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State Senate proposes sizable boost in public school funding

By MARK SABBATINI
Juneau Empire

A proposal to boost state funding for public schools by about 17%, increasing the current \$5,960 per-student formula by \$1,000, was unveiled Feb. 1 by state Senate leaders as the “beginning of the beginning” of a long debate about the future of education spending in the state.

Increasing what’s known as the base student allocation is the top priority of some legislators this session — the per-student funding amount is essentially unchanged since 2017, while inflation has risen about 21% since then.

Senate Bill 52 contains no provisions addressing future inflation or extra costs such as higher transportation expenses (school bus service).

“This is the first step of a long conversation we’ll be having,” Sen. Löki Tobin, an Anchorage Democrat who chairs the Education Committee, said during a press conference Feb. 1 with other members of the Senate majority, which consists of nine Democrats and eight Republicans.

If passed, it would represent the largest increase in state funding in a single year. Still, Caroline Storm, steering committee member of the state-wide volunteer advocacy group Great Alaska Schools, said it’s not enough.

“I consider a \$1,000 increase a start. I would like to see it higher just to make public schools whole again,” Storm said Feb. 1.

If approved by the Legislature and signed into law by the governor, a \$1,000 increase would add about \$627,000 in state dollars to the Wrangell School District budget, Tammy Stromberg, district business manager, estimated last Friday.

The district has been squeezed the past few years by rising costs and a pandemic-inflicted enrollment decline.

The additional funds would represent more than a 12% gain in revenues to the Wrangell district’s draft budget for next year.

Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, however, has proposed another year of flat funding for schools in his budget for next year, and the Republican-led majority of the state House is expected to oppose the sizable increase sought by the Senate.

“Our biggest problem right now is how do we get an increase ... through the House,” Senate President Gary Stevens, a Kodiak Republican, said in an interview Jan. 31. “I don’t know if we do that right now.”

Another significant issue is how increasing education spending will affect other budget priorities, including the Permanent Fund dividend. Dunleavy is proposing a dividend of

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Petersburg wolf stops by Wrangell on swim to Etolin

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Wolves are social, territorial animals that educate their young, care for their injured and stick with their close-knit family groups — most of the time, that is. In the past few months, a wolf from Petersburg has struck out on its own and taken up swimming, behaviors that are unusual — though not unheard of — for a wolf.

The swimming wolf traveled from Petersburg to Wrangell Island to Etolin Island, and its movements could help area scientists learn more about the animals’ lifestyle.

The animal was captured

on Sept. 14 within Petersburg city limits by state area biologist Frank Robbins and program technician Hilary Wood, who outfitted it with a GPS tracking collar. After a group of wolves were harvested in the Petersburg area in mid-November, the collared wolf swam from Mitkof Island across the Stikine River delta, traveled down the mainland and arrived on Wrangell Island. It swam to Etolin Island “shortly thereafter” on Nov. 25, said research wildlife biologist Gretchen Roffler of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), “and it’s been there ever since.”

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A lone gray wolf is photographed on Prince of Wales Island in 2019.

Tracking a radio-collared wolf that has traveled from Petersburg to Etolin Island will help state wildlife biologists “understand how gene flow occurs throughout this very island-dominated landscape.”

PHOTO COURTESY
ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF
FISH AND GAME

Reporter produces podcast about life ‘Before Me’

Lisa Phu finishes six-year quest to learn about mother’s journey from Cambodia to U.S.

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

As most journalists will tell you, it can sometimes take a while to earn a person’s trust. But what if that person is your mom?

For six years, Lisa Phu, a Wrangell Sentinel reporter from 2005 to 2009, worked on a podcast that centered on her mother’s upbringing and journey to escape Cambodia during its civil war. And though the interviews took place during two separate visits by mom to Phu’s home in Alaska, it took time before Lan Phu was ready to share her story.

“I asked her for years if I could interview her and she would always say no,” Phu said. Her mom acquiesced after being involved in a horrific car accident and Phu became a mom herself.

“Before Me” begins during the Vietnam war and Cambodian civil war of the late 1960s and early ‘70s, when Lan Phu was a teenager. She recounted the horrors of being in the same room when her uncle was killed by missile shrapnel, fleeing her Cambodian home, being separated from her first-born daughter, and fighting for survival on a daily basis.

Lisa Phu always knew that she had another sister who had died, but growing up she never knew how or why.

Over five podcast episodes, she tells the story of not only her mother’s escape but of her mother’s upbringing before war tore her world apart. For the most part, it was an ideal childhood, filled with family, food



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA PHU

Lisa Phu, left, with her mom, Lan Phu, during a visit to her reporter daughter in Alaska in 2017. Lisa Phu, a one-time Sentinel staffer, has produced a podcast about her mother’s life during the Vietnam war and Cambodian civil war and subsequent escape to America.

and a first crush. She was a good student with dreams of becoming a psychologist because, as she told her daughter, everybody would confide in her their problems.

Those dreams ended when she married and had a child. “In Cambodia, when you become a mom, your dreams die, unless

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Nolan Center seeks cast members for spring musical, ‘Annie’

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Wrangell’s rendition of “The Sound of Music” sold out twice last December, but thanks to the Nolan Center and a host of dedicated community members, the curtain won’t stay closed for long. Last Tuesday, Nolan Center Director Cyni Crary announced that the spring musical will be “Annie.”

This uplifting tale of resilience and found family, filled with classic show tunes like “Tomorrow” and “It’s the Hard Knock Life,” is coming to Wrangell on the weekends of May 12-13 and 20-21. The Nolan Center is seeking actors to fill the musical’s colorful cast of characters, from the high-rolling tycoon Daddy Warbucks to the sleazy crook Rooster Hannigan to the indomitable orphan Annie herself.

Haley Reeves, who played the Mother Abbess in “The Sound of Music,” will di-

rect the show and Sage Smiley, who played Sister Margaretta, will co-direct. Reeves comes from a small Montana town with a vibrant community theater scene, where she was able to explore all aspects of a production from stage management to sound engineering to acting.

“Annie” will be her first experience as a director and she is “really excited to show off the talents of the other people in town,” she said. The director is “there to make other people shine and that’s what excited me about it.”

Actors of all ages and singing abilities are encouraged to participate. Auditions are Feb. 15 and 16 from 4 to 7 p.m. Non-singing actors will be asked to read lines; singing actors should come prepared to perform a musical number of their choice. It doesn’t have to be from “Annie,” either. Reeves recommends actors pick a song that

makes them feel confident and showcases their entire vocal range. No backing track will be necessary — audition attendees can sing a cappella.

When Reeves, Crary, Smiley and set designer Michael Baina met to plan the show, their goal was to maximize community involvement. “Annie” has labor-intensive lead roles, but it also features a large ensemble cast, making it an ideal musical for die-hard theater aficionados and newcomers alike. “If somebody’s even just barely thinking about trying out ... come try out,” Reeves said. “Just dip your toe in.”

For those who prefer to operate behind the scenes, the Nolan Center is also seeking costumers, set designers, stage managers and more. To land one of these equally essential roles, contact Reeves at (406) 262-4360 or Crary at (503) 720-0106.

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Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Wednesday, Feb. 8: Ethan Blatchley; Anniversary: Joel and Tis Peterman.

Thursday, Feb. 9: None.

Friday, Feb. 10: Sumi Angerman, Valarie Draper, S.R. Privett III.

Saturday, Feb. 11: None.

Sunday, Feb. 12: Rooney Schafer, Lacey Soeteber.

Monday, Feb. 13: Anniversary: Michael and DeAnna Villarma.

Tuesday, Feb. 14: None.

Wednesday, Feb. 15: Caiden Scott.

Senior Center Menu

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

Thursday, Feb. 9

Moose stew, tossed salad, Pilot Bread

Friday, Feb. 10

Tamale pie, steamed spinach, apricot salad, angel biscuit

Monday, Feb. 13

New England clam chowder, tomato and cheese sandwich, coleslaw

Tuesday, Feb. 14

Cinnamon chicken with green peppers, steamed zucchini, tossed salad, roll

Wednesday, Feb. 15

Beef and rice soup, brussels sprouts, carrot raisin salad

Thursday, Feb. 16

Closed for Elizabeth Peratrovich Day

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

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, Feb. 17
Columbia, 6:45 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 24
Columbia, 3:15 p.m.
Friday, March 3
Columbia, 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 7
Columbia, 12:15 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, Feb. 20
Columbia, 6 a.m.
Monday, Feb. 27
Columbia, 5:15 a.m.
Monday, March 6
Columbia, 2:30 p.m.
Friday, March 10
Columbia, 7:45 a.m.

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

Tides

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Feb. 8	02:32	15.2	02:19	15.7	08:08	2.6	08:27	-0.3
Feb. 9	02:57	15.3	02:50	15.1	08:41	2.4	08:55	0.4
Feb. 10	03:23	15.3	03:25	14.2	09:18	2.2	09:27	1.2
Feb. 11	03:52	15.2	04:05	13.2	10:00	2.1	10:03	2.3
Feb. 12	04:26	15.0	04:58	12.1	10:49	2.2	10:46	3.5
Feb. 13	05:12	14.7	06:15	11.0	11:50	2.2	11:41	4.7
Feb. 14	06:16	14.4	07:54	10.8	01:05	2.1

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

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

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

NOLAN CENTER THEATER "M3GAN," rated PG-13, at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Feb. 10-11. The horror, sci-fi, thriller film runs 1 hour and 42 minutes, and tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

PARKS and RECREATION advisory board regular meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Feb. 15 in the borough assembly chambers at City Hall. Meeting information will be published online the Friday before the meeting at <https://bit.ly/406gxpn>. Public is encouraged to attend. To submit a comment to the department or to the board, email kthomas@wrangell.com.

FAMILY GAME NIGHT, 5 p.m. Feb. 17 at The Salvation Army. Food, board games, video games. All are welcome. Call for more information at 907-874-3753.

YOUTH ART, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Feb. 18 for ages 10-16 at The Salvation Army. Bookmaking and scrapbooking. Participants will make a journal to take home and a mini magazine. Supplies will be provided and a lunch break halfway through. Call for more information at 907-874-3753.

WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD will meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 20, via Zoom. Go to: <https://bit.ly/40sFhs0>. The meeting ID is 872 4384 1903 and the passcode is 115673. Community members can email comments to kpowell@wpsd.us, or can sign up under guests to be heard at the meeting by emailing the same address before 3:30 p.m. the day of the meeting.

HOSPICE annual meeting will be at noon on Monday, Feb. 20, at the Catholic church parish hall. Everyone is welcome to learn about the group and what they do. A simple lunch will be provided.

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

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

Continuing Events

PARKS and RECREATION www.wrangellrec.com

Weight room: 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.

Feb. 8, 1923

The opening of the Million Dollar Club in Wrangell Saturday night will without doubt be one of the greatest pleasure events in the history of Southeast Alaska. The thrilling life of bygone days of the Klondike will be lived over again as dramatic scenes are re-enacted. The famous Native orchestra of Metlakatla will furnish the music. Special boats will arrive from Juneau, Petersburg and Ketchikan bringing Elks and their ladies. The old rink is today an example of what money can do. Since it was leased by the millionaires, it has been transformed into one of the most elegant clubs on the Pacific coast. Certainly there is nothing like it anywhere in Alaska, and even the famous Arctic Club in Seattle is a woodshed in comparison. And the dance hall! It is simply a dream. And we know you'll say so too

when you see it. There will be no children present, but the children have not been forgotten, as a special party for them will be given in the Starland at the same time as the big event. On some former occasions people have complained of not being warm enough in the rink, but no one need be apprehensive about Saturday night, for the grand opening will be a warm affair in more ways than one.

Feb. 6, 1948

At the city council meeting last night, Carl Bradley appeared to represent the Binkley Canning Co., which is asking that a road be built across Shustak Point on Zimovia Strait. The road will make other private property on the point more accessible. James Gillen appeared, also urging that the road survey be made. The council decided to write George Parks, federal cadastral engineer, in Juneau to ask that a survey be made immediately and an estimate be given on the cost. Jim Meyers, another property owner on the Point, asked that the road not be built through the center of his property, as he said his lot was not large enough to be cut in half.

Feb. 9, 1973

Wrangell's four-man police department traveled 24,725 miles on patrol during 1972 and made 218 arrests, 77 of which were felony crimes. Figures are contained in the department's activity report, which includes

comparison figures from 1969 through 1972. The report was prepared for presentation to the mayor and city council, the city manager and the citizens of Wrangell. In addition to statistics on police activity, it presents brief explanations of the figures included in the report and general information on the department's operation during the past year. Fifty-four accidents and 883 criminal complaints were investigated. A total of 282 citations for moving violations, parking violations and mechanical vehicle faults were issued. Traffic warnings in cases where drivers were not cited totaled 191 for the year.

Feb. 5, 1998

With the hiring of five area residents and the employment of a local electrical contractor, the long-awaited renewal of activity at Wrangell's former Alaska Pulp Corp. mill has begun. According to plant superintendent Rick Klinke, four watchmen have been hired, and a local electrical contractor is examining the numerous motors on the site that have sat idle since the mill's closure in 1994. Reached by phone, plant manager George Woodbury said the plant will start up when the equipment is ready and logs are on hand. "We're assessing what has to be done at the mill. Everything is in the 'spring decision' mode. We'll get started as soon as we're satisfied that we're not going to get snowed out."

Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Feb. 8	7:31a	4:36p	09:04h
Feb. 9	7:29a	4:38p	09:09h
Feb. 10	7:27a	4:40p	09:13h
Feb. 11	7:25a	4:43p	09:17h
Feb. 12	7:22a	4:45p	09:22h
Feb. 13	7:20a	4:47p	09:26h
Feb. 14	7:18a	4:49p	09:31h

Southeast Natives find little land available in federal allotment program

BY CLARISE LARSON, *Juneau Empire*
AND CAROLEINE JAMES
Wrangell Sentinel

Einar Hasseth served in Vietnam from September 1964 to December 1965, and never received his entitlement of up to 160 acres of land under the 1906 Alaska Native Allotment Act. The program has reopened, but for Hasseth, and other Native veterans living in Southeast, there's a problem: Nearly no Southeast Alaska land is available under the program.

Last fall, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management announced an order and made available more than 27 million acres of public land to Alaska Native veterans who were unable to apply for their acres while serving during the Vietnam War between 1964 and 1971.

Of the more than 1,800 veterans across the state who are eligible to receive land, around 500 are from Southeast, according to Darrell Brown, veterans land specialist for Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

"The land that's open to (veterans) is clear up there near Barrow (Utqiagvik) and Kotzebue," Hasseth added. "There's no way I'm going up there."

The parcels are mostly in the Kobuk-Seward Peninsula, Ring of Fire, Ber-

ing Sea, Western Interior and East Alaska planning areas, with a very small number of lots in Southeast north of Skagway and Haines.

Parcels in Southeast are extremely limited because so much of the land is connected to the National Park system or National Forest system and, as a result, is not available for selection. Southeast Native veterans don't have the option to receive a cash payout instead of land, though they may be able to apply for a parcel up north and sell it with the permission of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

On Jan. 18, veterans living in Southeast were invited to an event that offered them more information on how to apply for and receive land. The event in Juneau was co-hosted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

Candy Grimes, the bureau's Native allotment coordinator, said she and other representatives came down from Anchorage intending to help as many Native veterans as possible get the resources they need to apply for the lands.

"Our goal is to have 100% applications," she said.

However, among the 45 or so veterans who showed up for the event, there was

general unhappiness about the lack of Southeast land.

"They would rather have landed in their homelands," Grimes said.

Wm. Ozzie Sheakley, commander of the Southeast Alaska Native Veterans organization, agreed. "It's too far away, there's nothing in Southeast Alaska — we want Southeast Alaska," he said.

Sheakley said he's been waiting for this land ever since returning from Vietnam. For the past 20 years, he was a part of the efforts to push for reopening the application period. But to add Southeast land to the available parcels would require federal action.

Sheakley and Hasseth said they don't know if they'll be around by then. "There were quite a few (veterans), now there's just a handful," said Hasseth. "The longer they take, the less amount they have to mess with because there won't be any left."

"I'm going to do it because it's all there is," said Arsenio "Pastor" Credo, a Vietnam veteran from Juneau. "I can't wait — an amendment could take 20, 30 years, and by then most of us will be dead."

Jessie Archibald, a senior staff attorney for Alaska Legal Services, said legal representatives can apply for the land on behalf of deceased veterans who were el-

igible for the lands.

Eligible legal representatives and veterans have until Dec. 29, 2025, to apply for the allotments. According to Grimes, once the application is accepted it takes around two years for the allotment to take place. So far, 253 applications have been received, and eight have been certified.

