

Wrestlers hit the mat to prepare for season, page 8



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Powell, Robbins, Allen, Whitaker all likely to win

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel writer

Though 87 absentee and early votes and questioned ballots will not be tallied until Thursday, the leaders after Tuesday's municipal election appear likely to win on the final count.

Borough assembly candidate David Powell led Don McConachie Sr. by 47 votes after Tuesday's election.

School board candidates Brittani Robbins and Angela Allen were ahead of their challengers by about 100 votes for two open seats.

And Jessica Whitaker led Julia Ostrand-

er by 44 votes — 215 to 171 — for a one-year school board term.

Races for two other assembly seats and three port commission spots were uncontested.

The borough canvas board will meet Thursday to review and count the early and absentee ballots and certify the election.

The 489 ballots cast in the election — 402 on Tuesday, plus the early, absentee and questioned ballots — is almost the same total as the 483 ballots in last year's municipal election.

Of the 402 ballots cast in-person Tuesday for the two, three-year terms on the

school board, Robbins received 236 votes, Allen 235, Alex Angerman garnered 136 and Elizabeth Roundtree received 107.

The three school board winners will join David Wilson and Laura Ballou on the five-member board. They will replace Aaron Angerman, Cyni Cray and Patty Gilbert, who declined to run for reelection to the board.

Jim DeBord and incumbent Bob Dalrymple were not challenged in their election to the two three-year terms on the borough assembly. Dalrymple, who received 258 votes, currently serves on the assembly; DeBord, with 310 votes, previously served as an assembly member.

In the ballot contest for the one year remaining of an unexpired term on the assembly between Powell and McConachie, Powell received 222 votes to McConachie's 175 on election day.

Powell is currently an assembly member. McConachie previously served on the assembly.

Incumbent Terry Courson did not seek reelection.

Powell said among the things he wants to accomplish are to finish negotiations with the borough employees union, get the ground and cultural survey work

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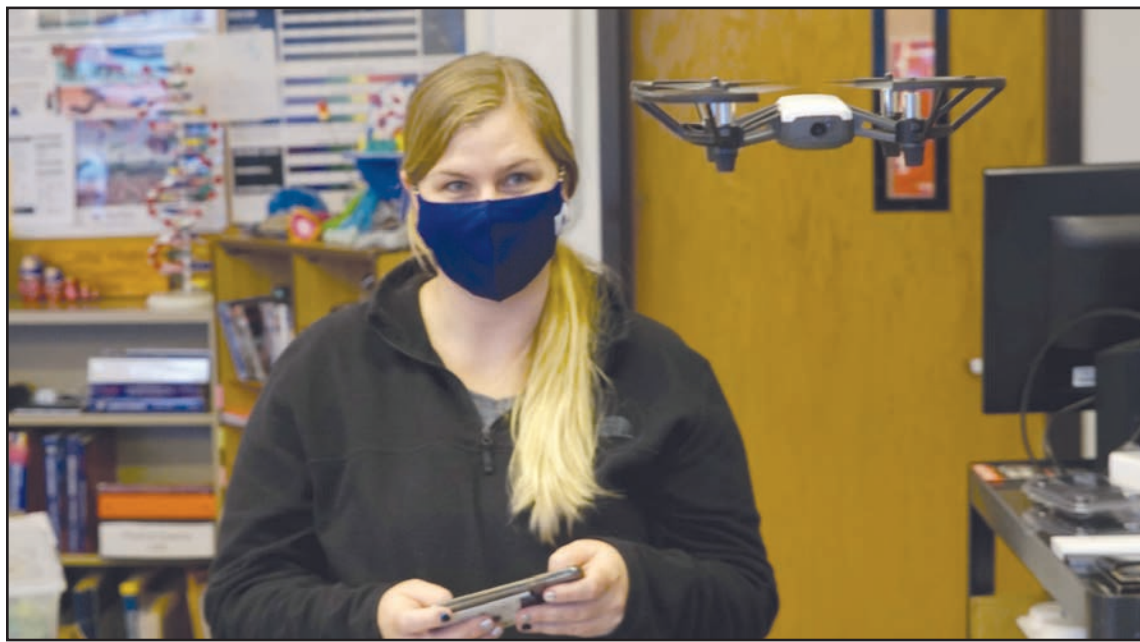


PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

High school science teacher Heather Howe flies one of the drones used in Tech Club. Students have used the drones for multiple projects.

Club goes beyond tech to teach life skills

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The first rule of Tech Club is talk about Tech Club.

Science teacher Heather Howe wants the students who attend Wrangell High's newly formed program to share what they're learning and doing to interest more kids in attending.

The T3 Alliance — often referred to as Tech Club — is a program designed to supplement the U.S. Department of Education's Upward Bound program, which helps students increase their ability to complete a secondary education, whether college or a technical school. Not

all members of Tech Club are in the Upward Bound program, and it's not a requirement.

"Trying to get students that maybe wouldn't have that background or support to get into a university to begin with, and specifically the T3 part, is through technology," Howe said. "The T3 stands for 'teaching through technology.'"

Howe and the students work with drones, 3D printers, laser cutters and Raspberry Pi computers, a computer kit that students can build and then program. They've also used the drones to create videos for the Wrangell Medical Center and Alaska Vistas tour company,

taking the drones on glacier tour up the Stikine River, getting a birds-eye view of the scenery.

"The kids right now super into the drones. We've kinda been leaning toward the drone stuff more than the other technologies, but last year we spent a little more time learning each," Howe said.

T3 is based on three pillars, which include a growth mindset, STEM learning (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and community engagement.

In addition to learning the ins

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Tire cutter will help break down problem to manageable size

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

Wrangell will share a tire cutter with other Southeast communities, intending to cut down on the thousands of tires stacked at the dump by making it easier to ship out the smaller pieces.

The borough assembly last Tuesday approved a resolution to share the equipment with the Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority. The mobile unit can separate tires from rims and then, using a powerful cutting arm, chop up the rubber into smaller, more easily transportable chunks.

The tires stacked at the landfill are too bulky to efficiently and cost-effectively ship off the

island for proper disposal, so the stockpile continues to build.

Public works employees recommended a tire cutter to help solve the problem.

The unit is coming to Wrangell first, said Tom Wector, public works director. The equipment is due to arrive on the barge this week, along with some spare parts.

Wrangell spearheaded the conversation to buy the unit, said Robert Venables, executive director of the Southeast Conference, a coalition of municipalities and chambers of commerce. The \$56,700 machine was purchased with a grant the Southeast Conference applied for on behalf of SEASWA.

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PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Wrangell will be the first community to use a new tire-cutting machine being shared among several Southeast towns. The plan is to hack up the stack of thousands of tires at the city dump so that it will be easier to ship the waste out of town to an approved disposal site.

Out-of-state health workers help at Wrangell hospital

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Wrangell Medical Center this week welcomed eight temporary out-of-state health care workers assigned to the hospital under a state-financed program to bring as many as 473 professionals to help relieve staffing pressures across Alaska.

The state is spending \$87 million in federal money to bring in the workers, allocating them to 14 hospitals and care centers around the state, as many of the facilities are at or near capacity amid a surge in COVID-19 patients the past month.

Some school districts also are included in the program for nurses.

The contract covers 90 days.

Wrangell had five additional nurses and three certified nursing assistants in the building as of Monday, said Car-

ly Allen, hospital administrator. The state contract allocates 10 more medical professionals for the community, though Allen said she does not know when, how many, or if the additional personnel will show up. "Hopefully," she said.

"This thing is moving very, very fast," Allen said last week, just days after the state signed a contract with Atlanta-based DLH Solutions. The contract calls for 10 registered nurses, three nursing assistants, a physician, two radiology technicians, a lab manager and lab tech for Wrangell.

Unlike the larger hospitals in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Wrangell is not stressed with COVID-19 patients amid the thousands of new cases reported in the urban centers over the past few weeks. Wrangell's issue is a long-term staffing shortage, Allen said. The temporary workers will provide a big help, taking pressure off existing staff, she said.

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, which operates the hospital, has about 120 employees in Wrangell. The total includes its clinics and facilities outside the hospital.

Wrangell's worst month during the pandemic was August, with 48 infections reported, followed by 14 in September and just one this month as of Monday.

Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage, the state's largest hospital, is in the contract for 161 temporary health care workers. The Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage is on the list for 60 personnel, followed by Alaska Regional Medical Center in Anchorage at 43.

The other Southeast hospitals covered by the contract are the SEARHC medical center in Sitka, at 27 workers, and Bartlett Regional Medical Center in Juneau, with an

Continued on page 6

Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Thursday, Oct. 7: Kirk Davidson, Dani Easterly, Jimmy Jabusch, Casey Blaze Nore, Ed Rilatos Jr.

Friday, Oct. 8: Sandy Churchill, Brian Rooney, Richard Taylor.

Saturday, Oct. 9: Jake Jabusch, Melinda Messmer.

Sunday, Oct. 10: Amy Byrd, Megan Clark, Free Guggenbickler, David Newman, Kevin Wallace.

Monday, Oct. 11: Marty Kaer, Donna M. Kuntz, Kanen Miller, Kurt Young; Anniversary: Craig and Kim Strain.

Tuesday, Oct. 12: Kathie Angerman, Perry Brink, Darian Meissner; Anniversary: Tony and Sue Ann Guggenbickler.

Wednesday, Oct. 13: Karen Lockabey, Victoria Roberts.

Thursday, Oct. 14: Ariana Ireland Ellsworth, Dustin Johnson, Erika Seimears.

Senior Center Menu

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

Friday, Oct. 8

Crispy chicken, steamed carrots, cauliflower toss, curry rice pilaf

Monday, Oct. 11

Meat chop suey, spinach, salad with oranges

Tuesday, Oct. 12

BBQ beef on bun, mixed veggies, potato salad

Wednesday, Oct. 13

Clam chowder, tomato sandwich, honey mustard slaw

Thursday, Oct. 14

Chicken enchiladas, black beans, calico corn salad

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 October 18-December 13

Northbound

Monday, Oct. 18

Kennicott, 12:15 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 10

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 14

Matanuska, 10:45 a.m.

Friday, Dec. 17

Matanuska, 10:45 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 24

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Southbound

Wednesday, Oct. 13

Kennicott, 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 27

Kennicott, 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 10

Kennicott, 9:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 24

Kennicott, 8:30 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 13

Matanuska, 8 a.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 October 7-October 13

High Tides

AM PM

Time Ft Time Ft

Oct. 7 01:55 17.6 02:06 18.7

Oct. 8 02:37 17.3 02:41 18.8

Oct. 9 03:20 16.6 03:19 18.5

Oct. 10 04:07 15.5 04:00 17.7

Oct. 11 05:01 14.1 04:79 16.5

Oct. 12 06:07 12.8 05:51 15.1

Oct. 13 07:34 12.2 07:17 14.0

Low Tides

AM PM

Time Ft Time Ft

Oct. 7 07:48 -0.9 08:15 -2.6

Oct. 8 08:24 -0.3 08:56 -2.9

Oct. 9 09:01 0.7 09:40 -2.6

Oct. 10 09:43 2.0 10:30 -1.7

Oct. 11 10:31 3.4 11:28 0.5

Oct. 12 11:30 4.8

Oct. 13 00:38 0.7 12:48 5.8

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD will meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, via Zoom. A work session with the Department of Health regarding covid-19 mitigation will precede the meeting at 6 p.m. Contact the district office at 874-2347 or email kpowell@wpsd.us no later than 3:30 p.m. Monday if you want to speak at the board meeting. The public is encouraged to attend. The Zoom link is available on the school district website; just click on Calendar and the link to the meeting.

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD will hold a community meeting 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. this Thursday, Oct. 7, at the Nolan Center to explain and receive public feedback on proposed maps to redraw state legislative district boundaries across the state, as required after the 2020 census.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "Cry Macho," rated PG-13, at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the drama, thriller and western that runs one hour and 44 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

WRANGELL PARKS & RECREATION registration for the American Red Cross lifeguard course is now open through Oct. 20. Course is Oct. 21-22 in the evenings and all day on Oct. 23-24. Fee is \$150. There is a fee waiver for eligible individuals who commit to a minimum of six months of employment at the pool. Participants can register online at wrangellrec.com. Call 874-2444 for more information or register online at www.wrangellrec.com.

WRANGELL SCHOOL DISTRICT is looking for volunteers to help on a regular basis or on an as needed basis at all three schools. Wrangell High School 874-3395, Stikine Middle School 874-3393, Evergreen Elementary 874-2321.

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

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

Weight room available by appointment and at reduced capacity:

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

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

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

Oct. 6, 1921

The Town Council on Aug. 4 passed an order removing the extra charge of 2.5 cents per kilowatt hour, which the council has permitted Mr. Palmer to charge since May 1, 1920. A few days ago, Mr. Palmer and the Town Council had a conference at which they went into the matter at length. The result of the conference was that the council decided to rescind its action of Aug. 4 and permit Mr. Palmer to continue charging the extra 2.5 cents per kilowatt hour. This means that until further notice the rates will prevail that charge

17.5 cents per kwh for the first 25 kwh, ranging lower for more usage, down to 12.5 cents for 300 kwh and above.

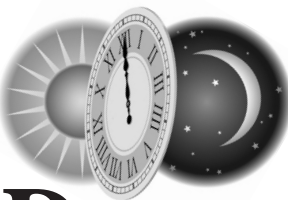
Oct. 4, 1946

Pan American World Airways, which serves Alaska, including Ketchikan and Juneau, revealed today that it has submitted to the Civil Aeronautics Board in Washington, D.C., for transcontinental and other long-distance, nonstop routes that will connect the 13 cities which the company is now authorized to serve on its overseas routes. New types of Clippers, flying far above the weather, will carry passengers faster than man has ever traveled before except in the cockpit of a high-speed pursuit plane. The planes will be able to travel from Seattle to the East Coast in 5 hours and 15 minutes. Pan American's high-speed, long-range luxury service at 430 miles per hour will be made possible by advanced aircraft which Pan Am was first to order and will be first to receive and first to put into operation.

peseth will continue to serve in Petersburg. Dr. Harriet Schirmer delivered a brief address in which she lauded Mrs. Espeseth for "good, kind, generous service to Wrangell. You have been patient with our impatience and with our shortcomings," said Dr. Schirmer. "We appreciate all you have done." Mrs. Pollock came here from Modesto, California, where she was a public health nurse and served previously in nursing in the Aleutians and Hoonah. She holds a nursing degree from Columbia University at New York City.

