Löki Tobin, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, said the resolution had caught her "off-guard" and that she had not learned about it until after it had passed. Tobin said she was concerned that the board had violated its requirement to allow the public to weigh in on resolutions before they are adopted.

Meanwhile, Palmer Republican Sen. Shelley Hughes said she had been aware of the board's resolution "for some time" and had intentionally been "keeping it quiet" about her ongoing effort to limit the participation of transgender girls in girls school sports because she "knew that it would create a stir."

The resolution from the Board of Education — which is comprised of individuals appointed or reappointed by Dunleavy — comes on the heels of a measure introduced by the governor that would impact the rights of transgender students in Alaska.

Earlier this month, he proposed a bill that would require gender nonconforming students to use bathrooms and locker rooms according to their sex assigned at birth. That bill, which has not yet been voted on by members of the Legislature, would also require parental approval for students seeking to change the name or pronouns they use in schools.



PUZZLE SOLUTION

PACE is visiting Wrangell March 28th-30th

Supporting new and existing families with
homeschool questions and/or
completing Student Learning
Plans.



Please call to schedule an
appointment.
866-864-5491,
ext 6002
paceschool.net