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Legislators pass \$1,100 PFD; governor wants more

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Not content with the \$1,100 Permanent Fund dividend adopted on the final day of the special legislative session that ended Tuesday, Gov. Mike Dunleavy three hours later called lawmakers back for a fourth special session starting Oct. 1 to “get the rest of this

year’s PFD.”

Dunleavy, who is running for reelection next year, has been promoting a dividend this year of more than double the \$1,100 approved by legislators.

The Department of Revenue has said it would send the payments to Alaskans about 30 days after the measure is signed into law, putting this

year’s checks a couple weeks late from past PFDs.

Back in June, Dunleavy vetoed a legislatively approved dividend that he said was too small at about \$525. This time, however, he said he will not veto the \$1,100 payment, but rather will keep pushing for a second check to Alaskans.

The governor said lawmakers also

should resume work Oct. 1 in Juneau “to solve the state’s financial problems with a complete fiscal plan,” in addition to a larger PFD.

To pay a larger dividend, the governor has proposed withdrawing an additional \$3 billion from Permanent Fund earnings to carry the state until other revenues can balance the books.

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PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Judy Bakeberg was recently chosen as the Mariners Ultimate Fan from Alaska.

Bakeberg selected as Mariners ‘Ultimate Fan’ for all Alaska

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Judy Bakeberg loves baseball. Specifically, she loves the Seattle Mariners. She’s been following the team since its inception in 1977, and she’s been a fan of baseball since she was a child.

Now the Wrangellite has been chosen as the Mariners’ 2021 Ultimate Fan for Alaska, a title that comes with lots of perks and bragging rights.

On Oct. 1, Bakeberg and her daughter, Leslie Cummings, will be

flown to Seattle and treated to a two-night stay and fan celebration in a box suite at T-Mobile Park. Bakeberg will also receive a personalized jersey and trophy. Cummings entered her mother a few months back in competition run by the Root Sports channel, which broadcasts Mariner games.

For the past 21 years, Bakeberg has been tracking the team and favorite players’ stats, writing down the results of games and storing them in large, three-ring binders. It’s a passion that goes back to her childhood.

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Demand exceeds tight supply in Wrangell housing market

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Finding an apartment or home to rent or buy is difficult in Wrangell, leaving many scrambling for a place to live.

“Wrangell is extremely tight, plain and simple,” said Bennett McGrath, owner of Anchor Properties in Petersburg. McGrath’s business focuses on home sales in Wrangell, Petersburg and Sitka. There is no real estate agent based in Wrangell.

A survey of landlords conducted by the state earlier this year showed no vacancies for one-bedroom apartments and homes in the Wrangell/Petersburg census area.

In addition, rent has increased over the past year. According to September’s edition of Alaska Economic Trends, issued by the Department of Labor,

Ketchikan and Wrangell/Petersburg rents increased the most of any communities in the state the past year.

The median rent in the Wrangell/Petersburg census area went from \$904 in 2020 to \$950 this year. In Ketchikan, the median rent climbed from \$1,115 to \$1,230.

Though even with the increase, Wrangell’s rents were still the lowest among the 10 areas in the state surveyed for the report. Sitka’s rent was highest at \$1,323, followed by Kodiak at \$1,270.

The report said the Wrangell/Petersburg area was the only place where single-family homes were cheaper to rent than apartments.

For those looking to buy, there are only four single-family homes listed in Wrangell, with a few sales pending as of

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PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Strong finish

Devlyn Campbell, a junior at Wrangell High School, finishes the boys’ 5-kilometer race, coming in 11th out of 69 runners. Teams from a dozen Southeast schools competed in cross country competition last Saturday in Wrangell. See story page 10.

Statewide COVID case count the past 30 days triple pandemic daily average

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Daily COVID-19 cases across Alaska over the past 30 days are about triple the average of the 18-month pandemic — more than quadruple on several days last week.

The heavy caseload, particularly seriously ill unvaccinated individuals infected with the highly contagious Delta variant, has strained hospitals in the state’s population centers.

Wrangell has fared better than much of the state, however, with just five cases reported in the first 14 days of September, a steep drop from the community’s record

of 48 cases in August.

State health officials Tuesday reported 676 new infections across Alaska, down from more than 800 on each of several days last week. The daily count has averaged under 200 since the tally started about 18 months ago, with low infection numbers February through June this year bringing down the average.

As of Tuesday, the state reported at least 202 people hospitalized due to COVID-19, down slightly from Monday’s record 210. And it was another day when all of the adult intensive-care beds in Anchorage hospitals were full, according to

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Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Thursday, Sept. 16: Tessa Appleman, Sarah Scambler; Anniversaries: Steve and Ginny Helgeson, Brian and Yuri McCloskey, Chris and Kristie Weber, Lee and Jennifer Wiedersphohn.

Friday, Sept. 17: Nancy Seimers; Anniversary: Robert and Rynda Hayes.

Saturday, Sept. 18: Derek Angerman, Miah Houston, Nicki Nikodym; Anniversary: Luke and Nicole Feuerhelm.

Sunday, Sept. 19: Alex Angerman, Mark Galla, Doug Roberts; Anniversaries: Delton and Tamra Claggett, Tom and Linda Nore.

Monday, Sept. 20: Jing O'Brien, Briana Burley Taylor, Amber Vergillo.

Tuesday, Sept. 21: Terry Bunes, Chris Gillen, Keely Good, Ellen Massin, Adam Messmer, Jason Rak, David Gregg Wilson.

Wednesday, Sept. 22: Lorne Cook, Terri Henson, Braidyn Daiva Young; Anniversaries: Bucky and Linda Bjorge, Terry and Janet Bunes.

Senior Center Menu

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

Friday, Sept. 17

Lemon baked chicken, brussels sprouts, salad, sweet potato

Monday, Sept. 20

Meatballs, beets, salad, pasta

Tuesday, Sept. 21

Meatloaf, steamed greens, salad, mashed potatoes and gravy

Wednesday, Sept. 22

Chicken a la king, broccoli, fresh fruit, rice

Thursday, Sept. 23

Liver and onions, tomatoes, coleslaw, roll

Please call the senior center at 874-2066 by 2 p.m. the day prior to reserve a seat at lunch at the center or to request delivery. The senior van also is available to transport seniors to medical appointments, reasonable errands such as collecting mail, getting prescriptions or other essential items.

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, Sept. 17

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 24

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 4

Kennicott, noon

Monday, Oct. 18

Kennicott, 12:15 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 14

Matanuska, 10:45 a.m.

Southbound

Monday, Sept. 20

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 27

Matanuska, 7 a.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 13

Kennicott, 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 27

Kennicott, 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 10

Kennicott, 9:30 p.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.

Call the terminal at 874-2021 for information or call 874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.



TIDES

September 16-September 22

	High Tides			Low Tides				
	AM Time	Ft	PM Time	Ft	AM Time	Ft	PM Time	Ft
Sept. 16	11:04	15.1	11:09	15.4	04:36	0.7	05:08	3.0
Sept. 17	11:48	16.2	11:59	16.0	05:28	0.2	05:57	1.5
Sept. 18	12:26	17.1	06:10	-0.1	06:36	0.2
Sept. 19	00:44	16.4	01:01	17.5	06:45	0.0	07:11	-0.6
Sept. 20	01:24	16.4	01:32	17.6	07:16	0.4	07:42	-1.1
Sept. 21	02:00	16.1	02:01	17.3	07:45	1.1	08:12	-0.8
Sept. 22	02:35	15.5	02:29	16.8	08:12	1.9	08:41	-0.4

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," rated PG-13, at 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the action, adventure and fantasy film that runs two hours and 12 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

WRANGELL PARKS AND REC is offering another round of Parent & Me swim lessons with instructor Briana Schilling. One parent with one child between 12 months and 3 years old on Saturdays, from 10:15 to 10:45 a.m., Sept. 25 to Oct. 16. \$35 for the parent-child pair. Register at wrangellrec.com or call 874-2444.

YOUTH BASKETBALL COACHES needed for Parks and Recreation program for kids through fifth grade. If you volunteer as a coach, your child's registration fee will be waived. Program will start the week of Oct. 4. Call Parks and Recreation at 874-2444.

BRAVE is hosting its fourth annual Family Resilience Fair noon to 2 p.m. Oct. 16 at the Nolan Center. Learn how your community can help your family. BRAVE is closely watching the Wrangell COVID-19 surge and will make safety decisions dependent on case counts closer to the fair date. BRAVE.Wrangell@gmail.com or 907-204-0530.

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

Continuing Events

PARKS and RECREATION www.wrangellrec.com

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

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

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

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

Open swim, 5:30 - 7 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; 6:30 - 8 p.m. Friday; 1 - 2 p.m. Saturday

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

Weight room available by appointment and at reduced capacity:

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

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

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

Sept. 15, 1921

Dick Howard and James Brison, well-known trappers who left here to spend the winter up the Iskut River hunting and trapping, returned to town this week having lost half their winter outfit last Friday on the way up. They had proceeded up the river to a point above the Quinn Glacier when they encountered a sweeper and their boat capsized. The guns and supplies that were lost in the accident amounted to about \$200 and it was necessary to return to Wrangell to replace the lost articles. The men left town again Tuesday.

Sept. 13, 1946

The Wrangell District this week was granted a fishing extension following a trip to Ketchikan by Howard Baltzo,

local Fisheries Management Agent, where he went to confer with Fish and Wildlife officials at the request of a group of local businessmen. The extended season opens the entire Clarence Strait, including North Clarence and the South Prince of Wales District known as the West Coast District. These areas opened at 3 p.m. yesterday and will remain open until 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 14. Baltzo further stated that if the run warranted it, further extensions would be probable. This is the first year the Fish and Wildlife Service has carried out this method and policy of opening areas when a run begins to show.

Sept. 17, 1971

James Birkland, an electrical engineer with the state Division of Aviation at Anchorage, was in town this week working on design of the runway lighting system for the airport. The state plans to light both the Wrangell and Petersburg runways. Birkland was unable to estimate when the work will be done. He said both lighting systems are in the planning stages at Anchorage. He was down earlier in the summer to study layouts for conduits and light fixtures and to confer with City Manager Kester Dotts about electrical hookup. Birkland said the possibility of a rotating light for the airport also is being considered by the state. Such beacons flash green and white and pinpoint the location of the

airport for incoming planes.

