



Wrangell, Alaska  
July 20, 2022

# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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## Resilient, like Wrangell



PHOTOS BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Anne Luetkemeyer stands next to her sculpture, "Honeysuckle," at the Nolan Center. The sculpture is for this year's BearFest and took Luetkemeyer about three months to carve and build.

## Sculptor hopes to evoke joy with BearFest statue

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

What's the recipe for sculpting a bear? Add one part encouragement, one part planning, two parts materials, one part inspiration, ruminate for two years, then take three months to cut away everything that doesn't look like a bear.

This year's BearFest statue, entitled "Honeysuckle," was created by Anne Luetkemeyer, an artist who leaned on her industrial background to carve the piece.

Two years ago, Sylvia Eteffagh, chairperson of BearFest, asked Luetkemeyer if she would create a bear statue for the annual event. Luetkemeyer agreed and began looking for welding equipment with the thought she'd create a metal sculpture. She decided that wasn't feasible and switched to wood.

Luetkemeyer started researching carved bears for inspiration, but it wasn't until she and her husband went to a wood-carving contest in Campbell River, British Columbia, that she knew she wanted to use wood and a chainsaw. She did some more research online and was further inspired by a group of Inuit sculptors who did small dancing bears from soapstone, ivory, jade and other mediums.

But she wanted the work to be specifically for Wrangell.

"We're really close to nature here," Luetkemeyer said. "What do I want to make for Wrangell? That blending of the natural world and the human world really appealed to me. It gave me the inspiration to move forward."

She built a shed to house the project to keep the wood dry. She obtained a cedar log approximately 2 feet in diameter by 11 feet long. She went to work



The claws of the bear statue are made from diamond pattern metal plating to stay true to artist Anne Luetkemeyer's vision of an angular rather than natural piece.

in earnest a little more than three months ago.

"I did an 11-inch clay model first. Thank goodness I did the model first. I would have been lost," Luetkemeyer said. "It gave me a sense of where I could start carving blocks, where the mass and crotch and down to the feet would be."

As she used a chainsaw to carve away the non-bear bits, Luetkemeyer said Honeysuckle began to take shape. Like any artist, she was conflicted with the direction she was taking and had to take a step back in the process.

"The most challenging part for me as an artist was whether or not I wanted it to be realistic or abstract," she said. "I often go between those two. She was becoming too realistic. I really tried

Continued on page 5

## State will start issuing dividends on Sept. 20

JUNEAU (AP) — The state plans to begin distributing this year's oil-wealth dividend and a special energy relief payment to residents on Sept. 20.

The timeline was announced last Friday by Gov. Mike Dunleavy and the state Department of Revenue.

The combined payout for the Permanent Fund dividend and energy relief payment is estimated at around \$3,200 per person; a final figure is pending. Residents will receive the money as one payment, the department said.

The energy relief payment was approved by lawmakers as a one-time benefit this year to help residents with high energy costs.

The energy relief portion of the payment will be about \$600; the traditional Permanent Fund dividend about \$2,600. Combined, the payments to Alaskans will total almost \$2.1 billion, the single

largest expenditure in the state budget.

The department said it was still in the process of determining eligibility for more than 78,000 applicants. The number of eligible Alaskans has ranged between 630,000 and 640,000 each of the past five years.

Checks for last year's dividend began going out the week of Oct. 11, 2021. Last year's dividend was \$1,114.

The dividends are typically paid in the early fall, but the governor and many legislators wanted an earlier distribution this year to help Alaskans cope with rising fuel prices and inflation.

Checks will start going out to those who requested payments by direct deposit starting Sept. 20 and for those who filed a paper application or requested a paper check starting the week of Oct. 3, according to the Department of Revenue.

## Gardeners slug it out with pesky mollusks

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Whether brown, yellow, black or spotted like a leopard, slugs all have one thing in common: They can devastate a garden.

Growers in Wrangell have many suggestions on what works to control the slimy mollusks, but they all agree it comes down to garden maintenance.

"Slugs are actually a good creature. They're the cleanup crew of the forest," said Kim Wickman, IGAP technician with the Wrangell Cooperative Association and board member with the Wrangell Community Garden. "They clean up all the things that are dead or dying on the forest floor. Then, of course, as they break it down, it turns into soils and adds nutrients back into the ground."

Unfortunately, Wickman said, slugs also like vegetables and whatever else they can find to eat.

Most species of slugs found in Southeast are considered native or non-threatening, except one: The European black slug. Researchers estimate the black slug arrived from the British Isles in Alaska about 25 years ago and has spread across Southeast and South-central during that time. Since native plants aren't used to the black slug, they haven't built up defenses against them, which can be disastrous for the ecosystem.

Slug eggs can be hidden in soil or attached in dark, wet places, making it easy to transport them without knowing it, introducing a species into a new area where they may not have existed before.

Wickman said her family is moving out the road this year and they are trying to leave any garden pests behind. The problem with slugs has been particularly big — to the point where she said she gave up.

"We are leaving all soil at

Continued on page 4

## Borough signs design contract for port and harbor surveillance cameras

Sentinel staff

The plan is to have surveillance cameras in operation at City Dock and the harbors sometime next year.

The borough assembly last week approved a \$90,983 design contract with Juneau-based RESPEC to prepare plans for the cameras, wiring and server system to store the images.

"We'll get a good percentage of the system up next year," Steve Miller, port and harbors director, said last Thursday.

The total project is estimated at \$983,000, Miller said, with \$409,000 already in hand from a pair of federal Department of Homeland Security grants. The borough is applying for a third federal grant to help cover the cost, he said. A small local match will be required.

RESPEC's design work will take about 15 weeks, the company said in its bid for the borough contract. The assembly approved the contract July 11.

After the installation work is put out for bids and a contract awarded, the job

will start with City Dock, a priority for Homeland Security, Miller said. Cameras also will be put up at the Marine Service Center and all harbors. The number of cameras will be determined in the design process.

In addition to meeting federal security requirements, the cameras are intended to help the port and harbors, police and fire departments in their public safety and law enforcement efforts to protect harbor users.