"It's hard," Sheakley said. He explained that despite his disappointment in the land offered, he's still going to apply.

Sheakley said the situation reminded him of what happened to the Cherokee Nation after the Indian Removal Act, which was signed into law in 1830, forced the tribe away from their ancestral homeland and into a land unlike their own.

"It's a bunch of land in the middle of nowhere, we don't know anything about up north," he said. "We want our homeland, where we come from."

Wrangell Native veterans "feel like they're being left out, not only from land but from the discussions," said Hasseth. "We don't see anything, we just take the leavings that they give us. I don't think that's right. We all served under the same flag."

Trident responds to market, plans to freeze more pinks at Wrangell plant

BY LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

As the market continues to shift from canned salmon toward more frozen product, "the company wants more frozen pinks," said Trident Seafoods Southeast regional manager John Scoblic. Which means Trident will freeze pinks along with chums at its Wrangell plant this summer.

After a three-year closure due to weak chum returns, Trident plans to reopen its Wrangell plant, buying and freezing salmon in July and August.

"We'll be testing out some new things there," Jeff Welbourn, Trident's senior vice president for Alaska operations, said at last week's Southeast Conference in Juneau.

It's too early to provide details of the company's plans, he said in an interview after the fisheries panel discussion, though he did add that the company will work on the plant's refrigeration system to make it more efficient.

The goal is to boost the plant's capacity to process and freeze fish.

"How much can you get through those freezers," he said. "We're going to see how efficiently we can run."

Scoblic called pinks and chums "the bread and butter of Southeast." The two species far exceed the catch by weight and number of fish of chinook, sockeye and coho, though those other species fetch higher prices.

Trident expects to start work in late February or early March to bring the Wrangell plant "out of mothballs." In addition to improving the refrigeration system, the

work list includes the roof, some structural components, flooring, electrical and plumbing, and even some pilings along the waterfront, Welbourn said.

The work likely will continue "up to the minute to when we process (fish)."

Welbourn declined to give an estimate for the cost of work at the plant, referring to it only as "a good number."

Trident expects to employ a little over 100 workers for the season, a lighter payroll than in past years.

The company also operates a smaller facility in Petersburg and a larger plant in Ketchikan, which includes a canning line.

Trident purchased the Wrangell plant almost 14 years ago.

Work gets started to build up seaweed, shellfish farming industry in Alaska

BY LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Organizers are creating programs to start using a \$49 million federal grant and \$15 million in matching funds to grow Alaska's shellfish and seaweed farming industry.

The money will go toward a statewide effort, though more permit applications were filed for new or expanded farms in Southeast than in any other region 2016 through 2022, according to state statistics.

Southeast set a record last year with seven applications for seaweed and shellfish farms, Rachel Baker, deputy commissioner at the Alaska Department of Fish Game, said at last week's Southeast Conference summit in Juneau. Those new filings brought to 37 the permit applications in Southeast since 2016.

Elsewhere around the state, 30 applications were filed for new or expanded farms in Southcentral Alaska 2016-2022, and 23 in the Kodiak area.

The Southeast Conference is the leader among the 17 participating organizations in the Alaska Mariculture Cluster, which won the federal grant late last year.

The money will fund several new programs, including a revolving loan fund, equipment for hatcheries and nurseries, marketing assistance and research and development of new products to boost sales.

The project will run through September 2026.

"We've got to be creative," in setting up the loan program for new businesses, said Alana Peterson, executive director of Spruce Root, a participating or-

ganization in the Alaska Mariculture Cluster.

Juneau-based Spruce Root, established in 2012 with funding from Sealaska Corp., is dedicated to helping local entrepreneurs with loans, business coaching and workshops.

The Mariculture Cluster will design the loan program for start-ups, taking on more risk than would a traditional bank, Peterson said during a panel discussion at the Southeast Conference summit.

The effort is targeting 25% of its loans to Native-owned operations and 25% to rural communities.

It's all about growing the industry, creating jobs and income, supporters said. From less than a \$2 million business last year, the expectation is that with assistance such as the federal grant and matching partners, the Alaska mariculture industry could expand to between \$60 million and \$185 million a year by 2032.

There were 13 operating oyster farms in Alaska in 2022, totaling almost \$1.5 million in sales.

In 2022, there were eight producing seaweed farms around the state, with 24 more permitted and 23 under permit review, according to a presentation by Dan Lesh, deputy director of the Southeast Conference.

Kelp goes into foods, including salsas and dried snacks, and skin care products.

The first kelp farm in Southeast started operations in 2017. The 2022 harvest totaled almost 300 tons, reported Markos Scheer, the Southeast Conference seafood committee chair

and founder of Seagrove Kelp, a wholesale business based north of Seattle.

The federal grant is from the Build Back Better Regional Challenge, run by the Economic Development Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Alaska application was selected from among 529 nationwide to develop and promote emerging industries.

Sealaska Corp. is among the matching fund donors.

Components of the Alaska Mariculture Cluster include \$26 million for equipment and technical help for hatcheries and nurseries, explained Juliana Leggitt, project manager for the initiative. That effort will include developing ideas for expanding the industry to farm new species other than oysters, focusing on shellfish that are commercially viable.

The plan allocates \$10.5 million for workforce training, partnering with the University of Alaska system on curriculum, and also developing training manuals for oyster and seaweed farming operations, Leggitt said.

The revolving loan fund

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would be capitalized with \$10 million, proving a source of capital for businesses.

Research and development efforts would be allocated \$9.5 million, with work to include, for example, analyzing the more than two dozen species of seaweed in Alaska for nutritional value, said Hannah Wilson, development director of the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, one of the partners in the mariculture cluster.

Nutritional analysis is an important tool in marketing the products, Wilson said.

Additional work would in-

clude using the money to model ocean currents and waves at potential mariculture locations, providing the data to applicants to help select the best sites.

Using a \$3.5 million pot for coordination and outreach efforts, the cluster plans to hire four regional coordinators to help with operations and work with local tribes throughout the four-year project, Leggitt said.

Market research and development efforts will get \$1.2 million, with \$700,000 allocated to look at renewable energy sources for mariculture operations.



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

The math is easy; the politics are hard

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Getting caught between a rock and a hard place is easier. At least you can rent a backhoe and move the rock. Getting politically caught between more money for public schools and even more money for the Permanent Fund dividend will be the hardest place for legislators this year.

The vote will come down to which is more important for Alaska: A long-needed, substantial increase in state funding for public schools, or the governor's proposed super-sized Happy Meal of a nearly \$4,000 Permanent Fund dividend?

But putting the dividend first and school funding second is exactly what Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposes in his budget. He would spend almost \$2.5 billion for this fall's dividends — a record amount that would make any candidate proud — and popular.

The same budget includes less than half that amount for state funding of public schools. Dunleavy says he is open to considering an increase but has shown no interest or inclination in naming a number. That's like a student telling the teacher, yes, I am interested in turning in the homework assignment, but I'd rather not say when.

The annual fight over the size of the dividend has consumed state politics the past half-dozen years. What makes it more crucial this year is that the state funding formula for public schools has not changed over those same half-dozen years, and there is a growing consensus across Alaska that a sizable increase in state money for classrooms is needed to avoid school closures and classroom cutbacks.

That's the hard place for legislators. The state checking account cannot afford both the governor's record-amount PFD and more money for schools.

"We can't have everything," Ketchikan-Wrangell Rep. Dan Ortiz told a meeting of Southeast Alaska officials last week, precisely summing up Alaska's fiscal dilem-

ma in four astute words.

Money to pay for both the governor's dividend — which would cost almost \$400 million more than last year's check — and the \$250 million school funding boost sought by advocates would exceed the fiscally responsible limit set in state law for annual withdrawals of Permanent Fund earnings.

Overdrawing the state's long-term savings account means coming up even shorter with revenues to pay for public services in the years ahead. It's selfish and it's shortsighted. It's like overfishing a salmon run because you want extra money this year, regardless that it ruins the run for future years.

That's something every Alaskan should understand.

Lawmakers know the end-of-session budget battle will come down to compromises on the amount of the dividend and an increase in school funding. "That's where everybody is going to have to show their cards," said Ortiz.

It will be an important decision, said Sitka Sen. Bert Stedman, co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee. "We're going to have to make a choice. Do we want to teach our kids to cash checks? Or

do we want to teach them to read and write and do arithmetic? And that'll be fundamentals of the debate, because something has to give."

What gives is rising costs at school districts statewide. Districts are paying more for insurance and to heat school buildings, for wages and student services, and they are doing it without any help from the state beyond a 6-year-old funding formula.

Alaskans should demand of their elected officials that they answer school funding needs first, and then figure out how much of a dividend Alaska can afford. Not the other way around.

Speaking to the same Southeast group last week as Ortiz, Kodiak Rep. Louise Stutes cynically commented that politics get in the way "of doing the right thing."

She's right. But maybe this year elected officials will get it right. If not, they are failing at their job and our schools will fail too.

That's the hard place for legislators. The state checking account cannot afford both the governor's record-amount PFD and more money for schools.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ortiz says school funding, child care and the state ferries are his top legislative priorities

The legislative session has begun, and I am back in Juneau working for you. As we dive into hearing proposed bills and dig into budget details, I want to share my priorities and remind you to reach out to me anytime.

One of my biggest priorities this session is to reevaluate the base student allocation and the state funding we allocate to our public school system. K-12 education has been flat funded for most of the past eight years, which, when we take into account inflation, actually has resulted in a significant cut in funding.

I know the four school districts that I represent are all looking at having to make very impactful cuts to programs and staff if they do not receive a significant increase

to the BSA.

I am also hearing frequently about the need for more and affordable child care, and that this is a major factor hindering our available workforce. I hope to engage in valuable conversations about funding for both pre-K and K-12, as well as looking for ways that the state can be of assistance on the child care issue.

Another one of my priorities is protecting the Alaska Marine Highway System. We've been given a wonderful opportunity to "right the ship(s)" due to the work of Sen. Lisa Murkowski. We have been awarded \$285 million in federal funding for our ferry system, but we need to make sure the state meets the match funding requirements so that we can take full advantage of these resources.

It is my hope this funding will help with building at least

two new vessels, fleet rehabilitation and upkeep of our existing fleet, eventually resulting in a significant increase in service throughout the whole system. I'm very aware of the Prince Rupert route's ongoing difficulties, and I will keep working to give southern Southeast access to the continental road system that exists just six hours away by boat from Ketchikan.

Some other issues that are on my radar: Making sure the state has the resources to fight the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit that could be so damaging to our trollers; making sure people have access to SNAP benefits despite the huge lag in processing applications; and the lack of state Division of Motor Vehicles services.

Rep. Dan Ortiz
Rep.Dan.Ortiz@AKLeg.gov
907-465-3824

EDITORIAL

Trident reopening welcome news for town

Wrangell has come up short in good economic news in recent years, what with business closures, the loss of Alaska Crossings a year ago, not-so-great salmon runs and crab harvests, rising consumer prices and worker shortages. So it was especially welcome news when Trident Seafoods announced it will open its Wrangell plant this summer after a three-year shutdown.

The company plans to start work at the downtown waterfront plant within the month, getting it ready for the summer season to handle pinks and chums for the fresh-frozen market. The maintenance and some upgrades at the plant over the next several months will create needed payroll in the community, followed by 100-plus workers on the job in July and August to process the catch.

Having a large fish buyer in town also will boost borough revenues. The state collects a tax on commercial fish harvests, sharing back half of the money to municipalities where the fish is brought ashore for processing and sale. Depending on this summer's salmon harvest and market prices, Trident's reopening could be worth around \$100,000 to the municipality.

In even more good news, some of the pre-opening work will be designed to boost the plant's production capacity, a solid indication that Trident is looking toward operating the plant long term. Weak chum runs the past few years pushed the company's decision to keep the plant closed, but now Trident sees a future that also includes freezing pinks at the Wrangell plant.

The market is shifting away from the traditional emphasis on putting pink salmon into cans as consumers increasingly turn to fresh-frozen fish, even pinks, explained John Scoblic, Ketchikan-based Southeast regional manager for Trident.

It's good to see the company putting its Wrangell operation back to work, rejoining Sea Level Seafoods and individuals who market their catch. The community has long been a fishing town. Getting back its largest processor is good news.

The Fourth of July depends on royalty

It's ironic that Wrangell's Fourth of July depends on the money raised by royalty candidates who sell raffle tickets, lunches, baked goods and a lot more so that the community can enjoy fireworks, street games and other events packed into several days of fun.

Ironic because the holiday celebrates the Declaration of Independence, when the colonies told England that Americans did not need royalty to throw a tea party.

Wrangell, however, needs all the help it can get from the annual royalty fundraising competition, and the royalty candidates need all the help they can get from the community. The chamber of commerce has embarked on its annual quest for a few young residents willing to spend the entire month of June raising money for the holiday celebration. In exchange, the royalty candidates get a cut of the ticket sales. Those candidates will need the town to help with the work — and it is a lot of work.

Tens of thousands of dollars for the town's Fourth of July don't just fall into the harbor like so much tea.

— Wrangell Sentinel

Community council thanks Carol Rushmore for her willingness to always help

As Wrangell Tlingit and Haida Community Council president, I want to thank Carol Rushmore, the borough's economic development director, and wish her the best for her retirement coming up in April.

In January 2018, Tom Gilen Sr., our council member, and I went to see Carol at City Hall when WTHCC was attempting to assist Patrick Mayer, former superintendent

of Wrangell Public Schools, to get the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program housed at the old Wrangell Institute property.

Though we were not successful in obtaining approval from the Alaska Federation of Natives to go forward with our proposal, I will remember Carol's enthusiastic, supportive and willingness to help with the deepest gratitude.

Susan G. Stevens
President
Wrangell Tlingit and Haida
Community Council

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School funding

Continued from page 1

nearly \$3,900 — a new record. The almost \$2.5 billion to pay that large of a PFD would put the state budget into a deficit, even before considering any increase in funding for public schools.

Senators talking about the education bill on Feb. 1 suggested a more balanced approach.

"If we had a \$1,300 dividend we could pay for an education increase, we could pay for the deficit and we could pay for the municipal debt for the entire state with this year's cash flow," said state Sen. Bert Stedman, a Sitka Republican who co-chairs the Senate Finance Committee.

"We've got to make a choice," Stedman said. "Do we want to teach our kids to cash checks, or do we want to teach them to read and write?"

The Senate's proposal would cost about \$257 million in increased state funding, according to a legislative fiscal analysis. By comparison, Dunleavy's total proposed budget for next year is about \$7.3 billion, including the dividend payout.

The Senate's proposed in-

crease comes in the wake of Alaska posting some of the worst standardized test results in the country. Lawmakers participating in the Feb. 1 news conference said the lack of adequate state funding has resulted in larger class sizes and other detrimental effects that are likely contributors to low test scores.

Dillingham School District Superintendent Amy Brower has painted a grim picture that includes rising costs of health care and transportation, lack of adequate teacher housing and vacant teacher positions.

"I have had to make the hard decisions to cut teacher positions, eliminate support services and restructure critical programming," Brower said.

Brower has also struggled to retain teachers, losing three in December: "The primary issue was the expense and condition of housing, and lack of livable wages."

The Wrangell Sentinel and Alaska Beacon, a nonpartisan news website, contributed to this report.

Swimming wolf

Continued from page 1

"It appears to have established a home range," she added. "It is currently breeding season for wolves — it is possible that this wolf has found a mate or has been accepted into an already-established pack." Though biologists have not yet been able to visit the wolf in its new home, Roffler is able to observe its whereabouts in real time, thanks to the GPS collar.

This behavior — leaving the pack and swimming long distances — is uncommon but not unprecedented for the species. Wolves may strike out on their own if they struggle to find opportunities to breed in their current pack, for example, but leaving home is always a risk.

Of the 20 wolves that have been tagged since the study began in 2018, only four have left their home packs. This wolf is the first to swim to a new island. "Survival rates of wolves who disperse have been found to be lower," said Roffler.

Studying wolves' travel patterns could help scientists gain a better understanding of the inbreeding that was recently discovered on Prince of Wales Island through a 2019 University of Montana study. Though the inbreeding has not yet reached crisis levels, ADF&G regional supervisor Tom Schumacher called the study's results "a red flag" in a conversation with the CoastAlaska radio network.

"When closely related animals breed together, there's a greater likelihood of passing on unfavorable traits, because both the mother and the father have those traits," he said. "And if both parents have them, they're more likely to

be expressed in the offspring." The proliferation of undesirable genetic traits is called "inbreeding depression."

"If wolves aren't traveling to Prince of Wales Island very often, there aren't going to be new genes," said Roffler. Tracking the Petersburg traveling wolf's movements could help biologists "understand how gene flow occurs throughout this very island-dominated landscape."