Sept. 19, 1996

Black, yellow, and fuzzy. They're everywhere. And nobody seems to know why. What are they? For the past month or more colorful, slow-moving caterpillars have been feeding on leafy trees and wreaking havoc on some local gardens. According to the U.S. Forest Service staff, the crawling critters are the larvae of the Tussock Moth. In summer, the larvae spin a cocoon and settle in for the cold winter months, waiting until spring to hatch. Though fun to catch in jars and containers, the caterpillars pack an unpleasant punch when handled — as several Wrangell youngsters and even some adults have learned to their dismay. Judy Mosher of the Public Health Clinic says she is seeing many cases of skin irritation caused by the seemingly harmless larvae. According to library sources, what appears to be soft fur covering the creature is actually a disguised defense mechanism. Much like the porcupine, the larvae's "fuzz" has a hooked barb that pierces the skin and often causes a rash similar to poison ivy or oak. The tiny barbs' bite could be particularly bad if suffered on the eyes and face. As a precaution, adults and children should avoid touching the larvae. If contact is made, be sure to check clothing for larvae when you come indoors, then thoroughly wash any contact area with cold water.

Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Sept. 16	6:23a	7:03p	12:39h
Sept. 17	6:25a	7:00p	12:35h
Sept. 18	6:27a	6:57p	12:30h
Sept. 19	6:29a	6:55p	12:25h
Sept. 20	6:31a	6:52p	12:20h
Sept. 21	6:33a	6:49p	12:16h
Sept. 22	6:35a	6:47p	12:11h



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Judy Bakeberg has kept meticulous stats on the Seattle Mariners since 2000. She's been a fan of the team since it was created in 1977.

Mariners Ultimate Fan

Continued from page 1

"I was a tomboy in school," Bakeberg, 83, said. "I had three brothers, and I played a lot of sports, basketball, softball and all of that. When I graduated from high school, I earned a four-year scholarship to the University of Oregon to be a girls' P.E. teacher. I ended up working at the high school."

She decided teaching wasn't for her and went to work for the U.S. Forest Service for 32 years.

As a child, her mother, who Bakeberg describes as "a strong Swedish woman who taught us girls could do anything boys could do," would make her brothers do the dishes and have Bakeberg carry wood in. That strong upbringing and her need to stay active could be what's helped her through her latest ordeal - one that could have derailed her plans to attend the Ultimate Fan celebration.

Back in July, while traveling through Washington in their RV, Bakeberg's husband, Jerry, had to slam on the brakes. She had been standing, and the sudden stop threw Bakeberg to the floor of the vehicle, breaking her back. Two days and two hospitals later, Bakeberg underwent surgery to fix her back. Less than two months later, she is awaiting physical therapy and has gotten off the painkillers doctors prescribed.

There was a time, however, when Bakeberg had stopped watching her beloved Mariners because they weren't doing so well. She began

watching the Minnesota Twins. That was short-lived and she returned to rooting for The M's.

Bakeberg isn't the only one in her house with a love of the game. Jerry Bakeberg had a brush with baseball infamy back in his military days.

"I played [baseball] in the service. I struck out Mickey Mantle," Jerry Bakeberg said. "They came to play an exhibition game. The night before, we went out to the bar. We tipped a few. The next day we went to play, and he was still up in his cups, I think. He just swung at everything I threw."

The Bakebergs haven't been to a game in two years. October's game against the Anaheim Angels will be the first in-person game Judy Bakeberg has been to since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. But Jerry Bakeberg will stay behind with their dogs, Jasper and Patsy, while mother and daughter cheer on the team.

But the couple, married 37 years, are planning to get back to games regularly.

"Gas prices dropped a little bit, so that helps," Judy Bakeberg said with a laugh.

When asked if she's a die-hard fan from now on, Judy Bakeberg responded the way only an ultimate fan would. "Yes. Especially if they could get going. They're doing better this year than they have in a long time," she said on Sept. 9. "Right now, they're 76 and 64, so they're 12 games over 500. And a lot of times ... they never got above 500."

August was busy month for COVID testing in Wrangell

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

After the number of people taking COVID-19 tests in Wrangell slowed down earlier in the summer, the volume doubled in August as the community reacted to the surge of new infections in town.

The borough reported 48 cases of COVID-19 in Wrangell in August, the highest monthly total since the pandemic count started in March 2020 and more than one-third of all cases in the community since the coronavirus tally began.

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, which provides tests at the airport and the Wrangell Medical Center, administered 753 tests in May, then 580 in June and 488 in July, said Carly Allen, hospital administrator at WMC.

The count jumped to 997 in August, she said.

The number of tests declined in the first nine days of September, Allen said.

Wrangell went from two COVID-19 cases in May to six each in June and July, before breaking the record with 48 in August.

September has started with just five reported cases, as of Tuesday.

Drive-up COVID testing at the hospital is by appointment only, though Allen said people most always can get a same-day time slot.

SEARHC also provides free testing at the airport twice a day, when the Alaska Airlines flights arrive, under a contract with the state. That agreement is scheduled to end Sept. 30, but the state has reached out to SEARHC to extend the contract to the end of

the year, Allen said.

The health care provider has administered almost 18,000 tests in Wrangell since March 2020.

"I think that's one of the best things Wrangell has going for it," Allen said of the community's access and willingness to get tested.

While the infection count has dropped in Wrangell - the state reported the rate of positive COVID-19 tests last week averaged less than 2% a day - other communities are not so fortunate. The Kenai Peninsula Borough averaged about 14% positive tests a day, according to the state.

A clinic in Kenai reported administering 150 tests a day last week. "About 45% of those people that are being tested are reporting active symptoms, and then 20% of those are reporting exposure," an official of the clinic told public radio station KDLL.

Another good thing for Wrangell is that the medical center last month started offering monoclonal antibody infusion for higher-risk individuals, Allen said. Offering the treatment locally was coincidental to the spike in cases in August, not directly because of the surge, she said.

The purpose of antibody treatments is to reduce a patient's viral load and lessen the severity of the illness.

"Having a lower viral load means you may have milder symptoms, thereby decreasing the likelihood of you needing to stay in the hospital," according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The treatment "may help people who ... had symptoms for 10 days or less, (and) are at high risk of getting more serious symptoms."

Alaska asks for out-of-state help with COVID caseload

JUNEAU (AP) - Alaska officials have requested help from more than 470 out-of-state medical personnel in response to a surge in COVID-19 cases across Alaska, even as other states are coping with their own high case counts and hospitalizations.

Alaska last week set multiple records for patients hospitalized with COVID-19, straining the health care system.

The state has requested nurses, patient care technicians, respiratory therapists and other health care workers. There is no guarantee the state will get the personnel it is requesting, said state health department spokesperson Elizabeth Manning.

Health departments from other states have made similar requests from the federal government. Hospitals nationwide are reporting strains and staffing concerns.

Out-of-state nurses, doctors and other health care workers have been able to get "emergency courtesy licenses" to practice in Alaska during the pandemic. Glenn Hoskinson, a state commerce department spokesperson, said issuance of such licenses can take days if everything is in order.


"However, if we get hundreds of those at once, it would take weeks because we don't have the capacity," she said.

Ketchikan Specialty Clinics. Stay Hometown Healthy, Close To Home.

In addition to our outstanding local specialty Orthopedics, General Surgery, and Obstetrics & Gynecology teams, PeaceHealth is pleased to host specialty clinics in Ketchikan for your convenience. Get your expert specialty care close to home, call for your appointment today.

Cardiology	Oct 18-19	888-739-2700
Ear, Nose & Throat	Nov 8-19	907-228-8101
Gastroenterology	Sept 20-24	907-228-8101
Oncology	Oct 12-14 Nov 9-11	907-228-8101
Pediatric Cardiology	Oct 7	888-739-2700
Pulmonology	Nov 1-4	907-228-7649

WMC Foundation offers A REIMBURSEMENT GRANT

 UP TO \$1200 YEARLY for individuals traveling outside their community for cancer care.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Anti-vax politics needs to take its temperature

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

The anti-vaccination politics rolling across the country — much like a pandemic — have gotten so bad that the Alaska state Senate could not even manage to pass a bill last Friday allowing more telemedicine without lawmakers amending it into a debate over personal liberty.

Much of the discussion had no connection whatsoever to patients and doctors working together online to diagnose and treat ailments often totally unrelated to COVID-19.

The Senate amendments were targeted at blocking businesses, state agencies and local governments from requiring vaccinations of workers or customers.

The measure later died in the House, succumbing to a terminal case of excessive politics.

It's time that Alaska, and the nation, find a vaccine against politicizing public health. There was no need to turn a telemedicine bill into a test of who can hold the reelection flag of freedom the highest.

Eagle River Sen. Lora Reinbold, who never misses an opportunity to pick a fight over vaccinations or face masks, told her colleagues the amendments "protect individual liberties."

But a Reinbold amendment adopted by the Senate essentially told businesses how to run their operations, denying them the right to make their own health decisions.

The amendments might have been Reinbold's parting shots before she left town for the Legislature's special session. The senator, who has been banned from Alaska Airlines for refusing to follow federal law and wear a face mask, wanted to get out of Juneau on Saturday, the last day Delta Airlines operated its summer flights into the capital city, though she later changed her travel plans to stick around.

Bethel Sen. Lyman Hoffman shared a different view of personal liberties with his colleagues.

Alaska hospitals are overloaded with COVID-19 cases, setting new records on consecutive days last week. Rural hospitals in particular are finding it difficult to transfer patients who need more care to urban medical centers overwhelmed with COVID patients.

The Norton Sound Regional Hospital has had to call several out-of-town hospitals to find an open bed for non-COVID patients who need specialized care they cannot get in Nome.

Speaking against the anti-vaccination amendments, Hoffman asked his colleagues: "What about the rights of the people who are walking the streets of America? They're continuing to die."

Alaska was up to 451 deaths as of Tuesday. Almost 85% of the people who died between January and early September were unvaccinated, state public health officials report. And many of the latest wave of patients are younger and generally healthy — before they caught the virus.

President Joe Biden last week announced the federal government will require employers with more than 100 workers to require vaccinations, or weekly testing, in a push to escalate the fight against the deadly virus that is sickening and killing more Americans than it has in months.

Biden's decision prompted an infectious political response nationwide, not just in the Alaska Senate. Some outbursts were extreme, even for today's divisive politics. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster said he will fight "to the gates of hell to protect the liberty and livelihood of every South Carolinian."

I thought the admission gates were in heaven and that hell took all comers.