Much of the project cost is due to the

expense of running telecommunications wiring to the camera sites, particularly harbor floats. "That all has to be brought in" to the far-flung locations, Miller said, adding that Homeland Security wants a wired surveillance camera system rather than one that works on cell or Wi-Fi signals.

The Port and Harbors Department will operate the system, which will be monitored by harbor staff and the police. U.S. Customs and Border Protection also will have access, Miller said.



## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

**Wednesday, July 20:** Erin Galla, Samantha Southland; Anniversary: Dave and Sharon McGuire.

**Thursday, July 21:** Liz Rooney.

**Friday, July 22:** James Castle, Trevor Keller, Matt Scott, Paul Anthony Smith; Anniversary: Dewyo and Charley Young.

**Saturday, July 23:** Marni Privett; Anniversaries: Jim and Betty Abbott, Matt and Candice Wilsie.

**Sunday, July 24:** Maddox Angerman, Jeanette Covalt, David Smith; Anniversary: David and Sabrina Smith.

**Monday, July 25:** Celly Nelson-Young.

**Tuesday, July 26:** Gus Barlow, Darian Burley, Timothy Melzer.

**Wednesday, July 27:** Daniel Churchill, Ann Johnson, Jean Kuntz, Damon Roher, Lester Schultz.

## Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining.

Must be fully vaccinated.

**Thursday, July 21**

Cheeseburger, oven fries, fruit and yogurt

**Friday, July 22**

Turkey vegetable soup, fruit slaw, half a cheese and vegetable sandwich

**Monday, July 25**

Chicken Tahitian, peas, carrot and pineapple salad, rice

**Tuesday, July 26**

A-1 meatloaf, steamed greens, perfection salad, mashed potatoes and gravy

**Wednesday, July 27**

Pork roast, baked sweet potatoes and apples, cabbage with fruit cocktail

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

## Ferry Schedule

### Northbound

**Saturday, July 23**

Matanuska, 4:15 a.m.

**Friday, July 29**

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

**Friday, Aug. 5**

Matanuska, 4:30 p.m.

**Friday, Aug. 12**

Matanuska, 8:45 p.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.

### Southbound

**Thursday, July 21**

Matanuska, 6:15 p.m.

**Monday, July 25**

Matanuska, 5:30 a.m.

**Monday, Aug. 1**

Matanuska, 5:30 a.m.

**Monday, Aug. 8**

Matanuska, 1:15 p.m.

## Tides

### High Tides

### Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
July 21	07:58	11.9	08:19	14.9	01:40	2.9	01:30	3.8
July 22	09:15	11.4	09:18	14.9	02:50	2.7	02:31	4.8
July 23	10:25	11.6	10:13	15.0	04:01	2.2	03:39	5.4
July 24	11:25	12.1	11:05	15.3	05:04	1.4	04:45	5.5
July 25	12:16	12.8	11:52	15.7	05:54	0.6	05:41	5.2
July 26	....	...	01:01	13.4	06:35	-0.1	06:26	4.8
July 27	00:35	16.1	01:41	13.9	07:11	-0.6	07:04	4.4

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**BLOOD DRIVE** will be held 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, July 24, and Monday, July 25, at the elementary school gym. Eat well, drink plenty of fluids before donating and bring a photo ID. Call the Blood Bank of Alaska for an appointment at 907-222-5630.

**PARKS and RECREATION** registration for the American Red Cross lifeguard training course Aug. 19-21 is open through Aug. 17. Must complete five to seven hours of coursework online before the first day of the course. There is a recommended prep class Aug. 8-11 to refine your stroke, practice surface dives and prepare for the prerequisites. For ages 15 and up. Fee is \$150. There is a fee waiver for eligible individuals who intend to work for Parks and Recreation. Register online at wrangllrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

**PARKS and RECREATION** is offering Jiu Jitsu on Monday and Wednesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the community center multi-purpose room through Sept. 28 for ages 16 years and up. Open to all, regardless of skill level. Beginners welcome. The sport teaches self-defense, patience, humility, discipline and problem-solving skills. No fee and no registration required. For more information go to www.wrangllrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

**WRANGELL HEAD START** is accepting applications for children ages 3 to 5 years old. Class begins on Aug. 23. Head Start is a nationwide, federally funded program to promote school readiness by enhancing the social, physical and cognitive development of children. Head Start is provided at no cost to eligible families. Apply online at <http://ccthita-nsn.gov/>

**"READ WITH A RANGER,"** sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, at 11 a.m. Fridays through July. Join Forest Service naturalists for a summer of nature-themed books and fun activities. Meet at the gazebo outside the Irene Ingle Public Library.

**CAMP LORRAINE**, a Christian summer camp for kids between the ages of 8 to 16, is planned for July 31 through Aug. 7. The camp is located on Vank Island. The cost is \$199. Applications available online: [www.alaskacamps.org](http://www.alaskacamps.org).

**NOLAN CENTER THEATER** presents "Minions: The Rise of Gru" rated PG, at 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the animation adventure comedy film that runs one hour and 27 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

**COMMUNITY POTLUCK** 6 p.m. Fridays through August at the sheltered site on Nemo Point Road. All are welcome.

**PARKS and RECREATION** is offering multiple activities and programs to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities visit [www.wrangllrec.com](http://www.wrangllrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

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

## Continuing Events

**PARKS and RECREATION** [www.wrangllrec.com](http://www.wrangllrec.com)

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

**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.

**July 20, 1922**

Tuesday was a red-letter day in the lives of the children of Wrangell. The arrival of the "Kandy Kings" on the Spokane was like a midsummer visit from Santa Claus. The visitors were distributing samples of high-class confectionery products. The youngsters followed the visitors around until their tummies as well as their pockets were full of sweets. The vessel is under charter to 150 members and their families of the Western Candy Association. The voyage is a novel one in that a convention is being held on board the steamer. Business discussions and convention talks are held during the day. The evenings are given over to dancing. A special daily edition of the Western Confectioner is published aboard the vessel each day on a mimeograph. Wrangell Mayor Grant did the honors of

the town and piloted the visitors to the totems, Shakes island and other points of interest.