The ongoing study could also guide the department's wildlife management decisions. The wolf harvest on Prince of Wales Island has long been controversial, as state officials and conservation groups clash over the population's sustainability. In 2020, trappers and hunters took a record-breaking 165 wolves on Prince of Wales and surrounding islands after ADF&G ended its previous quota-based system and opted to manage the hunt by limiting season length instead.

Last year, the harvest dropped significantly to 64 of the estimated 386 wolves in the area.

"These wolves are constantly being evaluated for their ability to remain viable," Roffler said. "We're really trying to collect this information so we can increase our understanding of wolves' ability to persist in ... Southeast. Forests have been heavily logged and there's concern about deer populations declining," depriving wolves of food.

The study will help biologists learn "how resilient (wolves) are to changes in their environment. Hopefully, this information can help."

Lisa Phu podcast

Continued from page 1

you come from a very rich family," Lan Phu said in an episode.

With research and interviews of her mom and cousin, Lisa Phu not only learned of her family's story, she had a revelatory experience.

"I didn't know that I was just Chinese until I was 20," she said. "I grew up thinking I was part Cambodian and Vietnamese. When my mom told me, I had just come back from my first backpacking trip in Southeast Asia. I felt so connected to the culture."

Mom cleared things up, letting her daughter know she was ethnically Chinese. Lan Phu's family had moved from China to Cambodia before she was born. "She said it so strongly, from that moment on I was 100% Chinese," Lisa Phu said, adding that she has always struggled with her identity, having grown up in New York among a white community and speaking only English with her mom.

Part of Lan Phu's journey was getting to Chappaqua, New York, in 1980, where a family had agreed to sponsor her and her children. During that time she was preg-

nant with Lisa, and gave birth to her not long after arriving in New York, where she still resides.

The process to create the podcast took some doing. Interviews with her mom yielded about 67 pages of transcribed copy. Lisa Phu would need to figure out the angle she wanted to pursue for the podcast, though she didn't consider herself a creative person.

"I was a reporter. I didn't consider myself an artist or writer. I was just a reporter," she said. Over the next few years, she continued to write the episodes while working and raising her children with husband Scott Forbes, whom she met and married in Wrangell.

She is still a reporter, working in Juneau for the Alaska Beacon, a website that covers politics and policy.

A series of connections and a grant allowed her to polish the series, which was coming in at about six episodes. Juneau-based musician Avery Stewart provided the original score for the podcast, while Dave Waldron, an audio specialist in Anchorage, helped edit it. Christine Carpenter, a graphic designer, came up with the art

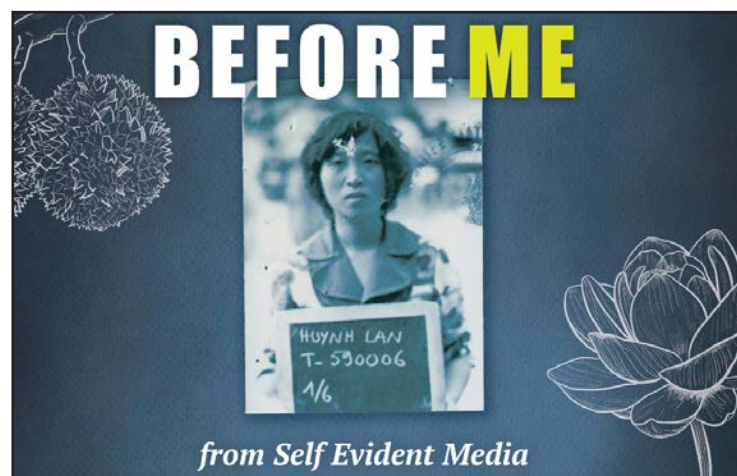


PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA PHU

Lan Phu's photo adorns the cover art for her daughter Lisa Phu's podcast about her mom's journey from Cambodia to America.

but added a little extra help.

"Christine also came up with the title of the show, which was huge," Lisa Phu said. "I didn't have a title for a very long time, which meant I couldn't voice the series. After hearing a description of the show, 'Before Me' was the first title idea she came up with and it was perfect."

She spent all of 2022 trying to find a home for the podcast, eventually connecting with Self

Evident, a podcast production company that specializes in Asian-American stories. Lisa Phu was familiar with their work and had listened to other shows they produced. She remembers wanting to pitch her show to them, but "I never thought I'd work with them to bring the podcast to life."

Self Evident took on "Before Me." An editor went through and restructured the podcast,

reducing it to five episodes, and the finished series was released in November of last year.

"Before Me" has inspired others who want to tell the stories of their families, and many listeners have expressed to Lisa Phu their desire to do so. Still, she was concerned if her mom would approve of the final product.

"She did. The first (episode) came out and she texted something like, 'I like it,' or, 'Excellent job,'" she said. Though they had a tumultuous mother-daughter relationship in the past, like many parents and their children, Lisa Phu said she believes the podcast has brought them closer to each other.

"I think my mom is amazing and I want the world to know that as well," she said. "Making this was trying to get a glimpse of what she's gone through. ... I still can't fathom what she's gone through. ... Stories of refugees are woven into us and our communities."

"Before Me" is available through podcast services or on its website at beforemepodcast.com.

'Annie'

Continued from page 1

Before last December, Wrangell hadn't held a community theater production in over 20 years. After Joe Rizzo directed "The Music Man" and "Bye Bye Birdie" in the late 1990s, the town's theatrical scene faded away.

But "The Sound of Music" brought the community's thespian streak back with a vengeance. The cast and crew were wondering, "what will the reaction be," said Reeves. "Everything just blew our expectations out of the water." After the show's unexpectedly large turnout, the Nolan Center decided to put on regular winter and spring musicals each year. "It was an incredible response from the community," Reeves added, and increasing the frequency of shows will give more people the opportunity to attend.

"Theater has a way of bringing a community together," she continued. "It'll never happen again the same as it was before. Each show has its own aura that sticks with you. It just brings all sorts of people from everywhere together and you get this shared moment."

THE WALKER FOUNDATION IS ACCEPTING GRANT PROPOSALS

The Walker Foundation is seeking solicitations for healthcare-related projects in Wrangell. Please submit a written letter request that includes your project budget and a narrative of what the project entails.

Please submit your letters no later than Tuesday, February 28, 2023 to Jessica Whitaker: SEARHC Behavioral Health, 333 Church Street or email your letter to jessicaw@searhc.org.

 **SEARHC** | healthy is here.

Tribal council candidates each share their ideas on serving

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Wrangell Cooperative Association members will vote later this month to fill four seats on the eight-member tribal council, which oversees decisions for the tribe.

Council members must be members of the WCA; the deadline to apply for candidacy is Feb. 14. Voting takes place on Feb. 28 at the WCA cultural center on Front Street. Ballots can also be absentee by mailing in or hand-delivering to the WCA office on Wood Street as long as they are received by Feb. 28.

Tribal administrator Esther Aaltséen Reese said there are a few aspects candidates should be aware of if elected to a two-year term.

"We have one meeting a month, it's usually the first Tuesday of the month. We have some special meetings and workshops and committee meetings that they may have to attend," she said. "When people get on the council, we just do our best to make sure they have all the information they need and that they are familiar with all the departments and grant funding, so they can come in and feel confident they're serving in the best way possible."

As of Feb. 6, five people have applied to be candidates: Luella Knapp, Jason Clark, Amber Wade, Sandy Churchill and Sam Campus. The new council members elected Feb. 28 to fill four seats. Clark and Knapp are currently on the council and running again. There were two vacant seats before the election.

The Sentinel reached out to the candidates to ask why they would like to serve on the council.

Amber Wade, 31;
customer service manager,
River's Mouth Trading Co.

How long have you lived in Wrangell? I was born and raised here and left in 2009 and came back in 2021.

Why are you running for the council?



How long have you lived in Wrangell? I have had more chances to connect with my indigenous side after moving home. I've enjoyed absorbing that ancestral heritage and all the interesting parts that come along with my Larsen and Shakes and Peratrovich and Wigg side.

What do you hope to accomplish during your two-year term? Bringing more young adults and residents coming home after being away a long time, including them and getting them more involved. Our perspective is very good to have. A lot of the tribal things, it's getting to be that the elders are getting so much older.

Have you held any positions with the tribe before? I have not. I have just been a Tlingit and Haida member my entire life. I grew up here and I went to JOM. I've kept that side of my life at the forefront of my mind, even when I wasn't living here, and constantly learning or finding out new things about my family or the tribe is what I've been doing.

What, if anything, do you believe should be done differently? I think continuing to include the younger generations and absorb and learn from the elders, while the younger generation and our perspective and life experiences can help day-to-day tribal issues. More of working together to ensure a spectrum of all voices are heard.

I'm looking forward to the opportunity of working and serving alongside elders and community members that I've looked up to and known my entire life and being more involved with the tribe on a day-to-day level.

Jason Clark, 40;
station agent for Alaska Airlines

How long have you lived in Wrangell? I was born and raised in Wrangell. I left for 10 years and came back in 2010. In total, I have lived in Wrangell for 30 years.

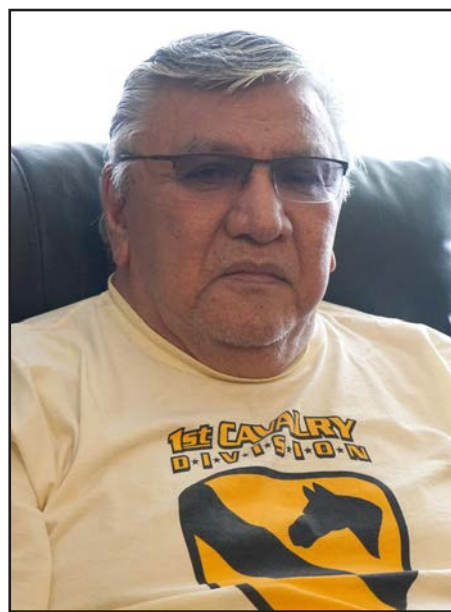
Why are you running for the council? I want to help my fellow tribal members first and foremost. I want to see Wrangell's Native community not only survive but thrive. We are in a technology age, but I don't want to lose our way of life. I don't want to see our culture disappear. WCA is actively working on cultural revitalization and bringing back our ways of life. I want to continue to be a part of that.

What do you hope to accomplish during your two-year term? I want to continue the work we have done over the past two years. We have accomplished a lot in a short amount of time, and I would like to continue that. We are putting WCA in a very strong position to be more self-sufficient so we can do more for our tribal members.

Have you held any positions with the tribe before? I am currently the vice president of the WCA council. I also serve on the Indian Education Committee in the Wrangell Public Schools.

What, if anything, do you believe should be done differently? I'm not going to say differently, but I would like to see us as a council work with our employees to get the word out to more tribal members about all the great things we are doing. I would love to see a bigger turnout for voting and input from tribal members on what we as a council are trying to accomplish. The staff at the WCA does an amazing job getting information out but I know there is always more that can be done.

I have been honored to serve our tribal citizens on the WCA council during a difficult time. Dealing with the pandemic and increasing services to tribal citizens



Clockwise from top left, Wrangell Cooperative Association members running for a seat on the tribal council are Amber Wade, Jason Clark, Luella Knapp, Sandy Churchill and Sam Campus.

in need was important. I'm looking forward to hopefully continuing that work.

Sam Campus, 75;
retired U.S. Army,
county assessor's office, Seattle

How long have you lived in Wrangell? I was born and raised here. I moved away right after graduating high school in 1966. Then I moved back 13 years ago. I always knew I was going to move back. There's no more beautiful country than Southeast Alaska, and right here in Wrangell you've got this beautiful ocean and mountains. That's what I missed most.

Why are you running for the council? I didn't request it. People asked me to. They signed me up. I didn't sign up.

What do you hope to accomplish during your two-year term? There's so much to it. Wrangell is the only city that doesn't take care of its elders and kids. We're the only town without an ANS and ANB hall. Our culture used to share everything with everybody. This group of Natives here is, "Gimme, gimme, gimme." They don't want anything else. There's only a few of us that think (the old) way. If you have a squabble with another Native, the two families get together and the tribe gets together and it's like a mediation. But most of the Natives here don't know that. We've lost our tradition here.

Have you held any positions with the tribe before? I used to be the president of WCA at one time, a year after I moved here. (I was president about) a year or two. I am the (Alaska Native Brotherhood) president about four or five years now. I'm also on the council for Tlingit and Haida.

What, if anything, do you feel should be done differently? I think we have to pay more attention to the elders here and the children.

Sandy Churchill, 64;
Head Start, lead teacher

How long have you lived in Wrangell? I was born and raised here. I went to college and lived in Sitka for a couple years and in Juneau for about six years. I moved back here in 1983.

Why are you running for the council? I have been asked several times over the



years to run for a seat on the board, but I've always been too busy over the years. I've loosened up on some of my other obligations so I'm able to put time into the WCA.

What do you hope to accomplish during your two-year term? I want to be a voice for the people, not just letting the board run the meeting. I want to hear what the people have to say and stand up for what they want.

Have you held any positions with the tribe before? I was the office manager (at the WCA, and I did) ... what Esther (Reese) is doing now from 1983 to 1988.

What, if anything, do you believe should be done differently?

We need to be more present, more visible in the community, including tourism. Since COVID, we haven't been dancing. There's also the problem if you work for the tribe, you couldn't be on the board.

I'm really dedicated to the organizations I join. I've been with the Tlingit and Haida community council for 30 years. I've been the secretary, vice president and president. And I'm the vice president right now. Also, I'm the president for the local Alaska Native Sisterhood. And I'm the secretary for the Presbyterian Church.

Luella Knapp, 68;
retired, speaker of the
Naanyaa.aayí clan house

How long have you lived in Wrangell? I am a true Wrangellite, born and raised. I went to get my college degree and came back. I went to Juneau and got my associate (degree) and then went to Sitka for my bachelor's.

Why are you running for the council? I just would like to see our tribe continue to grow. There are a lot of things we are looking at in the future, different programs and ways to grow.

What do you hope to accomplish during your two-year term? I would like to work more with the local government for the betterment of Wrangell as a whole.

Have you held any positions with the tribe before? No. I've just worked in tribal government.

What, if anything, do you believe should be done differently? I think that I would love to see our tribal government become a strong and cohesive government. And that we have a good board that works toward the benefit of tribal citizens.

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Wireless internet service expected to start later this year

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Wireless internet service for areas of Wrangell with limited or no access to high-speed downloads should be in operation later this year.

The broadband service initially will start with transmitting and receiving equipment in position atop two existing cell towers, along with two pop-up "cells on wheels (COWS)," explained Chris Cropley, director of the Tidal Network for the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

The portable cell units arrived in Wrangell last week. Each unit cost about \$100,000, including electronics and an extendable tower that can reach up to 120 feet high, Cropley said.

"We should see service on the existing towers this year, hopefully, the COWS this year as well," he said. "We have all the equipment purchased and most of the paperwork in place."

Tidal Network will lease space on existing towers as a temporary measure until it can obtain land and put up maybe three permanent towers to extend its reach in the community. "We will hopefully see service on the permanent towers in 2024," Cropley said.

Finding the best sites for the COWS and permanent towers is the issue. "We



PHOTO COURTESY CENTRAL COUNCIL OF THE TLINGIT AND HAIDA INDIAN TRIBES ON ALASKA

A pair of COWS — cells on wheels — arrived by barge in Wrangell on Jan. 31, and will be set up later this year to provide wireless broadband service to unserved areas of the community. The pop-up tower on the self-contained units can stand 120 feet tall.

are held up until we have property. We have several lots in mind and have done a lot of work on the design and options," he said.

"Once we have the land acquired (for

COWS), we can stand them up relatively quickly, within a week or two."

The plan is to install the portable units "to deliver broadband to people on the edges of town," Cropley said. Later,

"we will build permanent towers ... and move the COWS as needed."

The new network will cater to "the unserved and underserved first," by focusing on areas of Wrangell that have limited or no access to high-speed internet.

Tidal Network will be available to tribal and non-tribal citizens. The anticipated cost is \$75 per month for the base program, which will be slower than commercial broadband in areas served by fiber optic but will be fast enough for video conferencing and most streaming.

The wireless broadband service is intended to fill the gap in areas where fiber optic is not a feasible option.

Tlingit and Haida is using federal pandemic aid to pay for its Tidal Network pilot projects in Wrangell and Sitka.

Separate from the pilot project, the Central Council last November announced it had received a \$50 million federal grant for broadband infrastructure, part of the Tribal Connectivity Program funded by the 2021 federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The new money will go toward building 30 towers in more than 20 communities across the region, Cropley told a gathering of the Southeast Conference in Juneau last week.