It's time to tone down the anti-vaccination politics and not let it infect other public policy discussions, such as telemedicine. If people don't want to get a shot, that's their right. But it doesn't give them a right to expose everyone else to the risk.

Maybe they could discuss it with their doctor online.

EDITORIAL

Listen to a former president — no, not that one

Former President George W. Bush on the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on our country showed Americans the difference between a statesman and a showman.

In a speech at a memorial last Saturday in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where one of the hijacked planes crashed, Bush honestly and strongly confronted the growing divisiveness, hostility and political battles that have consumed America:

"A malign force seems at work in our common life that turns every disagreement into an argument, and every argument into a clash of cultures. So much of our politics has become a naked appeal to anger, fear and resentment. That leaves us worried about our nation and our future together."

He continued: "I come without explanations or solutions. I can only tell you what I have seen."

Bush didn't recite campaign slogans, didn't call anyone names, didn't make false accusations like so many politicians do these days to drive supporters to their Twitter feeds and toward contributing money to campaigns that promote even more fear and anger.

He spoke of a better America, without hatred. A country where people help each other, where religious bigotry and prejudice have no place. "That is the America I know. ... It is what we have been — and what we can be again."

The former president did not use the somber day to pick a fight.

Unlike former President Donald J. Trump, who went to the fights that night. The showman turned politician provided commentary that evening at a pay-per-view heavy-weight boxing match at a Florida casino.

Trump did visit a police station and neighboring firehouse in Midtown Manhattan earlier in the day, though he used the solemn day to claim once again that he won last year's presidential election, loudly complaining about the candidate who defeated him, President Joe Biden.

It's time for the showman to retire from the boxing ring and also the circus ring, and let the better former presidents give the speeches.

— Wrangell Sentinel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

B.C. mining industry meets highest standards

State Rep. Dan Ortiz's letter to the editor in the Sept. 2 Sentinel about British Columbia's mining regulations is misleading and largely inaccurate.

Continuous improvement is foundational to B.C.'s mining sector — in environmental management, community engagement, operational efficiency, innovation and more. The fact is B.C.'s mining industry meets some of the highest regulatory standards in the world for environmental assessment, operational permitting, compliance and enforcement, tailings, and post-closure monitoring and reclamation.

In recent years, the British Columbia government has made substantial changes to the laws governing mining, including a new Mines Act, a revised Health, Safety and Reclamation

Code, new water quality guidelines, and ongoing monitoring to protect downstream communities and critical salmon habitat.

Recent results of the B.C.-Alaska Transboundary Group on Monitoring found the "overall aquatic conditions in the Taku, Stikine and Unuk transboundary rivers currently support and maintain aquatic life."

B.C.'s independent chief mines auditor recently completed a comparison of B.C.'s regulations with those of other jurisdictions — including Alaska — and found that B.C.'s tailings storage facilities' regulatory framework is among the best in the world.

Our mines play an important role in the world's efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Many of the metals and minerals produced by B.C.'s low-greenhouse-gas-intensity mines (due to our use of hydroelectricity)

are essential for renewable energy projects, electric vehicles and clean technology.

On June 30, I wrote to Alaska's legislators — including Rep. Ortiz — and would be pleased to discuss B.C.'s world-class mining industry.

*Michael Goehring
President and CEO
of the Mining Association of
British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.*

Stokes family thanks community

Wilma Stokes' family would like to thank the community for their kind condolences.

Thank you to pastor Kem Haggard and the Harbor Light Assembly of God family; Katy Shilts and her father for reading the Lord's Prayer in Haida; Denny and Janet Strom; Don McConachie; KSTK staff Cindy Sweat; Wrangell Sentinel staff

Amber Armstrong and Larry Persily; city of Wrangell cemetery workers; Hope Church of God; Jackie Dozier and Doug Schwartz; Dr. Lynn Prysunka and Wrangell hospital nursing staff; and Wrangell long-term care and CNAs.

Thank you to Wilma's friends and family for all the cards as well as the monetary donations to the Wrangell EMS and Fire Department in her memory.

Overdrawing PFD is not the best option

Recently, the Alaska Legislative Fiscal Policy Working Group was established with the goal of making progress toward a long-term sustainable fiscal plan for the state, protecting the Permanent Fund and providing an annual dividend for generations of Alaskans to come.

It consisted of eight legisla-

tors: two from each caucus within both the House and the Senate. The group met 35 times over two months, and last month released its final report. Their work solidified the baseline assumptions and possible paths forward for our fiscal future.

Their recommendations were:

1. Restructure the Permanent Fund as a single, constitutionally protected account with annual draws limited to 5% of the fund's market value (POMV).
2. Constitutional certainty for the dividend.
3. A new dividend formula, based off the POMV draw.
4. A healthy capital budget.
5. New state revenues of \$500 million to \$775 million a year; the type(s) of additional revenue are not specified.
6. Budget reductions of \$25 million to \$200 million over

Continued on page 5

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Schools keep face mask, distancing protocols in place

By **MARC LUTZ**
Sentinel editor

Social distancing and masking requirements will continue to stay in place at Wrangell public schools.

At the school board meeting on Monday night, Superintendent Bill Burr updated board members on a change in some language in the district's COVID-19 mitigation plan, but students and staff will still be required to wear masks and stay apart.

The board in August agreed to review the mitigation plan and masking requirement monthly.

"There were a few additions we had to [the mitigation plan]," Burr said Monday, which will ease the testing requirement in some cases for students who travel or were in close contact with an infected individual.

"We added the section that said, 'If a student or staff provide medical documentation of a COVID-positive recovery within the previous three months or 90 days of school, they can return as if vaccinated and will not have to, on travel or close contact, have the testing requirements for those same three months of time,'" Burr said in his update to the board.

"We added that later under the 'vaccinated students and staff as close contacts' which also says, 'If there's medical documentation and somebody is vaccinated and has gotten COVID, in those three months the testing requirement we would have for vaccinated is also waived,'" he said.

Burr said the return-to-school-after-travel protocol was "also added for the same reason as that three months spelled out."

Board member Patty Gilbert said members of the public asked her how people would be treated if they didn't wish to share their vaccination status.

"[The public asked] if a student or staff member wishes to not divulge that information, how would that student or staff member be treated?" Gilbert said.

Burr said those not wanting to report their status would be treated as unvaccinated and would have to follow those protocols, which falls in line with public health recommendations.

One parent addressed the board, expressing thanks for the continued mitigation plan.

"I just wanted to ... advocate for continued masking for the students and the staff at the school district," Jessica Whitaker said. "I was really excited to see that we were going to go with masking for the school year, which led me to enrolling both of my kids back in public school this fall. I'm grateful that we have that mitigation plan in place to help protect our students and staff."

As of Monday, there are 265 students enrolled in Wrangell's public schools.

After a record-setting COVID-19 outbreak with 48 cases in August, the borough has reported just five new infections in the first 13 days of September.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Continued from page 4

multiple years through structural and statutory reforms that maintain levels of service but improve efficiency.

7. Revise spending limits.

8. One-time fiscal measures over the next few years as a transition period. Those measures may include a one-time transfer of \$3 billion above the annual 5% POMV draw from the Permanent Fund to bridge budget deficits, or a dividend "stair step" that starts with a modest dividend and increases to the new formula's full amount after adopting the above solutions.

9. The comprehensive solution must prove resilient to fiscal stress and able to survive market volatility and the varying price of oil.

One of the most important points is the very first recommendation to limit the fund draw to 5%. I am both thankful for and proud of the work done by the group, and agree that the above measures are necessary for creating a comprehensive fiscal solution. But I believe that capping and enforcing the POMV draw to 5% is most important and necessary to protect our Permanent Fund far into the future.

The \$82 billion value of the Permanent Fund is almost entirely due to prudent one-time transfers, inflation proofing and smart investing. We are no longer an oil state: less than 25% of the value of the fund has come from oil royalties. Instead, we are a state with an incredible investment portfolio to rely on.

However, if we overdraw the fund, we are missing out on billions of dollars of investments and growth. In my opinion, recommendations No. 1 and the \$3 billion additional draw on the Permanent Fund are incompatible. Because No. 1 is vital, I much prefer the option above of stair-stepping the dividend as the state adopts the other fiscal pieces of the solution.

*Rep. Dan Ortiz
Ketchikan and Wrangell*

WILMA ELIZABETH STOKES AUGUST 28, 2021

Survivors include daughters Becky (Gary) Koenig, Loretta Crockett, Donna McKay, Wilma Stokes-Leslie, Heidi (Mark) Armstrong; 21 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband Dick; sons Rick and David; and daughter Harriet Bangs.

Legislature

Continued from page 1

Most legislators have rejected his plan to take more money out of the savings account to pay dividends that would be about double the average of the past decade.

Dunleavy said Tuesday it has been a profitable year for Permanent Fund investments, and he believes the account can afford the extra withdrawal.

The state's 45-year-old oil-wealth savings account grew by about \$12 billion from Jan. 31, 2020, before the worst of the pandemic economic meltdown, to almost \$80 billion — net of liabilities — as of the most recent financial statement on July 31, 2021.

Though the governor has argued for pulling more money out of the fund to boost the dividend, many legislators view it as risky — arguing that it could weaken the fund and reduce future earnings. While the past 12 months have been profitable for the Permanent Fund, bad investment years happen, such as fiscal year 2009 when the account lost \$6.9 billion.

In addition to debating the amount of this year's PFD and a new calculation formula for future years, the governor and lawmakers have been unable to agree on a comprehensive, long-term fiscal plan covering dividends and public services. They disagree on the new revenues — taxes — that would be needed to help close a gap between revenues and expenses that could approach \$1 billion a year under the governor's large-PFD plan.

Dunleavy has acknowledged that new revenues will be part of any solution but has not proposed or endorsed any significant tax measures, sticking with his proposal to withdraw money from the Permanent Fund to buy more time.

The final day of the special session had added drama when the House early in the day adjourned, leaving the Senate with the option of either accepting the House-passed bill with an \$1,100 PFD — or nothing. With the House done for the session, the Senate could not change the House bill or approve its own meas-

ure, as final legislation needs approval by both chambers to become law.

Though some senators grumbled at the House move, the Senate's final vote for passage was 12-7.

Voting against the bill were Republicans Mia Costello and Roger Holland, of Anchorage; Lora Reinbold, of Eagle River; Shelley Hughes, of Palmer; Mike Shower, of Wasilla; Robert Meyers, of North Pole; and Democrat Donny Olson, of rural Golovin (east of Nome). Anchorage Democrat Bill Wielechowski was excused from Tuesday's session.