**July 18, 1947**

The local Elks lodge started installing molding in their new club rooms this week after finishing up the rough work. The lodge room furniture arrived on the Briggs Corp. boat, the Southeastern, last Wednesday and is just waiting for the arrival of the floor tile, due to arrive next Wednesday, before being moved in. A carpenter will start work on the bar and back bar in the next few days and the booths will be moved in. With about everything on hand to complete the job, the Elks are pushing to open the club by Aug. 21, when the Emblem Club will hold an installation of officers with a cocktail party, banquet and dance.

**July 21, 1972**

A timber fire last week charred 13 acres of felled and bucked trees in Tyler Logging Co. territory on the west end of Zarembo Island. Wrangell District Ranger Gary McCoy of the U.S. Forest Service said the fire started Tuesday evening after the logging crew had left the area five miles east of the camp at St. John's Harbor. The flames were reported by the camp, which turned out to fight the blaze along with Forest Service personnel. McCoy said up to 62 men were on the lines. Equipment used to quell the blaze included three bulldozers, a yarder, a log loader and four portable Forest Service pumps that were

flown in. Smoke from the blaze rose 1,000 feet into the air but was not reported visible in Wrangell 23 miles east. McCoy declared the fire out at 5 a.m. Wednesday after an all-night struggle to keep it from spreading into timber, which was becoming a dangerous fire hazard after a number of sunny, rainless days. The ranger estimated the value of the timber in the fire area at more than \$30,000. Cause of the fire was not immediately determined.

**July 24, 1997**

After a three-day blockade by Canadian fishermen, the state ferry Malaspina was allowed to leave Prince Rupert, B.C., about 9 p.m. Monday and sail north to Ketchikan. The stand-off with up to 250 fishing boats began Saturday morning, as a protest by Canadian salmon fishermen over alleged illegal taking of Canadian-spawned sockeyes by Alaska fishermen in the high seas. A treaty allocating salmon stocks between Canada and the U.S. expired in 1993 and negotiations to renew the pact broke down recently when Canadian representatives walked away from the table. Alaska Attorney General Bruce Botelho said the state will sue Canada for damages in the incident, including some \$1,200-per-hour in overtime charges for the ferry crew, as well as inconvenience to passengers all along Southeast Alaska and damage to the reputation of the Alaska Marine Highway System at the height of the tourist season.

## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
July 20	4:29a	9:20p	16:51h
July 21	4:31a	9:19p	16:47h
July 22	4:33a	9:17p	16:44h
July 23	4:34a	9:15p	16:40h
July 24	4:36a	9:14p	16:37h
July 25	4:38a	9:12p	16:33h
July 26	4:40a	9:10p	16:30h



# Family fiddle has legacy of Nordic music in eight strings

BY MARC LUTZ  
Sentinel editor

Lorraine Jenson-Kagee has a physical connection to her family's origins in Snarum, Norway, that sat in a box gathering dust for the past 20 years.

Last month, Jenson-Kagee's sister, Darlene, sent the family fiddle to Wrangell after it spent almost eight decades in Oregon, far from the place it was built in 1842.

Though some might refer to it as a violin, the instrument is actually a Hardangerfele or Hardanger fiddle, the national instrument of Norway named for the region of the country where it was built. Rather than the typical four strings of a violin, the Hardanger has up to eight strings.

Four strings run the length of the fingerboard and neck of the fiddle and two to four run underneath, resonating the notes played on the upper strings. Though many Hardanger fiddles are ornate with various designs, the Jenson fiddle is small and plain.

Jenson-Kagee's grandfather, Anton Jenson, was born in Snarum in 1872. Sometime during his childhood, he was gifted the fiddle and learned to play. The entire Jenson family was musical, according to a book written by Jenson-Kagee's aunt, Effie Ritsche.

"My dad had a strong and varied musical background," Ritsche wrote. "His mother played for the king of Norway



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Lorraine Jenson-Kagee inspects an eight-string Hardangerfele (Hardanger fiddle) that was built in Norway in 1842 and given to her grandfather in the late 1800s. This type of fiddle, smaller than a violin, typically has four strings running along the top of the instrument and two to four strings running under the neck which resonate when the other strings are played.

and also the queen of England when they visited areas of Norway."

Jenson came to America in 1889 when he was 17, settling in Homesville Township, Minnesota. He instilled his love of music in

his children, building violins out of strings and cigar boxes and flutes from red willows they would learn to play. He would also use his fiddle music to earn money to support his wife and 10 children.

"Throughout the years, he would put the (fiddle) in a cleaned, bleached flour sack, stick it into the ... box which he had made, would take off on foot through the woods to the neighbors and play for dances," Ritsche wrote. "He played alone and would come home about two in the morning, and brought \$2 which he gave to my mother for the groceries and sundries."

Jenson-Kagee's father, Helmer Jenson, moved his family from Minnesota to Lebanon, Oregon, in 1942. The fiddle ended up with Helmer's sister.

"It was supposed to go to my dad, but the one sister took it," Jenson-Kagee said. "Then her son bought it from the estate and it ended up with my brother (in Lebanon). Then it sat in the case for over 20 years."

From there, Jenson-Kagee's sister, Darlene, ended up with it, eventually sending it to Wrangell.

Before he died, Anton Jenson said no one could lay claim to the fiddle, stating that his children could take care of it and pass it from brother to brother and sister to sister. "Whoever tries to keep it will have lots of bad luck, this is my will," Ritsche wrote.

Jenson-Kagee is giving the fiddle to her son, Richard Burr, who is fascinated with the instrument. He's not sure whether he will have it restored yet, but he admits he is fascinated with the style and history of it. He said the one thing he for sure will do with the treasured family heirloom is "hide it."

## Sharing Our Knowledge conference coming to Wrangell in September

BY CARLEIGH MINOR  
For the Wrangell Sentinel

For the first time in its almost 30-year history, Sharing Our Knowledge, a regional conference of Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian tribes and clans will be held in Wrangell.

The conference is scheduled for Sept. 7-11 at the Nolan Center, with activities also planned for Chief Shakes Island and the WCA carving shed.