The plan includes extending broadband services to "truly remote" locations, such as fish camps, he said.

Port Commission discusses possible rate increases, vessel insurance requirement

By CAROLINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Thanks to its aging infrastructure and pricey upcoming projects, Port and Harbors is the least financially sustainable of all the borough's enterprise funds. Last Thursday, the Port Commission met with Finance Director Mason Villarma and Susan Erickson of P-W Insurance to come up with a plan to improve the fund's finances while minimizing the impacts on cash-strapped Wrangell residents.

One major takeaway from the 2021 audit, Villarma explained, was that many of the borough's self-supporting funds — particularly the Port and Harbors account — are not bringing in enough money to keep up with replacement costs of property like vehicles, floats and other pieces of essential infrastructure.

"This is basically screaming at us that we are not keeping up on recapitalizing our infrastructure back to what it was," he said.

In the past, Port and Harbors has met its immediate needs largely through grant funding and has not laid away money for future needs. Wrangell voters recently approved a \$3.5 million bond for repairs to the elementary, middle and high schools, but "we probably need about five times that for a harbor project," said Villarma. "Can we afford that? Well,

no. We can't right now. And that's just saving for one project. How do we get the new trucks and get saving for Heritage (Harbor), which is coming down the line in 20 years?"

The Port and Harbor Department will likely need to use a combination of measures to strengthen its savings, including raising rates and cutting costs.

"We have some of the cheapest rates around," he said. "I think we can maintain that competitive advantage but still get a little closer to the competition." He suggested targeting out-of-town users, letting them bear the rate increase burden more heavily than residents, though this plan would require the commission's and assembly's approval.

Other "creative" techniques, like establishing a non-compete agreement with Sitka to prevent them from attracting business away from Wrangell's Marine Service Center, could also be on the table in later borough meetings.

Sitka's privately owned boat haul-out closed early last year, which has driven more vessel owners to come to Wrangell for work on their boats. However, Sitka voters last year approved withdrawing \$8.1 million from savings to build a new haul-out.

In another move to boost finances, the Wrangell commission is considering requiring harbor users to

provide proof of insurance so that the department can avoid unaffordable and unexpected costs salvaging boats that sink. The issue had been on the Harbor Department's radar on and off for years, but when a fire at a Ketchikan harbor last October put the city at risk of a lawsuit for not requiring insurance, Wrangell's commissioners decided to revisit the issue.

Erickson recommended implementing an insurance requirement or establishing a fee rate for uninsured vessels based on their size, value and age to shore up against possible future costs. "The bottom line is the bottom line," said Erickson. In the Lower 48, such requirements are the industry standard and "it's going to cost more and more every single year to raise these boats" due to inflation.

Villarma plans to compile the commissioners' recommendations into a series of proposals that he will present March 2. After being reviewed by the port commission, the proposals will go before the borough assembly at its meeting on March 28, when assembly members revisit all enterprise fund rates in an effort to secure each funds' sustainability in the coming year.

Other enterprise funds include water, sewage service and electrical.

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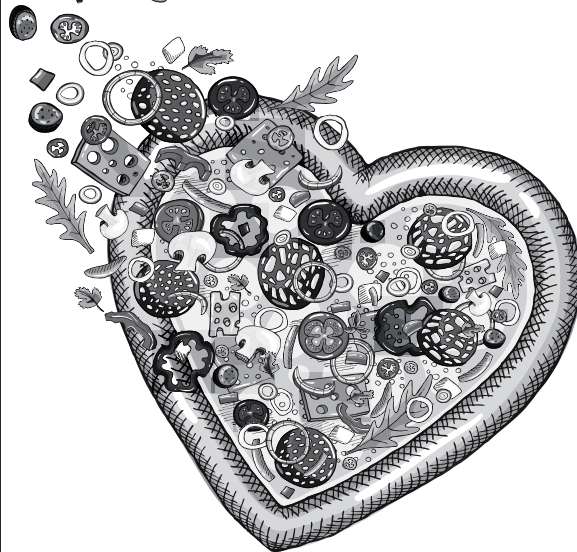


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Here's the tipoff: Celebrity team coming to Wrangell

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

Communities without 70,000-seat stadiums don't often get visits from professional athletes, but later this month Wrangell will become an exception to the rule. Players from Team Hollywood celebrity streetball will visit Feb. 21 to share inspirational messages — and play sports — with students and community members through Wrangell Cooperative Association (WCA) funding.

Tribal Administrator Esther Aaltséen Reese of the WCA invited the organization to town after a conversation with Tanana Chiefs Conference member Donald Charlie at the Association of Alaska School Boards conference. After Charlie described the Team Hollywood program to Reese, she decided that "it sounded like a wonderful program that would be really beneficial to Wrangell" and reached out.

Before founding his celebrity streetball team in 1999, Team Hollywood President Peter Adams was a sports manager for former NBA players, for-

mer NFL players, and members of the Harlem Globetrotters, an exhibition basketball team. He compared the job to Tom Cruise's role in "Jerry Maguire," a 1996 film about a struggling sports agent that features the famously quotable lines "help me help you," "you had me at 'hello'" and "show me the money!"

These days, however, Adams' focus has shifted from money to mission. "I decided that I wanted to do more mentorship, more giving back, more helping students in crisis than just basketball," he said.

During his conversations with Reese, he recounted how Team Hollywood got started. After Globetrotters shows, "(Adams) would see kids outside waiting to get autographs," she recalled. "He would ask them how they liked the show and they would tell him they can't afford to go in." He designed the Team Hollywood program with these youth in mind, creating "a program that was about more than just sports, that had a positive message, and have it open to all," Reese said.

The team's motto? Access to success

no matter your ZIP code, said Adams. The group takes pride in visiting communities that are out of the typical professional athlete's way, like Acuña in northeastern Mexico and Karluk, Alaska, a community of 37 on Kodiak Island. "The village that has 10 kids, we give them the same show as the city that has 3,000 people that come to our game," he said.

Maurice "Mo" Woodard, actor and international football player, Tommy Adams of the NBA summer league, and Roman Adams, a professional soccer player in Columbia, are scheduled to attend the Wrangell event. They will share inspirational messages about self-esteem, anti-bullying, avoiding substance abuse and the importance of academic achievement with the community's youth.

They will also hold a free-throw contest, a three-point contest, and play Wrangell student athletes three on three. The exact details of the rest of the event's programming are meant to be a surprise, but Team Hollywood has requested that WCA provide basketballs, dodgeballs, a small classroom garbage

can and a tarp — make of that what you will. "I'm really interested and excited to see what the show is going to look like," said Reese.

Bringing the show to Wrangell is part of "the tribe's effort to continue to promote health and wellness in our community," said Reese. "Both mental and physical health."

The WCA council approved the visit on Jan. 6. It was funded through the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium "healthy is here" program.

"Our youth are a precious commodity," Reese continued, "and anything we can do to help them is definitely worthwhile. I'm really excited to have the athletes come and experience our wonderful community and introduce them to our culture. I think they're really going to enjoy their time."

There will be three shows: One for elementary school students, one for middle and high school students and another for the public. The public show will run from 6 to 8 p.m. on Feb. 21 in the high school gym. Seating is free of charge and on a first come, first served basis.

Chamber seeking royalty candidates for annual July 4 fundraising

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

It's still early but the chamber of commerce is wasting no time in finding candidates for its annual royalty competition.

Each year, candidates sell tickets through door-to-door sales or at food booths to raise money to fund the following year's Fourth of July festivities. Sales in 2022 totaled \$56,260, which is about \$30,000 shy of what the organization needs to cover costs.

Candidates have until May 30 to sign up to vie for the titles of king, queen, prince and princess. Last year, only one candidate, Tyson Messmer, signed up. Typically, there are two to three candidates, said Britanni Robbins, executive director of the chamber of commerce. As of last week, there was one potential candidate.

Out of the ticket sales, expenses such as food managers,

ticket managers, support teams and utility costs are paid. Thirty percent goes to the candidate and about 40% goes to the chamber coffers for the following year's celebration costs, including fireworks.

But it takes a lot of work, Robbins said.

"It's probably the hardest thing you'll do in a month," she said.

Food booths typically sell the usual fare of hamburgers, hot dogs, haystacks and other items, but will also offer daily specials like Philly cheesesteak sandwiches.

The highest amount raised was \$126,408 in 2016, when two contestants participated. Two years ago, Robbins said Emma Martinsen sold \$90,000 in tickets. Though candidates can sell tickets door-to-door, they're more apt to win if they run a food booth, Robbins said, which requires a regular daily menu, a daily special, food prep, people to operate the booth, a food manager and a ticket manager.

It used to be that only high school juniors and seniors could compete, as it was seen as a way for them to raise money for college tuition. Now the competition is open to anyone 14 and up. Candidates who are 14 through 15 years old can only sell tickets door-to-door due to state raffle laws.

The chamber is also in need of about three royalty competition committee members to help set ground rules for this year's competition, such as food prices. Robbins said they want new ideas and fresh perspectives. "Your opinion is taken into account," she said.

To help raise funds to supplement the ticket sales, the chamber is holding a raffle a ticket. The 400th ticket pulled will win \$10,000.

Candidates can sign up in the chamber office inside the Stikine Inn, by calling 907-874-3901 or emailing info@wrangellchamber.com.

NOAA rejects petition to ban fishing in Bering Sea crab area

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has rejected a petition from crab fishers to bar all commercial fishing for six months in an area of the Bering Sea designated as a special protective zone for red king crab, which have suffered a population crash.

The decision announced on Jan. 20 by NOAA Fisheries confirms action in December by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The council rejected the emergency request, which was made by the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers, a harvester group.

In a statement, NOAA Fisheries said the available information did not support the requested emergency action to bar all fishing in the square-shaped territory in outer Bristol Bay known as the Red King Crab Savings Area.

Specifically, it did not show that such action "would address the low abundance and declining trend of mature female Bristol Bay red king crab," the statement said. "The immediate benefits of emergency rulemaking in this case do not outweigh the value of advance notice, public comment and deliberative consideration of the impacts on participants under the normal rulemaking process."

The Red King Crab Savings Area was designated in 1996, and bottom trawling is banned there, though trawling at midwater depths, longline fishing and fishing with pots is allowed, NOAA Fisheries said.

The crab harvesters' group argued that those fisheries that

are conducted in the area are damaging crabs and their habitat. The allowed harvests are causing fishing gear to touch the seafloor and harm crabs when they are in their sensitive molting and reproductive phases, the harvesters' group argued.

In a statement, the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers said its members are "dismayed and disappointed" at the denial.

"We have science and data proving this action would help crab at a time when the stock needs it. ... And if our situation isn't urgent and alarming with closed fisheries and collapsed stocks, then what is?" the statement said.

Stocks of Bristol Bay red king crab, a species that normally supports a lucrative commercial harvest, are so low that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game last October closed the fishery for the second consecutive year. Along with that closure, the department imposed its first-ever closure on the harvest of Bering Sea snow crab, another stock that crashed dramatically.

Crab harvests, even those conducted in federal waters, are managed by the state, though NOAA Fisheries and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council cooperate in management. Those federal entities have management authority over other fisheries conducted in federal waters.

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SENTINEL SPORTS

High school boys sweep Craig, while girls teams struggle

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Coordinated plays, three-pointers galore, solid defense and near misses defined Wrangell High School basketball teams' games against Craig High School last Friday and Saturday.

The boys varsity and junior varsity teams each won both of their games against the Panthers, while the girls varsity lost two games and junior varsity had one win and one loss in Craig.

Boys varsity squad members were back in good form, as team members were healthy and energetic on the hardwood. From the tipoff in Friday's game to the final buzzer in Saturday's, the Wolves never let up in their defensive and offensive plays. At only 30 seconds into the first game, Jacen Hay hit a three-pointer, his first of many.

Almost every member of the team scored in each game, while keeping fouls to a minimum. The first quarter of Friday's game ended with a score of 20-7, Wrangell. That spread would be a taste of what was to come. Though Craig fought to catch up, rallying with their scoring at times, they couldn't match Wrangell's speed and form. Friday's game ended 65-40, Wrangell.

Saturday's game was only different in the amount of cohesive play the Wolves demonstrated; there was more of it, and the shots reflected it. Though Craig led in the early moments of the game, Wrangell adjusted and sank basket after basket. Fast passes and alley-oops along with three-pointers gave the Wolves all the advantage, leading to a 52-point spread. Wrangell won 83-31.

Varsity girls had a much tougher time of getting the jump on the Craig team. Though they led for the first three periods in Friday's game, the Lady Panthers weren't far behind in points. Wrangell's Kiara Harrison was a blocking machine, keeping Craig from scoring more points. Both teams tied, took the lead and then lost it. That play continued near the end of the game, when Craig retook the lead and held onto it until the buzzer. Craig won the first game, 31-28.

On Saturday, the Lady Wolves would be the first on the scoreboard at nearly 1:30 into play, but Craig answered those points. The teams would keep up solid defense against each other, again staying close in points. However, once Craig started pulling ahead in points, Wrangell struggled to keep up. Craig was only five points ahead at halftime, but they widened the gap into the second half of play. The Lady Panthers went on to win, 48-35.

"It really came down to just too many missed shots and offensive boards," said head coach Christina Good. "I'm super proud of the girls' defense and low turnovers."

The junior varsity boys team matched the energy and cohesive play as their varsity counterparts, trouncing the Craig JV team. By the first half of Friday's game, the score was 32-5, with Wrangell in the lead. Craig would only add nine more points to the board, while Wrangell collected another 25, ending the match 57-14, Wrangell.

Saturday's game was much closer as the Panthers stepped up their offense and defense. Though Wrangell led in all four periods, Craig worked to catch their opponents. It wasn't enough as Wrangell won 58-36.

Girls junior varsity players used what they learned from the Craig players on Friday to turn it around on Saturday. Friday's game had Craig leading in every period. Even with solid plays for Wrangell, they couldn't catch the home team. Craig won 54-31.

Craig's glory was short-lived as Wrangell played more aggressively, hitting more of their shots on Saturday, even landing a three-point basket at the buzzer in the third period. That seemed to boost the Lady Wolves confidence, as they pulled ahead, allowing Craig to only score another five points, while adding seven of their own to the board. Saturday's game went to Wrangell, 25-11.

The Wolves have a bye week this weekend but are scheduled to travel back to Petersburg Feb. 17-18 for the Stikine Hardwood Classic, followed the next weekend with homecoming against the Petersburg Vikings in Wrangell.

Senior puts laser focus on project to raise money for shop class

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The high school shop class shapes more than wood, metal and other materials for a myriad of uses. It also shapes young minds and abilities to invest in the future. Kyle Hommel is a good example of that.

Hommel, 17, took what he has learned in shop and from his father to complete his senior project, which used his skills to raise money for his favorite class.

The idea for his project came from his father, Kyle Hommel Sr., when he created metal fish-themed sculptures using a plasma cutter to sell online.

"(My dad) gave me all the files to make all the stuff, and I did it in the school shop," Hommel said. He used the shop's plasma cutter to carve out each piece. "I did a bunch of stuff like coat hangers and key hooks, then we took it down to the Christmas sale at the Nolan Center."

The senior sold the pieces along with wood sculptures made by middle school shop students to raise about \$850 for the shop class.

"Right now, that money goes into the class and club account which helps with expenses such as tools, repairs and materials for shop projects," said Winston Davies, the high school and middle school shop teacher.

Davies said the proceeds from Hommel's project will help invest in future classes. "Kyle's a good hand in the shop and will most likely go into the trades. This contribution will help kids down the road who also might head that direction."

It took about a week for Hommel to produce about 60 items to sell at the Christmas market, with skeleton key hooks going for \$40 and smaller items selling for \$15. Davies also contributed to the offerings by crafting sculptures from old wooden saw handles.

"I just wanted to see money go into the shop," Hommel said. "They don't get quite as much funding as other stuff."

After graduation, he said he plans on attending WyoTech in Laramie, Wyoming, to become certified as an auto mechanic, something he's been interested



TOP PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL; BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF KYLE HOMMEL
Kyle Hommel created metal key hooks and coat hooks to sell and raise funds for his high school shop class as his senior project.

Sitka McDonald's will close this summer after 35 years

By SHANNON HAUGLAND
Sitka Sentinel

After more than 35 years as Sitka's top spot for a fast-food fix, McDonald's on Feb. 1 announced that its Sitka restaurant will close this summer.

An announcement posted on the bulletin board at the Sitka McDonald's said the restaurant would "cease operations no later than 7/31/23."

The announcement indicated the decision came from McDonald's headquarters, and not from the franchise holders, Mike White and Bill Laliberte.