Oct. 10, 1996

With three swim meets behind him, Wrangell's lone Wolf has begun to mount up points and the legend of being Wrangell's first member of the high school swim team. Robbie Rooney, 15, began his swimming career very early, as an infant, and since then has gone to become a member of the Stikine SeaRunners, the U.S.S. Swim Team, and this year becoming the sole school representative in the high school league. Rooney was Wrangell's first entry ever in a meet at Juneau. He placed fourth in the 200 individual medley, eighth in the 100 backstroke, eighth in the 50 freestyle, and eighth in the 100 breaststroke. At the end of the competition, Rooney had made a record for himself as well as for his school. Rooney said he feels fortunate to have a pool such as the one in Wrangell to practice for his meets.



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Oct. 7	7:06a	6:07p	11:01h
Oct. 8	7:08a	6:04p	10:56h
Oct. 9	7:10a	6:01p	10:51h
Oct. 10	7:12a	5:59p	10:47h
Oct. 11	7:14a	5:56p	10:42h
Oct. 12	7:16a	5:54p	10:37h
Oct. 13	7:18a	5:51p	10:33h

Oct. 8, 1971

Public Health Nurse Bea Espeseth was honored at a Chamber of Commerce-sponsored going away luncheon attended by 25 persons Tuesday at the Stikine Inn. Mrs. Espeseth has served Wrangell for the past nine years from her office in Petersburg. The state recently named Mrs. Gail Pollock as Wrangell Public Health Nurse. Mrs. Es-

Search begins for new borough manager after Von Bargaen resigns

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel writer

Wrangell has begun its search for a new borough manager.

On Friday, the assembly accepted the resignation of Lisa Von Bargaen from the post, effective Oct. 29.

"It is with sadness I submit my letter of resignation as borough manager for this amazing community. The strain of the past year and a half has helped me realize I need to take a pause and focus on the needs of my family and myself," Von Bargaen wrote in her resignation letter, dated Sept. 28.

She has been on the job since July 2017, moving to Wrangell from Valdez, where she was community and economic development director.

The assembly sought input from every department head to look over the borough manager job description before posting the notice for applicants. It approved the job description on Friday, going through the lines one by one with input from sole respondent Amber al-Haddad, capital facilities director, until all members agreed it was ready for approval.

The borough clerk posted the job Monday. There is no deadline to apply; the posting says the job "will be open until filled."

The job notice does not list a salary, which the borough clerk said will be based on a candidate's experience.

Preference will be given to candidates who hold a degree from an accredited four-year college or university, with a master's degree in public administration

or business administration. A combination of related education and/or municipal experience may be considered.

For a complete job description, contact the clerk's toffice at 907-874-2381, email clerk@wrangell.com, or visit www.wrangell.com/jobs on the borough website.

Mayor Steve Prysunka said he will want job candidates to visit the town for several days to experience the nature of the work.

In the meantime, Prysunka has requested that Borough Clerk Kim Lane send him and Vice Mayor Patty Gilbert some names for consideration as possible interim borough managers. The mayor said the assembly wants to review a possible list this week.

Meanwhile, Prysunka has asked Fi-

nance Director Mason Villarma to work with Von Bargaen on understanding any current employee-related issues, and requested that Lane and Economic Development Director Carol Rushmore split up the remaining borough issues or projects.

Ideally, Prysunka said, an interim manager should be brought on while Von Bargaen is still employed to ensure continuity on any loose ends, and minimize the potential that Lane or Rushmore would need to become acting borough managers. "They already have full-time jobs," he said.

Von Bargaen informed the assembly she had begun a transition handbook, compiling a list of critical issues, "major and minor things that are very nuanced," information that needs to be passed along.

Postal Service adds package surcharge to run until Christmas

Sentinel staff

There are no changes to moving first-class mail in and out of Wrangell — that will continue by air, according to a U.S. Postal Service official. But service out of state could be slower, depending on how far the mail is coming or going.

And it will cost more to mail packages now through Christmas as the Postal Service tries to improve its finances.

Through Dec. 25, customers will pay an additional 25 cents to \$5 to ship a parcel through the Postal Service, depending on the level of delivery service they select and the distance the package will travel.

The federal government is not alone in tacking on a holiday surcharge for package deliveries.

FedEx and UPS also add a surcharge for many of their services and customers to cover the additional work required to meet the overwhelming holiday demand.

The Postal Service surcharge applies to anything that isn't a postcard, letter or a flat package such as a large envelope, newsletter or magazine. "A box

of cookies, for example, would be a parcel," and subject to the surcharge, the agency said.

The added fee started last Sunday.

Separate from the holiday surcharge, the Postal Service has taken other steps to bring in more money and reduce its costs.

It raised the price of a first-class stamp to 58 cents at the end of August.

And last Friday, it implemented new — often slower — service standards for the delivery of first-class mail, newspapers and magazines.

"Most first-class mail and periodicals will be unaffected by the new service standard changes," the Postal Service said in a statement. "Standards for single-piece first-class mail traveling within a local area will continue to be two days."

But the farther a letter travels, the more likely it will take longer to arrive.

"The Postal Service will increase time-in-transit standards by one or two days for certain mail that are traveling longer distances," such as cross country, according to the statement. That will allow the Postal Service to use ground transportation instead of air, saving money.

The Washington Post reported that the Postal Service plans to cut in half the amount of mail it transports by plane, instead moving it across the country by truck.

State approves protocols for hospitals to ration care if needed to manage surge

The Associated Press
and Sentinel staff

The state has activated emergency crisis protocols that allow 20 hospitals to ration care if needed as Alaska reports among the nation's worst COVID-19 infection rates of recent weeks, straining the state's limited health care system.

The declaration last Saturday covers three facilities that had already announced emergency protocols, including the largest hospital, Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage, and facilities across the state, including hospitals in Wrangell and Petersburg.

Though Wrangell Medical Center is covered under the order, "We don't anticipate we will see any changes," Carly Allen, hospital administrator, said Monday. "We are well prepared."

The state order also covers the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium's larger hospital in Sitka.

The state action and the decision to participate by individual hospitals recognizes that Alaska's health care system is connected, and stressed, Allen said.

Patients in Wrangell with serious illnesses or injuries often are flown to larger hospitals in Alaska or Outside.

"Today's action recognizes that Alaska has an interconnected and interdependent health care system," the state health department said in a statement.

Factors that led the state to activate crisis-of-care standards include scarce medical resources at some facilities, limited staff and difficulty transferring patients because of limited bed availability. Other factors include limited therapies and oxygen supplies.

"The care we are able to provide is highly fluid and can change day by day and even hour by hour depending on the availability of resources within our system and stateside."

- Dr. Angelique Ramirez,
Fairbanks Chief Medical Officer

The crush of new COVID cases was particularly acute around Alaska in late September. According to data collected by Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering, one in every 84 people in Alaska was diagnosed with COVID-19 from Sept. 22 to Sept. 29. The next highest rate was one in every 164 people in West Virginia.

The Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corp. in Bethel announced the activation of crisis-care guidelines three days before the state decision, on Sept. 29, the same day the facility was operating at full capacity.

"Unfortunately ... as a result of the current surge in COVID-19 cases requiring hospitalization and limited resources statewide, we are now in a position of making these difficult decisions on a daily basis," Dr. Ellen Hodges, the hospital's chief of staff, said in a statement.

Fairbanks Memorial Hospital activated its own crisis-care policy a day before the state because of a shortage of beds, staff and monoclonal antibody treatments, along with the inability to transfer patients.

"This is in response to a very serious surge of COVID in our community," Fairbanks Chief Medical Officer Dr. Angelique Ramirez said in a statement.

Statewide, less than 64% of eligible residents have received at least their first dose of a vaccine. The Fairbanks North Star Borough is the third worst region for vaccination rates in Alaska, at just 55% of eligible residents with at least one shot. In Wrangell, 67% of eligible residents had received at least their first dose of a vaccine as of Tuesday, according to the state COVID website.

The decision in Fairbanks came the same day the state reported 1,044 new cases, 108 of them in the Fairbanks area. The hospital says 35% of its patients last Saturday were being treated for COVID-19.

Ramirez said many factors

drove the decision to move to crisis standards, including community spread caused by the low vaccination rates and a high number of patients waiting to be admitted.

"This impacts all patient care, those with broken bones, traumas, heart attacks, strokes, COVID, anyone needing medical care," Ramirez said. "The care we are able to provide is highly fluid and can change day by day and even hour by hour depending on the availability of resources within our system and stateside."

Heidi Hedberg, director of the state Division of Public Health, encouraged all residents to wear masks and get vaccinated.

"Every action you take helps prevent COVID-19 from spreading and protects you, your family, other Alaskans and our health care system. No one wants to use crisis standards of care guidelines," she said.

In addition to assisting hospitals in deciding which patients take priority, crisis standards of care provide guidance and liability protection for health care workers working with scarce resources.

Since March 2020, there have been 114,000 total COVID-19 cases as of Tuesday in Alaska, which has a population of about 731,000. More than 24,000 new cases were reported in September as the Delta variant drove a spike in cases in Alaska, which has never had a statewide mask mandate.

State officials reported more than 3,000 new infections in the first four days of October.

The state health department reported Tuesday that 2,465 people have been hospitalized since the start of the pandemic last year, and 582 residents and non-residents have died.


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Corrections

A story in the Sept. 23 issue of the Sentinel incorrectly reported that Ivy Patch Produce sells its goods to the Stikine Inn. Owner Katherine Ivy said she only sells to Zak's Cafe and individual consumers.

A story in the Sept. 30 Sentinel reported that an oyster farm operation was established at Blashke Islands in 1990. It was established in 1983.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

COVID-19 will be with us a long time

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Maybe someday COVID-19 will be like the flu, which kills an average of 36,000 Americans a year, rather than the coronavirus which has killed more than 700,000 people in the country over past 18 months.

Maybe vaccines will become even more effective, health officials will approve the shots for children of all ages, researchers will develop new medicines to heal the sick and new treatments to ease the suffering.

Although science can do a lot to block the virus and lessen its death sentence, no pill or shot or wishful thinking can make it go away completely. Herd immunity, though helpful to reduce the spread, does not eradicate the virus. It merely knocks it out of the daily headlines. COVID-19 and its variants will be a permanent part of life around the world, but hopefully not nearly as deadly.

How much damage it does depends on us. How we decide to live with it depends on us.

As of this week, more than one-third of all eligible Alaskans have not gotten even their first dose of a vaccine. That number has not changed very much in weeks, despite the

“Herd immunity, though helpful to reduce the spread, does not eradicate the virus. It merely knocks it out of the daily headlines.”

painful reality of record-high infection numbers, care rationing at some hospitals, and a mounting death toll.

If those grim statistics can't move the needle, literally, then it's reasonable to assume that means maybe we have reached a vaccination plateau — those one-third of eligible Alaskans just will not get vaccinated, ever. As is their right.

How should the other two-thirds go on with our lives?

Will face masks for our health become as common as rain jackets in Wrangell to stay dry? Will people want to jam into public spaces so tight that they can read the tattoos on everyone's arms? Will hand sanitizers forever replace the candy dish on store counters? Will holiday parties be as festive and joyful, with shared serving

utensils, hugs and reunions?

How we manage to protect our health without giving up all of the joys of family and friends and life will not be easy. Everyone is going to need to think about what level of risk they are willing to accept, the rules they want to follow to protect their family's health, and how to react and/or adapt when close friends or family think otherwise.

None of this will be easy. Nor fun. Nor temporary. But it is all necessary. Without full immunity for our own community — be it Wrangell, our neighbors, our customers, church or classmates — the health choices will confront us most every day for a long time to come.

Everyone will need to make their own choice for their own world. For those who don't want to get vaccinated, that's your choice. For others, putting up a “masks required” sign is their choice, as is not going to large public events. The two worlds can co-exist. It's not the best way to live, but it sure looks like how we will be living.

EDITORIAL

Fantasy dividend a waste of everyone's time

Once again, Alaska legislators have gaveled back into special session because Gov. Mike Dunleavy wants to show his constituents that he believes in one thing above all else: The largest Permanent Fund dividend in state history.

He's like a wide-eyed kid in the candy shop, only he's got a record-setting Permanent Fund balance jingling in his pockets and wants to spend some of it to buy chocolates for everyone in the state. Talk about a dangerous sweet tooth that can only decay the future growth potential of the state's only savings account.

A long-term plan to pay for schools, the state ferries, fish and game management and all the other public services that Alaskans need to enjoy life and prosper — those are secondary niceties in the governor's political road map to reelection in 2022. On his highway, arriving at a stable fiscal future for public services comes only after the dividend is protected in the constitution.

The governor believes the dividend drives the entire calculation. Sadly, Dunleavy has it backwards. The forward-thinking approach would be to figure out recurring annual revenues and then decide on spending.

A dividend is a sweet nicety for many and, yes, essential for some families. But without dependable revenues to pay for solid public schools, a strong in-state university system and vocational training program and other services, the benefits of an unaffordable short-term PFD are as lasting as a stretch of sunny weather in Southeast. You enjoy it, all the while knowing it is temporary. That's no way to govern.

Rather than calling lawmakers back this week for their fourth special session of the year, telling them to keep working on a much larger dividend, the governor first should have offered specific, detailed legislative proposals for how the state can afford public services and a dividend with the trans-Alaska oil pipeline three-quarters empty.

Rather than setting up lawmakers to take the blame during the 2022 campaign for denying his super-size dividend, the governor should take a break from the magical fantasy tour of his \$2,350 PFD and let lawmakers take a break from meeting. There's no point in another special session. He does not have the votes and that's not going to change no matter how many times he calls them back to the Capitol.

Dunleavy should accept reality: Most legislators don't like his dividend-driven fiscal plan. That's how checks and balances work between the equal branches of government. Unlike the dividend, that is in the constitution.

—Wrangell Sentinel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sullivan should stand by U.S. Army officer who truthfully spoke his mind

I served in the U.S. Army from mid-1966 to mid-1968 and I have written Alaska Sen. Dan Sullivan to let him know that I find the Marine Corps putting Lt. Col. Stuart Scheller in the brig for his two Facebook comments about the way the U.S. handled its withdrawal from Afghanistan to be unacceptable and sanctimonious.

I would hope that Sen. Sullivan, as a member of the military and representing a state with a large active and veteran military population, would feel the same way.