Each day will begin with keynote speeches followed by workshops, said Alice Taff, a conference coordinator. Several field trips are planned and evenings will be devoted to cultural activities for participants.

The sessions will be open to anyone interested in Southeast Alaska indigenous people and their Canadian relatives. Registration will be \$75 for general admission and \$25 for elders and students, organizers said.

Presentations will cover topics such as language retention, art, Alaska Native history, museum studies, cultural anthropology, indigenous law, clan protocols, fisheries and traditional ecological knowledge, according to the Juneau-based organization's website.

The event started in 1993, then known as the Clan Conference, and was first held in Haines and Klukwan. The 2021 conference was canceled due to the pandemic. Past events have attracted as many as 400 participants.

Funding for the Wrangell Sharing Our Knowledge conference comes from a variety of sources including WCA, the U.S. Forest Service, National Science Foundation and others.

This year's conference theme is "A Time for Peace."

Taff said presentations on a range of topics have been accepted for the September schedule, including art and healing, Wrangell's history, boarding schools in Alaska, ethical research and community empowerment.

Local clans will welcome attendees on the eve of the conference with a "Warming of the

Hands" ceremony at the Chief Shakes House.

Other activities will include Raven and Eagle/Wolf ceremonies, and creative presentations. Weavers of Chilkat and Ravenstail blankets and other artisans will be invited to work on and present their pieces throughout the conference.

Alaska Native art will be presented for sale.

While most presentations will be in person, a few will be via Zoom, said Peter Metcalfe, a member of the event's planning committee who is also coordinating video coverage. "We expect to have people making presentations from St. Petersburg, Russia, and from Washington, D.C., and Montreal."

The conference will be live streamed and recorded on the organization's YouTube channel.

Alaska Waters business manager and Wrangell resident Brooke Leslie said the community is helping prepare for the conference. Many businesses have stepped in and donated to help with catering, equipment, drinks and such.

Students and faculty of Outer Coast, a new two-year college in Sitka, will be on hand as volunteers.

Presentation proposals from the canceled 2021 conference provided a start for this year's program, which has filled out in recent weeks. Anyone who wants to submit a proposal for this year can go to the conference website [sharingourknowledge.org](http://sharingourknowledge.org).

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## High COVID case count hits community

Sentinel staff

An additional 40 COVID-19 cases were recorded in Wrangell July 7-13, more than twice as many as in the previous three weeks, according to the Alaska Department of Health website.

That's almost as many cases as were reported in Ketchikan, 43, during the same seven-day period, though the Ketchikan borough has more than six times the population of Wrangell.

Of the 713 infections in Wrangell reported to the state since the pandemic count started in March 2020, 172, almost 25%, have come in the past three months.

Federal and state health officials acknowledge that the actual number of infections is much higher than official counts because of the prevalence of at-home COVID tests, which are not included in government statistics unless reported by a health care provider.

The recently higher case counts in Wrangell have led to workforce issues as businesses cope with staff on sick leave.

The state releases case numbers every Wednesday.

The latest omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5, have become the dominant cause of infection in the United States, and a large percentage of genetically sequenced cases in Alaska are attributed to the two fast-spreading subvariants.

Health officials have said the subvariants are among the most contagious variations of the virus but have not been linked to more severe illness. In addition, the possibility of reinfection and antibody evasion appear higher for these variants, officials have said.

At-home test kits are available at the Wrangell Fire Hall and at the Wrangell Medical Center pharmacy. The hospital also offers drive-up testing for people with symptoms by appointment only. Call 907-874-7000.

Meanwhile, the quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super-contagious omicron mutant that's worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States.

Scientists say the variant — called BA.2.75 — may be

able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection. It's unclear whether it could cause more serious disease than other omicron variants, including the globally prominent BA.5.

*The Associated Press and Anchorage Daily News contributed to this report.*

### Corrections

The July 13 Sentinel erroneously reported that tickets to the BearFest dinner on July 29 would include a chance to win two round-trip tickets on Alaska Airlines. The raffle is separate from the dinner.

The July 13 Sentinel erroneously listed Chad Diffenbacher as the third-place winner in the single-buck event at the Fourth of July logging competition. Mike Lockabey won third place in the event.



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Congress should extend health insurance subsidies

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

Some argue that the federal government paid out far too much money to too many people under the headline of “pandemic relief aid.”

The list includes up to \$3,200 per person in cash, expanded and extended unemployment and food stamp benefits, child tax credits, mortgage assistance payments, rent relief payments, help with utilities, larger subsidies for health insurance on the Affordable Care Act marketplace, business grants and low-interest loans, federal aid to cities and states with few strings attached.

But those programs, which started more than two years ago, are gone or winding down, with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called food stamps, the next program that will reset back to pre-public health emergency levels. Which means about 125 Wrangell

households will see their benefits substantially cut beginning in September. Since April 2020, monthly SNAP payments have averaged \$430, but in the months leading up to the pandemic the average Wrangell household SNAP benefit fluctuated between \$208 and \$260 — which is where they will return.

The numbers will be similar for the more than 50,000 Alaska households statewide participating in SNAP, with the reductions taking millions of dollars a month off the breakfast, lunch and dinner tables of families in need.

The political and economic debates over whether the federal government paid out too much money to people, businesses and communities the past two years means nothing to the families, children, young and old adults who now find the so-called “safety net” has some holes.

There is still time, however, to avoid the next tear in that net, though the deadline is September and the fix is up to Congress — more known of late for caring about elections than people.

The cost of health insurance will rise substantially next year for about 13 million Americans — and more could lose their coverage — unless

Congress can summon the political will and the votes before leaving town for summer break and election campaigns.

Under the American Rescue Plan Act, the 2021 pandemic relief bill, lawmakers boosted the subsidies for low-income people to purchase insurance through national or state Affordable Care Act exchanges — and granted those benefits to middle-income Americans for the first time.

“There is still time, however, to avoid the next tear in that net, though the deadline is September and the fix is up to Congress — more known of late for caring about elections than people.”

Those subsidies work on a sliding scale, depending on income, with the American Rescue Plan capping the premium for people at the higher end at 8.5% of their income.