"As a franchisee of McDonald's we understand the business decision but find it hard to leave a community that we have been involved with for so long," said the statement above White's and Laliberte's names.

The closure will leave Juneau and Ketchikan as the only Southeast communities with a McDonald's.

Customers at the bustling Sitka waterfront restaurant reacted to the news with disappointment.

Fran and Jim Hartman, both in their 70s, were at a table overlooking the harbor and enjoying a Happy Meal (hers) and a quarter-pounder with cheese (his).

"Big bummer, and very sad," Fran said. "When we left Kodiak we talked about what city we wanted to go to. And one of the things on the list is

they had to have a McDonald's."

They are oceangoing sailors and live aboard their boat in neighboring Thomsen Harbor. They've called Sitka home for the past 13 years, and said they eat more than once a week at McDonald's.

They cited not just the food but the view as a selling point, a world-class view of Thomsen Harbor, the ocean, and Mt. Edgecumbe in the distance.

"The Kodiak McDonald's has a view of the used tire shop," Jim said.

Jim also mentioned the artwork on the walls of the Sitka McDonald's featuring Alaska landscapes, images and wildlife.

"It's really nice, somebody cared," he said.

The couple even had a special celebration of Jim's 70th birthday, and McDonald's let them and their friends "make it fancy fancy," with linen tablecloths and china.

Bruno said she used to enjoy walking down from the high school during lunch.

Chamber of Commerce executive director Rachel Roy said she has noticed helped-wanted signs in recent years, and the restaurant shortening its hours, citing a lack of staff.

She said she didn't know why the restaurant is closing but it makes her think about the workforce challenges in Sitka.

in for most of his life. His plan right now is to complete the program and then return to Southeast — most likely Wrangell — to provide the community with a much-needed service. Hommel made the decision after the Wyoming school made a presentation at the high school.

This year, the senior is taking marine fabrication. Though he's not building his own boat, he is helping others on their projects.

"Kyle needs a good kick in the butt to get going, but once he's rolling, he's good," Davies said. "One thing about Kyle is that he shows up every day, on time, five days a week, with a good attitude and (he) works. That actually seems rare lately — to have a high schooler show up regularly like that, and that is important."



Coast Guard makes special delivery to help communities

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Pike went on a BRAVE mission last Wednesday.

Though the vessel is often engaged in patrolling the waters around Wrangell and Petersburg and performing search and rescue operations, the crew took a few hours to help the neighboring communities in another way: Package delivery.

Donated items from Petersburg were transported by the Pike and her crew to the Reliance float in Wrangell. The 66 boxes contained bedding, adult and children's clothing, accessories and all manner of other donated items. Building Respect and Valuing Everyone (BRAVE) volunteers will sell the items to raise funds for the organization's various programs such as the emergency backpacks for people who lack housing or necessities.

"If someone reaches out to us and wants to connect, we're absolutely down to support," said Jak Loewenstein, commanding officer of the Pike. "Humanity In Progress reached out to us, and we look forward to serving the community any way we can."

The Pike, stationed in Petersburg, is new to Alaska, taking over for the recently retired cutter Anacapa. It's 87 feet long and has a crew of 12. It was commissioned in 2005.

Humanity In Progress is a nonprofit agency that

addresses the basic needs of those facing homelessness in Petersburg. They collect donated items and sell them to raise funds. What they weren't able to sell at a fundraiser on Jan. 31 was packed up and shipped (literally) to Wrangell for BRAVE to use in its fundraisers.

"When the opportunities arise ... we find out about it to help the community and jump on it," said Kevin Chapman, petty officer aboard the Pike.

Joan Sargent, a volunteer with BRAVE who coordinated the receiving end of the delivery, said the first fundraiser, a rummage sale, will be held at Island of Faith Lutheran Church on Feb. 10-11. Items will be sorted into bags. "We're asking for a \$5 donation per bag," she said.

Whatever items aren't sold in Wrangell will be donated to other nonprofits in other communities, Sargent said. After the rummage sale, BRAVE will send items to Anchorage and Sargent will haul some to Oregon to donate to nonprofits there.

Sargent said they've received so many items that they aren't taking donations from people in Wrangell because there's not enough storage space.

As for the Pike, they'll continue to help where they can.

"That's our goal, ultimately, to be as available as possible to the people in Southeast Alaska," Loewenstein said.



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL
The 12-member crew of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Pike unloaded a shipment of donated items for BRAVE at the Reliance float on Jan. 31. The vessel transported 66 boxes from Petersburg to Wrangell.

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Obituary

Services set Feb. 18 for Dennis Berkeley, 76

Former Wrangell resident Dennis Robert Berkeley, 76, passed away after a courageous battle with cancer on Dec. 7, 2022, in Sitka, his family reported. He was surrounded by family and friends, and was visited by many close friends and family during his final stay in Sitka.

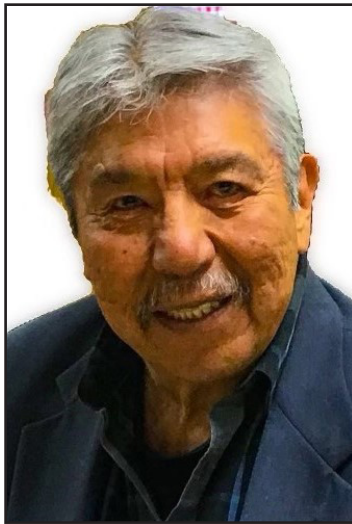
A service will be held on his birthday, Saturday, Feb. 18, from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Elks Lodge in Wrangell.

He was born Feb. 18, 1946, in Petersburg, and grew up in Kake, where he developed his love for commercial fishing and music. He spent many of his summers purse seining and halibut fishing. He also developed his singing voice in the local church choir as a young boy and young man. "He always talked fondly of playing with his brother JR Berkeley and close friend Ben Jackson," his family wrote.

He had a strong connection with being on the water, whether it was commercial fishing, sport fishing or hunting, and loved being on the boat with family and friends. Countless weekends were spent out on the water. "Anyone who knew Dennis knew that he would often plan boat rides and trips with many of his friends. He could often be found with family in tow in the boat with Miguel Jimenez, Ed Rilatós and Morgan Joseph."

After graduating from Kake High School in 1964 he attended Sheldon Jackson College in Sitka. An avid musician he could be found playing with the "Bumble Bees" around Sitka and at local events. "Playing in a band and jamming with friends were some of his greatest memories and times. Music opened up much of his life to many friends throughout the state."

After retiring from the state of Alaska, he could often be found singing karaoke or playing with friends. "It was a passion of his and he loved sharing it with good friends and family," his



DENNIS ROBERT BERKELEY

family wrote.

It was during his time playing music in Sitka that he met his wife of 51 years, Darlene Ann Gilbert. They were married May 31, 1967, in Kake, and had two children, Denise and Jon, whom they raised in Wrangell.

Dennis was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Darlene Berkeley; his mother and father, Harold Berkeley Sr. and Gloria Paul; and younger siblings Winnie Williams (Wendell Williams), Les Berkeley (Sue Berkeley), and Harry Berkeley Jr.; and nephews Clifford Adams Jr. and Matthew Adams.

He is survived by his children Denise Berkeley-Salter (David Salter) and Jon Berkeley (Karen Mehl); his sisters Marian Adams and Arne James; brother-in-law Clifford Adams Sr.; and younger brother Thomas Berkeley (Deborah). He is also survived by his grandchildren Travis, Shelby, Rachel and Zach; and nieces and nephews Rosita Madura (Tim), Suzette Carlson (Curtis), Beverly Anderson (Lonnie), Doreen Hopper, Donald James Jr., Dale James, Delphine James; and grand-nieces Jessica Andrews (Kelly), Leann Welch (Kyle) and Jeannette Akin (William).

Ketchikan shipyard operator sold to international private equity firm

Ketchikan Daily News

The parent company of Vigor Industrial — whose subsidiary Vigor Alaska operates the state-owned Ketchikan Shipyard — is being sold to an affiliate of international private equity firm Lone Star Funds.

Financial terms of the deal involving the sale of the parent company, Titan Acquisition Holdings, were not disclosed in an announcement published last Friday by the Carlyle Group private investment firm.

Titan was formed in 2019 by Carlyle and the private equity firm Stellex Capital Management, bringing together the Portland-based Vigor Industrial with the Norfolk, Virginia-based MHI Holdings under a unified ownership structure.

In addition to Vigor and MHI Holdings, Titan also owns Continental Maritime of San Diego, giving it an array of ship repair, ship modernization and marine and complex fabrication services capabilities on both coasts and Alaska.

Lone Star, headquartered in Dallas, has offices in 11 countries.

Founded in 1995, Lone Star Funds "invests on behalf of its limited partners, which include institutional investors such as pension funds and sovereign wealth

funds, as well as foundations and endowments that support medical research, higher education and other philanthropic causes," according to the announcement.

The Alaska Marine Highway System is the primary customer for the Ketchikan Shipyard, which has been owned since 1997 by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority.

Originally built by the Alaska Department of Transportation during the 1980s, the 25-acre shipyard has been operated under state leases by private entities, including the Ketchikan-based Alaska Ship and Drydock.

Alaska Ship and Drydock began its operation of the shipyard in 1997 and continued through March 2012, when it was purchased by Vigor Industrial.

The Carlyle-Stellex purchase of Vigor in 2019 and formation of Titan Acquisition Holdings marked the first time that the Ketchikan Shipyard would be operated by firms associated with private-equity investment, a trend that will continue with Titan's sale to the Lone Star Funds affiliate.

The sale is anticipated to close at some point this year, "upon satisfaction of customary closing conditions, including certain governmental approvals," according to the announcement.

Southeast commercial pot shrimpers frustrated with change to May season

By ANNA LAFFREY
Ketchikan Daily News

The 2023 commercial pot shrimp fishery in Southeast Alaska will open May 15. Fishermen targeting pot shrimp missed out on their usual October opener last year following a season change set by the Alaska Board of Fish.

Fishermen expressed frustration over the season change during a pre-season meeting held Feb. 1 by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. About 70 people from across Southeast attended the Zoom meeting to review the department's shrimp surveys and catch-limit estimates.

In previous years, the pot shrimp season ran from Oct. 1 until end of February. During its March 2022 meeting in Anchorage, the Board of Fish passed a proposal put forward by the Sitka Fish and Game Advisory Committee that changed the season to open May 15.

Proponents of the season change said that fishing shrimp in the spring and summer instead of the fall and winter will benefit shrimp populations in Southeast by allowing mature female shrimp to lay their eggs before they are caught by fishermen.

Frustrated fishermen said last week that the change limits their fishing opportunities.

"You turned our world upside down with no data. You have no data on shrimp in May. It's a bad time to try to fish in May," Wrangell fisherman Alan Reeves told the department during the meeting. "They might not have eggs, but they'll still be hiding under a shelf because they're soft-shelled."

Fishermen also expressed concerns about the quality of spot shrimp meat during spring and summer months; about competition between commercial, sport and subsistence shrimp harvesters at the same time; and market competition with spot shrimp fishermen in British Columbia who participate in a commercial opening at about the same time.

Shrimp biologist Max Schoenfeld said Alaska Department of Fish and Game surveys show shrimp stocks are in bad shape across Southeast. In comments to the Board of Fish last year about the proposed May opener, Fish and Game said changing to a spring season would lend itself to biological conservation.

"Fishing on the stock in the spring would also allow females carrying eggs in the fall to brood and hatch their eggs before being subject to fishing mortality, which may enhance long-term stock resilience," the department wrote in support of the proposed season change.

This change in timing would mean a larger shrimp population and therefore a higher cap for pot shrimp harvest in the future, the department wrote.

But during last week's meeting, Fish and Game shrimp biologist Quinn Smith said the department will cut the pot shrimp fishery's guideline harvest level ahead of the May opener.

The projected harvest reduction is meant to account for the fact that shrimp bearing no eggs in the spring will weigh less than shrimp harvested in fall. About 3% of total poundage of shrimp caught in the fall pot fishery comes from the eggs, Smith said.

The department will meet in March to set catch limits for the spring shrimp pot fishery areas based on Fish and Game's surveys of those areas.

Chris Guggenbickler, a fisherman and chair of the Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee, expressed frustration about the expectation of tighter catch limits.

"This (spring season) was sold as a benefit to the fishery that there may be more (shrimp) available for harvest," Guggenbickler said. "Because we know less about fishing at this time of year, because we know less about the distribution, it's going to lead to precautionary approaches and it's going to lead to less shrimp being harvested. Who knows what the market will do, because at the end of the day, that's where the value is achieved for us as fishermen."

Overall pot shrimp harvests have declined along with the decline in shrimp populations, Fish and Game wrote in a 2021 fishery management report. During the 2003-2004 season, fishermen caught more than 1.1 million pounds of shrimp. During the 2021-2022 season, fishermen caught 476,441 pounds of shrimp, according to department reports.

The pot shrimp fishing season will begin May 15 and close at the end of July. Individual management areas will close when the guideline harvest level is reached for an individual area.

Pacific Halibut Commission reduces Southeast commercial harvest limit 3%

By ANNA LAFFREY
Ketchikan Daily News

A joint U.S.-Canadian commission voted last month to curtail halibut fishing along the Pacific coast this year.

In Area 2C, which spans Southeast Alaska from the U.S.-Canada maritime border to Yakutat, the total allowable halibut take was set at 5.85 million pounds for 2023, down 1% from the 5.91 million pounds allowed in 2022, the International Pacific Halibut Commission announced.

Guided recreational or charter fishermen can catch 800,000 pounds of halibut in Area 2C. Non-guided recreational fishermen in Area 2C are expected to catch 1.14 million pounds of halibut in 2023.

Commercial fishermen can catch 3.41 million pounds, down 2.85% from the 3.51 million pound limit set in 2022.

The commission sets annual catch limits and management measures for the Pacific halibut fishery across eight regulatory areas including northern California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska coasts.

The commission at its annual meeting in Victoria, British Columbia, approved an overall coastwide halibut take of 36.97 million pounds for 2023, down 10.31% from the 41.22 million pounds allowed in 2022, according to information from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

This total catch limit includes landings from commercial halibut fisheries, recreational fish-

"We know it's environmental conditions, but we don't know exactly what those conditions are that help a bunch of baby fish spawn and survive."

Linda Behnken,
Alaska Longline
Fisherman's Association
representative

eries and subsistence fishing, as well as "discard mortality" (bycatch) in all fisheries.

Commercial halibut fishermen across all management areas combined will be allowed to catch 24.9 million pounds in 2023, down 11.29% from 28.07 million pounds in 2022. Recreational fishermen are expected to catch 2.4 million pounds of halibut.

Since the commission began regulating halibut in 1923, the annual mortality limit for all management areas has ranged from 34 million to 100 million pounds per year, with an average of 63 million pounds per year.

In Alaska, rural residents and Alaska Native tribal citizens can fish for halibut with Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificates regulated by the commission and implemented by

NOAA Fisheries. There is no areawide or coastwide harvest cap for subsistence fishing. The halibut commission estimates subsistence fishermen in Area 2C will catch 290,000 pounds of halibut in 2023, similar to last year's volume.

In Area 2C, surveys showed just a 1% decline in abundance. In the Gulf of Alaska Area 3A, where halibut biomass is the highest, surveys showed a 37% drop in abundance.

"It's always a mystery what creates a strong year class in fish. We know it's environmental conditions, but we don't know exactly what those conditions are that help a bunch of baby fish spawn and survive," said Linda Behnken, who represents the Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association and is U.S. co-chair of the conference board, a 55-member group of harvesters from the U.S. and Canada.

Behnken said the past five or six years have brought some of the worst-ever "year classes" of fish that hatched. It takes fish a few years to grow large enough to bite a baited hook.

The commission also adopted a proposal from NOAA that changes rules to allow for limited consumption of recreationally caught halibut by fishermen on board charter and sport fishing vessels in all Alaska regulatory areas. Previously, all halibut had to be returned to the dock before sport fishermen could process or eat their catch.

The commercial halibut season will be open March 10.

EPA uses veto power and blocks proposed Pebble Mine

By BECKY BOHRER AND PATRICK WHITTLE
Associated Press

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency took an unusually strong step Jan. 31 and blocked a proposed Alaska mine heralded by backers as the most significant undeveloped copper and gold resource in the world. The EPA based its veto on concerns over the mine's potential environmental damage to Alaska lands and waters that support the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery.

The move, cheered by Alaska Native tribes and environmentalists and condemned by some state officials and mining interests, deals a heavy blow to the proposed Pebble Mine. The intended site is in a remote area of southwest Alaska's Bristol Bay region, about 200 miles southwest of Anchorage.