Shower had proposed a \$3,800 PFD, but it failed 8-11. Even if it had passed Tuesday, without the House in session it could not have moved ahead.

A day before adoption of the dividend funding bill, lawmakers lost their final opportunity to pass a measure that would have eased the rules for telemedicine, which enables doctors and patients to meet online.

Intended to help health care providers better serve their patients during the in-person limitations of the pandemic, the legislation became a magnet for amendments that ended its chances at passage.

The Senate last week added language that would have allowed Alaskans to opt out of vaccination mandates. The House rejected those amendments, but then added its own language on Sunday that could have blocked hospitals from limiting visitors to patients during the pandemic.

As the measure was dragged deeper into pandemic politics, House leadership pulled the bill from the agenda and sent it back to committee to die.

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Murkowski sees opportunities for Wrangell in infrastructure funding

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Though its passage is uncertain amid partisan battles in Congress and even disagreements among the majority-holding Democrats, the trillion-dollar infrastructure bill could be an opportunity for federal help with costly improvements to Wrangell's water system.

However, all communities in Alaska "have to be honest in regard to timing," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who visited Wrangell last weekend. In addition to waiting on Congress to decide on the legislation, "we know what it means to bring a (big) project online," the state's senior U.S. senator said.

Work funded nationwide under the legislation could easily stretch into 2022, 2023 or beyond, she said.

The Senate approved the measure in August, with a House vote anticipated later this month, though the bill is politically linked

to a much larger Democrat-led spending package that lacks bipartisan support.

Aside from waiting for Congress to take action and for federal departments to administer the funds, "there is a level of enthusiasm for what this can bring," Murkowski said of the measure that would fund water, highway, bridge, airport, port and other projects.

"Here in Wrangell, you've got a dam that has been designated as the second-most hazardous dam in the whole state," the senator said in an interview Saturday.

Rebuilding the two reservoirs has been estimated at around \$50 million, far beyond Wrangell's financial ability without significant state or federal assistance. The original lower crib dam was constructed in 1900 and the upper crib dam was built in 1935, though several upgrades have been added over the years, according to a 2018 report to the borough assembly.

A 2015 state report said the reservoir dams are stable, but at risk of failure "during a substantive seismic event."

Murkowski said the borough should have engineering studies and cost estimates ready should the infrastructure legislation pass and grants later open up.

In addition to the reservoirs, Wrangell's water treatment plant needs a system upgrade or replacement to better clean the water before piping it throughout town. That project was last estimated at \$10 million, though the borough has federal grant funds to cover most of the cost.

The senator said harbor work could be another opportunity for the community in the infrastructure bill.

A provision of the bill directs up to \$250 million for "remote" harbors, such as Wrangell, that lack rail or road access to another port. "It's their own pool of money," Murkowski said.

A more immediate federal



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Sen. Lisa Murkowski talked with Mayor Stephen Prysunka and others on Monday at assembly chambers. She was in town to help her parents for the weekend.

concern in Wrangell is the U.S. Census, which showed the community lost about 10% of its population between 2010 and 2020, dropping by 242 people.

Multiple federal and state financial aid programs are based on population, adding importance for an accurate count. Borough officials last month said they disagree with the count and would investigate the census numbers, looking for evidence of errors and

whether Wrangell can challenge the numbers.

"It is very difficult" to appeal a census, Murkowski cautioned. "We have to demonstrate it (the count) has been so egregious that it makes a substantial impact" to the community.

The senator said her office would work with Wrangell to determine what options might be available to contest the census numbers.

New legislative map puts Wrangell, Ketchikan, Petersburg together

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Working to carve up Alaska into 40 legislative districts of approximately equal population, a state board has released its draft maps based on the 2020 U.S. Census that move Wrangell, Petersburg and Ketchikan into the same House district.

Wrangell has shared a district with Ketchikan the past decade,

while Petersburg has been part of the Sitka district.

Population shifts, particularly increases in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, forced the Alaska Redistricting Board to move boundaries across the state to keep legislative districts roughly equal in population size.

The combined population of Wrangell, Petersburg and Ketchikan is 19,473, according to

the census count, a little more than one-40th of the state.

The southern Southeast House district would share a state senator with the Sitka district, the same as it does now.

Under the draft plan, the Sitka House district would stretch 600 miles from Metlakatla to Yakutat and include Kake, Hoonah, Angoon, Gustavus, Pelican, Elfin Cove, Prince of Wales Island and

Hyder. That would pull Yakutat out of the Prince William Sound district, where it has resided the past decade.

It also would pull Metlakatla, Prince of Wales Island and Hyder out of the district they have shared with Ketchikan.

Much of Juneau would be its own House district, while the northern portion of Juneau would be joined with Haines

and Skagway in a separate district. The map, however, includes a small carve-out with a big political implication.

In redrawing the boundary lines for the two House seats that include Juneau, board members put two incumbents into the same district — a frequent outcome in the political process. The redistricting board went outside

Continued on page 9

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New legislative map

Continued from page 6
the straight lines — grabbing one side of the street but not the other — to pull Rep. Andi Story into the same district as Rep. Sarah Hannan.

If the jigsaw map is adopted and upheld, Story and Hannan would have to run against each other, or one of the lawmakers could choose to move into the other district — or leave the job. Both are Democrats in their second term.

The board has adopted two draft maps for public comment. The five-person board last week agreed on most boundaries across Alaska but could not agree on the line between the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Anchorage. Where the line is

drawn would have ripple effects into Anchorage, reshaping some districts there.

Rather than trying to decide the issue immediately, members adopted two draft maps for further review.

Proposed maps from third-parties, such as political parties, Native corporations and others, are due this week. The board will decide on which draft maps to take on a statewide tour of public meetings later in September and into October, with a Nov. 10 deadline to adopt a final map.

Multiple lawsuits over district boundaries are common after a final map is adopted. If the antic-

ipated litigation can be settled in time, the new boundaries would take effect for the 2022 legislative elections.

The state constitution says districts should be “contiguous and compact territory containing as nearly as practicable a relatively integrated socio-economic area.” Board members last week disagreed about whether Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough are integrated or whether districts should stop at borough boundaries, as they agreed should happen with Fairbanks.

The redistricting board includes two members appointed

by the governor, one each appointed by the state House speaker and Senate president, and one appointed by the chief justice of the Alaska Supreme Court.

State and federal law requires redrawing legislative boundaries after every census.

“This is a dynamic process, where it will be evolving and changing as we get input from the public, on what they see in these maps and other people’s opinions,” said board chair John Binkley.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Housing —

Continued from page 1
Sept. 10.

“What is showing up in just Wrangell in the MLS [Multiple Listing Service] is four homes,” said Sarah Holmgrain, the owner of Petersburg Properties. “There are a couple in Kake, eight in Petersburg. It’s very tight now.”

“What we’re seeing are homes that are move-in ready going quickly,” she said. “If they even need a little bit of help, a little cosmetic, they’re still going quickly.”

According to Holmgrain, the average sold price 2020 for homes in the Wrangell/Petersburg/Kake area was \$174,211. In 2019 and 2018, the average sold prices were \$158,092 and \$148,285, respectively. Those numbers don’t account for people who sold the homes without an agent or agents who didn’t list homes on the state MLS.

“We’re coming off the best season I think Sarah [Holmgrain] and I have ever had,” McGrath said. “A lot of people are coming up from down south, Petersburg and Wrangell are the last enclave in the Southeast that haven’t been exploited as far as price goes. You get a lot of bang for your buck.”

Several factors have led to the increase in demand, chief among them are people relocating for jobs, lower taxes, and a simpler way of life.

A look at the Wrangell community page on Facebook will show posts from folks moving to the island from across the Lower 48, including Utah, Florida, New Hampshire and California, to name a few.

According to a report issued in March by the Pew Research Center, “The number of homeowners [nationwide] increased by an estimated 2.1 million over the prior year. ... This matches the largest prior net increase in homeowners that occurred during the housing boom between 2003 and 2004.”

“Lots of people are refinancing and making that leap to buy because the rates are so low,” Holmgrain said. As of Sept. 10, the rates were 2.7% for a 30-year loan and 2.25% for a 15-year loan.

The lack of housing doesn’t seem to have a ready remedy.

“The Economic Develop-

Continued on page 10



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Housing

Continued from page 9
ment Committee met [Sept. 8] and started having a conversation on ... how can it be addressed," said Carol Rushmore, economic development director for Wrangell. "You've got a lot of factors happening here. Mainly it's SEARHC who opened the hospital, who's doing a lot of hiring. And then you have Crossings who has a lot of seasonal [workers]. Not just Crossings but other businesses will have the seasonal workers come in."

That makes it next to impossible to secure a rental during the summer months, she said. However, permanent residents brought in due to SEARHC's hiring efforts has made the long-term housing market tighter still, she said.

"To help the moving process, SEARHC will work with new hires to provide housing leads and, if possible, connect them with available housing options," Maegan Bosak, senior director of lands and property management, wrote in an email. "If housing cannot be secured prior to relocating to Wrangell, SEARHC will provide temporary housing to new hires while they search for options."

The borough has been working to develop the former Wrangell Institute land, near Shoemaker Bay Loop, for residential housing. That will have to wait, however, until the borough and federal Bureau of Indian Affairs can conduct a ground search of the property as part of a national effort to ensure no gravesites or cultural artifacts at the former Native and

American Indian boarding schools.

A lack of housing can be frustrating for house hunters and those trying to attract employers and employees alike to the island.

"There's zero, nothing available on the market. If there is, it happens overnight, it's who you know, and we're seeing the values of property going up, too," Rushmore said. "I'm talking with somebody right now who wants to start and move their business here. It's difficult. They're having housing issues, trying to figure out where they will live, or if they have a number of employees, what will happen there."

"There have been some builders that have built some housing for rental purposes," Rushmore said. "I do think you have some developers that could potentially build some additional multi-family or duplexes or something along those lines."

Rushmore said the city is working with SEARHC to accommodate the organization in its efforts to create housing for its workers. However, nothing definite has been planned by the health care organization.

"At this time, there is no timeline for such projects," Bosak said. "Traveling medical staff are typically provided housing as part of their contract. Our housing roster is a mixture of SEARHC-owned apartments and rental units leased by SEARHC from local landlords. Travelers are provided housing assignments by the housing services manager."

Wolves take on 11 teams in first cross country meet of season

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Despite intermittent downpours, the Wrangell High School boys' and girls' cross country teams took on several other runners in the first in-person meet of the season last Saturday.