Those expanded subsidies, however, are set to expire at the end of this year unless Congress extends the help. The cost would be about \$22 billion a year, or less than 0.004% of the federal budget.

For Alaskans, the loss of enhanced federal subsidies would boost the average cost of health insurance by \$1,164 a year — the fifth-highest

increase in the nation — according to data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, as compiled by Families USA, a nonprofit health advocacy organization.

The increase would add more than \$26 million a year in insurance costs to the household budgets for almost 23,000 Alaskans who get insurance through healthcare.gov, according to the Families USA analysis.

That assumes those Alaskans could afford the larger bills and keep their coverage. If not, they would go without coverage, as they are over-income for Medicaid and too young for Medicare.

Losing insurance is not a good answer for keeping people healthy and holding down medical costs.

Much of the problem in Congress is the refusal of Republicans in the Senate to approve anything that has a Democratic tinge or taint to it, and Democrats’ inability to stick together and accomplish much of anything. However, there is still time to avoid a terminal prognosis for the subsidies. Senators need to put health ahead of politics and extend the program.

EDITORIAL

Property assessments worth a full review

Probably no one enjoys paying property taxes. It’s a big check, rather than a few dimes or dollars in sales taxes each time at the register.

But it’s an essential part of the municipal budget, second only to sales taxes in bringing in revenue to pay for schools, roads, police, fire and other services.

The tax is based on the value of property — whether commercial or residential, the tax rate is all the same. Cities and boroughs across Alaska send out assessment notices each year, telling property owners what their home, fourplex, warehouse, retail shop or other property is worth. City councils and borough assemblies then set the tax rate to match what the community needs to provide services.

In Wrangell, the rate is 12.75 mills, or 0.01275% on each \$100,000 in assessed value. On a \$250,000 home, that comes to \$3,187.50 a year. On a million-dollar commercial shop, it would be \$12,750 a year.

State law requires municipalities to assess property at the “full and true value,” which the statute defines as the “estimated price that the property would bring in an open market.”

The most important thing about property taxes is that they should be assessed fairly and equitably, which does not mean equally. Not all three-bedroom homes are worth the same on the market; some are in better condition, some have larger rooms or may have a garage, or a sun deck or be on a larger piece of land. An assessor is supposed to take all those variables into account and arrive at a fair-market value. That means an approach that treats all square feet, extra bathrooms, decks, garage and roof rot pretty much the same.

It’s not a perfect system, but it should be consistent and current, which takes constant work particularly in a tight housing market where values only go in one direction because of limited supply.

All of which are good reasons to support the borough in its effort to undertake a comprehensive review of all of the property assessments on the island. Though the assessor tries to review each piece of property every three years, some have gone years without a reassessment for taxable value. Which means the owner probably is underpaying taxes compared to neighbors with a current valuation.

There will be a cost to paying a contract assessor to review the file for every parcel and building in town, maybe even inspect some of them in person, and it will take a lot of work to get it all done before assessment notices for 2023 taxes need to go out in the mail before March 20.

Despite the cost and work, it’s the fair thing to do. Fair so that every property owner pays taxes by the same standards.

— Wrangell Sentinel

Slugs

Continued from page 1

our property when we go,” she said. “Any plants that go with us, the soil is staying. It’s a new property (where we’re moving), freshly developed, so it doesn’t have the same pest issues that we have in town.”

For gardeners, any species of slug is a nuisance, no matter how beneficial they can be. At the community garden site, beds are covered with netting to repel anything seeking to munch on the plants. But netting isn’t the only method used throughout Wrangell.

Input on the Garden of Weedin’ Facebook page includes suggestions from an ammonia spray treatment and copper tape to beer traps.

“A plastic container full of beer pushed into the dirt so they just plop in for a swim. They’re attracted to the yeast in the beer, and you get the satisfaction of ‘collecting’ them,” one member posted.

“Beer traps are really popular,” Wickman said. “The whole idea is you want to get them into the water so they drown. They can be in the water for a long time and crawl out. It’s got to be something that’s fermented or intoxicating.”

Wickman said the Southeast Master Gardeners provide a class that focuses on slug traps, which is putting down a tarp, newspaper or cardboard to provide

a protective covering overnight. “In the morning, as the slugs try to hide, they’ll go underneath those areas,” she said. “Then you can roll your tarp over and dispose of them in whatever method suits you.”

Another slug-eradication method, which is ecofriendly but not commonly known, is ducks.

“I’ve had all types of slugs from monster black ones to banana slugs to the smaller garden destroyers,” said Christina Florschutz, a lifelong gardener, who grows on about an acre in Wrangell. “I do not remember how I learned that ducks ate slugs. It’s likely I read it somewhere.”

Florschutz said she uses a square-within-a-square method. The garden bed — the smaller square — is set up with chicken wire around its perimeter, while a larger square with fencing surrounds the smaller square.

“Ducks are within the larger square but are prevented from entering the garden,” Florschutz said. “The space between the squares becomes the slug-free zone. After harvest in the fall, I can open up the inner square and allow the ducks to clean up anything (like slug eggs) that might have escaped their notice during the summer.”

Wickman had a neighbor with wandering ducks that would come into her garden to devour the slugs, except there was one problem.



A brown slug munches on a leaf outside the compost bin at the community garden. Slugs can be good and bad for gardens, as they’ll clean up animal waste and dead or dying matter. However, they also like vegetation and can devastate a garden.

PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/  
WRANGELL SENTINEL

“Those slugs get so big the ducks couldn’t eat them,” Wickman said. “We’d sit there and watch them trying to eat these giant slugs, and it was not going well for the ducks.”

Another natural solution can be certain plants that repel slugs, like peonies and hydrangeas, Wickman said. But really it comes down to maintenance, she said, keeping garden beds clean and removing any dead or dying debris and things slugs can hide on or under.

“It’s one of those things where you’re never going to get rid of all your slugs, but if you can get a handle on it, then you

can manage it,” she said.

Carol Fletcher, the IGAP coordinator in Kasaan has been studying soil biology, which she said has helped her understand the attraction of slugs to gardens.