I understand the conflict of disobeying a direct order, especially in the time of war and on the battlefield. But, as the senator knows, Lt. Col. Scheller was not on the battlefield and was not part of the decisions that were made. His comments spoke the truth as he sees it.

Those comments only publicly embarrassed those high-ranking commanders who were in charge at the time — and deservingly so. It smells like their feelings got hurt. The whole withdrawal from Afghanistan was a public, political, monetary and humanitarian disaster. For those who have a contrary point of view, they are entitled.

But you do not put a person in jail just because they disagree

with you! What a country are we living in?

I would hope that Sen. Sullivan would have the courage to understand Lt. Col. Scheller is in as if he were him, and do everything humanly possible to help a fellow brother in his time of need. Please, he needs his brothers in arms to stand by him to prevent the military from railroading him and making him an example, which is military standard operating procedure.

Bruce E. Harding

Mayor wrong to call unvaccinated 'idiots'

Recently, in a social media post, the mayor of Wrangell called persons who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine “idiots.” I would like to appeal to the mayor's less arrogant self to remind him that unvaxxed people are unvaxxed for many different reasons, many less idiotic than he may be able to perceive from the heights of his ego.

Some have legitimate medical issues such as allergies or genetic anomalies that have made them concerned for their health if they get this never-used-previously medical technology. While I understand that being the spouse of a doctor does not make one a medical expert, I will assume that the mayor is aware of these concerns.

Quite frankly, it is not the mayor's or any other person's place to judge or interrogate a person regarding their vaccination status. I would like to remind the mayor that this country in which he chose to become a citizen isn't only a nation where he was able to become rich but also a nation that holds freedom, like the freedom to become rich or the freedom to decide how one takes care of their own health, very dear.

When a political leader regardless of how big their ego or small their position feels free to insult or denigrate the citizens of his community who don't do what he deems correct, we are all put on a distinct path that historically has led to horrific outcomes.

Personally, I have had enough of the divisive rhetoric from politicians who forget that they are not superior to the rest of us regardless of how they think of themselves.

Bob Lippert

Interior secretary should let ANWR leases proceed

As a former governor of Alaska (2002-2006) and a U.S. senator (1980-2002), I am appalled at the secretary of the Department of the Interior's cavalier action challenging the legitimacy of recent sales of leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

I must remind the secretary that the sale was advertised and consummated with payment made by the state-owned Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority and accepted by the U.S. government. Any attempt to void the sale will be seen as a taking, and litigation will result in substantial damages. The ANWR lease sale has met the terms of contract sanctity.

I would remind the secretary that it is contrary to our nation's security interests to have to look to OPEC for our oil needs when we have more than 50 years of proven production capability from Alaska.

Frank Murkowski

Wrangell has avoided worst of TikTok challenges

The Lower 48 TikTok craziness continues.

September's challenge was to vandalize school bathrooms. Wrangell schools got off lightly — a few messes in the bathrooms and small items like soap dispensers and toilet paper were stolen. Overall, nothing too serious.

In fact, I was feeling fairly confident that we had gotten ahead of this trend, and that

we could focus on better and more important things.

Unfortunately, there is now a “devious licks” challenge for each month of the school year. October's challenge is “Smack a Teacher;” December's challenge involves exposing oneself in the halls; and January is “Jab a Breast” month.

I could go on, but I'm sure you get the picture. These challenges are not simply stunts; they're criminal.

I may be naive, but I really believe our students are better than this. I have talked with all of the high school classes and the middle school teachers have talked to their students. Student responses could not have been better. I doubt we will have many issues with this type of behavior here in Wrangell.

I am asking, however, that you talk with your children about the seriousness of these challenges and to monitor their social media content. Devious licks challenges (as well as other TikTok challenges) have the potential to leave a permanent mark on our students' lives.

Bob Davis
Assistant Principal/Lead Teacher
Stikine Middle School
Wrangell High School

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Creative pursuit leads to unique boutique focused on Wrangell

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Tracy Churchill believes in "Keeping it Authentic." That's the tagline the graphic designer uses to celebrate the uniqueness of Wrangell, the community that inspired her Compass Line brand and led to the opening of a gift shop by the same name.

"We wanted to initially do some designs to sell in the other shops, and then decided at that time we might as well try to just carry some things nobody else has in town," Churchill said. The space at 321 Front St. became available in 2017, and the decision was made to open Compass Line Gift Shop.

Churchill and her two children, Kaylauna Churchill-Warren and Talon, set to painting the space, updating the floors and giving the shop its current feel.

"It was an opportunity to have the family all involved in something together," Churchill said.

Kaylauna contributes her photography for framed prints and postcards, and the family brainstorms when it comes to creating new products. "They have input on different things we might carry, different ideas, things they think might sell well," Churchill said. "Because they're younger than me and cooler than me."

Though there are a few local items made by family, women or independently owned businesses, the majority of product is under the Compass Line brand, like sweatshirts and T-shirts, soaps, candles and scent diffusers (which Churchill makes herself). She also makes favors and gift bags.

Churchill works six days a week, Monday through Saturday, which includes her graphic design business and various other side jobs, such as creating memorial programs for churches and funerals.

"(Tracy has) worked with a lot of different families (for funeral programs)," said Kem Haggard, pastor at Harbor Light Assembly of God. "She sits down and talks with the family, and she captures the person we're honoring. She just goes above and beyond in working with the family."

As someone who likes to stay busy, COVID-19 forced Churchill to switch gears a bit.

"I had to adapt. As soon as it was possible to open, I was immediately open under whatever circumstances I could be," she said. "This is my livelihood. ... (COVID)



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

It was a family effort for Tracy Churchill when she opened Compass Line Gifts in 2017, enlisting the help of her two children, Kaylauna Churchill-Warren and Talon. They continue to provide input on what the shop should carry. "They're younger than me and cooler than me," Churchill said.

was a big hit for all the businesses."

The problems in supply chains also affected Compass Line's operations. Churchill said a lack of inventory sources forced her to get creative in where she was finding products. "It just makes me search for more independent, sole proprietors. I find craftsmen from all over. Obviously if I can't find them in Alaska, I search the West Coast."

It's important to Churchill that she knows where she spends her money, so that her customers know where they're spending their money.

"Even if I go in (to Compass Line) to look for something specific, I always find something else that I just

have to have," said Kim Lane, who has shopped with the store since it opened. "Tracy is very knowledgeable about what people want in our community. She listens to what people say and finds what appeals to her customers. She is genuine and caring for sure."

When it comes to trying something new, Churchill is all in.

"Business-wise, I've always worked a lot, and it's never intimidated me to start something because I know I'll work hard," she said. "If I work really hard at something it will prove itself to be lucrative or not. A lot of it is just the time you put in."

Tech Club

Continued from page 1

and outs of gadgets and gizmos, Howe's students have also been delving into another somewhat scientific realm: home economics. One day will be dedicated to tech, the other to home ec.

"Home ec is really cool because we have all these kids who have never cooked for themselves at all," she said. "This morning we had a couple of middle schoolers that had come to join us. Both of them had said, 'Well, I don't know how to cook.' You're gonna learn today!"

They've made French toast, bacon and other breakfast foods, but it's all a part of learning basic life skills to help kids take care of themselves when they strike out on their own. "We're just learning through doing," Howe said.

Funding for the club comes from a federal grant through the Upward Bound program, and Wrangell High School is one of 10 schools in Alaska that receives that funding. Howe said the school works closely with the director of Upward Bound Alaska out of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Word is getting around school to other students, whether sharing about the things they've

cooked or flying drones down the hallways. Howe said it's helped attract other kids and increasing the club size to about 15 participants.

Students can also suggest projects for the club to get involved in, such as a marine debris cleanup effort in partnership with the Wrangell Cooperative Association. They used drones to spot debris, then went out as a group to clean up the trash.

"Heather's tech class and I hope to work together (again) to use drones to map out other pieces of large marine debris that might be located in areas that I'm unable to access on foot or in a timely manner," said Kim Wickman, IGAP technician with WCA. "The maps could then be used to form a plan to provide cleanup for these items."

Howe said there's still a lot of trash that needs to be cleaned up. Partnering with community groups like WCA is an important ingredient in connecting Tech Club kids with their community.

"We're trying to make those connections so we can start doing projects that make a difference and impact the place we live," she said. "That's the ultimate goal."



(Front to back) Sean McDonald, Nikolai Bardin-Siekawitch and Daniel Harrison make breakfast during a session of the club. Home economics is one of the skills taught in Tech Club.

Tire cutter

Continued from page 1

Wetor estimates 15,000 to 20,000 tires are at the landfill, possibly more.

"We don't know exactly where the bottom of the pile is," Wetor said.

Working full time, that many tires will take several months to get through, he said. The machine can only operate so fast. Some of the tires are grown into the brush and may take some work to dig out, Wetor said.

Large, heavy-equipment tires will remain at landfill as the machine is too small to chop those.

Wetor anticipates needing the cutter until December, possibly longer.

"We plan to get through as many tires as we can this fall but may have some tires left over that will need to be taken care of the next time we have access to this machine," Wetor said.

That could be a year or two years, as the cutter moves around the other SEASWA

member communities of Petersburg, Thorne Bay, Craig, Klawock, Kasaan, Coffman Cove and Hydaburg. It will stay in Petersburg when it's not in use.

The communities agree to share in the operation, maintenance and repair costs of the equipment based on an operation fee of \$25 per day. That fee will only apply on days the tire shear is actually in operation.

The shipping cost will be the responsibility of the community requesting the tire cutter.

Southeast Conference will own the equipment.

"We worked collaboratively," Venables said. "Common needs, common solutions. It's a way to address these issues without everyone having to buy their own piece of equipment."

Wrangell hasn't had a good option to deal with tires for a long time, Wetor said. Having access to this equipment will put a dent in the tire pile at the transfer station.

"Tires cannot be shipped in

the normal waste stream as full tires tend to float up in landfills," Wetor said. "Once they are chopped into pieces this is not as much of an issue."

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Legislative redistricting board wants Wrangell's opinions

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Most of the six proposed legislative redistricting maps under consideration would keep Wrangell and Ketchikan in the same district, but one proposal would separate Wrangell from its longstanding share with Ketchikan and move it into a state House district with Sitka.

A couple of the options would put Petersburg in the same district as Wrangell and Ketchikan, but half would assign Petersburg to a stretched-out House district from Prince of Wales Island to Yakutat.

The Alaska Redistricting Board is traveling to communities statewide to show the maps and get feedback as it works toward its deadline of Nov. 10 to adopt a new set of boundaries for House and Sen-

ate districts.

The Wrangell meeting is scheduled for 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. this Thursday at the Nolan Center.

The law requires redrawing legislative districts after every census. The redistricting board proposed two of the six draft maps that are touring the state, while other groups drew four proposals that the board accepted for consideration.

Using data from the 2020 U.S. Census, the board is working to divide the state into 40 House seats as close as possible to the same number of residents. The goal is "as near as practicable" to 18,335 residents per district, with the intent to keep neighborhoods and communities that share common issues together as much as possible.

Litigation is expected over whatever redistricting plan the five-member board adopts. Depending on the timeline for court action, the new maps would take effect for the 2022 legislative elections.

Of the six proposals, the board's two draft maps would retain Wrangell and Ketchikan in the same district, adding Metlakatla to get closer to the ideal population count. In both board proposals, Petersburg would be in a district with Prince of Wales Island, Sitka, smaller Southeast communities and extending north to take in Yakutat.

The four other proposals — from groups affiliated with Interior Native corporations and Sealaska Corp., Republicans, labor unions and state Senate Democrats — present a range of options

for Wrangell.

The Republican-affiliated group has proposed putting Wrangell and Petersburg in with Ketchikan, but excluding Metlakatla. The labor group would keep Metlakatla, Ketchikan and Wrangell together, as would the map offered by Native corporations. The Senate Democrats' proposal would separate Wrangell from Ketchikan and combine it with Petersburg, smaller Southeast communities, Sitka and Yakutat.

The more controversial boundary battles are in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas, where incumbents and challengers, Democrats and Republicans look for election district advantages.

Returning history major finds a home at the museum

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The new coordinator of the Nolan Center and Wrangell Museum wasn't a fan of the big city.

So, Tyler Eagle left Spokane, Washington, right after graduating in 2018 from Gonzaga University and came back to Wrangell.

Eagle did a few odd jobs in town: fishing, working as a paraprofessional at the schools, until a job came up that was the perfect application for his degree in history.

"A notification went out on the 'Friends of the Museum' mailing list," Eagle said. "They were looking for a coordinator because Cyni (Crary) was getting overworked."

Crary, the Nolan Center's director, offered Eagle an interview four hours after he applied for the coordinator position.

Eagle is resourceful, professional and quickly became an asset to the Nolan Center, Crary

wrote in an email. He won over the staff by explaining his passion for museums and curating.

He started Aug. 13.

Now, Crary handles the big picture stuff, and Eagle handles the day-to-day tasks.

Those tasks include accounting for every dollar and cent visitors spend at the museum gift shop, on admission and on movies at the Nolan Center Theater.

Eagle said his wheelhouse lies less in accounting and more in what's on the horizon for the center: artifact maintenance and display.

"There's been a backlog in cataloging of our artifacts, making sure things aren't deteriorating," Eagle said. "I need to get on top of pest management, make sure there aren't any bugs eating paper or leather."

In addition, Eagle said he will be handling new donations of objects of historical interest to

Wrangell.

His coordinator job dovetails well with his love of history and reading. Eagle said he has access to archives, subject files not open to the general public and collections rooms — a historian's playground.

And, for the first month he was working at the Nolan Center, Eagle enjoyed speaking with tourists, which gave him a different perspective on the town. Hearing people say, "Wrangell is so beautiful, the museum is awesome, I love it here," made him appreciate his hometown.

"You can lose sight of that a little bit," Eagle said. "You don't appreciate the little things, like when someone says, 'It's so quiet here.' Yes, it is."

Eagle said he wants the town to know the Nolan Center has new staff. "Things may have slowed down with the pandemic and staffing issues, but we're getting back on track."



This decorative Japanese samurai helmet was part of a 1977 gift exchange between the Rotary Clubs of Wrangell and Noshiro, Akita Prefecture, Japan. Noshiro and Wrangell are sister cities, and the helmet was given in return for a hand-carved totem pole given to Noshiro's Rotary Club several years previous. The helmet is on permanent loan at the Wrangell Museum.

PHOTO COURTESY
TYLER EAGLE

Health care workers

Continued from page 1

allocation for up to 20 temporary workers.