Forty-six girls and 69 boys from around Southeast competed in the soggy conditions, with Wrangell boys placing third as a team against 11 others, and the girls' team placing fifth out of nine in the 5-kilometer event.

"The boys stuck together like we have been in practice, and they listened to me as I told them to catch people," cross country coach Kayla Rooney said about the boys' overall performance. "They did really good. I'm happy with how they're placing right now."

The boys' race started a little after noon and the girls began around 1 p.m., running a three-lap loop around Volunteer Park.

"I'm very proud of my girls," Rooney said. "We have some work to do this week to help get them ready for our next meet. ... This team has been dedicated to cross country for the last two seasons and I'm grateful for that."

Senior Liana Carney was the first Wrangell runner across the finish line for the girls, placing fourth overall with a time of 21:56.77. Freshman Daniel Harrison was the fastest of the boys' team, coming in sixth at 18:26.09.

Sitka placed first in the boys'



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Sophomore Mia Wiederspohn completes the first lap of the cross country meet at Volunteer Park in Wrangell last Saturday.

competition with a team total of 1:32:16, while Wrangell's total time was 1:38:54.

The girls' team turned in a time of 2:19:12 for their fifth-place finish. Ketchikan finished first at 1:57:22.

Teams competing in the event were Wrangell, Sitka, Petersburg, Craig, Gustavus, Ketchikan, Klawock, Juneau-Douglas, Thunder Mountain, Mt. Edgecumbe, Southeast Island School District and Metlakatla.

Rooney expects times and performance to improve, as this race was the first official one of the season with other teams.

"It's the first race with actual people, so they're getting those first-race jitters out. We did a practice with Petersburg last week, but it's different when you've got 11 other

teams you're competing with," she said. "It's definitely a learning curve usually the first race. I expect their times will be better after this week, but I'm happy with what they are."

Runners' stats:

Boys

Daniel Harrison, 18:26.09 (Frosh)
Devlyn Campbell, 18:58.21 (Jr)
Elias Decker, 19:55.18 (Jr)
Randy Churchill, 20:08.73 (Jr)
Ethan Blatchley, 21:26.07 (Jr)
Jimmy Baggen, 21:34.42 (Sr)
James Shilts, 22:10.57 (Sr)
Tyson Messmer, 23:13.01 (Sr)

Girls

Liana Carney, 21:56.77 (Sr)
Della Churchill, 25:27.81 (Frosh)
Sierra Ely, 27:12.09 (Soph)
Mia Wiederspohn, 27:13.93 (Soph)
Rylee Chelette, 37:21.82 (Jr)

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Boutique returns downtown after taking temporary break

By Marc Lutz
Sentinel editor

Sometimes businesses can gain fresh insight with a new perspective. Just ask Terie Loomis, owner of Silver Liningz Boutique.

In June, Loomis opened the doors on her Front Street shop down and across from where she'd been a few years earlier. On Labor Day, she was in the shop to gauge what traffic would be like on a day she's typically closed.

Silver Liningz specializes strictly in women's apparel, carrying tops, jeans, dresses and intimate clothing, along with jewelry, accessories and other gift items. Loomis describes the style as "boutique-y," with dressier clothing and items that could be worn for a "night out."

The clientele ranges from young mothers to grandmothers, Loomis said, with teenagers starting to come in. There is, however, one demographic that might find it hard to shop in her store.

"I have very few things for men. I have men walking in saying, 'Oh! This isn't for me,'" she said with a laugh. "Well, it is if you're shopping for a woman."

Clientele have found it refreshing to be able to come into the store, peruse and try on different selections, Loomis said, as it can be frustrating to order online and have it delivered, only to find it doesn't fit. Out of all her inventory, she said leggings are probably the most popular item.

"[Terie] has great taste, so there's always a variation of different styles," said Candice Muse, who has been shopping at Silver Liningz for about three years. "You can always find something that will fit you."

Being the only woman in her house, Muse said she will stop into the shop when she needs retail therapy.

"Normally, I don't go in looking for anything in particular. I go in for a mental checkout," Muse said. "Her style is frilly and girly. I live in a house full of boys, and they don't want to do anything girly."

Muse said she will often go into the boutique and spend 30 minutes just "chitchatting" with Loomis. "She is incredible," Muse said.

Loomis originally opened Silver Liningz in 2017 in the Churchill Building on Front Street where Compass Line Gift Shop is now located.

From there, she moved to the back of the building into a larger space. Then COVID-19 hit.

"We definitely saw an affect on the business in that people didn't go shopping, myself included. People would go grocery shopping one day out of the week," Loomis said. "You'd mask up, and you'd run down to the grocery, then you'd run home and stay home for the week. The same thing with the business."

The shop was opened a few times during the pandemic, but Loomis' husband, Mike, had relocated to Kenai for his job. Rather than be separated, they decided to shut down the boutique temporarily while the family joined him in Kenai. They returned in March of this year and moved the business to its

current location.

Small business problems are not those Loomis thought she would ever have to contend with.

"I was a paralegal, and I started with a law firm for a little bit. Then I worked in the electric utility in the engineering department for 17 years," she said. "So, I had no experience in a boutique at all."

Her daughter, Antonya, opened a boutique in Kenai, and that was about as close as she had been to retail. After moving to Wrangell in 2016, Loomis thought opening a boutique shop here would be fun since there wasn't anything similar in town.

"I didn't have anything to do. I homeschool my kids ... my husband works away, so I kind of needed, I hate to say, 'hobby,' but that's how it started," Loomis said. "I talked with my daughter, and she gave me a lot of input and put me in the direction of inventory."

And with the pandemic, trade shows and various other methods shopkeepers might have used to find new product were put on hold. Loomis said many started using applications like Zoom and Facebook Live to show new items, making it possible to keep stock fresh.

"This year's been kind of tough. Sometimes a lot of my orders are backordered and it's because of COVID," she said. "There's people who aren't working, there are [companies] that are understaffed, and that goes across the board. You see about it in restaurants and things like that, but it's all over. Even in the clothing industry they may not have the people to make the clothes or ship the clothes, you know, there's something out there causing the delay."



Terie Loomis

Unable to fly, Eagle River legislator excused from Senate

JUNEAU (AP) - An Eagle River legislator banned from Alaska Airlines for refusing to follow federal law that requires a face mask has been excused from attending state Senate floor sessions until mid-January - at her request.

However, Republican Sen. Lora Reinbold decided to stick around for the final days of legislative action anyway, leaving her no apparent option but to take a ferry out of Juneau and then drive through Canada to get home.

Reinbold on Sept. 9 requested the excusal to Jan. 15. Her request was accepted by the Republican-led Senate without objection.

She cited the challenges of further travels between Juneau and Anchorage after she was suspended from flying on Alaska Airlines earlier this year.

Had she not changed her travel plans, Reinbold's decision could have caused her to miss Tuesday's vote on the amount of this fall's Permanent Fund dividend, where she was on the losing side that wanted a larger PFD.

The session ended Tuesday, though Gov. Mike Dunleavy has called lawmakers back for another special session in Juneau starting Oct. 1.

Lawmakers can request excusals from the House or Senate

floor sessions for such things as personal or state business.

Delta Air Lines provides seasonal service to and from Juneau, which the company began in late May and ended last weekend. After her ban from Alaska Airlines, the senator has flown Delta into Juneau, but needed to get out last weekend if she wanted to fly before the summer service stopped.

Delta's flights allowed Reinbold to connect through Seattle for her travel between Anchorage and Juneau.

Alaska Airlines in April said Reinbold was not allowed to fly with the carrier "for her continued refusal to comply with employee instruction regarding the current mask policy." The company said the suspension was effective immediately "pending further review."

On Sept. 9, airline spokesperson Tim Thompson said by email that Reinbold's case "was reviewed earlier this year and she was notified of the outcome. Nothing has changed with her status from earlier this year."

Reinbold has called the ban political. The legislator has been a vocal critic of masking rules, including at the state Capitol.

The senator in April drove from Anchorage to reach Juneau, making the last leg of the trip by state ferry.

WCA will work on two-year study of seafood consumption

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Cooperative Association will assist with a two-year research project into seafood consumption rates, intended to help state officials understand the importance of clean water and healthy seafood for the community's Indigenous population.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Tribal Climate Resilience Program has approved a \$130,000 grant to the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission, which will administer the program and work with WCA.

The project will include a survey of current and past seafood consumption and its importance to people's diets, said Esther Ashton, the WCA tribal administrator.

The survey will ask about salmon, eulachon (hooligan), halibut, crab and shellfish consumption. "Any traditional foods," Ashton said.

The surveys will not get un-

derway until next year, with the project to include community meetings to explain the work and later review the survey results, said Frederick Olsen Jr., of Sitka, the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission's executive director.

The Wrangell project is a first for the group, though it hopes to conduct similar research projects elsewhere in Southeast in the future, Olsen said.

"This is our first federal money," he said.

SEITC, a consortium of 15 sovereign tribal nations in Southeast, works on water quality issues, in particular to protect the region against the risks of mining wastes flowing into Southeast waters through the three transboundary rivers: Stikine, Taku and Unuk.

"Our foods are safe and healthy to eat. It is important we keep it that way for our future generations," SEITC chair Rob Sanderson Jr. said in a prepared statement.



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Susan Erickson

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inquiry@p-wins.com



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Police report

Monday, Aug. 30
 Fraud: Identity theft.
 Summons service.
 Letter served for removing a person from a licensed establishment.

Tuesday, Aug. 31
 Subpoena service.
 Letter served for removing a person from a licensed establishment.
 Agency assist: Fire Department.

Wednesday, Sept. 1
 Agency assist: Harbor Department.
 Search and rescue.

Thursday, Sept. 2
 Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.
 Citizen assist.
 Motor vehicle accident.

Friday, Sept. 3
 Alarm.
 Paper service.
 Traffic stop: Verbal warning for tail light out.
 Citizen report: Driving under the influence.

Saturday, Sept. 4
 Civil standby.

Sunday, Sept. 5
 Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits.
 Traffic stop: Citation issued for expired registration and verbal warning for driving habits.
 Found property: Returned to owner.
 Traffic stop: Verbal warning given for signaling intent and not committing to a turn.

Monday, Sept. 6
 Agency assist: Fire.
 Suspicious persons.
 Harassment.
 Civil matter.

Tuesday, Sept. 7
 Citizen assist.
 Agency assist: Fire.
 Assault.