“Slugs, as we all know, are attracted to alcohol,” Fletcher said. “When your soil is compacted, it creates anaerobic bacteria and alcohol that attracts them.”

The solution is to aerate the garden soil without turning it over to keep it from becoming compacted. One way that can be done, Fletcher said, is by using vermicomposting or worm compost. Worms do all the work of keeping the soil aerated.

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# Wrangell seeks 50% state grant funding for new \$2.3 million Meyers Chuck float

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

The borough is applying for a \$1.166 million state grant to go toward replacing the harbor float at Meyers Chuck. The 400-foot-long float is 57 years old, supported by steel pilings almost 40 years old, according to information presented at the July 11 borough assembly meeting.

Assembly members approved the application for state funding.

The float "has been in a poor and deteriorated condition for many years and needs to be replaced," said a report to the assembly prepared by Amber Al-Haddad, Wrangell's public facilities director.

Total cost of the harbor work is estimated at \$2.332 million. The state grant would cover half the cost. The required 50% local match would come from the borough's Ports and Harbor Enterprise Fund Reserves, which held about \$3 million as of the end of the past fiscal year on June 30. Some of the reserve fund is restricted for use on the Meyers Chuck project.

In 2008, when Wrangell expanded to a borough instead of a city, it took in Meyers Chuck as part of the borough. State law re-

quires that a new borough include at least two communities. Meyers Chuck, population about 20, is 50 miles south of Wrangell. The state transferred ownership of the harbor to the borough in 2014.

"The project would include a complete replacement of the existing moorage system with a wood-decked float structure, replacement of steel piles ... replacement of the gangway for ADA compliance and a small shelter," according to the summary prepared for the assembly. There are no utilities to the float.

The plan is to replace the 400-foot float with a 200-foot-long structure, said Steve Miller, Wrangell port and harbors director. "I don't think they probably ever fill it out with their own vessels," he said of the small community.

Frequent users of the float, Miller said, are yachts and other private boats that stop over in Meyers Chuck as a halfway point on cruises between Ketchikan and Wrangell.

The state budget for the fiscal year that started July 1 includes \$16 million for municipal harbor grants, with applications due Aug. 5.

The borough will continue to look for other grant funds to help pay for the project.

# Last-minute permits for Anan available through Forest Service

Sentinel staff

Independent travelers and residents looking to visit Anan Wildlife Observatory apart from tour groups still have a chance to do so.

The Forest Service Wrangell ranger district is making last-minute permits available through its office on a weekly basis until Aug. 25, the end of the bear-viewing permits season.

Up to four last-minute permits per day will be made available for those who request them the previous week by filling out a form in the district office.

"Collection of weekly requests will end Mondays at 4:30 p.m. and permits will be awarded on Tuesdays by noon. If several requests are for the same day, a lottery for awarding reservation space will be held on Tuesday at 9 a.m.," reads a statement is-

sued by the Forest Service. Corree Delabrué, recreation management specialist with the Forest Service, said the last-minute permits were put on hiatus when the coronavirus pandemic hit and the agency's offices were closed. The offices on Bennett Street are now reopened.

"The reason we started this back up is because people were calling and asking," Delabrué said. "People remembered them and started calling."

Delabrué said independent travelers should first check recreation.gov for available permits. A search for "Anan Wildlife Observatory" will reveal what's available each day. Permits for visiting Anan are required until Aug. 25.

To see the weekly schedule or to find out more about last-minute permitting, visit bit.ly/3IB-YrTQ or call the Wrangell ranger district at 907-874-2323.

# Sculptor

Continued from page 1

to start making her more geometric. The vision is up in your head, but you don't see what you're working on."

Luetkemeyer knew she was realizing her vision when she stuck to more angular design. She also used her welding background to create the bear's paws and claws, foot prints and fish at the base from diamond metal plates.

She was inspired to be an artist at an early age, seeing the work of American sculptor Alexander Calder on display on a trip to Chicago. Though she went to

school in Iowa for welding and became a boilermaker for the Alaska Railroad, she always had aspirations of being an artist, sculpting since high school. She began taking art classes in earnest after getting pregnant, and that took her on a different career path.

After moving to Wrangell in 2005, Luetkemeyer went to work as a teacher at the high school, teaching whatever classes were needed. She eventually made her way to the art class after long-time teacher Kirk Garbisch retired. Luetkemeyer retired in 2018, still focusing on her art.

One of the aspects she wanted to dis-

play with Honeysuckle was a sense of joy, which is why she has the bear lifting her arms to the sky.

"It's amazing. It's so beautiful. I love how the arms are open. I can just feel Anne (in this piece)," said Cyni Crary, director of the Nolan Center, where the statue is currently on display. "We're so lucky that BearFest uses our site for these statues."

Luetkemeyer was also appreciative that Eteffagh asked her to create the artwork.

"It's unique to me that (Sylvia) expected me to do it, and I've probably had

many more people in my life expect me not to make sculpture because of my industrial background," Luetkemeyer said. "In fact, I've had people say, 'You cannot make sculpture. You're a welder. This is not part of your job training.' For (Sylvia's) expectation, I'm appreciative because it launched me."

It's Luetkemeyer's hope that people who view Honeysuckle find joy in it.

"I think the last couple years we've been through hard, hard times," she said. "I wanted the bear to express Wrangell's resilience. I hope you dance when you have the chance."

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# Early voting opens Aug. 1 for special and primary elections

By Wrangell Sentinel  
and Anchorage Daily News

Early voting will open Aug. 1 for the Aug. 16 special election to fill the unexpired term of the late U.S. Rep. Don Young and the primary election, also Aug. 16, for governor, Legislature, U.S. Senate, and to select the top candidates for a full two-year term in the U.S. House.

Voters may cast their ballots between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays through Aug. 15 at City Hall assembly chambers, said Sarah Merritt, state elections worker in Wrangell.

"You never have to give a reason" to vote early, Merritt said.

Voters can choose to vote early if they will be out of town on election day, or want to avoid the busier day at the polling booths, or just find it more convenient to vote during the two weeks before election day.

On election day Aug. 16, polling places will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Nolan Center.