In a statement, Pebble Limited Partnership CEO John Shively called the EPA's action "unlawful" and political and said litigation was likely. Shively has cast the project as key to the Biden administration's push to reach green energy goals and make the U.S. less dependent on foreign nations for such minerals.

The Pebble Limited Partnership is owned Canada-based Northern Dynasty Minerals.

The minerals deposit is near the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed, which supports a bounty of salmon "unrivaled anywhere in North America," according to the EPA.

The announcement marks only the 14th time in the roughly 50-year history of the federal Clean Water Act

that the EPA has flexed its powers to bar or restrict activities over potential impact on waters, including fisheries. EPA Administrator Michael Regan said his agency's use of its so-called veto authority in this case "underscores the true irreplaceable and invaluable natural wonder that is Bristol Bay."

The veto is a victory for the environment, economy and tribes of Alaska's Bristol Bay region, which have fought the proposal for more than a decade, said Joel Reynolds, western director and senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The mine would have jeopardized the region's salmon fishery, which brings 15,000 jobs to the area and supplies about half the world's sockeye salmon, Reynolds said. The 2022 harvest was more than 60 million fish, state officials reported last year.

"It's a victory for science over politics. For biodiversity over extinction. For democracy over corporate power," Reynolds said.

The EPA, citing an analysis by the Army Corps of Engineers, said discharges of dredged or fill material to build and operate the proposed mine site would result in a loss of about 100 miles of stream habitat, as well as wetlands.

The Pebble partnership has maintained the project can coexist with salmon. The partnership's website says the deposit is at the upper reaches of three "very small tributaries" and expresses confidence any impacts on the fishery "in the unlikely event of an incident" would be "minimal."

Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy said the EPA's veto was a

dangerous precedent that could affect future development in the state, while state Attorney General Treg Taylor called the agency's action "legally indefensible."

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she opposed the mine, but added that the EPA's veto shouldn't be allowed to jeopardize future mining operations in the state. "This termination must not serve as precedent to target any other project in our state and must be the only time EPA ever uses its veto authority under the Clean Water Act in Alaska," Murkowski said in a statement.

Tribes in the Bristol Bay region in 2010 petitioned the EPA to protect the area under the federal Clean Water Act. Alannah Hurley, executive director of United Tribes of Bristol Bay, said that to call the EPA announcement "welcome news is an understatement."

Tim Bristol, executive director with the group Salmon-State, lauded the EPA's decision, saying it "may be the most popular thing the federal government has ever done for Alaska."

The EPA's decision is the latest in a yearslong back-and-forth over the project that has spanned administrations.

Leila Kimbrell, executive director for the Resource Development Council for Alaska, called the decision "a dangerous abuse of power and federal overreach." The National Mining Association, citing high demand for minerals and fragile global supply chains, said domestic mining has "never been more important." It said EPA's decision is "in stark contrast to national and global realities."

BLM review recommends approval of \$8 billion Alaska oil project

By BECKY BOHRER AND MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

The Biden administration released a long-awaited study Feb. 1 that recommends allowing an \$8 billion oil development on Alaska's North Slope that supporters say could boost U.S. energy security but that climate activists decry as a "carbon bomb."

The move — while not final — drew immediate anger from environmentalists who saw it as a betrayal of the president's pledges to reduce carbon emissions and promote clean energy sources.

ConocoPhillips had proposed five drilling sites as part of its Willow project. The approach listed as the preferred alternative by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in its environmental review calls for up to three drill sites initially.

Even as the land agency released its report, the U.S. Interior Department said in a separate statement that it has "substantial concerns" about the project and the report's preferred alternative, "including direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions and impacts to wildlife and Alaska Native subsistence."

The Bureau of Land Management,

which falls under the Interior Department, also said in the report that identifying a preferred alternative "does not constitute a commitment or decision" and notes it could select a different alternative in the final decision.

U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, who fought the Willow project as a member of Congress, has the final decision on whether to approve it, although top White House climate officials are likely to be involved. Haaland has multiple options, including outright approval or rejection or a middle ground that allows some drilling but blocks other development. A final decision is expected no sooner than early March.

ConocoPhillips would like to start preliminary work at Willow before the end of winter.

Opponents of the project have raised concerns about the impacts of oil development on wildlife, such as caribou, and efforts to address climate change.

Willow is in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, a vast region roughly the size of Indiana on Alaska's resource-rich North Slope. ConocoPhillips said the project, at its peak, could produce an estimated 180,000 barrels of oil

a day, almost 40% more than the entire North Slope produced last month.

The Arctic Slope Regional Corp., an Alaska Native corporation, and the Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope joined the North Slope Borough in praising the proposed three-site alternative and calling on the administration to move ahead on the project. In a joint statement, they said advancing the project "is critical for domestic energy independence, job security for Alaskans and the right of Alaska Natives to choose their own path."

Other Alaska Native groups have expressed concerns.

Leaders of the Native Village of Nuiqsut and city of Nuiqsut in a recent letter said they do not believe the Bureau of Land Management is listening to their concerns. The community is about 36 miles from the Willow project.

The Bureau of Land Management's "engagement with us is consistently focused on how to allow projects to go forward; how to permit the continuous expansion and concentration of oil and gas activity on our traditional lands," Native Village of Nuiqsut President Eunice Brower and City of Nuiqsut Mayor Rosemary Ahtuanguaruk wrote in a letter.

ConocoPhillips has estimated the project would create as many as 2,000 jobs during construction and 300 permanent jobs and generate between \$8 billion and \$17 billion in federal, state and local revenue over the life of oil production.

The project would bring miles of roads and hundreds of miles of pipeline to the area, disrupt animal migration patterns and erode habitat if it goes forward, said Earthjustice, an environmental group.

Jeremy Lieb, an attorney with the group, said Willow is currently the largest proposed oil project in the U.S. He said it is "drastically out of step with the Biden administration's goals to slash climate pollution and transition to clean energy."

Biden "will be remembered for what he did to tackle the climate crisis, and as things stand today, it's not too late for him to step up and pull the plug on this carbon bomb," Lieb said.

The 30-year project is estimated to add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere equivalent to roughly a third of all U.S. coal plants, according to BLM.

Legislature considers restoring traditional pensions for public employees

By IRIS SAMUELS
Anchorage Daily News

JUNEAU — Amid a deepening crisis in recruiting and keeping state workers, the Alaska Legislature is again considering measures to recreate a pension plan for public employees, but disagreements on the type and extent of the plan mean a long path ahead.

A deficit of billions of dollars led lawmakers in 2006 to do away with the state's defined-benefits plans, which gave state and municipal employees a dependable pension calculated on their years of service and average salary, not reliant on the ups and downs of the stock market. Instead, the state now offers public employees a 401(k)-style option that allows them to invest in the stock market but gives less stability — and less of an incentive for workers to remain in Alaska.

Since then, some lawmakers, union leaders and worker advocates have raised alarm about the loss in Alaska's ability to recruit new employees and keep existing workers, who are sometimes lured by more generous benefits plans to other states. In the 2021-2022 legislative session, a bill to recreate a defined-benefits pension plan

for public safety workers came close to passage but stalled in a Senate committee.

This year, the bipartisan Senate majority has named improving recruitment and retention of state employees as one of their top priorities. Members of both the Senate majority and the House coalition are hoping to see a new plan. But among the more conservative Republicans that govern the House, lingering fear over committing the state to an affordable plan could translate to a long and difficult legislative process.

In the House, lawmakers are already considering a bill that would create a pension plan only for public safety workers. That measure is a reincarnation of the bill that passed the House in 2021. Rep. Andy Josephson, an Anchorage Democrat who sponsored the bill both in 2021 and this year, says it's a conservative measure that can demonstrate the efficacy of such a pension plan without putting the state under an unreasonable financial burden.

Josephson called his bill "the sweet spot" that can appeal to the Republican-dominated House majority's more conservative side. But leadership in the House referred Josephson's bill to four different committees

for hearings, typically signaling an interest to stall the measure.

The measure passed its first committee last Thursday, picking up support from two Republicans.

Josephson's plan would apply to roughly 2,300 first responders, who make up around 7.5% of public employees in Alaska.

The reasoning for giving public safety workers a pension option while setting aside other workers is the investment needed to train first responders. Josephson pegged the number between \$100,000 and \$200,000 per worker, shouldered entirely by the state or local government. His bill has a price tag of roughly \$6 million annually, but he says that is less than the millions the state currently pays in recruiting and training public safety workers that are leaving because of unattractive benefits options.

Dominic Lozano, president of the Alaska Professional Firefighters Association, told the House Community and Regional Affairs committee last month that after the state got rid of the defined benefits plan in 2006, firefighters began noticing more of their colleagues leaving. And in their field, more experience is essential.

"You can pretty much go

around the state, and it doesn't matter what municipality, what town, what fire service area — the fact they cannot keep and retain public safety employees is becoming a big concern," said Lozano.

Josephson acknowledged that other public sectors, including education, face a crisis in turnover that could be addressed with a new pension plan, and that he hopes that a bill targeting public safety workers will ultimately lead to a plan that applies to other workers.

"If it leads to success and a culture of spreading the wealth — great," he said.

That is exactly what some more conservative Republicans worry about. They say that even a narrow bill opens the door for other state employees to demand similar benefits.

"That is a big concern with folks I talk to about a bill like this, that you're opening the door for a tremendous financial burden on the state by allowing thousands of public workers to demand this program," said Anchorage Republican Rep. Tom McKay, during a hearing on the bill.

But Republicans are not united in their opposition. Soldotna Rep. Justin Ruffridge said he is open to considering a de-

finned-benefits program for all public employees. Whatever plan is adopted, he said that "it has to be everybody."

"You can't just pick one group and not offer the same to everybody," Ruffridge said.

But even with a renewed focus on the challenges created by worker turnover, some want to take time to review all of the state's options, including possibilities like increasing worker salaries rather than creating a new pension plan.

Given the complexity of the issue, Sitka Sen. Bert Stedman, co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee, predicted it will take longer than one legislative session — typically lasting four months — for the Legislature to agree on a new plan, meaning the issue could drag at least until the 2024 legislative session.

The length of time lawmakers debate the issue could in itself prove contentious. Nikiski Republican Sen. Jesse Bjorkman said there is urgency in addressing Alaska's retirement system sooner rather than later. The problem, he said, has already been studied for years.

"At a certain point in time, study hall needs to be dismissed," said Bjorkman, a social studies teacher.

Cameras could replace federally required observers on fishing vessels

By JOSHUA GOODMAN
Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — For years, Mark Hager’s job as an observer aboard New England fishing boats made him a marked man, seen as a meddling cop on the ocean, counting and scrutinizing every cod, haddock and flounder to enforce rules and help set crucial quotas.

On one particularly perilous voyage, he spent 12 days at sea and no crew member uttered even a single word to him.

Now Hager is working to replace such federally mandated observers with high-definition cameras affixed to fishing boat masts. From the safety of his office, Hager uses a laptop to watch hours of footage of crew members hauling the day’s catch aboard and measuring it with long sticks marked with thick black lines. And he’s able to zoom in on every fish to verify its size and species, noting whether it is kept or flung overboard in accordance with the law.

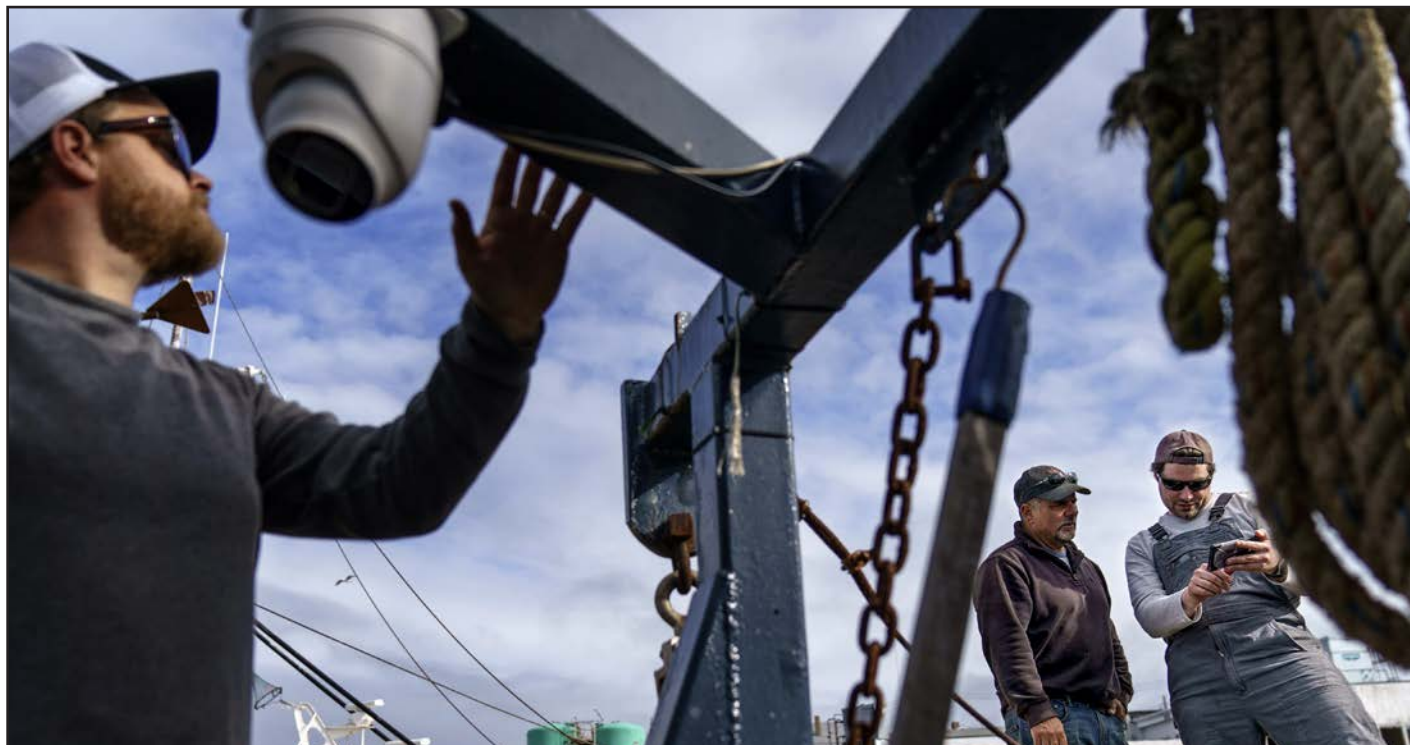
“Once you’ve seen hundreds of thousands of pounds of these species it becomes second nature,” said Hager as he toggled from one fish to another.

Hager’s Maine-based start-up, New England Maritime Monitoring, is one of several companies seeking to help commercial vessels comply with new U.S. mandates aimed at protecting dwindling fish stocks. It’s a brisk business as demand for sustainably caught seafood and around-the-clock monitoring has exploded from the Gulf of Alaska to the Straits of Florida.

But taking the technology overseas, where the vast majority of seafood consumed in the U.S. is caught, is a steep challenge. Only a few countries can match the U.S.’s strict regulatory oversight. And China — the world’s biggest seafood supplier with a record of illegal fishing — appears unlikely to embrace the fishing equivalent of a police body camera.

The result, scientists fear, could be that well-intended initiatives to replenish fish stocks and reduce unintentional bycatch of threatened species could backfire: By adding to the regulatory burdens already faced by America’s skippers, more fishing could be transferred overseas and further out of view of conservationists and consumers.

“The challenge now is getting the political will,” said Jamie Gibbon, an environmental scientist at The Pew Charitable Trusts who is leading its efforts



AP PHOTO/DAVID GOLDMAN

Mark Hager, left, positions a camera with the help of Anthony Lucia, right, as captain Al Cottone watches the feed on a monitor from his boat, the Sabrina Maria, in Gloucester, Massachusetts, last spring. Hager’s Maine-based start-up, New England Maritime Monitoring, is one of a bevy of companies seeking to help commercial fishing vessels comply with new federal mandates aimed at protecting dwindling fish stocks.

to promote electronic monitoring internationally. “We are getting close to the point where the technology is reliable enough that countries are going to have to show whether they are committed or not to transparency and responsible fisheries management.”

To many advocates, electronic monitoring is something of a silver bullet.

Since 1970, the world’s fish population has plummeted, to the point that today 35% of commercial stocks are overfished. Meanwhile, an estimated 11% of U.S. seafood imports come from illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, according to the U.S. International Trade Commission.

To sustainably manage what’s left, scientists need reliable data on the activities of the tens of thousands of fishing vessels that ply the oceans every day, the vast majority with little supervision.

Traditional tools like captains’ logbooks and dockside inspections provide limited information. Meanwhile, indepen-

dent observers — a linchpin in the fight against illegal fishing — are scarce: barely 2,000 globally. In the U.S., the number of trained people willing to take underpaid jobs involving long stretches at sea in an often-dangerous fishing industry has been unable to keep pace with ever-growing demand for bait-to-plate traceability.