State officials said the first group of workers filled immediate needs at Anchorage and

Matanuska-Susitna Borough hospitals with the highest number of intensive-care unit beds. As of Monday, all but one of the adult ICU beds in Anchorage were filled, with 17 COVID-19 patients on ventilators, the state reported.

The temporary workers also will be assigned to other facilities in Anchorage and in Fairbanks, Kodiak, Valdez, Homer and Utqiagvik, and schools in Sitka,

Unalaska, Dillingham, Kotzebue, Nome, Skagway, Petersburg and the Kenai Peninsula.

Under the contract, DLH is providing transportation, housing and other services for the workers.

"This contract was never intended to fill all the vacancies ... it's only intended to meet the immediate needs that the hospitals are facing," Heidi Hedberg, director of the state's

Division of Public Health, told the Anchorage Daily News last week. "They're all starting to flow in, they're all starting to be matched," Hedberg said.

The \$87 million, 90-day contract works out to almost \$62,000 per month per temporary employee. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services did not respond to a request last week for comment on the price tag.



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Record Dungeness prices and strong catch in Wrangell area

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The Wrangell and Petersburg region took the top spot for Southeast commercial crab catches this past summer season, according to the Department of Fish and Game. Even better, it was a record year for prices.

From June 15 to Aug. 15, 680,000 pounds of Dungeness crab was harvested in District 8, which includes the waters north and west of Wrangell up past Petersburg. Sixty-nine permits were issued for the district.

For all of Southeast, 3.09 million pounds of crab were harvested with 205 permit holders reporting. The catch equates to \$13 million with Dungeness selling at an average of \$4.21 per pound. That's a record high-price, according to Joe Stratman, lead shellfish biologist in Southeast for Fish and Game.

Last year's harvest was the second largest on record, but was valued at \$9.96 million, with a purchase price of \$1.70 per pound. A total of 5.87 million pounds were caught during last year's summer season.

Dan Lesh, a consultant at McKinley Research Group in Juneau specializing in the seafood indus-

try, said this year's increased prices could be due to people cooking more at home.

"The rationale that I've heard, and it makes sense to me, is the premium seafoods have been in demand, especially the premium products that can be sold at retail," Lesh said. "Dungeness was being sold at retail — and still is — but there's king crab and snow crab that seem to translate into retail pretty well," though king and snow crab are traditionally more a restaurant menu item.

Lesh said that uptick in retail demand comes from people cooking more at home during the pandemic. Cautious optimism within the seafood industry is that the higher demand will continue for now, he said.

Fish and Game uses the first seven days of the summer harvest season to estimate totals for the separate summer and fall/winter seasons. Based on those numbers, the department estimated an additional 1.14 million pounds of Dungeness would be harvested in the Southeast fall/winter crab effort.

The fall season for commercial crabbing runs from Oct. 1 to Feb. 28.

Hot tubs, bears and trails: Forest Service gives update on projects

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel writer

The U.S. Forest Service got to most of its Wrangell-area work projects this past summer, with one big job pushed into next spring.

The Anan Wildlife Observatory — which has reached the end of “its structural lifetime and needs replacement,” the agency’s website says — was supposed to be torn down in October, Corree Delabrué, U.S. Forest Service information assistant at the Wrangell Ranger District, said.

Tory Houser, the recreation, lands, minerals and heritage staff officer for the Wrangell and Petersburg Ranger Districts, said deconstruction and rebuilding of a new observatory has been pushed to spring, before the next viewing season.

The Forest Service split the project into two phases, an upper viewing deck phase and lower deck phase. Petersburg-based Rainforest Contracting will do the work on the upper viewing deck, a \$900,000 federally funded capital improvement project, Houser said.

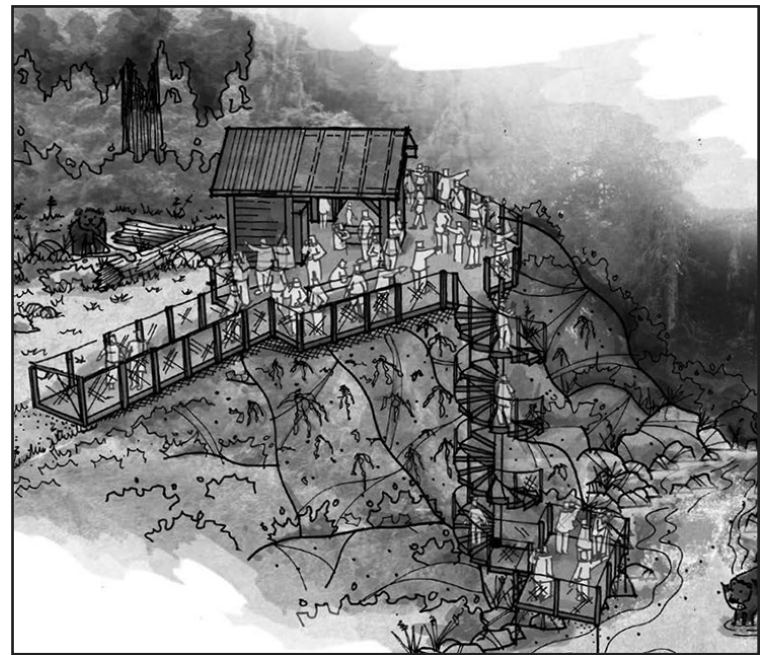
The Anan Wildlife Observatory’s upper deck should be finished ahead of the July 5 to Aug. 25, 2022, viewing season, Houser said.

Before the pandemic cut into tourist traffic last year, the Anan Creek site drew about 2,400 visitors a year hoping to get a peek at bears during that two-month-long, permit-only viewing season.

The Forest Service is seeking funding for the second-phase lower deck through the Great American Outdoors Act, but will not be able to set a timeline



The Anan Wildlife Observatory, above left, has reached the end of “its structural lifetime and needs replacement,” the U.S. Forest Service says, with plans to tear down the wooden structure next spring in preparation for building a new viewing station. Juneau-based landscape architect Corvus Design prepared this drawing, above right, of the new viewing station planned for Anan Creek.



PHOTOS COURTESY U.S. FOREST SERVICE

for the work until the federal government makes spending decisions under the August 2020 law.

Next, the gravel replacement of a slippery boardwalk trail at the Anan observatory should be complete this fall, Houser said.

Replacement of the boardwalk is estimated at \$750,000, Houser said, and was paid for through recreation fee funds.

“When people pay fees to visit our cabins, or visit Anan, or go on a trip, that money comes back to the Forest Service to reinvest into various projects,” Houser said.

The work was contracted to Ketchikan Ready-Mix & Quarry.

The Wrangell Cooperative Association continued its main-

tenance work on the Anan Creek Trail this past summer, as it does every year.

In the meantime, work on the outdoor deck at the Chief Shakes Hot Springs site up the Stikine River, which consists of two hot tubs — one indoor and one outdoor — is anticipated to start next year around June, based on the river and tide levels, Houser said.

A higher river means easier access to the site.

“When that river comes up, we will all be ready to jump into action,” Houser said.

The Forest Service secured \$191,000 for the project — \$11,000 from the Resource Advisory Councils under the Bureau of Land Management

and \$180,000 from the 2020 Outdoors Act.

The Forest Service partnered with the Sitka Conservation Society to redo the deck at the outdoor tub.

And the Forest Service is working on a smaller trail reconstruction project of the Nemo Saltwater Access Trail in partnership with WCA, under

the \$950,000 Nemo-Skip Loop Road improvement project contracted to Ketchikan Ready-Mix & Quarry.

The contractor is clearing out the trail and doing site prep, and WCA is putting the gravel down.

Work on the access trail is estimated to be complete at the end of next fall.

Police report

Monday, Sept. 27

Gun shots: Unable to locate.
Reckless driving.
Agency assist: Probation.
Subpoena service.
Vandalism.

Tuesday, Sept. 28

Noise complaint.
Dead deer.
Found property.

Wednesday, Sept. 29

Suspicious circumstance.

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Thursday, Sept. 30

Agency assist: Elks.
Subpoena service.
Agency assist: Ambulance.
Traffic stop.
Agency assist: Fire department.

Friday, Oct. 1

Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.
Vacation check request.
Agency assist: Public works.

Saturday, Oct. 2

Agency assist: Ambulance request.
Scam.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance.

Sunday, Oct. 3

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.
Papers served.



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1. Outside county mail subs	104	122
2. In county subs	256	271
3. Distribution outside the mail	244	262
4. Other mail classes	0	0
c. Total paid and/or requested circulation	604	655
d. Free distribution by mail		
1. Outside county	4	4
2. In county	20	1
3. Other mail classes	0	0
e. Free distribution outside the mail	4	3
f. Total free distribution	28	8
g. Total distribution	632	663
h. Copies not distributed	32	0
i. Total	664	663
j. Percent paid & for requested circulation	95.57%	98.79%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation		
a. Paid Electronic copies	50	60
b. Total paid print copies + electronic copies	654	715
c. Total print distribution + electronic copies	682	723
d. Percent paid	95.89%	98.89%
17. Publication of Statement of Ownership required.		
Will be printed in the Oct. 7, 2021 issue of this publication.		
18. Larry Persily, Publisher		

SENTINEL SPORTS

Wrangell wrestlers prepped to pin wins to mat



PHOTOS BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

High school assistant coach Jack Carney, above and below, instructs wrestlers on various techniques during practice last Friday. Jamie Early and Liana Carney, bottom left, face off against each other, using the training they have received since their wrestling careers began. Della Churchill and Lucas Schneider, bottom right, shake hands before squaring off on the mat.

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

“Low, guys! Heads up, elbows in! Tap that floor a couple times,” said Jack Carney, assistant coach of the high school wrestling team.

His direction is met with a resounding THUMP! as the squad of 14 student-athletes hits the mat. They continue to run drills and warm up without any further instruction from their coach.

Wrestling season started on Wednesday and athletes are already poised to pin the competition at the first meet on Oct. 22.

“They’re looking tough,” said head coach Jeff Rooney in a phone interview. “Wrangell has been putting out a top-end wrestling team, both boys and girls, for a long time.”

Not all of this year’s wrestlers were at practice last Thursday. A couple were getting COVID tests in order to attend last Saturday’s cross country meet in Ketchikan, and one was in Sitka getting a doctor’s update on a broken leg.

The one with the broken leg is senior Ryan Rooney, who, like most of the other wrestlers, is a multi-sport athlete. Coaches encourage their students to participate in more than one sport.

“Cross country is great. It provides cardio, mental toughness, it’s going to keep the injuries low, and keeps the legs and core in good shape,” Carney said. Ironically, Ryan Rooney broke his leg during cross country practice.

Seven of this year’s wrestlers are seniors, most of whom both coaches have worked with since they started wrestling in the Pee Wee league. Even though they’ll be losing some of their top contenders, the coaches aren’t worried for



upcoming seasons.

“We’re going to be competitive for the next eight years or more,” Carney said. Out of the 17 wrestlers, five are girls. Two of whom, seniors Liana Carney and Jamie Early, are primed to compete all the way to the state level.

“For so long, people said women couldn’t wrestle,” Liana Carney said. “My dad (Jack Carney) has been my coach ever since I started wrestling, and it’s great just being able to go out there and prove women can be every bit as good as men.” She is a three-time regionals champ and a two-time state champ. She is also nationally ranked.

state twice and regions all four years has a simple strategy for his final year: “I’m going to go at them harder than I ever have. It’s my senior year. You have to, right?”

In addition to the standout talent, Jeff Rooney foresees all the grapplers doing well, especially with the help of his assistant coach, who was a collegiate wrestler and has an eye for that talent.

“I anticipate our wrestlers doing really well. We’re just excited to be competing and to get on the mat,” Jeff Rooney said.

Jack Carney echoed that sentiment. “Regionally, we’re the team to beat,” he said. “We’ve run regionals the last few years, and won sportsmanship awards at regional and state levels. They wrestle hard, ruthless. But then they’re shaking everyone’s hand.”

This year’s team:

Girls

- Della Churchill (senior)
- Liana Carney (senior)
- Jamie Early (senior)
- Mia Wiederspohn (sophomore)
- Lily Younce (sophomore)
- Vanessa Barnes (freshman)

Boys

- Lucas Schneider (freshman)
- Elias Decker (junior)
- Noah Stewart (freshman)
- Randy Churchill (junior)
- James Shilts (senior)
- Daniel Harrison (freshman)
- Ryan Rooney (senior)
- Ethan Blatchley (junior)
- Steven Bales (junior)
- Rowen Wiederspohn (senior)
- Jake Eastaugh (senior)

Early said when she was coming up through the wrestling ranks, there weren’t enough girls in the sport for equal competition, so she and the other girls would have to wrestle boys in the same weight class.

“In the long run, it helped us out by wrestling tougher competition,” Early said. “All around the Southeast (the popularity of wrestling among girls) has been growing every year. She is a two-time regionals champ and placed fourth at state her sophomore year.

Senior Jake Eastaugh, who’s been wrestling since the age of 5 and is a regionals champ and placed at state, has gone to



Family tradition

Cross country coach brings home Wrangell sports legacy

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Kayla Rooney hated running when she started. Now she can't imagine her life without it.

The four-time state placer returned to Wrangell specifically to coach the high school cross country team, continuing a family legacy of coaching.

"My mom (Trisa Rooney) made me start running. I told her I didn't want to do it. She told me I could try it out, and if I didn't like it, I could quit," Rooney said. "So, a few weeks in, I didn't like it and I wanted to quit, and my mom told me, 'Well, you've already started. You can't quit now.'"

By the end of that first cross country season in 2009, Rooney "absolutely loved it." She qualified to go to state her freshman year and every year after that. Though she didn't win any of the state races, she placed each year. No other female on the team has done that since Rooney until now.

Like Rooney, senior Liana Carney has gone to state every year, placing each of the past three years.

"I'm really happy (coach Rooney) came back. I love the Rooney family," Carney said. "Jeff (Rooney's father) is my coach in wrestling. (Her mom) is my athletic director, and (brother) Ryan is a senior in my class. She's a great coach for us. It's definitely fun to have a coach who's been in our high school and comparing our times with hers."

Carney said part of the inspiration in a coach like Rooney is that she can say she's competed in the same way, encouraging her runners to do the same.

When the opportunity to return to Wrangell and coach the cross country team came up, the decision was simple for Rooney, now 26 and a certified nursing assistant.