Voters are advised to bring either their state voter ID card or other identification for early voting or on election day, Merritt said.

The Aug. 16 ballot is two-sided, with one side listing the names of three candidates to fill Young's term until the new Congress convenes in January. The choices are Republicans Nick Begich and former Gov. Sarah Palin, and Democrat Mary Peltola.

This will be Alaska's first ranked-choice election, with voters able to list the three candidates in order of preference.

"You choose your top choice, but then you also have the opportunity to follow up with a second choice and a third choice," said Amanda Moser, chief strategy officer for Alaskans for Better Elections, the organization that advocated for the elections law change approved by voters in 2020.

Ranked-choice voting provides for immediate, automatic runoff counts if no candidate gets more than 50% of the vote. It eliminates the last-place finisher and moves to the second choice on those voters' ballots, adding their numbers to the remaining candidates until someone gets more than half the votes.

In a public opinion poll conducted by Alaska Survey Research, pollster Ivan Moore

found that Democrat Peltola would likely not be eliminated in the first round of voting in the special U.S. House race, with conservative voters divided between Palin and Begich.

The probability of Peltola being eliminated in the first round "is like, zero," Moore said.

If Moore's poll is accurate and voter sentiment does not change in the next few weeks, voters who cast ballots for Palin or Begich, whichever comes in last, would have their votes moved to their second choice. If enough Palin and Begich supporters stick with a Republican as their second choice, the second-place candidate would overcome Peltola's first-round lead and win the election.

The other side of the Aug. 16 paper ballot is for the primary election, where voters again will see Peltola, Palin and Begich listed, along with 19 other candidates for a full two-year term as Alaska's only member of the U.S. House, a job Young held for 49 years.

Voters can choose only one candidate in the primary.

The top four finishers from the primary will move to the Nov. 8 general election, under

the same ranked-choice selection process.

In addition to the U.S. House race, the Aug. 16 primary ballot will include the governor's race, with incumbent Gov. Mike Dunleavy facing former Gov. Bill Walker, former Anchorage Democratic legislator Les Gara, and seven other Republican, Libertarian, Alaskan Independence Party and undeclared candidates. The top four will advance to November.

Incumbent U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski faces a reelection challenge from Republican and former Dunleavy administration official Kelley Tshibaka and 17 other candidates in the Senate primary.

In the state House race, incumbent Rep. Dan Ortiz, of Ketchikan, has two challengers — so all three will advance from the primary to the general election. The district includes Wrangell.

Ortiz, an independent, was first elected to the House in 2014. He currently serves as vice chair of the budget-writing House Finance Committee.

His challengers are Ketchikan Republican Jeremy Bynum and Wrangell non-partisan candidate Shevaun Meggitt.

Meggitt, who flies a Boeing 777 for a cargo airline, graduated Wrangell High School in 1987, later returning to the community to live while she commutes for mostly international freight flights.

"I've always paid attention to politics," she said in an interview last month, though she had not been looking to run for office.

The government's response to COVID-19 "was insanity," she said. "I can't sit on the sidelines anymore," adding, "This kind of government overreach cannot be tolerated."

There are just two candidates for the state Senate district that represents Wrangell: Incumbent Republican Bert Stedman, of Sitka, who has been in the Legislature since 2003 and currently serves as co-chair of the budget-writing Senate Finance Committee; and Mike Sheldon, of Petersburg.

Sheldon's campaign website says: "We must wake up this nation, including Alaska, or lose our freedoms from a bunch of liars and actors who say one thing and do another."

Both Stedman and Sheldon will advance from the primary to the Nov. 8 general election ballot.

## Borough wants to undertake comprehensive review of property assessments

By LARRY PERSLEY  
Sentinel writer

Looking to ensure that all property is taxed fairly and equitably, the borough is considering a reassessment of all residential and commercial properties for next year's tax bills.

The goal is for assessments to be consistent and "fair and equitable for everyone," Borough Manager Jeff Good said last week.

It's not about raising taxes, it's to ensure that similar properties are assessed accordingly, he said.

Generally, the borough's property assessor — a contractor from out of town — reviews the value assigned to about a third of the property in town each year. But despite that three-year cycle, some

properties have not been reassessed in 10 years, Good said.

Property taxes are based on a percentage of assessed value. The borough assessor sets the value as of Jan. 1 each year for every residential and commercial structure and land in town, subject to appeal by the property owner, and then the borough assembly sets the tax rate.

This year's total assessed value of all taxable commercial and residential property in Wrangell is \$150 million. Property owned by the borough, state and federal governments, the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, churches, some other nonprofits and senior-owned homes are exempt from taxes.

The borough this year is budgeted to take in \$1.78 million in property taxes,

the second-largest revenue source for Wrangell after sales taxes.

Good, who took over as borough manager last November, wrote in this year's budget report it became apparent this year "that we need to conduct a city-wide assessment of all the properties for the 2023 property assessment cycle. This will allow us to correct disparities between like properties, while adequately adjusting property assessments to current values."

State law requires municipalities to assess property as of Jan. 1 each year at the "full and true value," which is defined as the "estimated price that the property would bring in an open market and under the then-prevailing market conditions."

Alaska does not require property sellers or buyers to report the value of their transaction, unlike many states that require disclosure of the sales price. That lack of data "makes it tough on the assessors," Good said.

Besides, not many sales occur in Wrangell each year, further limiting the information available on property values, he said.

Undertaking a reassessment of every property in town will be a large job, the manager said. He does not have a cost estimate. Assembly approval would be required for a contract for the work.

The contractor would be on a tight deadline to complete the work before assessment notices need to go out in the mail by March 20 next year.

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### Entries due by July 29 in BearFest photo contest

Sentinel staff

The BearFest photo contest is wide open like an aperture on a starry night. That is, it's time to click and submit entries focused on bear photos and videos.

From now through 11:59 p.m. on July 29, photographers and

videographers can post up to five of their favorite Alaska bear photos and/or videos at [facebook.com/BFphotocontest2022](https://facebook.com/BFphotocontest2022) for a chance to win a BearFest T-shirt and \$50 gift card. Children 16 and under who enter their work have a chance to win a T-shirt and \$25 gift card.