Even when observers are on deck, the data they collect is sometimes skewed.

A recent study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that when an observer was on deck New England skippers changed their behavior in subtle but important ways that degraded the quality of fisheries data, a phenomenon known as “observer bias.”

“The fact is human observers are annoying,” Hager said. “Nobody wants them there, and when they aren’t being threatened or bribed, the data they provide is deeply flawed because it’s a proven fact that fishermen behave differently when they’re being watched.”

Enter electronic monitoring. For as little as \$10,000, vessels can be equipped with high-resolution cameras, sensors and other technology capable of providing a safe, reliable look at what was once a giant blind spot. Some setups allow the video to be transmitted by satellite or cellular data back to shore in real time, delivering the sort of transparency that was previously unthinkable.

“This isn’t your grandfather’s fishery anymore,” said Captain Al Cottone, who recently had cameras installed on his 45-foot groundfish trawler, the Sabrina Maria. “If you’re going to sail, you just turn the cameras on and you go.”

Despite such advantages, video monitoring has been slow to catch on since its debut in the late 1990s as a pilot program to stop crab overfishing off British Columbia. Only about 1,500 of the world’s 400,000 industrial fishing vessels have installed such monitoring systems. About

Continued on page 14

Public Defender Agency short staff, will limit new clients in Bethel and Nome

ANCHORAGE (AP) — A state agency that represents Alaskans who cannot afford their own attorneys intends this month to stop taking clients facing serious felony charges in parts of southwest and western Alaska due to staffing shortages.

Samantha Cherot, head of the Alaska Public Defender Agency, notified the judges overseeing the Nome and Bethel judicial districts of the plans on Jan. 31, the Anchorage Daily News reported. The agency asked that Superior Court judges in those regions not assign new cases to the agency for certain felonies that cover the most serious and complex crimes, starting Feb. 13.

An Alaska Court System spokesperson declined to respond to questions from the newspaper about the options available for individuals who would be affected.

Cherot said the agency has long struggled to recruit and retain qualified attorneys, challenges worsened by a pandemic-fueled backlog in criminal cases. Recent resignations in Bethel and Nome have left the agency without enough experienced attorneys to handle new complicated cases, she said.

“With a few additional attorneys with the necessary training and experience to handle unclassified and A felonies, the situation could improve quickly. Otherwise, the agency needs time for its existing qualified attorneys to resolve many of their pending cases before they can ethically accept new cases

or for newer attorneys to gain the necessary experience to be able to handle these case types,” Cherot said.

The agency has used contracted private lawyers and will continue to do so, he said. But finding enough private attorneys with the skills and experience to

represent individuals charged with serious felonies and fill the gaps has been difficult.

While lawmakers last year approved pay increases for state attorneys and, in recent years, more positions for public defenders, that hasn’t fully addressed the problem, Cherot

said. For example, applicants often lack the qualifications to take on the most complex cases immediately. And recruitment is challenging, she said, with attorneys citing as reasons for not wanting to work for the agency more lucrative compensation and manageable

workloads elsewhere.

Jeff Turner, a spokesperson for Gov. Mike Dunleavy, said the governor’s supplemental budget calls for an additional \$3.1 million this year for the Office of Public Advocacy and Public Defender Agency.

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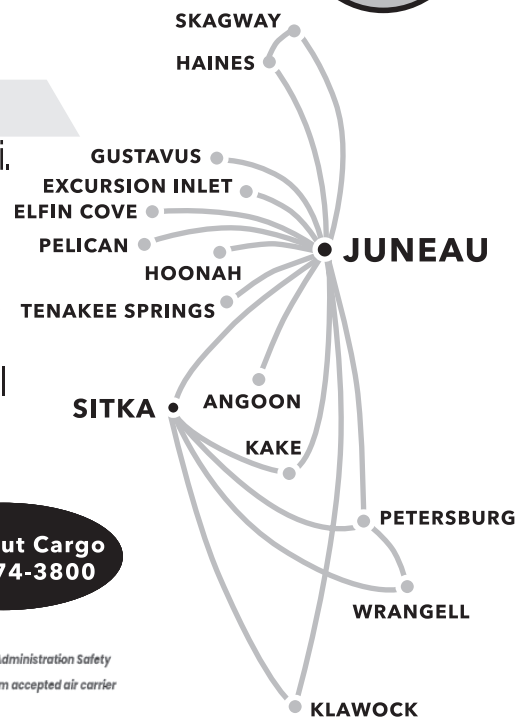
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Fishing cameras

Continued from page 13

600 of those vessels are in the U.S., which has been driving innovation in the field.

The stakes are especially high in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean — home to the world's largest tuna fishery. Observer coverage of the Pacific's longline fleet, which numbers around 100,000 boats, is around 2%, well below the 20% minimum threshold scientists say they need to assess a fish stock's health. Also, observer coverage has been suspended altogether in the vast region since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, even though the roughly 1 billion hooks placed in the water each year has barely ebbed.

The lack of internationally accepted protocols and technical standards has slowed progress for video monitoring, as have the high costs associated with reviewing abundant amounts of footage on shore. Hager says some of those costs will fall as machine learning and artificial intelligence ease the burden on analysts who have to sit through hours of repetitive video.

Market pressure may also spur faster adoption. Recently, Bangkok-based Thai Union, owner of the Red Lobster restaurants and Chicken of the Sea tuna brand, committed to having 100% "on-the-water" monitoring of its vast

tuna supply chain by 2025. Most of that is to come from electronic monitoring.

But by far the biggest obstacle to a faster rollout internationally is the lack of political will.

That's most dramatic on the high seas, the traditionally lawless waters that comprise nearly half the planet. There, the task of managing the public's resources is left to inter-governmental organizations where decisions are taken based on consensus, so that objections from any single country are tantamount to a veto.

Of the 13 regional fisheries management organizations in the world, only six require on-board monitoring — observers or cameras — to enforce rules on gear usage, unintentional catches and quotas, according to a 2019 study by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which advises nations on economic policy.

Among the worst offenders is China. Despite boasting the world's largest fishing fleet, with at least 3,000 industrial-sized vessels operating internationally, and tens of thousands closer to home, China has fewer than 100 observers. Electronic monitoring consists of just a few pilot programs.

China in 2021 deployed just two scientists to monitor a few hundred vessels that spent months fishing for squid near

the Galapagos Islands. At the same time, it has blocked a widely backed proposal at the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization to boost observer requirements.

"If they want to do something they definitely can," said Yong Chen, a fisheries scientist whose lab at Stony Brook University in New York hosts regular exchanges with China. "It's just a question of priorities."

Hazards faced by observers are highest outside U.S. waters, where electronic monitoring is used the least. Sixteen observers have died around the world since 2010, according to the U.S.-based Association for Professional Observers.

Back in the U.S., those who make their living from commercial fishing still view cameras warily as something of a double-edged sword.

Just ask Scott Taylor. His Day Boat Seafood in 2011 became one of the first longline companies in the world to carry an ecolabel from the Marine Stewardship Council — the industry's gold standard. As part of that sustainability drive, the Fort Pierce, Florida, company blazed a trail for video monitoring that spread throughout the U.S.' Atlantic tuna fleet.

"I really believed in it. I thought it was a game changer," he said.

But his enthusiasm turned when NOAA used the videos to bring civil charges against him last year for what he says was an accidental case of illegal fishing.

The bust stems from trips made by four tuna boats managed by Day Boat to a tiny fishing hole bound on all sides by the Bahamas' exclusive economic zone and a U.S. conservation area off limits to commercial fishing. Evidence reviewed by the AP shows that Taylor's boats were fishing legally inside U.S. waters when they dropped their hooks. But hours later some of the gear, carried by hard-to-predict underwater eddies, drifted a few miles over an invisible line into Bahamian waters.

Geolocated video footage was essential to proving the government's case, showing how the boats pulled up 48 fish — swordfish, tuna and mahi mahi — while retrieving their gear in Bahamian waters.

As a result, NOAA levied a whopping \$300,000 fine that almost bankrupted Taylor's busi-

ness and has had a chilling effect up and down the East Coast's tuna fleet.

When electronic monitoring was getting started a decade ago, it appealed to fishermen who thought that the more reliable data might help the government reopen coastal areas closed to commercial fishing since the 1980s, when the fleet was five times larger. Articles on NOAA's website promised the technology would be used to monitor tuna stocks with greater precision, not play Big Brother.

"They had everyone snowballed," said Martin Scanlon, a New York-based skipper who heads the Blue Water Fishermen's Association, which represents the fleet of around 90 longline vessels. "Never once did they mention it would be used as a compliance tool."

AP Writer Caleb Jones in Honolulu, Hawaii, and Fu Ting in Washington contributed to this report.

Police report

Monday, Jan. 30

Traffic stop: Verbal working for expired registration.
Traffic stop: Citations issued for expired registration and failure to provide proof of insurance.
Citizen assist: Unlock vehicle.
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.
Motor vehicle accident.
Agency assist: Fire Department.
Welfare check.

Tuesday, Jan. 31

Welfare check: Person is out of town.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance.
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for improper display of tabs.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for speeding in a school zone and verbal warning for expired driver's license.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for expired registration.
Paper service.

Wednesday, Feb. 1

Theft: Firewood.
Domestic.
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for improper display of tabs.
Arrest: Intoxicated person on licensed premises.

Thursday, Feb. 2

Intoxicated person: Refusing to leave the bar.
Letter served to remove a person from a licensed establishment.
Dog complaint.
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for headlight out.

Domestic violence order: Violation.

Friday, Feb. 3

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.
Agency assist: Ambulance requested.
Citizen assist: Vehicle unlock.
Traffic stop: Citations issued for driving with expired driver's license and no proof of insurance.
Found property.
Traffic stop: Citations issued for expired registration and no proof of insurance.
Agency assist: Petersburg Police Department.
Traffic stop: Citations issued for failure to provide proof of insurance and driving while license is revoked.
Suspicious circumstance.

Saturday, Feb. 4

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for improper display of tags and failure to carry and show driver's license.
Fireworks complaint.
Agency assist: Ambulance requested.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for new owner to obtain or transfer vehicle registration.
Noise complaint.

Sunday, Feb. 5

Domestic violence order.
Noise complaint.
Found keys.

During this reporting period there were five subpoenas served and five citations issued for speeding in a school zone.

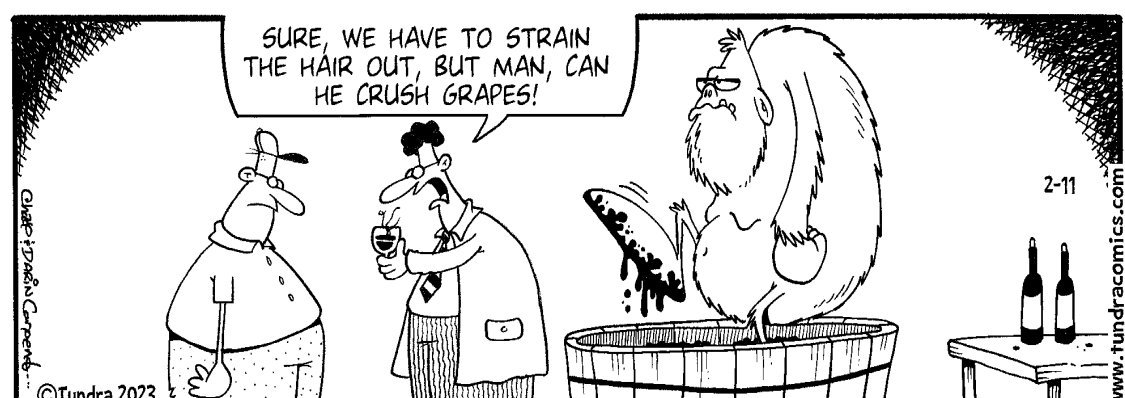
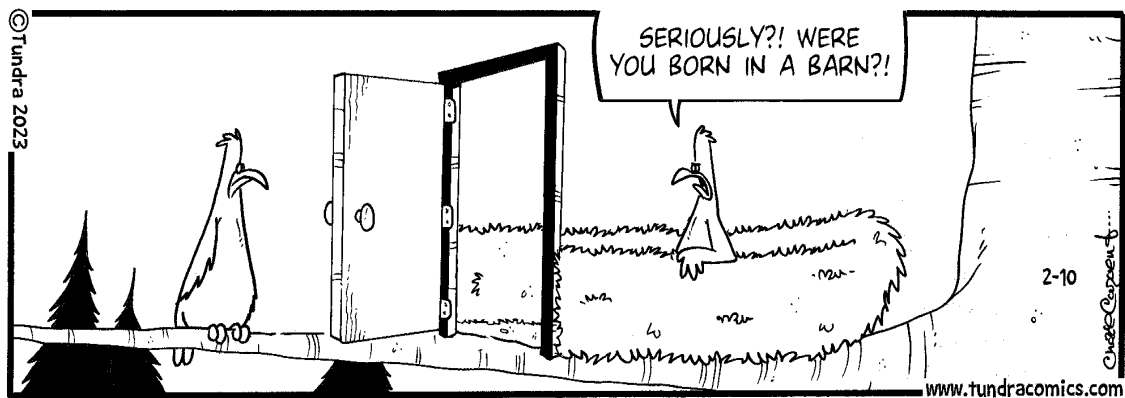
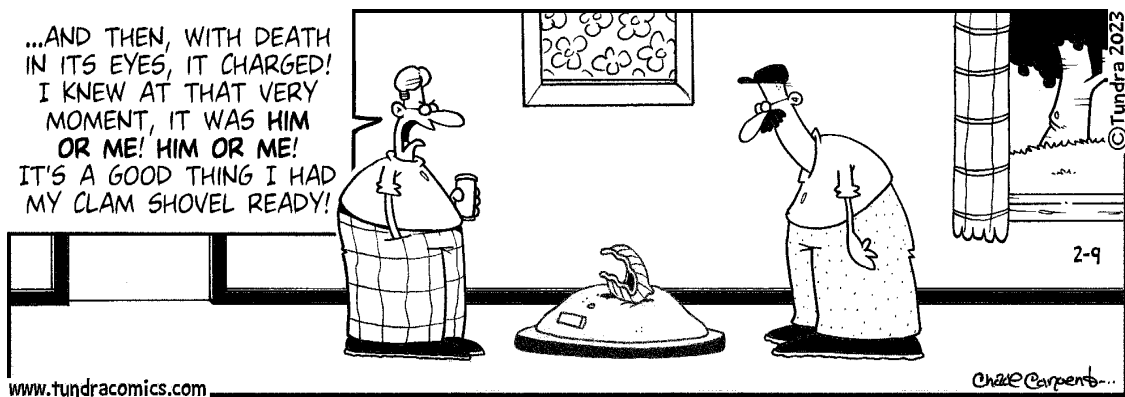
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



CLASSIFIED

HELP WANTED

Wrangell Senior Center is seeking a part-time driver. \$17/hour. Position is 16 hours a week, Monday and Tuesday. Benefits include a 403b retirement account, employee assistance program, 12 paid holidays. Background check required. Apply online at www.ccsak.org/jobs. For more information, contact Solvay Gillen at 907-874-2066.

Bentz boat with twin LP-6 Yanmar diesel engines (2,400 hours) and 241 Hamilton pumps with turbo impeller. Like new condition. Captain/owner is retiring. \$319,000. Recent survey puts value at \$325,000. Captain-ron389@yahoo.com or call 907-518-1180.

FREE PAPERS

Stop by the Sentinel to pick some up.

GARAGE SALE

BRAVE will host a garage sale 1 to 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb 11, at the Island of Faith Lutheran Church.

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 907-874-2301 or email wrgsent@gmail.com.

BOAT FOR SALE

2013 inspected 14-passenger

Peltola says Congress wastes time bickering rather than solving problems

By RILEY ROGERSON
Anchorage Daily News

WASHINGTON — Alaska Democratic Rep. Mary Peltola has lamented “partisan bickering” on Capitol Hill during the first weeks of the new Congress.

“One of the things that has not necessarily surprised me but disappointed me is how little actual work we’re doing even now this far into the session,” Peltola told reporters last Thursday.

Peltola pointed to two measures she had just voted on. The first was on a Republican-led effort to remove Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Minnesota Democrat, from the Foreign Affairs Committee for her past comments regarding Israel, which drew intense debate.

“Not really sure all the theatrics involved in that. I voted no on that. I don’t believe, you know — she has not done anything that, in my opinion, would warrant her removal,” Peltola said.

The second vote was on a Republican-sponsored resolution condemning the “horrors of socialism.” Republicans backed the resolution alongside 109 Democrats, including Peltola.