"It's something I wanted to do since I got out of high school but wasn't able to until last year," she said. She returned from Anchorage specifically to coach. "I'm pretty committed to coaching. I really enjoy the kids that I have. Since I got it last year, I didn't want to give it up. I felt like I owed it to the kids to come back and coach so they didn't have a new coach every



PHOTOS BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kayla Rooney, above, head coach for the cross country team, talks about her coaching and days as a runner at Wrangell High School. Rooney coaches her runners, below in the blue mask, at a meet in Wrangell on Sept. 11. During her time as a student-athlete, Rooney qualified for state four years in a row, despite hating the sport when she began.

other year."

During her running career in high school, Rooney credits coach Monty Bunes for helping her improve her times. Bunes would tell one runner to catch another. Then, he would quietly approach the runner to be caught and tell that person not to be caught by the first person. "That always stuck with me because it helps the students kind of get faster and work a little bit harder," she said.

Rooney will sometimes employ that technique to this day, but she tends to put her own spin on it.

"My boys — I've got Devlyn (Campbell), Daniel (Harrison) and Ethan (Blatchley) — run together at practice. During competition they're pretty spaced out, so I'm just telling them, 'I want you guys as a group, just stick together as a team and help push each other along the way.'"

Her strategy is working. The girls have placed third as a team so far this season, and the boys are getting stronger, she said. "Looking at placements for our



division, I've have at least four (boys) in every single race place in the top 15."

Along with coaching, Rooney is working at SEARHC as a COVID tester. Her plan is to stay a coach for a long time. After the cross country season ends this

weekend, she plans to return to Anchorage and get contract travel work, allowing her to take three months off to coach.

Her approach to life, in part, is dictated by what running has taught her.

"Running has taught me disci-

pline. It has taught me my body is going to take me a lot farther than my mind thinks it's going to. It has taught me no matter how much you want to give up, just keep going. It will be worth it," she said.

Two runners qualify for state despite delayed race

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Even though high winds canceled last Friday's flight to Ketchikan, Wrangell runners were able to travel there and clock their times on Sunday, the day after the Southeast regional championship meet was held. Two did well enough to qualify for state.

Senior Liana Carney and freshman Daniel Harrison both qualified for state after placing second and seventh, respectively. Both the boys and girls cross country teams placed fourth overall.

"My team did amazing given the situation we were given and working with it," head coach Kayla Rooney said. "I'm nothing but impressed and in awe of every single one of them."

Carney finished with a time of 19:24.92 in the 5-kilometer run, second to first-place finisher Ariel Godinez-Long of Haines, who finished in 17:59.32. Harrison turned in a time of 18:08.50.

The boys team finished in 1:37:36, while the girls team had an overall time of 1:56:25.

"They went out there and they ran hard and cheered on their teammates throughout the entire run," Rooney said. Rooney will take Carney and Harrison to state on Saturday in Anchorage.

Results:

Boys

Daniel Harrison — seventh place, 18:08.50
Ethan Blatchley — 18th place, 19:16.80
Devlyn Campbell — 20th place, 19:22.20
Randy Churchill — 23rd place, 20:09.30
James Shilts — 25th place, 20:38.90
Jimmy Baggen — 32nd place, 21:51.10
Tyson Messmer — 33rd place, 22:14.90

Girls

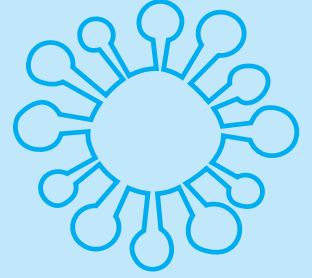
Liana Carney — second place, 19:24.92
Della Churchill — 17th place, 22:59.37
Sierra Ely — 19th place, 23:18.05
Mia Wiederspohn — 20th place, 24:24.80
Emma Martinsen — 22nd place, 26:17.97
Rylee Chelette — 24th place, 29:28.90



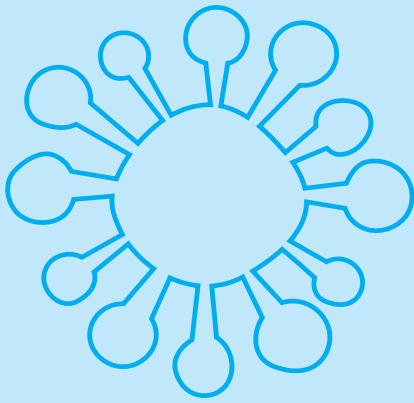
PHOTO COURTESY OF KAYLA ROONEY

Wrangell cross country runners prepare to run the regionals course at the Southeast regional championship in Ketchikan last weekend.

#StopTheSpread

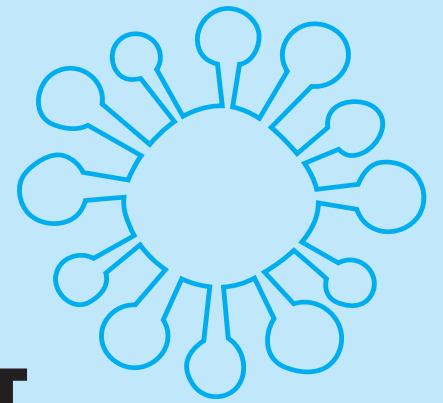


The EOC wants to remind you to please consider these steps as new daily habits instead of short-term prevention strategies to help stop the spread of COVID-19



WASH YOUR HANDS

WEAR A MASK

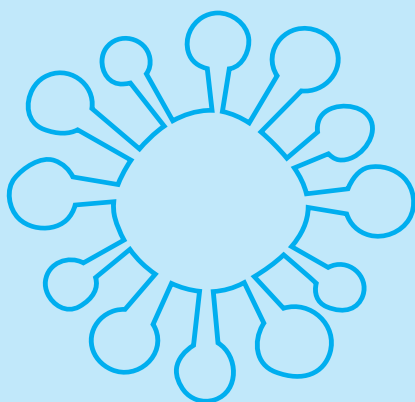


**STAY PHYSICALLY DISTANT
AND SOCIALLY CONNECTED**

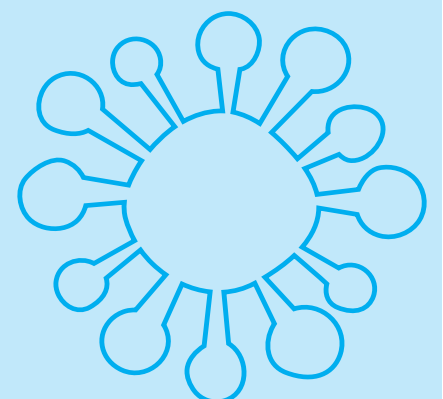
INCREASE FRESH AIR

CLEAN AND DISINFECT

**CHECK FOR SYMPTOMS DAILY
AND STAY HOME IF YOU ARE
SICK**



GET VACCINATED



*Brought to you as a public service by the
Wrangell Sentinel*

Election

Continued from page 1

done at the former Wrangell Institute property so that development can proceed, and be involved in the search for a new borough manager.

The three assembly winners will join Mayor Steve Prysunka, Patty Gilbert, Ryan Howe and Anne Morrison on the body.

The three uncontested seats on the port commission were filled by incumbent Frank Roppel, who won the one-year term and received 358 votes; with three-

year terms going to incumbent John Martin, with 312 votes, and newcomer Chris Bunes, at 309 votes.

Port commission member Brian Merritt did not seek reelection. The port commission now consists of Roppel, Martin, John Yeager and Gary Morrison.

"Hear ye, hear ye, the polls are now closed," a poll worker announced just outside the doors at the polling place at the Nolan Center, marking the close of voting at 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Borough approves study to examine barge freight rates over past decade

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel writer

The borough is taking a closer look at the cost of shipping goods by barge to Wrangell.

The assembly last Tuesday approved a \$7,300 study by Rain Coast Data, prompted, in part, after Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski raised "the very serious issue of shipping rates as a concern" when she was in town earlier in September.

"The senator asked if the borough had documentation of the increases. The answer is no," borough officials reported to the assembly for its consideration of the rate-history contract.

Mayor Steve Prysunka had requested a shipping rate study, and Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga reached out to Rain Coast Data, which specializes in eco-

nomics data research in Southeast Alaska and has done several economic surveys and studies in Wrangell.

In a letter dated Sept. 20, Meilani Schijvens, director of Rain Coast Data, quoted \$7,300 "to develop a freight study to track the growing costs of freight over time along with any changes in services those costs represent."

The study will track rates between Seattle and Wrangell from 2012 to 2021 following the merger between Alaska Marine Lines and Northland Services in 2013, Schijvens wrote.

In addition to tracking the "rate sheet" costs, her team will also track other changes to cost structures that are more nuanced. These include, but are not limited to, fuel surcharges,

full-container versus partial-load options, preferred customer benefits and pallet requirements.

The Rain Coast Data team will work with the borough to develop the survey and ensure that key businesses participate, Schijvens wrote.

The survey will also be open to all Wrangell businesses to share their experiences using marine freight over the past decade.

A final report that incorporates survey data, interview summaries and additional research data on the decline in ferry services will be furnished to the city.

Wrangell shifted money from its general reserves to cover the cost of the survey.

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

During the Regular Borough Assembly meeting on October 12, 2021, beginning at 7 p.m., there will be a public hearing on the following items:

Request to vacate a portion of the Peninsula Street Right-of-Way adjacent to Lot A, P.C. Resubdivision, owned by Dave and Lilia Brown, zoned Single-Family Residential.

The public is encouraged to attend.

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

Publish Oct. 7, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

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

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

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

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

Publish Oct. 7, 2021

CLASSIFIED/ LEGALS

FOR SALE

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

SERVICES OFFERED

Western Boat and Trawler Marine Survey will be in Wrangell Oct. 10-11. Call 907-321-3240.

FREE

Recycled newspapers. Stop by the Sentinel to pick some up.

FREE ADS

Do you have something to sell? Having a garage sale? Looking to buy something? Classified ads for individuals and community groups are free in the Sentinel. Contact Amber at 874-2301 or email wrgsent@gmail.com.

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING: Borough Manager

The island life in Southeast, Alaska is raw, exotic, serene and has a profound sense of community – it is home.

The City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, is looking to hire a dynamic, motivated individual to be our Borough Manager. Our island home is surrounded by towering peaks, the pristine waters of the Inside Passage, and the largest temperate rain forest in the world.

If you have ever dreamed of an Alaska experience, this may be the opportunity for you. Wrangell's rich culture is a unique blend best characterized by its Tlingit heritage and its blue-collar roots as a logging and fishing community. We pride ourselves in being a hard-working and resilient community that reflects the best in authentic Alaska values.

Wrangell operates under an Assembly-Manager form of government. The Assembly and community expect you to chart the path forward toward new opportunities and growth. Come join us as we continue our journey.

Preference is given to candidates who hold a degree from an accredited four-year college or university, with a master's degree in public administration or business administration. A combination of related education and/or municipal experience may be considered.

For a complete job description, please contact the Borough Clerk's Office at 907-874-2381 or email: clerk@wrangell.com or visit the Borough website: <http://www.wrangell.com/jobs>.

Please send a cover letter, detailed resume and references to: City & Borough of Wrangell, P.O. Box 531, Wrangell, AK 99929, or fax: (907) 874-2304 or email: clerk@wrangell.com.

This position will be open until filled.

Publish Oct. 7, 14, 21, and 28, 2021

Wrangell-Petersburg Resource Advisory Committee Notice of Meetings and Call for Project Proposals

The Wrangell-Petersburg-Kake Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) will be meeting virtually on October 13-14, 2021 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., or until business is concluded. The purpose of the meetings is to review the progress of previously funded projects, review new project proposals, and make recommendations for funding of projects through Title II of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (PL 115-141).

The meetings will take place virtually and by teleconference. The meetings are open to the public. A teleconference number will be available for individuals who wish to attend by telephone. Committee discussion is limited to Forest Service staff and Committee members. However, there will be a one-hour public comment period beginning at 7:00 pm on both nights. Individuals wishing to make an oral statement should request in writing at least five days prior to the meeting in order to be scheduled on the agenda.

New project proposals from the public or community organizations are welcome and encouraged.

Title II funds allocated to this RAC may be used for projects that benefit the National Forest areas of the Petersburg and Wrangell boroughs, and the Unorganized borough surrounding the community of Kake. Projects should have broad-based support with objectives that may include, but are not limited to:

- Road, trail, and infrastructure maintenance or obliteration
- Soil productivity improvement
- Improvements in forest ecosystem health
- Watershed restoration and maintenance
- Restoration, maintenance and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat
- Control of noxious and exotic weeds
- Reestablishment of native species

New project proposal forms are available at the Petersburg and Wrangell Ranger District offices. Please contact Linda Slaght at linda.slaght@usda.gov to request a form. To be considered at a committee meeting, proposals should be submitted in writing no later than five days prior to the meeting. Proposals will continue to be accepted after that date, but sufficient funding may not be available to consider all proposals received. For assistance with the form, or for other information pertaining to the meetings, please contact Linda Slaght, RAC Coordinator, at 772-3871 or by e-mail at linda.slaght@usda.gov.



The USDA Forest Service is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.
Publish September 30, 2021 and October 7, 2021

ATTENTION SALMON FISHERS

The Board of Directors of the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, Inc. seeks nominations for the following three (3) year seats:

- Seine - 1 Seat
- Power Troll - 1 Seat
- Gillnet - 2 Seats



Nominations must be in writing and include the permit holder's name, address, vessel name, phone number and a brief statement. Nominees must be "active" Southern Southeast Commercial Salmon permit holders. Permit holders should nominate person from their own gear groups.

SUBMIT NOMINATIONS TO:
SSRAA, 14 BORCH STREET
KETCHIKAN, ALASKA 99901
Or email: lizj@ssraa.org

For further information call (907) 225-9605
Deadline: 10/20/21

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the Matter of the Estate of Edward Teague, Jr. deceased. Case No. 1KE-21-93PR.

Notice to creditors is hereby given that Richard Franklin Teague has been appointed personal representative of the above named estate. All persons having any claims against the decedent are required to present their claims within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims will forever be barred. All claims must be presented to:

Richard Franklin Teague
c/o Keene and Curral, PPC
540 Water Street – Suite 302
Ketchikan, AK 99901

Alternatively, a claim can be filed directly with the Ketchikan Superior Court.