Wednesday, Sept. 8
 Deer complaint.

Thursday, Sept. 9
 Agency assist: Office of Children's Services.
 Animal complaint.
 Traffic stop.

Friday, Sept. 10
 Paper service.
 Agency assist: Line crew.
 Traffic stop.

Saturday, Sept. 11
 Deer complaint.

Sunday, Sept. 5
 Citizen assist: Vehicle unlock.
 Alarm.
 Arrest: Domestic violence assault in the fourth degree.
 Welfare check: Unattended death.

During this reporting period there were nine ambulance calls, seven agency assists with the Hoonah Police Department, four subpoenas served and three arrests for burglary and criminal mischief.



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Cruisin' on a Sunday afternoon

The cruise ship Silver Muse made its final stop of the season in Wrangell last Sunday, carrying an estimated 250 passengers, just about one-third of the ship's capacity. The Silver Muse, at almost 700 feet long, was the largest ship to stop in Wrangell during this summer's abbreviated tourist season as cruise traffic was down substantially from last year. The ship, operated by Silversea Cruises, targets the luxury traveler.

Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH Fisheries columnist

Bering Sea crabbers get bad news about red king, snow crab stocks

Alaska's Bering Sea crabbers are reeling from the devastating news that all major crab stocks are down substantially, based on summer survey results, and the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery will be closed for the first time in more than 25 years.

The state announced the closure Sept. 3.

That stock has been on a steady decline for several years, and the 2020 harvest had dwindled to just 2.6 million pounds.

Most shocking was the drastic turnaround for snow crab stocks, which in 2018 showed a 60% boost in market-sized male crabs (the only ones retained for sale) and nearly the same for females. That year's survey was documented as "one of the largest snow crab recruitment events biologists have ever seen," said Bob Foy, director of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Crab Plan Team.

Again in 2019, the "very strong" snow crab biomass was projected at more than 610 million pounds, and the catch was set at a conservative 45 million pounds for the 2020 fishery. No Bering Sea crab surveys were done that year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the 2021 results indicated the numbers of mature male snow crab had plummeted by 55%.

The stock "seems to have disappeared or moved elsewhere," said Jamie Goen, executive director of the trade group, Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC). The snow crab catch for the upcoming season could be down by 70% and the stock could be clas-

sified as "over-fished," she said, adding that no decisions will be made until the data undergo more scrutiny by plan team and council scientists.

ABSC estimates the closure of the red king crab fishery and a reduced snow crab catch could cost harvesters well over \$100 million. The hit will be felt by roughly 70 vessels, more than 400 fishermen, and the processors and fishing communities that rely on the Bering Sea crab revenues.

The crabbers are calling on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and NOAA Fisheries to conserve crab habitat and spawning grounds highlighted by scientists more than 10 years ago, but with little resulting action.

The crabbers also want managers "to create meaningful incentives to reduce crab bycatch in other fishing sectors, to reduce fishing impacts on molting and mating crab, and to estimate unaccounted for bycatch from unobserved fishing mortality from bottom and pelagic (mid-water) trawl nets, as well as pot and longline gears."

Boats fishing the Bering Sea are required to have 100% ob-

server coverage to track what is retained and what is tossed over the side, but it's what is not observed that most concerns the crabbers. And what goes unseen is not factored into stock or bycatch assessments.

In a February letter to the NPFMC, ABSC highlighted studies showing "that 95% to 99% of crab in the path of trawl gear go under the foot-rope escaping capture and some portion of those likely die after contact with the fishing gear. Given this number compared to what is observed as bycatch, the potential for unobserved mortality of crab could be millions of additional pounds of dead crab bycatch."

According to a February report by NPFMC scientists, which (unsuccessfully) proposed an amendment to the management plan for crab bycatch in the Bering Sea groundfish trawl fisheries: "Crab may actively escape capture from trawl gear, as they can slip under the trawl itself, or over the sweeps, but the damage from the gear results in mortality or delayed mortality due to injuries. The potential for unobserved mortality of crabs that encounter bottom trawls but are not captured has long been a

concern for the management of groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea."

The Crab Plan Team meets Sept. 13-16 to discuss the Bering Sea crab stock assessments, and catches for the 2021-2022 season will be announced before the Oct. 15 start of the fisheries. Reducing crab bycatch is not on the agenda.

The NPFMC meets via web conference Oct. 6-10, when it will set preliminary catch and bycatch levels for 2022.

Dungeness update

Southeast crabbers wrapped up an "average" Dungeness season for a 2½-month summer fishery that ended in mid-August.

Preliminary numbers indicate the catch came in at half of last summer's level, said Adam Messmer, Alaska Department of Fish and Game assistant manager for the region.

"We ended up with just over 3 million pounds this season, which is right around our 10-year average. Last year was our second biggest year ever. We were kind of expecting a little bit more than what we caught this year. But we had a quite a bit of

Continued on page 13

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Ketchikan airport plans major renovations; airport work ongoing in Juneau

By ABBEY COLLINS

Travelers flying in or out of Wrangell on Alaska Airlines touch down in either Juneau or Ketchikan as they head north or south. The airports in both cities are set to look a lot different in coming years, amid tens of millions of dollars in planned and ongoing renovations and expansion.

At the Ketchikan International Airport, there is a financial plan in place for new construction on the first and second floors, said airport manager Alex Puera. That includes more room for TSA screening, air taxi operations, changes to the concessions area, and another jetway to connect with planes.

"We get so busy in the summer that the TSA lines wind down into the baggage area and it causes a huge amount of congestion," said Puera. "It's going to make a lot more room for passengers."

A terminal plan published by aviation consultants the Mead and Hunt Team in January laid out issues with the design and flow of the airport that it says leads to traveler confusion and congestion. The project team proposed four alternatives for airport layouts and solicited public input for choosing the preferred concept.

This first phase of work is estimated at \$23 million. Puera said funding is expected to come from a variety of sources, including airport reserves, passenger fees added to ticket prices, and federal money for airport improvements.

The entire scope of the overhaul, projected in several phases through 2040, is estimated at \$89 million.

Puera said there is one thing standing in the way of the first phase moving forward — the airport has a long-term land lease with the state of Alaska that ends

in 2027. The state owns the land; the borough owns and operates the terminal.

"In order for the borough to take up bond debt, we need a long-term lease," said Puera, who added that the airport is in discussions with the state to expedite that process.

If everything goes well with lease negotiations, Puera said, construction would likely begin in late 2023 or 2024. At that time, he said, there will be some disruptions at the airport. "The airport will be running as normal, but there will be areas that will be closed off."

Meanwhile, renovations are ongoing at the Juneau International Airport. It's the second phase of terminal renovations, said airport manager Patty Wahto. The \$25 million project includes replacing parts of the terminal building constructed before 1984, mostly affecting smaller carriers, such as Alaska Sea-

planes, and employee offices.

About 35,000 square feet of the older end of the airport terminal was torn down and is being rebuilt.

Construction began in early 2020, and Wahto said airport employees are starting to move into the newly built space, though there is still work ongoing.

"A lot of noise and demolition," Wahto said, "that's the biggest part that's left. Now it's time to get rid of the old stuff."

Wahto said this phase of the project is set for completion in early 2022.

Though Juneau officials had expected federal grants spread over several years would cover maybe half of the project cost, they were notified last year that the Federal Aviation Administration had awarded a \$15 million grant for the work, significantly reducing Juneau's debt to pay for the job.

Fish Factor

Continued from page 12

softshell crab (newly molted) at the beginning of the summer. That accounts for the missed poundage," he said.

The 2020 Dungeness catch of six million pounds was valued at nearly \$10 million at the docks.

Despite a lower catch this summer, the harvest of the two-pounders was worth much more to the fleet of 205 permit holders.

"It was our highest price ever, averaging \$4.27 per pound. That came out to almost a \$13 million fishery. So that pencils out to

about \$63,000 per permit," Messmer said.

Southeast crabbers get another go when the Dungeness fishery reopens on Oct. 1.

Salmon watch

Alaska's salmon catch as of Sept. 11 was on its way to 219

million fish, well above the forecast of 190 million.

Pinks pushed up the number with a total harvest so far of nearly 151 million. Nearly 65 million were from Prince William Sound and over 45 million humpies were harvested in

Southeast and more than 26 million at Kodiak.

The statewide sockeye salmon catch had topped 54 million. Chums were nearing 11.5 million, cohos at 2.1 million and 243,000 Chinook salmon had crossed the docks so far.

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL SAMPLE BALLOT REGULAR ELECTION OCTOBER 5, 2021

Instructions:

To vote, completely fill in the oval next to your choice like this: ●

Use a blue or black ink pen to mark your ballot. NO RED INK. If you make a mistake, ask for a new ballot.

To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, fill in the oval and print the person's name on the blank line provided for a write-in candidate.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER THREE YEAR TERM VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN TWO	ASSEMBLY MEMBER UNEXPIRED ONE YEAR TERM UNTIL OCTOBER 2022 VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN ONE
<input type="radio"/> BOB DALRYMPLE <input type="radio"/> JIM DEBORD <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN	<input type="radio"/> DONALD J. MCCONACHIE SR. <input type="radio"/> DAVID L. POWELL <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN
SCHOOL BOARD THREE YEAR TERM VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN TWO	SCHOOL BOARD UNEXPIRED ONE YEAR TERM UNTIL OCTOBER 2022 VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN ONE
<input type="radio"/> ANGELA ALLEN <input type="radio"/> ALEX ANGERMAN <input type="radio"/> BRITTANI ROBBINS <input type="radio"/> ELIZABETH ROUNDTREE <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN	<input type="radio"/> JULIA OSTRANDER <input type="radio"/> JESSICA WHITAKER <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN
PORT COMMISSION THREE YEAR TERM VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN TWO	PORT COMMISSION UNEXPIRED ONE YEAR TERM UNTIL OCTOBER 2022 VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN ONE
<input type="radio"/> CHRIS BUNESS <input type="radio"/> JOHN M. MARTIN <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN	<input type="radio"/> FRANKLIN ROPPEL <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN

Published: September 16, 23 and 30, 2021

Parks & Rec wants to help more kids with financial aid

By SENTINEL STAFF

The Wrangell Parks and Recreation Department wants to help more kids whose families who may not be able to afford the fees for activities.

"The department believes that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in the scheduled activities, programs and classes." The fee assistance also applies to punch cards for use of recreational facilities.