She referred to voting on the non-binding resolution as “darned-if-you-do and darned-if-you-don’t.”

“Here I am spending my time and Alaskans’ time thinking, and worrying and weighing the decision of voting for or against a non-binding resolution, and I think all Americans would condemn the horrors of socialism or any kind of government structure that is imposing horrors on peo-

ple,” she said. “All of this is to say there are so many distractions, almost never-ending distractions.”

Peltola also expressed frustration with the time the House spent on a bill last month to limit President Joe Biden’s access to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. She called the Republican-led measure a “messaging bill.” The House voted on nearly 60 amendments over the course of two days before passing the bill.

“If you think about the time and cost for all of the staff involved in helping to read all of those individual amendments,” Peltola said. “And how poorly written so much of this is ... it’s

a lot of wasted time and energy.”

Over in the Senate, even less has been accomplished. The chamber has voted on largely symbolic and widely supported bills, like categorizing January as National Stalker Awareness Month.

Peltola said committee work has not been more productive. She was assigned to the Transportation and Infrastructure and Natural Resources committees — her predecessor Republican Rep. Don Young’s former panels and her “top two picks.”

But in Natural Resources on Feb. 1, California Democratic Rep. Jared Huffman proposed an amendment to ban carrying fire-

arms into the committee room. As committee members began throwing political barbs, Peltola left to meet with constituents. She said she’d seen enough after Colorado Republican Rep. Lauren Boebert displayed a poster of Huffman wearing a tinfoil hat.

“I just thought, ‘OK, this has devolved to a place where I have better uses of my time,’ ” Peltola said.

Peltola called the committee discourse “very high-pitched emotionalism and not problem solving.”

“I don’t think we should be walking around necessarily

with loaded firearms, or incendiary devices or knives,” Peltola said. “I think that this process is about having civil and respectful discussions, not violence or language that is violent or, you know, talking or acting in ways that don’t solve our problems.”

The amendment failed 25-14 without Peltola’s vote.

She told reporters, “I truly feel like that, and if we were going to have a real discussion on it, that would be interesting. But right now, it’s just partisan bickering, and as a mother of seven kids, I know what bickering sounds like.”

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the matter of the estate of Ronald Kagee, Notice to Creditors is hereby given that Keith Kagee has been appointed personal representative of the above named estate. All creditors are hereby notified to present their claims within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims will forever be barred. Claims must be presented to:

Keith Kagee
PO Box 762
Wrangell, Alaska 99929

Publish Feb. 8, 15, and 22, 2023

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE To Purchase Borough-Owned Tidelands

As per Wrangell Municipal Code 16.12.040, notice is hereby given that a request to purchase Borough-owned tidelands consisting of approximately 2,867 square feet of filled tidelands, described as Filled Tidelands, Lot 15, Block 1-A, ATS 83, requested by the current lease holder.

The Wrangell Planning and Zoning Commission and Port Commission have reviewed this request and approved the request to move forward with the tidelands purchase with conditions.

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

2,867 square feet of filled tidelands described as Lot 15, Block 1-A, Tidelands Subdivision ATS 83, on the corner of Brueger and Lynch Streets.

... must file a written protest with the Borough Clerk, no later than Feb. 24, 2023, at 4 p.m.

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

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

Publish Feb. 1, 8 and 15, 2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Hungry Beaver, Inc., dba Marine Bar located at 640 Shakes Street, Wrangell, is applying for transfer of a Beverage Dispensary AS 04.11.090 liquor license to Hungry Beaver Pizza LLC.

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

Publish Feb. 1, 8 and 15, 2023

STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF FORESTRY & FIRE PROTECTION SOUTHEAST AREA OFFICE

PUBLIC REVIEW FIVE-YEAR SCHEDULE OF TIMBER SALES STATE FISCAL YEARS 2023-2027

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Fire Protection Preliminary Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales for the Southern Southeast Area is available for public review. Per AS 38.05.113 this is a scoping document that outlines the proposed timber sale activity to be undertaken on State land over the next five years. The Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales is not a decision document.

The public is invited to comment on any aspect of the Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales. Comments should be mailed to the Alaska Division of Forestry and must be received by the close of business at the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection’s office no later than Feb. 28, 2023, to be included as comment to the file in the adopted schedule. This document can be viewed at the Area Office in Ketchikan, the public libraries in Craig, Ketchikan, Petersburg and Wrangell, the State of Alaska’s online public notice website <http://notice.alaska.gov/209684> as well as the DOF’s website <http://forestry.alaska.gov/>.

After public comment has been received and reviewed, the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection may proceed with planning the proposed timber sales and associated developments. When each sale is prepared and ready for review, notice of the proposed decision and the opportunity for public comment will be given for that specific timber sale, as is required under state statutes and regulations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO SUBMIT COMMENTS CONTACT:

Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection 2417 Tongass Avenue, Suite 213 Ketchikan, AK 99901	Contact: Greg Staunton Phone: 907-225-3070 Email: dnr.dof.sse@alaska.gov
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The State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Fire Protection Complies with Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who may need auxiliary aids, services, or special modifications to participate in this review may contact the number above.

Publish Feb. 1 and 8, 2023

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING

Marketing and Community Development Coordinator

The City and Borough of Wrangell is seeking candidates for the position of Marketing and Community Development Coordinator. The Coordinator position will remain open until filled. The first review of applications will begin Feb. 15, 2023.

The Marketing and Community Development Coordinator will be supervised by the Economic Development Director. The position will be primarily responsible for enhancing and implementing the visitor marketing and promotional program. Other responsibilities will include assisting the Economic Development Director on community development projects as directed and marketing other industries within Wrangell. The Economic Development Department is responsible for a myriad of services, including supporting other departments in their needs, project planning and development, grant writing, planning and zoning, business assistance, and land development.

The position will appeal to a candidate who thrives in developing project and marketing plans, implementing multiple tasks, creating programs to benefit visitor industry growth and interacting with businesses and community members. The successful candidates with experience that demonstrates strong organizational skills and an aptitude for solving problems autonomously and efficiently will serve as an asset to the successful candidate.

This is a permanent non-exempt position with all City and Borough benefits, paid at a Grade 15 Wage ranging from \$21.10 hour to 26.76 hour. The full job description, qualifications and requirements, and job application can be obtained on the borough website at <https://www.wrangell.com/jobs>.

Applicants are required to submit their cover letter, resume, and application to City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929 or via email at rmarshall@wrangell.com.

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

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

Publish Feb. 1 and 8, 2023

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE INVITING BIDS Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) System

Notice is hereby given that the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, will receive sealed bids for the construction of the AUTOMATED METERING INFRASTRUCTURE (AMI) SYSTEM project. Work consists of providing and implementing a mesh Advanced Metering Infrastructure System (AMI) with a smart grid to facilitate two-way communications with its electric utility service to improve staff efficiencies, customer service, ensure billing accuracy, and perform data collection. The Estimate for all work is approximately \$700,000 to \$750,000.

Sealed bids will be received by the City and Borough of Wrangell, P.O. Box 531, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, or located at the Borough Clerk’s Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, until 2 p.m. prevailing time on March 2, 2023, and publicly opened and read at that time.

The Contract Documents are available in electronic format and can be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFPs section. Downloading Contract Documents from the City and Borough of Wrangell’s website requires registration with the Borough Clerk in order to be placed on the Plan Holders List and to ensure receipt of subsequent Addenda. Failure to register may adversely affect your proposal. It is the Offeror’s responsibility to ensure that they have received all Addenda affecting this Solicitation. To be registered, contact the Borough Clerk at 907-874-2381 or at clerk@wrangell.com

The Owner reserves the right to reject any or all Bids, to waive any informality in a Bid, or to make award as it best serves the interests of the Owner.

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

Publish Jan. 25, Feb. 1, 8 and 15, 2023

Lawsuit challenges use of state funds at private or religious schools

By LISA PHU
Alaska Beacon

The question is resurfacing, but this time in a lawsuit: Can families enrolled in a state-funded correspondence program use their allotment to pay for private school classes?

Last June, the Alaska Department of Education didn't know the answer, so they asked the state's attorney general's office, which offered a response that drew some lines but left room for interpretation. Now, some Alaska families are suing the state with the hope of getting a definitive answer.

"It's a constitutional issue," said Tom Klaameyer, president of NEA-Alaska, a teachers union, which is supporting the lawsuit financially.

The Alaska Constitution says, "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."

"We want to make sure all of the public money that is rightfully allocated to the public school system stays within the public school system in order to give our students the best chance to succeed possible," Klaameyer said.

The complaint was filed last month in Superior Court in Anchorage. The four plaintiffs are parents or teachers from Anchorage, Craig and Fairbanks.

The lawsuit challenges state law, which allows families to purchase nonsectarian services and materials from a public, private or religious organization with what's known as a correspondence

student allotment.

The complaint said the statute "is being used to reimburse parents for thousands of dollars in private educational institution services using public funds thereby indirectly funding private education in violation ... of the Alaska Constitution."

School districts in Alaska can establish state-funded public correspondence schools for families who choose to homeschool their children. The terms correspondence school and homeschool are often synonymous and used interchangeably in Alaska.

The state funds correspondence program students at 90% of \$5,930, the base amount the state pays per student to local school districts. Correspondence programs can offer a student funding allotment, which can be spent on educational-related needs of the student, like books, classes, school supplies, technology support, tutoring, music or activity lessons. Allotment rates vary from program to program.

Alaska has about 36 correspondence school programs in the state, according to the correspondence school directory on the Alaska Department of Education website.

Last June, the Alaska Beacon found at least one Alaska correspondence program that has been reimbursing families for non-religious private school classes for more than three years, and another that was planning to start doing so this current school year. The schools cited the statute as allowing for the practice.

The statute language was part of leg-

islation which then-Sen. Mike Dunleavy sponsored in 2013. That same year, Dunleavy also sponsored Senate Joint Resolution 9, which aimed to amend the constitution by deleting the line: "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."

"This statute collides with our constitution in a real substantive way that can't really be mitigated," said Scott Kendall, attorney at Anchorage law firm Cashion Gilmore & Lindemuth, who is representing the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

The lawsuit asks the court to declare the statute unconstitutional and to prohibit any current or future use of public funds to reimburse payments to private educational institutions in accordance with the statute.

It's unclear how widespread the practice of correspondence schools reimbursing families for private school classes is. The Department of Education did not reply to questions on the issue.

Anchorage Christian Schools, which has a mission to "develop Christ-centered world changers," encourages families to offset the rising costs of private education by enrolling in a state-funded correspondence program.

Anchorage Christian Schools Vice President of Education Calvin Hoffman said in a recent YouTube video that "the baseline tuition rate will increase by 5% for the 2023-2024 academic year." The private school's website lists 2023-2024 tuition rates for kindergarten through fifth grade as \$8,395 and for sixth through

12th grades as \$9,275.

"If you enroll in one of the approved correspondence programs — Family Partnership, Mat-Su Central, Denali Peak or Raven — you will be eligible for reimbursement from your correspondence program for courses" taken at Anchorage Christian, Hoffman said in the video. "This opportunity could help reduce the out-of-pocket costs to you by almost 50%."

Kenai Classical, another private school, promotes the same thing on its website's tuition page. If a family self-pays, the 2022-2023 tuition is \$8,800. If a family co-enrolls with the Alaska correspondence programs Connections or Interior Distance Education of Alaska (IDEA), tuition could go down to about \$6,200, according to its website.

Last July, the attorney general's office offered a written opinion on the issue, saying that public money can be spent for homeschool students to attend one or two classes in a private school, but can't be used for most of a student's private school tuition.

The 19-page opinion said that it's sometimes legal to use public funds for private school classes through the state's correspondence allotment program.

"But the more it looks like you're just trying to send your kid to private school and get subsidized by the state, I think that's when you start getting into unconstitutional territory," the legal opinion said.

Protections could end for grizzlies around Yellowstone, Glacier national parks

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The Biden administration took a first step Feb. 3 toward ending federal protections for grizzly bears in the northern Rocky Mountains, which would open the door to future hunting in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said state officials provided "substantial" information that grizzlies have recovered from the threat of extinction in the regions surrounding Yellowstone and Glacier national parks.

But federal officials rejected

claims by Idaho that protections should be lifted beyond those areas and raised concerns about new laws from the Republican-led states that could potentially harm grizzly populations.

"We will fully evaluate these and other potential threats," said

Martha Williams, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Williams told the head of Montana's wildlife agency in a Feb. 1 letter that a law allowing grizzlies to be killed if they attack livestock was inconsistent with the state's commitment to bear conservation. She said the 2023 legislative session offered a "good opportunity" to address such problems.

The Fish and Wildlife Service action kicks off at least a year of further study before final decisions about the Yellowstone and Glacier regions.

The states want protections lifted so they can regain management of grizzlies and offer hunts to the public. As grizzly populations have expanded, more of the animals have moved into areas occupied by people, creating public safety issues and problems for farmers.

State officials have insisted future hunts would be limited and not endanger the overall population.

After grizzlies temporarily lost their protections in the Yellowstone region several years ago, Wyoming and Idaho scheduled hunts that would have allowed fewer than two dozen bears to be killed in the initial hunting season.

In Wyoming, almost 1,500 people applied for 12 grizzly bear licenses in 2018 before the hunt was blocked in federal court. About a third of the applicants came from out of state. Idaho issued just one grizzly license before the hunt was blocked.

Republican lawmakers in the region in recent years also adopted more aggressive policies against gray wolves, including loosened trapping rules that could lead to grizzlies being inadvertently killed.

As many as 50,000 grizzlies once roamed the western half

of the U.S. They were exterminated in most of the country early in the 1900s by overhunting and trapping, and the last hunts in the northern Rockies occurred decades ago. There are now more than 2,000 bears in the Lower 48 states and much larger populations in Alaska, where hunting is allowed.

The species' expansion in the Glacier and Yellowstone areas has led to conflicts between humans and bears, including periodic attacks on livestock and sometimes the fatal mauling of humans.

The federal government in 2017 sought to remove protections for the Yellowstone ecosystem's grizzlies under former President Donald Trump. The hunts in Wyoming and Idaho were set to begin when a judge restored protections, siding with environmental groups that said delisting wasn't based on sound science.

Those groups want federal protections kept in place and no hunting allowed so bears can continue moving into new areas.

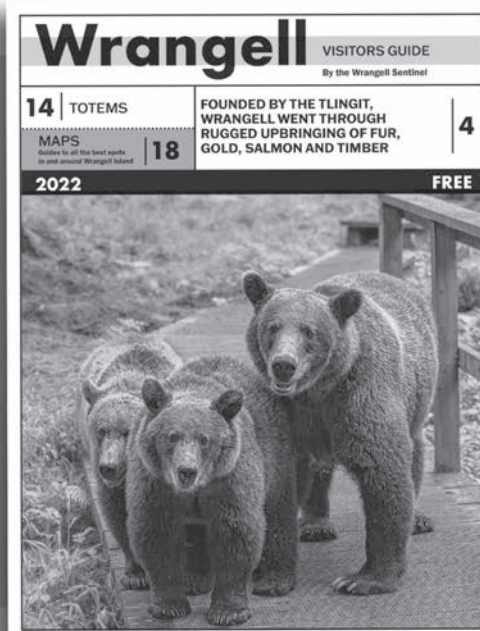
"We should not be ready to trust the states," said attorney Andrea Zaccardi, of the Center for Biological Diversity. Derek Goldman with the Endangered Species Coalition said state management would be a disaster and was glad federal agencies were looking at the states' laws.

Dave Evans, a hunting guide with Wood River Ranch in Meeteetse, Wyoming, said the issue is complex, and he can understand why people fall on both sides of the debate.

"You have so many opinions and some of them are not based on science, but the biologists are the ones that know the facts about what the populations are and what should be considered a goal for each area," Evans said.

The Wrangell Sentinel and Wrangell Convention and Visitor Bureau are working together to create a visitor guide showcasing all that Wrangell has to offer!

The guide will be available online year-round, in addition to 10,000 high-quality printed copies to mail out, take to trade shows and hand out to spread the word of Wrangell as a great tourist destination.



There is no increase from last year's ad rates. The deadline to reserve your ad space is March 1.

Call or email Amber at the Sentinel today to ask about advertising in the guide.

907-874-2301 • wrgsent@gmail.com

WRANGELL SENTINEL

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE LINES
WRANGELL

Policy for Letters to the Editor

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

The Sentinel reserves the right to edit any submissions.

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

Letters are run on a space-available basis.

WRANGELL SENTINEL

P.O. Box 798, 205 Front St., Wrangell, AK 99929
Ph: 907-874-2301 • wrgsent@gmail.com