Publish Sept 23, 30 and Oct. 7, 2021

Borough continues voluntary traveler testing requirement

Sentinel staff

The borough is continuing its voluntary requirement that unvaccinated individuals arriving from out of state whether by plane or boat must have proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of their departure for Wrangell or take a test on their arrival in town.

The requirement does not apply to Alaska residents.

The rules match the state of Alaska's travel requirements.

The borough assembly approved an extension of the travel requirements at a special meeting last Friday, the day after they had expired. There are no penalties under the ordinance for noncompliance; testing is voluntary.

Alaska is in the middle of its worst COVID outbreak since the pandemic started, and the state has extended its contract with SEARHC for free testing in Wrangell through the end of the year.

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium now provides the testing noon to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday at a drive-up trailer at the Wrangell Medical Center, after shutting down its airport testing operation last month.

The assembly last week also extended to Dec. 31 the disaster ordinance that is required to qualify for federal and state funding related to the pandemic.

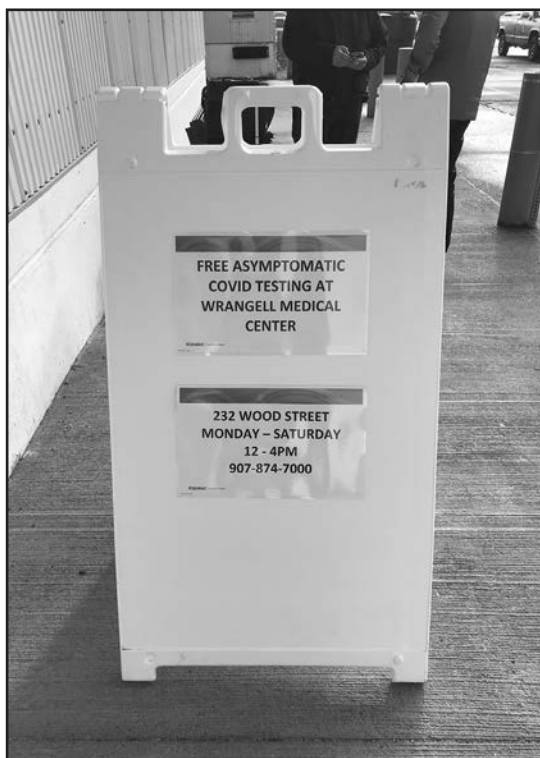


PHOTO BY SARAH ASLAM/WRANGELL SENTINEL
A sign at the Wrangell airport shows the hours of Wrangell Medical Center where arriving travelers can get voluntary COVID-19 testing.

State shifts to telework as much as possible during COVID surge

JUNEAU (AP) — The state plans to emphasize telework for many of its 14,000 employees this month as the COVID-19 pandemic strains Alaska's health care system.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy, in a memo to state department leaders, said the state "must take measures to protect its health care infrastructure while still providing essential government services to its residents." He wrote that effective Sept. 27, the state will emphasize telework "to the maximum extent practical," while still maintaining public services.

The policy will remain in effect until Oct. 29, he said. Any extensions would be decided later.

Brian Penner, director of the union that represents supervisory employees, said the decision was welcome.

"We've been hearing from supervisors who are not only concerned about their own safety, but concerned about the people they supervise," he said, adding that the action "should've happened earlier."

Alaska is in the midst of a surge in COVID-19 cases, averaging more than 1,000 new infections a day over the past few weeks. Health care leaders say hospitals face capacity issues, with staff overtaxed. Alaska is spending millions of federal dollars to bring in several hundred out-of-state health care professionals to help cover the workload.

More than 6,000 state employees were asked to work from home last year. That shifted earlier this year to a "hybrid" system where employees could work from home or the office.

Kate Sheehan, director of the state division of personnel and labor relations, said details of the new shift are being worked out at the agency and division level.

In an email to state labor leaders, Sheehan said, "For the next 30 days, those employees who can telework, should telework full time. We will still need to keep offices open," and management will figure out a plan for that.

Alaska Airlines will require vaccinations for all employees

SEATTLE (AP) — Alaska Air Group has told its 22,000 employees they will be required to get a COVID-19 vaccination.

There are some exceptions to the policy, which has shifted since last month, The Seattle Times reported.

In an email Sept. 30 to all Alaska Airlines and Horizon Air employees, the Seattle-based company said employees will now be required to be fully vaccinated or approved for a reasonable accommodation.

Officials said the new policy would be in accordance with the White House executive order that requires all federal con-

tractors to have their workers vaccinated. It replaces an Alaska policy that paid vaccinated employees \$200 and required regular testing for others. At that time, Alaska said that 75% of its employees had been vaccinated.

A memo from Andy Schneider, Alaska's senior vice president of people, said President Joe Biden's executive order applies to Alaska Air's subsidiaries as well as some contractors.

"After careful review of this order, we have determined that Alaska, Horizon and McGee employees (including certain contractors and vendors) do fall under

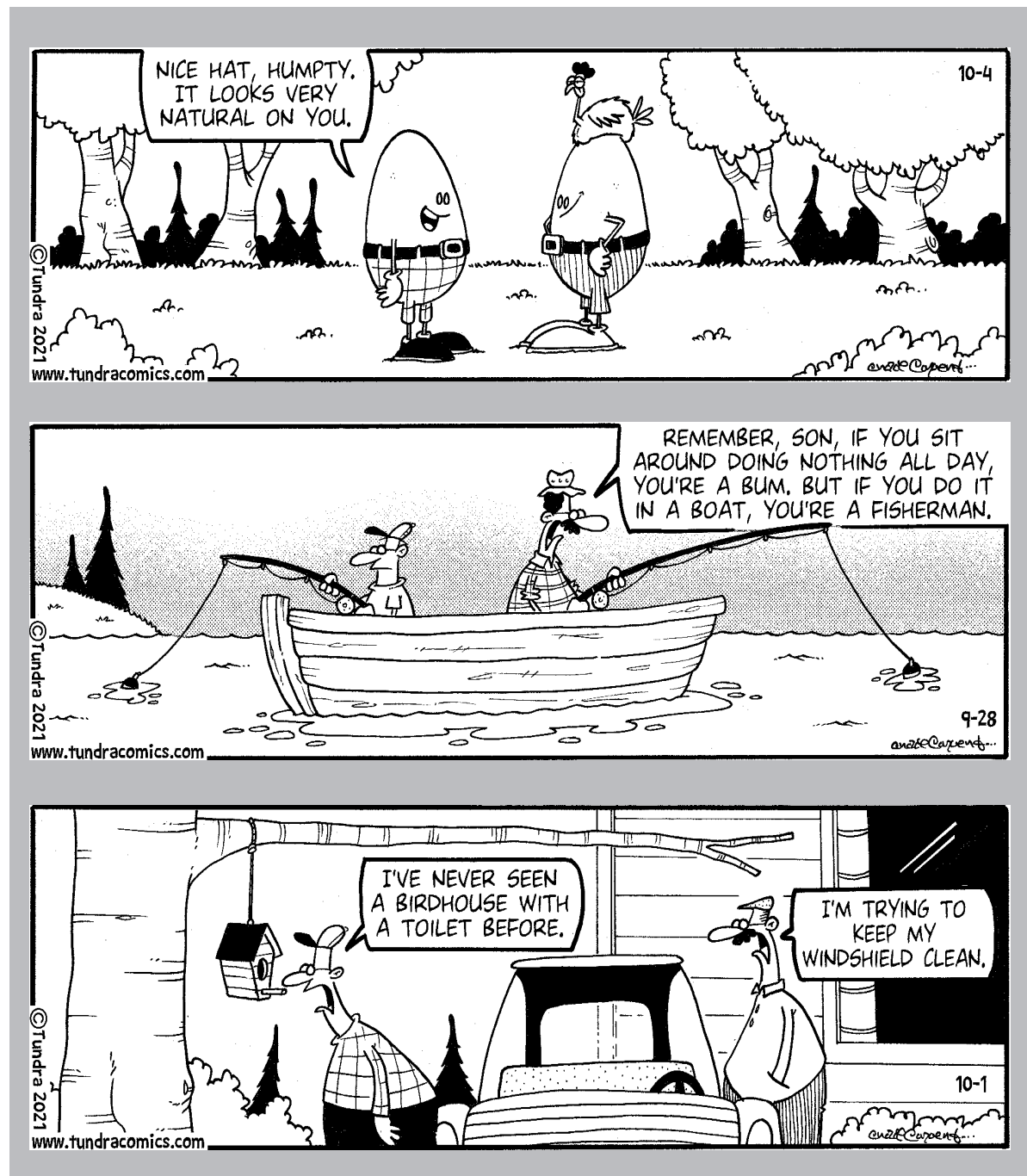
this federal vaccine mandate due to our significant work for the federal government, alongside the other major U.S. airlines," Schneider told employees in the email.

Alaska said the deadline by which employees must be fully vaccinated could be as early as Dec. 8. The airline is extending its offer of \$200 to newly vaccinated employees until Dec. 1.

Alaska said employees can request "reasonable accommodation for sincerely held religious beliefs or a medical condition that prevents them from getting the vaccine."

Employees who are granted an exemption for religious or medical reasons "may be subject to additional protocols such as weekly testing, continued masking and social distancing, modified work schedules or locations, delayed training class start dates, the inability to attend in-person events or unpaid leaves of absences," Schneider's email said.

United Airlines was the first major U.S. carrier to mandate vaccinations for all employees. American Airlines and JetBlue joined the list last week, and Southwest announced on Monday it too would require vaccinations.



White House reactivates Arctic policies committee

The Associated Press

The Biden administration is stepping up its work to figure out what to do about the thawing Arctic, which is warming three times faster than the rest of the world.

The White House said Sept. 24 it is reactivating the Arctic Executive Steering Committee, which coordinates domestic regulations and works with other Arctic nations. It also is adding six new members to the U.S. Arctic Research Commission, including two Indigenous Alaskans.

The steering committee had been moribund for the past four years, not meeting at a high level, said David Balton, appointed to direct it. "It will step up and do more in the Arctic."

The revamped committee will try to figure out what "needs to be done to get a better handle on addressing the changes in the Arctic," Balton said.

University of Colorado scientist Twila Moon, who is not involved with the committee or commission, praised the developments. She said that because the Arctic is changing so quickly, "serious issues like national security, stability of buildings and roads, food availability, and much more must be considered and acted on promptly," Moon said. "The U.S. cannot afford to sit back on Arctic issues."

Balton said the Arctic is "opening up in a number of

ways. Most of this is bad news."

"But there's also increased tourism and increased shipping, potentially other industries coming up into the Arctic that need regulation," he said. "And right now, the nations and the peoples of the Arctic are scrambling to keep up with this change."

The new efforts emphasize working with Indigenous people.

"It's really important to achieve these goals, so it has to be done in partnership with people who live in the area," said committee deputy director Raychelle Alauq Daniel, a climate policy analyst and Yup'ik who grew up in the Alaska village of Tuntutuliak.

Superpower tensions are likely to increase in the region as it becomes more ice-free in parts of the year, allowing not just more shipping but the temptation for going after resources such as oil, Balton said.

People who live in the Lower 48 states should still care about what happens in the polar region, he said. "The Arctic is kind of a bellwether for what happens to the planet as a whole. The fate of places like Miami are tied very closely to the fate of the Greenland ice sheet," Balton said. "If you live in Topeka, Kansas, or if you live in California, if you live in Nigeria, your life is going to be affected. ... The Arctic matters on all sorts of levels."

Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH
Fisheries columnist

Much of Bristol Bay's salmon wealth goes to non-resident permit holders

The preliminary value to fishermen of the nearly 41 million salmon caught this summer at Alaska's largest fishery at Bristol Bay is nearly \$248 million, 64% above the 20-year average. That figure will be much higher when bonuses and other price adjustments are paid out.

But as with the fish dollars tallied from Alaska's cod, pollock, flounders and other groundfish, the bulk of the Bristol Bay's salmon money won't be circulating through Alaska's economy because most of the fishing participants live out of the state.

In 2017, for example, 62% of gross earnings from the Bristol Bay driftnet fishery and 40% from the setnet fishery left Alaska as nonresident earnings.

That's due to the region experiencing an overall 50% decline in local permit holdings since Alaska began limiting entry into commercial salmon fisheries in 1975. Combined, residents of the Bristol Bay region now hold less than one-quarter of the region's salmon permits.

The fishing communities of Pilot Point, Levelock, Egegik, Ekwook, Pedro Bay and Nondalton, respectively, lost more than 75% of their local permits.

The numbers come from a new report titled "Righting the Ship: Restoring Local Fishing Access and Opportunity in Bristol Bay Salmon Fisheries," which examines how Alaska fisheries policy dating back nearly 50 years has gradually disenfranchised local residents from economic opportunities.

"In Bristol Bay communities, there's been a sharp and costly decline in the number of people who are able to take part in the world's most valuable salmon fishery.

"For the State of Alaska, this has led to a staggering loss of livelihood opportunity and personal income in a region often celebrated for its fishery abundance and wealth. The fact that much of this loss has occurred among Alaska Native fishing families and villages is especially concerning," said Rachel Donkersloot who authored the 40-page report for The Nature Conservancy in Alaska.

A 2021 analysis of change in permit holdings among the more than 10,000 local and non-local shareholders of the Bristol Bay Native Corp. shows a 38% decline in setnet and drift permit holdings between 1980-2018 (1,147 to 716 permits). Holdings for local shareholders suffered a greater loss of 47% (1,001 to 531 permits).

Local participation has primarily declined as a result of permit transfers and migration of permit holders, the report says, adding, "Since implementing Alaska's Limited Entry Program, legislators, researchers and rural and Alaska Native community leaders and fishermen have grappled with the consequences of creating a freely transferable permit system (i.e., permits that can be gifted, inherited, and/or bought and sold on the open market)."

While it focuses on Bristol Bay, the report also describes the ways in which the limited entry system disproportionately disadvantages rural and Alaska Native fishing families and communities across the state.

It points out that statewide rural, local permit holdings have experienced a net loss of 2,459 permits since 1975, while urban and nonresident permit holdings have experienced net gains.

Between 1976-2016, for example, the villages of Angoon, Kake, Metlakatla and Hydaburg each suffered a loss of more than 60% of local permit holdings in Southeast.

A key objective of the Limited Entry Act was to keep fishing rights in the hands of Alaskans dependent on fisheries, especially rural residents with limited economic opportunities. However, the opposite has happened.

"These shifts in who has access to Alaska's commercial fisheries represent a yet-to-be fixed policy failure of the state," the report says.