The program is designed to provide financial assistance to youth 3 to 18 years old "who may not otherwise be able to participate," with a limit of \$150 per person for the fiscal year that started July 1.

The program has been around at least 10 years, said Kate Thomas, Wrangell's parks and recreation director. Participation has been down in recent years, prompting the push to rebuild the program, she said.

Eligibility is based on income, and students who qualify for the school lunch program automatically qualify, Thomas said.

In past years, a child's family had to provide tax returns or other proof of income. But this year, in a move to reduce the paperwork, there is a simplified form to complete — and no tax returns required. Application information will be kept confidential.

The department also has dropped the requirement for an essay on "why recreation is important," Thomas said. The intent is to draw more kids into the program and into recreational activities.

Funding for the fee assistance program comes from community members, organizations and businesses. Donations are always welcome.

More information, go to the parks and recreation website or call 874-2444.

CLASSIFIED/LEGALS

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that an application to lease Borough-owned tidelands consisting of approximately one acre of tidelands within a portion of Tract D-1, ATS 1531, S.B.P.L. Subdivision (Parcel No. 03-007-498; Plat No. 99-8) for the purpose of storing and raising mature oysters in plastic mesh containment bags.

The Wrangell Planning & Zoning Commission and Port Commission have reviewed this request and approved the request to move forward with the Tidelands Lease.

Any person wishing to protest this application to lease the proposed Borough-owned property described as:

Approximately One acre of tidelands within a portion of Tract D-1, ATS 1531, S.B.P.L. Subdivision (Parcel No. 03-007-498; Plat No. 99-8)

... must file a written protest with the Borough Clerk, no later than October 1, 2021, at 1:00 PM.

Written protests may be emailed to clerk@wrangell.com or delivered to 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, AK 99929. Any such protest shall state the reason(s) for the protest in detail.

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

Publish Sept. 16 and 23, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

ABSENTEE VOTING for the Regular Borough Election (to be held October 5, 2021) begins on Monday, September 20, 2021, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., (Monday through Friday) at City Hall.

Qualified Voters may vote an Absentee Ballot until Monday, October 4, 2021, at 4 p.m. for the Regular Borough Election.

For those voters who cannot vote absentee in person, you may submit an application to have your ballot mailed or faxed to you. Please stop by the Borough Clerk's Office to apply.

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

Publish Sept 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

The City & Borough of Wrangell is now accepting letters of interest to fill the following seats on the SEASWA (Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority) Board of Directors:

- Director Seat
- Alternate Board Member Seat

Please turn your Letters of Interest into the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, City & Borough of Wrangell, P.O. Box 531, Wrangell, AK 99929, on or before 4 p.m., Tuesday, September 28, 2021.

Information on the powers and duties of the SEASWA Alternate Board of Directors seat is contained in Wrangell Municipal Code Section 3.30.090 Board of Directors. A copy of that code chapter can be obtained at the Borough Clerk's Office or viewed at the City's website at: www.wrangell.com.

Appointment will be made at the regular Assembly meeting on September 28, 2021.

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

Publish Sept. 16 & 23, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL CITY-OWNED PROPERTY FOR SALE

In conformance with WMC 16.12 and approved by Resolution No. 08-21-1606, the Borough is offering for sale the City-Owned Property, listed below, on the Public Surplus Website: <https://www.publicsurplus.com/sms/wrangell.ak/list/current?orgid=933515>

Property Descriptions:

- Lot 1A, Etolin-Spruce Subdivision, Plat 2020-8
- Lot 1B, Etolin-Spruce Subdivision, Plat 2020-8
- Lot 1C, Etolin-Spruce Subdivision, Plat 2020-8

The property shall be available for bidding on the Public Surplus Site for not less than 30 days, specifically from September 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021, 3 p.m. ADT.

Bidders' registration and fee required in advance of the online auction on the Public Surplus Website.

Visit the Borough website at:

<https://www.wrangell.com/community/public-surplus> for the terms and conditions and specifics of the auction/sale of the property.

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

Publish Sept. 9, 16 and 23, 2021

SERVICES OFFERED

Piano tuner Ryan Gracey will be here Oct. 4-8. Contact Alice Rooney at 305-0007 to get on his work list.

HELP WANTED

Wrangell Head Start is hiring for a classroom cook. For more information call 874-2455.

FOR SALE

Remote property, Thoms Place subdivision, South Wrangell Island. 1.88 acres, waterfront. Call 907-321-3240.

FOR SALE

17-1/2 foot Lund, 115hp Mercury outboard and easy-loader trailer. \$3,500. Call 907-518-1417.

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the Matter of the Estate of Lucille Merrill. You are notified that the court has appointed a personal representative of the estate of Lucille Merrill, born September 10, 1935, died July 21, 2021. All persons having claims against the deceased are required to present their claims within four months after the date of the first publication of this notice or the claims will be forever barred.

Case No. 1WR-21-14PR
Brenda Schwartz-Yeager
PO Box 1996
Wrangell, AK 99929
907-470-4000
brenda@marineartist.com

Publish Sept. 2, 9 and 16, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

For the upcoming City and Borough of Wrangell Regular Election of October 5, 2021, the following ordinance applies:

2.16.030 Write-in Candidates and Write-in Votes. Individuals who fail to file a declaration of candidacy but wish to run for office as a write-in candidate must file with the borough clerk a letter of intent no later than 5 p.m. on the Friday preceding the election (October 1, 2021) in which the candidate plans to participate.

Write-in votes cast for individuals who do not file a letter of intent will not be counted.

In order to vote for a write-in candidate, the voter must, in space provided, write in the candidate's name as the candidate's name appears on the letter of intent filed with the borough clerk. In addition, the voter must mark the oval opposite the candidate's name. Stickers shall not be used.

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

Publish Sept 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2021

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT AT WRANGELL

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF)

STEPHEN DALE URATA,)

Deceased.) 1WR-21-15 PR.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that Jack Michael Urata and Angela Joy Urata have been appointed Co-Personal Representatives of the estate of Stephen Dale Urata ("Estate"). All persons having claims against Stephen Dale Urata are required to present their claims within four (4) months after the date of the first publication of this Notice or said claims will be forever barred. Claims must either be presented to Jack Michael Urata and Angela Joy Urata, Co-Personal Representatives of the Estate, by mailing each claim to Baxter Bruce & Sullivan P.C. at P.O. Box 32819, Juneau, Alaska 99803, or filing each claim with the Wrangell Superior Court.

Publish Sept 16, 23 and 30, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on the 5th day of October 2021, in the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, a Regular Local Election will be held for the purpose of voting on the following Borough Official positions.

- Borough Assembly: Two seats, for 3-year terms
- Borough Assembly: One seat, for 1-year unexpired term until October 2022
- School Board: Two seats, for 3-year terms
- School Board: One seat, for 1-year unexpired term until October 2022
- Port Commission: Two seats, for 3-year terms
- Port Commission: One seat, for 1-year unexpired term until October 2022

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

Publish Sept. 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2021

Judge orders action to help salmon pass Oregon dams

SALEM, Ore. (AP) - A federal judge has ordered the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to take immediate action to improve fish passage at dams in Oregon's Willamette Basin.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reports that in a final opinion and order issued last week, U.S. District Judge Marco Hernandez said the Corps had for years failed to provide adequate passage for threatened chinook salmon and winter steelhead trout at dams it operates in the basin.

"As evinced by the listed species' continuing decline, the Corps' failure to provide adequate fish passage and mitigate water quality issues is causing substantial, irreparable harm to the salmonids," Hernandez wrote in the opinion.

The order comes after the court decided in favor of three environmental organizations that sued the Corps and the National Marine Fisheries Service, arguing the agencies weren't doing their part to protect the species.

Laurie Rule is a senior attorney at Advocates for the West, a nonprofit environmental law firm that represented the plaintiffs. She said the poor state of salmon and steelhead runs this year underscore the importance of the judge's order.

"It's important because these fish are in really bad shape," Rule said.

Chinook salmon and steelhead in the Upper Willamette River system are both listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Dams on the Willamette and its tributaries have blocked access to spawning grounds for the fish, contributing to population declines.

The Corps said it will review the judge's order to ensure compliance.

Alaska aid group will help resettle Afghan refugees

ANCHORAGE (AP) - Dozens of Afghan refugees will be resettled in Alaska over the next six months, a resettlement organization said Monday.

Between 50 to 100 refugees will come to Alaska starting later in September, Catholic Social Services Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services said in a statement. Resettlement will continue through March.

Catholic Social Services Alaska CEO Lisa Aquino told The Associated Press it's not known when the first refugees would arrive in the state, but they were ready for them when it does happen.

The refugees were described as being in vulnerable populations, such as chil-

dren, women and the elderly. Many worked for the U.S. government or the military in Afghanistan in positions such as translators.

Thousands of Afghans were evacuated after American forces left Afghanistan last month. They were first sent to military bases in the Lower 48 for screening and preparing to be sent to destinations around the U.S.

The refugees, including individuals and families, will work with program staff in several areas such as employment and English-language skills after arriving in Anchorage. Aquino said it wasn't known how many would settle in other parts of the state, but it's expected a majority would remain in Anchorage.

Dunleavy calls Biden's vaccination order 'divisive'

JUNEAU (AP) - Gov. Mike Dunleavy said President Joe Biden's push to require millions of U.S. workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is "ill conceived, divisive and un-American."

"At a time in which we are called to work together, forced medical procedures run counter to our collective sense of fairness and liberty," the Republican Dunleavy said Sept. 10. "My administration is aggressively identifying every tool at our disposal to protect the inherent individual rights of all Alaskans."

Biden a day earlier outlined plans to mandate that employers with more than 100 workers require their employees to be vaccinated or test for COVID-19 weekly. When asked about critics who might sue over the plan, Biden said, "Have at it."

Dunleavy has faced some

criticism for not issuing a statewide mask mandate and for not implementing a new disaster declaration to deal with a recent surge in COVID-19 cases.

He has instead asked lawmakers to act on legislation intended to address staffing concerns raised by health care facilities.

In his statement, Dunleavy said it is "clear from the data and empirical evidence over the last year that the vaccine is the most effective way to fight COVID-19. From what we are seeing in our hospitals, the very ill are mostly those who are unvaccinated."

The governor said he would "continue to recommend that Alaskans speak to their health care providers and discuss the merits of the vaccine based on their individual healthcare needs."

COVID

Continued from page 1

the state COVID-19 website.

Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage announced Tuesday it had started to ration care. "We are no longer able to provide the standard of care to each and every patient who needs our help," the hospital's chief of staff said in a letter addressed to "fellow Alaskans."

The overwhelming caseload means the hospital must "prioritize scarce resources and treatments to those patients who have the potential to benefit most," the letter said.

The hospital reported Tuesday that more than 30% of its adult patients were COVID-19 positive.

The Anchorage Daily News reported Tuesday that Fairbanks Memorial Hospital began reconfiguring three meeting rooms for patient care last week as an "emergency response to a massive COVID surge and critical staffing shortages," according to hospital spokesperson Kelly Atlee.

Patients housed in the converted rooms would most likely require less-intensive care, Atlee said.

After hospitalizations across the state stayed low from February through July — at just 25% the daily level of the recent surge — Alaska now is among the nation's leaders.

Alaska was among the top five states nationwide for an increase in hospitalizations last week, Sen. Lisa Murkowski told the Southeast Conference at its annual summer meeting in Haines on Tuesday. "That is not where we want to be," the state's senior senator said.

Alaska is among the bottom third nationwide for vaccination rates, after being among the leaders earlier this year.

Murkowski told the gathering of municipal and chamber of commerce officials that a higher vaccination rate would be good for tourism, especially as Southeast looks to rebuild its economy next year. "It sends the message that we're safe and we want you to come."

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association reported that of those hospitalized the last week of August, 81% were unvaccinated.

The vaccination rate among eligible Alaskans for at least their first shot was at 61.9% on Tuesday, barely moving in recent weeks. The rate in Wrangell remains at 65%.

As Wrangell gets past its August spike in cases, the rate of positive test results also is dropping. The state website reported Tuesday that just 2% of COVID-19 tests administered in Wrangell over the past seven days had come back positive. The Kenai Peninsula Borough, at a 14% positive result, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, at 15%, and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, at 17%, were the state leaders.

To help stem rising infection rates, Fairbanks schools last week shifted to universal masking, after starting the semester without mandatory face masks. The new requirement will remain through the semester.

Though they have taken other mitigation steps, the Matanuska-Susitna and Kenai Peninsula districts continue to operate without mandatory face masks.

Absenteeism rates among Mat-Su students and school staff last week were nearly 25%, the district said.

Peter Pan Seafood will require its employees to be vaccinated

ANCHORAGE (AP) - A seafood processing company with multiple operations in Alaska and Washington state will require its employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

"Our team often works in close quarters and in remote communities with limited access to health care resources," Rodger May, president at Peter Pan Seafood, said in a statement.

"Requiring employees to be vaccinated is the new gold standard. This is the best way I know to keep them and the communities we work in as healthy as possible," May said.

The policy will be enacted in tiers. The first tier includes employees at company headquarters in Bellevue, Washington; its Seattle warehouse; Alaska processing facilities in Valdez, Port Moller, Dillingham; and Alaska support centers in Dillingham, Sand Point and Naknek.

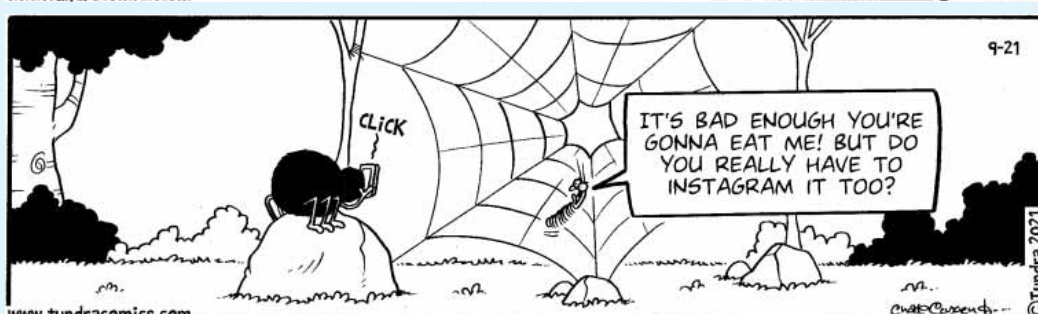
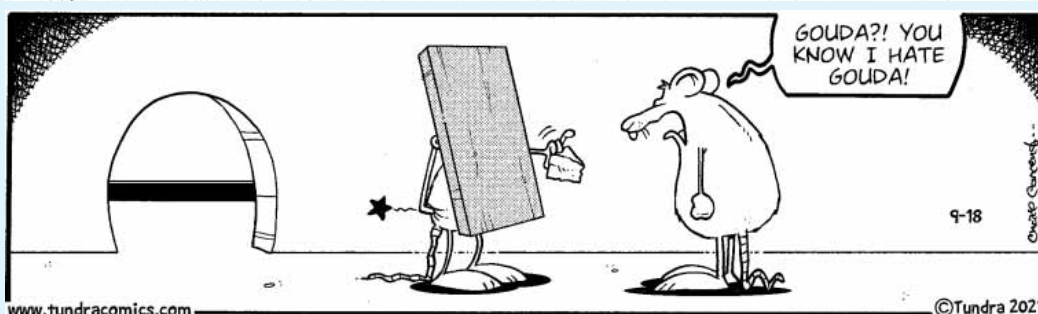
Those employees already have a 95% vaccination rate. The others must be fully vaccinated by Oct. 1, the company said.

The second tier includes all employees at the processor's facility in King Cove. A deadline for those employees will be announced later.

The company said 80% of its employees are included in the first tier, with the rest working in King Cove.

Exceptions will be made for people who have medical or religious reasons not to be vaccinated, but employees who don't fall under those categories and choose not to be vaccinated will be fired, the company said in an email to the AP.

The mandatory vaccinations do not apply to crew members in the fishing fleet, which operate separately from Peter Pan, the email said.



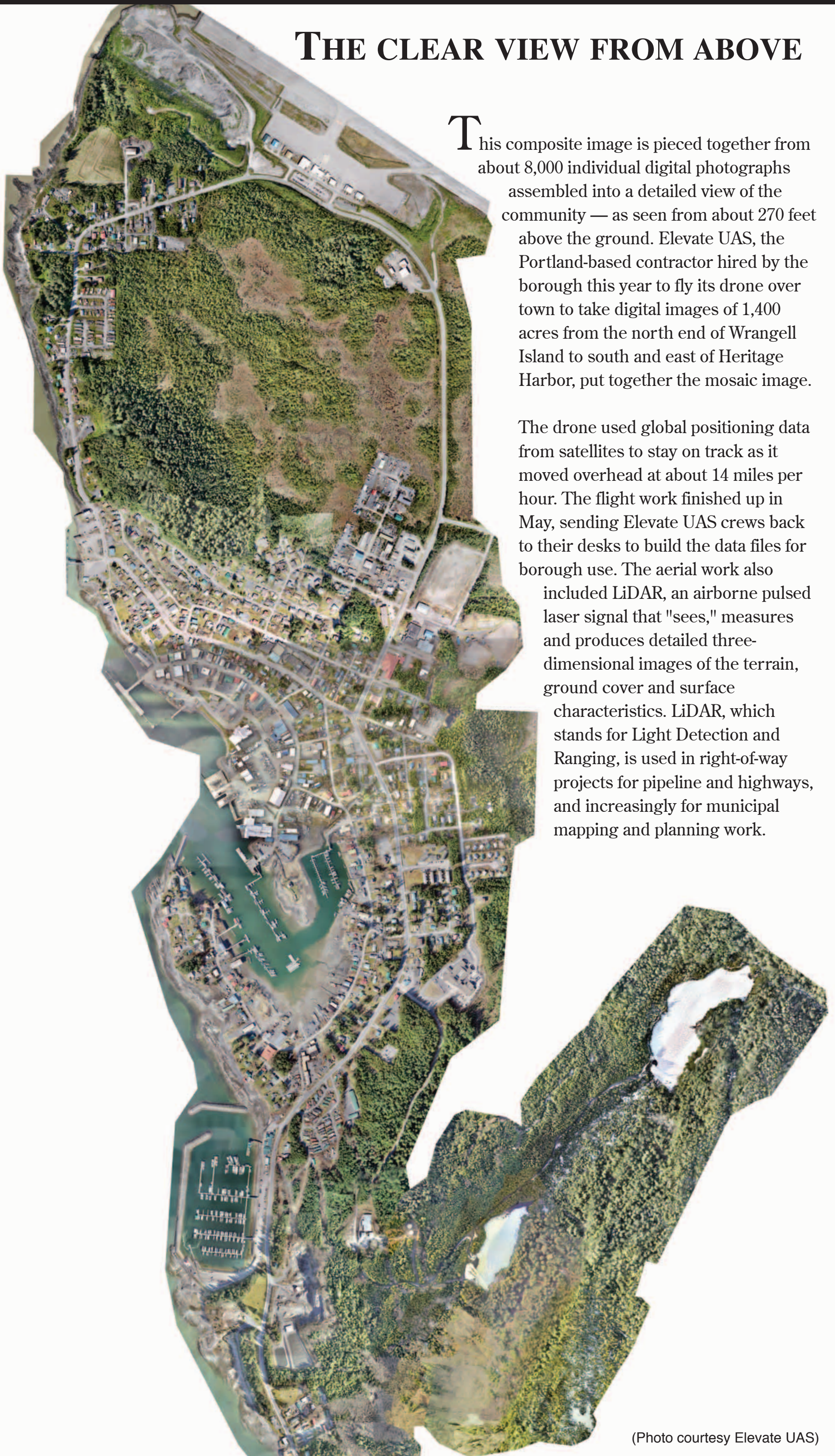
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WRANGELL SENTINEL

THE CLEAR VIEW FROM ABOVE

This composite image is pieced together from about 8,000 individual digital photographs assembled into a detailed view of the community — as seen from about 270 feet above the ground. Elevate UAS, the Portland-based contractor hired by the borough this year to fly its drone over town to take digital images of 1,400 acres from the north end of Wrangell Island to south and east of Heritage Harbor, put together the mosaic image.

The drone used global positioning data from satellites to stay on track as it moved overhead at about 14 miles per hour. The flight work finished up in May, sending Elevate UAS crews back to their desks to build the data files for borough use. The aerial work also included LiDAR, an airborne pulsed laser signal that "sees," measures and produces detailed three-dimensional images of the terrain, ground cover and surface characteristics. LiDAR, which stands for Light Detection and Ranging, is used in right-of-way projects for pipeline and highways, and increasingly for municipal mapping and planning work.



(Photo courtesy Elevate UAS)