It documents how Limited Entry continues to negatively affect rural and Native fishing communities including "limited access to financing for permit purchases; a lack of earnings, credit and credit history; higher borrowing costs; lower personal wealth; limited experience with debt, credit and financial management; and limited access to and knowledge of capital markets and financing options.

"A key problem with the application process was that it was modeled after a 'non-rural fisherman' in that it assumed that all fishermen were highly efficient, full-time fishermen, fully entrenched in the market economy, who 'maintain written records of income, [with] sufficient education to comprehend a complex application process,' the report

says, adding, "These shortcomings were exacerbated by language and cultural barriers, poor outreach and misinformation."

The report also describes residency requirements that have been ruled unconstitutional. "Rural fisheries access cannot be sufficiently preserved with the suite of tools available under current law. Legal interpretations have constrained efforts to ensure that the state's natural resources benefit its citizens, leaving open the question of whether the state constitution allows for the kinds of solutions that are actually going to work. ... New solutions are clearly needed to restore and sustain viable rural and small-scale fishing ways of life that underpin healthy rural communities."

The report also presents a

suite of policy options for sustaining rural fishery participation. "Forty-five years after the first limited entry permits were issued, the State of Alaska has the benefit of hindsight. ... It's time to catch up."

Trade tangles

Alaska's 2021 salmon catch of nearly 222 million fish is 32 million more than managers projected. While it will rank as one of the state's highest catches, it's dwarfed by Alaska's biggest competitor — Russia — whose wild salmon catch totaled nearly 386 million fish.

Global market watcher Tradex predicts the combined wild salmon catches this year from Russia, the U.S., Japan, Canada

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Interior Village tries to prevent COVID cases

BY MARK THIESSEN
AND BECKY BOHRER
The Associated Press

TANACROSS — One Alaska Native village knew what to do to keep out COVID-19. They put up a gate on the only road into town and guarded it round the clock. It was the same idea used a century ago in some isolated Indigenous villages to protect people from outsiders during another deadly pandemic — the Spanish flu.

It largely worked. Only one person died of COVID-19 and 20 people got sick in Tanacross, an Athabaskan village of 140 whose rustic wood cabins and other homes are nestled between the Alaska Highway and Tanana River in the state's Interior.

But the battle against the coronavirus isn't over. The highly contagious Delta variant is spreading across Alaska, driving one of the nation's sharpest upticks in infections and posing risks for remote outposts like Tanacross where the closest hospital is hours away.

The COVID-19 surge is worsened by Alaska's limited health care system that largely relies on hospitals in Anchorage. It's where the state's largest hospital, Providence Alaska Medical Center, is overwhelmed with patients and was the first weeks ago to declare crisis-of-care protocols, meaning doctors are sometimes prioritizing care based on who has the best odds of survival.

Since then, 19 other health care facilities in Alaska, including Anchorage's two oth-

er hospitals and Fairbanks Memorial, have also entered crisis care mode, something overtaxed facilities in other states have had to do, including Idaho and Wyoming.

"Even though we live here, we're concerned about Anchorage and Fairbanks," said Alfred Jonathan, a Tanacross elder. "If somebody gets sick around there, there's no place to take them."

While Alaska has contracted for more than 470 medical professionals from out of state to help over the next few months, the ramifications are dire for those in rural Alaska if they need higher levels of care — for COVID-19 or otherwise — but no beds are available.

Sometimes those patients get lucky and get transferred to Fairbanks or Anchorage. Other times, health care staff are on the phones — in some cases, for hours — looking for a bed or facility that can provide specialty treatments like dialysis.

One patient who couldn't get dialysis at Providence died, hospital spokesperson Mikal Canfield said. Dr. Kristen Solana Walkinshaw, the hospital's chief of staff, said she knew a patient in an outlying community who needed cardiac catheterization and died waiting.

Options in Seattle and Portland also are being overloaded. One rural clinic finally found a spot for a patient from Interior Alaska in Colorado.

Health officials blame the hospital crunch on limited staffing, rising COVID-19 infections and low vaccination rates in Alaska, where 61% of eligible residents in the con-

servative state are fully vaccinated. According to data collected by Johns Hopkins University, one in every 84 people in Alaska was diagnosed with COVID-19 from Sept. 22 to Sept. 29, the nation's worst diagnosis rate in recent days.

Officials say medical workers are exhausted and frustrated with what feels like a no-win effort to combat misinformation about COVID-19 being overblown and vaccines being unsafe. Some say it could have long-term effects — further shaking confidence in vaccines and treatments for other illnesses and making the longstanding pre-pandemic challenge of recruiting health care workers to the remote state more difficult.

Medical workers "describe the emotions of: 'You hear a code is happening, someone is passing away,'" said Jared Kosin, president and CEO of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association. "That is devastating. You never want to lose a patient. But in the back of your mind, you're thinking, 'OK, another bed is now available that is critically needed.' And how do you balance those emotions? It's gut-wrenching."

In Tanacross, elders are encouraging people to get vaccinated, especially with facilities strained. The village is in a sprawling, sparsely populated region of eastern Alaska where the vaccination rate is under 50%.

Jonathan, 78, tells villagers that COVID-19 is here, and like the Delta variant, is going

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Fish Factor

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and South Korea will top 2 billion pounds compared to 1.3 billion pounds in 2020.

Trade data show that so far this year the U.S. has purchased nearly three million pounds of salmon from Russia valued at almost \$11 million, of which nearly half of the volume and value was from sockeye salmon.

Russia has not purchased a single pound of U.S. seafood since 2014 due to a trade embargo, yet Russian seafood imports to the U.S. have increased by 173%, said Jeremy Woodrow, executive director of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, speaking at the 2021 [Southeast Conference in Haines](#).

Meanwhile, the continuing trade war with China has pushed up tariffs as high as 37% to 42% on seafood going to that country, Woodrow said. Seafood is Alaska's top export by far and the value going to China has dropped by about half a billion dollars in the past four years, he said.

Judge rules against village plans for gaming hall

ANCHORAGE (AP) — A U.S. District Court judge has ruled against plans by the Native Village of Eklutna to build a tribal gaming hall about 20 miles north of downtown Anchorage.

The tribe had intended to offer pull-tabs, bingo and lotteries at the site, the Anchorage Daily News reported. The tribal government said the gaming hall would support jobs, tourism and the economy.

The U.S. Department of Interior in 2018 concluded the tribe does not have jurisdiction over an eight-acre allotment where it has sought to build the gaming hall. Members of the tribe own the allotment, located near the Birchwood Airport in Chugiak.

The tribal government sued in 2019, challenging that decision.

Judge Dabney L. Friedrich with the District Court for the District of Columbia in a 24-page ruling determined the department properly came to a "rational" decision when it denied tribal jurisdiction.

"Though the Tribe may not agree with Interior's application of law to the facts at hand, the record shows that Interior made a reasoned judgment which the court will not second-guess," Friedrich wrote in the decision issued Sept. 22.

Aaron Leggett, president of the tribe, which has about 300 members, said Sept. 22 it was too early to provide a detailed comment on the decision.

"Of course it's a disappointment," he said. "But like I said, it's pretty fresh. So we're reviewing our options."

The state of Alaska had intervened in the case in support of the Interior Department. The state has often opposed attempts by tribal governments to exercise jurisdiction, citing fears that such a situation could lead to a patchwork of conflicting laws.

Sockeye returns in central Idaho among the worst in a decade

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The number of sockeye salmon making it to central Idaho from the ocean this year is one of the worst returns in the past decade, with only 43 fish so far, state wildlife managers said Sept. 28.

But the Idaho Department of Fish and Game said a hatchery program intended to prevent the species from going extinct allowed the release of 1,211 sockeye into Redfish and Pettit lakes to spawn naturally.

The agency in August also started an emergency trap-and-truck operation at Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River in Washington due to overly warm rivers and captured 201 fish. The agency brought the fish to its hatchery in Eagle in southwestern Idaho where it raises adult brood stock for spawning.

The agency also said it brought in captive brood stock

from a safety net program operated by NOAA Fisheries in Washington. In all, the agency said it had 2,750 sockeye for spawning this year.

"When I think about the program as a whole, I think that we have been incredibly successful in preventing extinction and preserving genetic diversity," said John Powell, a fisheries research biologist with Fish and Game. "And that we're currently transitioning to our second phase of the recovery plan, which is the recolonization phase."

Powell said things were looking good in the spring when early indications showed the number of sockeye salmon passing Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River was above what was forecast.

However, a heat wave that warmed rivers changed that, cutting into what had been an expected 250 fish arriving

in central Idaho. A few more fish might still return this year to bolster the 43 counted so far. If Fish and Game hadn't trapped and trucked the 201 fish at Granite Dam, most likely would have died trying to make it to central Idaho.

"Our preference would have been to allow those fish to complete the last leg of their journey on their own, because from a genetic perspective, sockeye that make it back to the Sawtooth Basin have a level of fitness that we want in our captive breeding program," said Lance Hebdon, Fisheries Bureau chief, in a news release. "But based on river conditions, trucking fish from Lower Granite Dam to Eagle was a necessary tradeoff to increase survival."

Fish and Game hopes to eventually get enough fish returning to naturally recolonize Redfish and Pettit lakes. That plan involves the Springfield

Fish Hatchery in eastern Idaho that is expected to produce a million young sockeye salmon to be released next spring in central Idaho.

Powell also said managers have been examining ways to increase the number of young fish, called smolts, that survive the journey from central Idaho to return as adults several years later.

Currently, that number is under 1%, and fishery experts say it needs to be between 2% and 6%.

An estimated 150,000 sockeye at one time made the 900-mile trip from the ocean to the central Idaho lakes near the town of Stanley. Redfish Lake was named for the abundant salmon that spawned there. Federal officials say the run declined starting in the early 1900s because of overfishing, irrigation diversions, dams and poisoning.

Mining company collects soil samples on Chichagof Island

JUNEAU (AP) — A Canadian mining company has been looking for precious metals on Chichagof Island in Southeast Alaska.

Millrock Resources, a Vancouver, British Columbia-based company, several years ago applied to the U.S. Forest Service for drilling permits to renew exploration on claims that once comprised the historic Apex and El Nido gold mines.

However, the exploration never happened. CEO Gregory Beischer said the company wasn't able to secure financing.

The mines produced precious metals in the early 20th century. "But it really has been dormant since the mining activity took place in the '20s and '30s," Beischer told CoastAlaska public radio.

Some exploration resumed in the 1980s.

Millrock has now formed a partnership with a mining company already working in Southeast which has allowed it to take soil samples on claims less than three miles from Pelican, a community with fewer than 100 year-round residents.

The operator of Kensington Mine north

of Juneau, which is a subsidiary of Coeur Mining, invested about \$200,000 for a small team of geologists based in Pelican to pursue the samples. The property is about 175 miles northwest of Wrangell.

Beischer said soil sample results are pending. But he said geologists hope they will show that gold-bearing quartz veins continue down the mountain.

Taking soil samples doesn't require permits, according to state and federal regulators.

Feds charge three men with getting too close to bears

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Federal prosecutors have charged three men with leaving a special viewing platform and getting too close to bears in Alaska's Katmai National Park and Preserve.

The remote park on the northern Alaska Peninsula, about 250

miles southwest of Anchorage, protects some of the highest densities of bears in the world and requires visitors to abide by special rules.

Mature male brown bears at Katmai can weigh up to 900 pounds.

The U.S. attorney's office filed

charges last month in the August 2018 incident.

Spokesperson Lisa Houghton said the office doesn't discuss the timing of cases. "Every case is unique, and it takes varying amounts of time to bring forth criminal charges," she said by email.

The charges allege the men entered a closed area of the park by leaving an authorized viewing area and wading into the Brooks River when bears were feeding on salmon in the nearby falls.

The U.S. attorney's office says two of the men are from Alaska and one is from New Mexico.

Villagers angry and worried over loss of Yukon River salmon

BY NATHAN HOWARD
AND GILLIAN FLACCUS
The Associated Press

STEVENS VILLAGE — In a normal year, the smokehouses and drying racks that Alaska Natives use to prepare salmon to tide them through the winter would be heavy with fish meat, the fruits of a summer spent fishing on the Yukon River like generations before them.

This year, there are no fish. For the first time in memory, both king and chum salmon have dwindled to almost nothing and the state has banned salmon fishing on the Yukon, even the subsistence harvests that Alaska Natives rely on to fill their freezers and pantries for winter.

The remote communities that dot the river and live off its bounty — far from road systems and easy, affordable shopping — are desperate and doubling down on moose and caribou hunts in the waning days of fall.

"Nobody has fish in their freezer right now. Nobody," said Giovanna Stevens, 38, a member of the Stevens Village tribe who grew up harvesting salmon at her family's fish camp. "We have to fill that void quickly before winter gets here."

Opinions on what led to the catastrophe vary, but those studying it generally agree human-caused climate change is playing a role as the river and the Bering Sea warm, altering the food chain in ways that aren't yet fully understood. Many believe commercial trawling operations that scoop up wild salmon along with their intended catch, as well as competition from hatchery-raised salmon in the ocean, have compounded global warming's effects on one of North America's longest rivers.

The assumption that salmon that aren't fished make it back to their native river to lay eggs may no longer hold up because of changes in both the ocean and river environments, said Stephanie Quinn-Davidson, who has worked on Yukon River salmon issues for a decade and is the Alaska Venture Fund's program director for fisheries and communities.

King, or chinook, salmon have been in decline for more than a decade, but chum salmon were more plentiful until last year. This year, summer chum numbers plummeted and numbers of fall chum — which travel farther upriver — are dangerously low.

"Everyone wants to know, 'What is the one smoking gun? What is the one thing we can point to and stop?'" she said of



AP PHOTO/NATHAN HOWARD
Ben Stevens hauls fuel to his river boat before leaving for the Stevens' family hunting camp on the Yukon River on Sept. 14 in Stevens Village. Two salmon species have all but disappeared from Alaska's Yukon River this year, prompting the state to shut down fishing in an effort to save them.

the collapse. "People are reluctant to point to climate change because there isn't a clear solution ... but it's probably the biggest factor here."

Many Alaska Native communities are outraged they are paying the price for generations of practices beyond their control that have caused climate change — and many feel state and federal authorities aren't doing enough to bring Indigenous voices to the table. The scarcity has made raw strong emotions about who should have the right to fish in a state that supplies the world with salmon, and underscores the powerlessness many Alaska Natives feel as traditional resources dwindle.

The nearly 2,000-mile-long Yukon River starts in British Columbia and drains an area larger than Texas in both Canada and Alaska as it cuts through the lands of Athabaskan, Yup'ik and other tribes.

The crisis is affecting both subsistence fishing in far-flung outposts and fish processing operations that employ tribal members in communities along the lower Yukon and its tributaries.

"In the tribal villages, our people are livid. They're extremely angry that we are getting penalized for what others are doing," said P.J. Simon, chairman and chief of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, a consortium of 42 tribal villages in the Alaska interior. "As Alaska Natives, we have a right to this resource. We have a

right to have a say in how things are drawn up and divvied up."

More than a half-dozen Alaska Native groups have petitioned for federal aid, and they want the state's federal delegation to hold a hearing in Alaska on the salmon crisis. The groups also seek federal funding for more collaborative research on effects that ocean changes are having on returning salmon.

Citing the warming ocean, Gov. Mike Dunleavy requested a federal disaster declaration for the salmon fishery this month and has helped coordinate airlifts of about 90,000 pounds of fish to needy villages. The salmon crisis is one of the governor's top priorities, said Rex Rock Jr., Dunleavy's advisor for rural affairs and Alaska Native economic development.

That's done little to appease remote villages that are dependent on salmon to get through winter, when snow paralyzes the landscape and temperatures can dip to minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.

Families traditionally spend the summer at fish camps using nets and fish wheels to snag adult salmon as they migrate inland from the ocean to the place where they hatched so they can spawn. The salmon is prepared for storage a variety of ways: dried for jerky, cut into fillets that are frozen, canned in half-pint jars or preserved in wooden barrels with salt.

Without those options, com-

munities are under intense pressure to find other protein sources. In the Alaska interior, the nearest road system is often dozens of miles away, and it can take hours by boat, snow machine or even airplane to reach a grocery store.

Store-bought food is prohibitively expensive for many: A gallon of milk can cost nearly \$10, and a pound of steak was recently \$34 in Kaltag, an Interior village about 328 air miles from Fairbanks. A surge in COVID-19 cases that has disproportionately hit Alaska Natives has also made many hesitant to venture far from home.

Instead, villages sent out extra hunting parties during the fall moose season and are looking to the upcoming caribou season to meet their needs. Those who can't hunt themselves rely on others to share their meat.

"We have to watch our people because there will be some who will have no food about midyear," said Christina Semaken, a 63-year-old grandmother who lives in Kaltag, an Interior town of fewer than 100 people. "We can't afford to buy that beef or chicken."

Semaken hopes to fish next year, but whether the salmon will come back remains unknown.

Tribal advocates want more genetic testing on salmon harvested from fishing grounds in Alaska waters to make sure that commercial fisheries aren't

intercepting wild Yukon River salmon. They also want more fish-tracking sonar on the river to ensure an accurate count of the salmon that escape harvest and make it back to the river's Canadian headwaters.

Yet changes in the ocean itself might ultimately determine the salmon's fate.

The Bering Sea, where the river meets the ocean, had unprecedented ice loss in recent years, and its water temperatures are rising. Those shifts are throwing off the timing of the plankton bloom and the distribution of small invertebrates that the fish eat, creating potential chaos in the food chain that's still being studied, said Kate Howard, a fisheries scientist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Researchers have also documented warming temperatures in the river that are unhealthy for salmon, she said.

Because salmon spend time in both rivers and the ocean during their unique life cycle, it's hard to pin down exactly where these rapid environmental changes are most affecting them — but it's increasingly clear that overfishing is not the only culprit, Howard said.

"When you dig into all the available data for Yukon River salmon," she said, "it's hard to explain it all unless you consider climate change."

Alaska Natives, meanwhile, are left scrambling to fill a hole in their diet — and in centuries of tradition built around salmon.

On a recent fall day, a small hunting party zoomed along the Yukon River by motorboat, scanning the shoreline for signs of moose. After three days, the group had killed two moose, enough to provide meat for seven families, or about 50 people, for roughly a month in their small community of Stevens Village.

At the end of a long day, they butchered the animals as the Northern Lights blazed a vibrant green across the sky, their headlamps piercing the inky darkness.

The makeshift camp, miles from any road, would normally host several dozen families harvesting salmon, sharing meals and teaching children how to fish. On this day, it was eerily quiet.

"I don't really think that there is any kind of bell out there that you can ring loud enough to try to explain that type of connection," said Ben Stevens, whose ancestors founded Stevens Village. "Salmon, to us, is life. Where can you go beyond that?"

COVID cases

Continued from page 14

to develop in other ways.

Those who "didn't get vaccinated? Gosh, we're afraid for them," said Jonathan, who recently led a crew clearing dead and dying trees to reduce wildfire fuel and provide wood to heat homes.

His wife, Mildred, helped guard the gate into the community this year. Those restrictions ended this summer as the pandemic seemed to be improving. Now, she says she's tired of outsiders calling their friends in Tanacross to scare them, claiming there are problems with the vaccines.

"I got both my shots, I'm alive and nothing's wrong with me," she said before piling bags of sanitizer, masks and gloves into her Prius to deliver throughout town.

Alaska, hailed early in the pandemic for working with tribal health organizations to distribute vaccines widely and quickly, has fallen into the bottom half for percentage of total population inoculated, according to Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention data.

At hospitals, care "has shifted," said Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska's chief medical officer.

"The same standard of care that was previously there is no longer able to be given on a regular basis," she said. "This has been happening for weeks."

In rural Alaska, six Indigenous villages, including Tanacross, rely on the new Upper Tanana Health Center in the hub community of Tok, about a two-hour drive from the Canadian border. The staff treats who they can and moves those with more serious needs to Anchorage or Fairbanks, said Jacoline Bergstrom, executive director of health services for the Tanana Chiefs Conference, a consortium of 42 Athabaskan villages spread over an area nearly the size of Texas.

Emergency plans are in place to house people overnight if hospital beds aren't available right away, clinic director Joni Young said. They're usually flown because it's a three-hour drive from Tok to Fairbanks and about seven to Anchorage.

"If for some reason, we can't medevac

out, we've been preparing since the beginning to help our patients if we need to," Young said. "We've got cots before, stored here, and we have another building that we lease that we could use to separate COVID patients."

The staff is putting in overtime, with nurses taking COVID-19 questions from callers and working weekends. They need to hire two urgent care registered nurses, but few have applied.

Joyce Johnson-Albert lay on a bed at the health center with an IV in her arm. She was vaccinated but got a breakthrough infection, she suspects from a hunting camp.

"I just hope the next few days, I'll be getting a little better than now," Johnson-Albert said as she received a monoclonal antibody infusion, given at the onset of COVID-19 to lessen symptoms. "It's just hard to say. You can go either way."

Registered nurse Angie Cleary is grateful the clinic offers the infusion treatment.

"However, I feel worried some days where we're not sure when we'll get

more," Cleary said. "For example, we're down to, I think, five doses right now, and we could get more tomorrow or it might not be until next week. That's one of the concerns we have living out here, is like, when are we going to get our next shipment?"

They're also battling misinformation about the pandemic.

Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy has faced criticism for not mandating masks and not endorsing vaccines as fully as some would like. He has encouraged people to get shots but said it is a personal choice.

Daisy Northway of the Tok Native Association knows how hard it is to advocate for vaccinations, saying she's "talked till I'm blue in the face" trying to convince one of her sons.

The Athabaskan elder said she urges people to get the shots but in a way that lowers the political fervor.

"We need to say, 'Get vaccinated' in such a manner that it's helpful and not being criticizing for their beliefs," she said.

Scientists want to learn why some robins migrate and others stay home

The antenna of a satellite tag extends past the tail feathers of an American robin as she feeds a worm to her hungry nestlings on a front porch in Cheverly, Maryland, on May 9. A new antenna on the International Space Station and receptors on the Argos satellite, combined with the shrinking size of tracking chips and batteries, are allowing scientists to remotely monitor songbird movements in much greater detail than ever before.



AP PHOTO/CAROLYN KASTER

By CHRISTINA LARSON
Associated Press science writer

A plump robin wearing a tiny metal backpack with an antenna hops around a suburban yard in Takoma Park, Maryland, then plucks a cicada from the ground for a snack.

Ecologist Emily Williams watches through binoculars from behind a bush. On this clear spring day, she's snooping on his dating life. "Now I'm watching to see whether he's found a mate," she said, scrutinizing his interactions with another robin in a nearby tree.

Once the bird moves on at season's end, she'll rely on the backpack to beam frequent location data to the Argos satellite, then back to Williams' laptop, to track it.

The goal is to unravel why some American robins migrate long distances, but others do not.

An earlier study Williams worked on showed some robins are long-distance migrants — flying more than 2,780 miles between their breeding area in Alaska and winter grounds in Texas — while others hop around a single backyard most of the year.

With more precise information about nesting success and conditions in breeding and wintering grounds, "we should be able to tell the relative roles of genetics versus the environment in shaping why birds migrate," said Williams, who is based at Georgetown University.

Putting beacons on birds is not novel. But a new antenna on the International Space Station and receptors on the Argos satellite, plus the shrinking size of tracking chips and batteries, are allowing scientists to remotely monitor songbird movements in much greater detail than ever before.

"We're in a sort of golden age for bird research," said Adriaan Dokter, an ecologist at Cornell University who is not directly involved with Williams' study. "It's pretty amazing that we can satellite-track a robin with smaller and smaller chips. Ten years ago, that was unthinkable."

The device this robin is wearing can give precise locations, within about 30 feet, instead of around 125 miles for previous generations of tags.

That means Williams can tell not only whether the bird is still in the city, but on which street or backyard. Or whether it's flown from the Washington, D.C., suburbs to land on the White House lawn.

A second new tag, for only the heaviest robins, includes an accelerometer to provide information about the bird's movements; future versions may also measure humidity and barometric pressure. These Icarus tags work with a new antenna on the International Space Station.

That antenna was first turned on about two years ago, "but there were some glitches with the power-supply and the computer, so we had to bring it down again with a Russian rocket, then transport it from Moscow to Germany to fix it," said Martin Wikelski, director of the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior, whose scientific team is honing the technology. After "the usual troubleshooting for space science," the antenna was turned back on this spring.

As researchers deploy precision tags, Wikelski envisions the development of "an 'Internet of animals' — a collection of sensors around the world giving us a better picture of the

movement of life on the planet."

The American robin is an iconic songbird in North America, its bright chirp a harbinger of spring. Yet its migratory habits remain a bit mysterious to scientists.

"It's astounding how little we know about some of the most common songbirds," said Ken Rosenberg, a conservation scientist at Cornell University. "We have a general idea of migration, a range map, but that's really just a broad impression."

What factors drive some robins to migrate, while others don't? Does it have to do with available food, temperature fluctuations or success in mating and rearing chicks?

Williams hopes more detailed data from satellite tags, combined with records of nesting success, will provide insights, and she's working with partners who are tagging robins in Alaska, Indiana and Florida for a three-year study.

Scientists have previously put GPS-tracking devices on larger raptors, but the technology has only recently become small and light enough for some songbirds. Tracking devices must be less than 5% of the animal's weight to avoid encumbering them.

In a Silver Spring, Maryland, yard, Williams has unfurled nylon nets between tall aluminum poles. When a robin flies into the net, she delicately untangles the bird. Then she holds it in a "bander's grip" — with her forefinger and middle finger loosely on either side of the bird's neck, and another two fingers around its body.

On a tarp, she measures the robin's beak length, takes a toenail clipping and plucks a tail feather to gauge overall health.

Then she weighs the bird in a small cup on a scale. This one is about three ounces, just over the threshold for wearing the penny-sized Argos satellite tag.

Williams fashions a makeshift saddle with clear jewelry cord looped around each of the bird's legs. She then tightens the cord so the tag sits firmly on the bird's back.

When she opens her hand, the robin hops to the ground, then takes a few steps before flying off.

In addition to providing very precise locations, the satellite tags transmit data that can be downloaded from afar onto Williams' laptop. The data on older tags couldn't be retrieved unless the same bird was recaptured the following year — a difficult and uncertain task.

Wikelski hopes the new technology will help scientists better understand threats birds and other creatures face from habitat loss, pollution and climate change.

"It is detective work to try to figure out why a population is declining," said Ben Freeman, a biologist at the Biodiversity Research Centre at the University of British Columbia.

A 2019 study co-written by Cornell's Rosenberg showed that North America's population of wild birds declined by nearly 30%, or 3 billion, since 1970.

4 WEEKS LEFT TO ENTER

Week 3 | Adult Winner: James Durkee
Youth Winner: Elia Samuelson
Parent/Guardian Winner: Carol Samuelson



Protect Our Economy and Give Alaska a Shot at Recovery

Week 5: Oct 3-Oct 9

Getting your first dose during week 5? Enter to win by Saturday!



Week 5 Eligibility Expires at 11:59 pm Oct. 9

Entries limited to one per person. Eligible Alaskans should enter to win ONCE based on the date of your FIRST dose. You do not need to enter the sweepstakes weekly.

Alaskans vaccinated before Sept. 2 can enter to win anytime before Oct. 30

You can enter for a chance to win if you:

- Are an Alaska resident
- Are age 12 or older
- Received a first dose of any COVID-19 vaccine at any time before or during the sweepstakes period
- Received your vaccination in Alaska - OR if a veteran, at any VA hospital or VA clinic

Other restrictions apply. See GiveAKaShot.com for more details

2 Winners each week!

Vaccinated parent/guardian of youth winners will receive a \$10K cash prize

\$49K

cash prize

for Alaskans 18+

\$49K

ALASKA529

EDUCATION SAVINGS PLAN

for Alaskans 12-17

Free language interpretation services available

Muaj kev pab txhais lus dawb
무료 언어통역 서비스 이용가능
Предоставляются бесплатные услуги переводчика
Servicios de interpretación de idiomas gratuitos disponibles
May makukuhang libreng serbisyo sa pagsasalang wika.
Akiingtungat nungitugustet piavngaut

GiveAKaShot.com



If you do not have access to the internet or require language or other assistance, call the State of Alaska COVID vaccine helpline for assistance. Callers must ask that they be entered into the Give AK a Shot Sweepstakes, provide the required entry information, and provide the required acknowledgements and consents.

Call the State of Alaska COVID vaccine helpline at 1-907-646-3322 or toll-free 1-833-4-VAXLINE (1-833-482-9546)
Mon-Fri: 9 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. | Sat/Sun: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