According to BearFest organizer Ceona Koch, the contest usually receives anywhere from 20 to 30 entries. She said submissions have increased since the contest was moved online.

The annual BearFest activities will run July 27 through July 31, with workshops, symposiums, art and music, a marathon and, of course, food.

Last year's top three adult winners were: Jim Nelson, first place for his photo "Best Part of the Fish"; Alan Thompson, second place for his photo "Black bear eating at Anan"; and Kellie O'Brien, third place for her photo "Brown Bears at Anan."

The contest is open to residents and visitors and work requires photographer or videographer credit.

Photos and video will be judged by local photographers and narrowed down to the top three selections for the adult and child categories.

Work can be entered by someone who isn't the photographer, but work needs to be properly credited to be accepted, Koch said. Those who want to enter their work anonymously or those who don't use Facebook can enter their work by emailing the digital file to [fun@alaskabearfest.org](mailto:fun@alaskabearfest.org).

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# Peak budworm infestation eats its way through Southeast forest

By the Chilkat Valley News, Sitka Sentinel and Wrangell Sentinel

Look around Southeast and you will see a lot of evergreen trees that aren't so green.

Southeast Alaska's hemlock and spruce trees are fending off an assault by a number of pests and diseases, most notably a caterpillar that causes the conifers to turn reddish-brown.

The main culprit is the western black-headed budworm, a moth caterpillar that feeds on hemlock and spruce needles, according to U.S. Forest Service Alaska Region entomologist Elizabeth Graham in Juneau.

Graham said Southeast trees are experiencing a peak budworm infestation, a cyclical event that occurs every 30 or 40 years. While the widespread browning looks alarming, she said it's not a big concern for general forest health.

"It's actually endemic to the forest here. It's not an invasive species or an exotic pest we haven't dealt with before," Graham said. "It may look really bad at first, but it's part of the dynamic forest and how it's changing."

Budworms tend to feed on new growth, leaving older parts of the tree intact. As they devour needles, they create gaps in the tree cover, providing new habitat for wildlife and letting more light shine on the understory, Graham said.

She added that budworm poop, called frass, is also beneficial for the forest, infusing the soil with nutrients when it falls to the ground.

Graham will be in Wrangell for BearFest next week, and said she is scheduled to give a presentation and talk about the budworm on July 28.

"The nice thing is it's not the spruce bark beetle," she said of the bug that has infested an estimated 1.6 million acres of Southcentral forests from the Kenai Peninsula to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. That's equal to about 10% of the Tongass National Forest.

Southeast forest managers first noticed



PHOTO COURTESY ELIZABETH GRAHAM/U.S. FOREST SERVICE

A western black-headed budworm larva, hanging by silk thread for dispersal in the forest.

the budworm outbreak in 2020. Infestations can last a few years, building up until the population crashes, Graham said. The last time there was a major outbreak was 1992 to 1995.

The caterpillars prefer hemlock but this year they are feeding more on spruce, Graham said, likely because their population grew and more moths laid eggs on spruce trees last fall.

"In coming weeks, the western black-headed budworm will continue to feed and the damage will become even more apparent," the Forest Service warned in a July 5 announcement. "While most trees survive the damage caused by the

budworms — and some trees may even benefit in the long term — heavy concentrations of activity can lead to the death of some trees."

Some areas in Southeast have been hit particularly hard, Graham said, especially where a different insect called the hemlock sawfly also is active.

"Prior to this, though, in 2018 and 2019, we had an outbreak of the hemlock sawflies, which is another defoliating insect that occurs here and is endemic to the forest here," she said. "That (sawfly outbreak) ended in 2020, really dropped off ... but then the budworm activity started to increase."

Hemlock trees — particularly around Angoon and Petersburg — have been hardest hit in the current budworm outbreak, she said.

Graham and a colleague will conduct aerial surveys across Southeast in the coming weeks and will gain more information about the extent of the budworm outbreak. She said they fly over about 15% of the Tongass National Forest and other lands in Southeast each year. "Insects and disease don't recognize the borders."

She encourages Alaskans to engage with a citizen science program called iNaturalist, which collects data on a wide range of species, not only budworms. People can post photos and look at postings from others. The program can be found at <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/alaska-forest-health-observations>.

"What iNaturalist is meant to do is just to record all the organisms out there and it's just an awesome resource for people who can help identify them," Graham said. "This isn't just limited to western black-headed budworms or hemlock sawflies, but really any kind of cool critters you're finding in the forest or things like a fungus or cool plants and stuff like that."

Outbreaks of more serious insect threats to the forests have been linked to climate change, but more research is needed before it's shown to cause budworm outbreaks, Graham said.

"We're actually working with some researchers to look at any climate factors that may help trigger the outbreak or build the population. We know that there are some things that can be an indirect factor. And the question now, though, is with changing climates, will the frequency increase? Is it possible that instead of it being 30 to 40 years (between budworm outbreaks), will it go more 20 to 30 years? These are questions that we're all wondering," she said.

## Wrangell businesses less optimistic about economy than Southeast neighbors

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

Nearly two-thirds of the 440 Southeast Alaska business leaders who responded to a spring survey said the region's overall business climate is good, the highest positive rating since 2017.

It's a strong turnaround from last year's survey when 80% called the business climate "poor" or "very poor," amid the second year of pandemic limitations on travel.

Businesses in Wrangell were not as optimistic as other Southeast communities. Whereas the Southeast average was 62% who rated the economy as good or very good, Wrangell came in at 48% good and 48% poor, similar to Ketchikan's survey results.

More than one-third of Wrangell businesses reported a generally negative economic outlook for their business or industry.

"Wrangell businesses have a tremendous amount of uncertainty, with nearly half of all businesses unsure if they will add or cut jobs in the next year," according to the survey report.

Some of the strongest optimism came from Sitka, Hoonah and Petersburg.

Juneau-based Rain Coast Data conducts the annual survey for the Southeast Conference, an organization of municipalities and businesses from throughout the region.

The survey was conducted in April and May.

The lower numbers in Wrangell don't surprise Carol Rushmore, the borough's economic development director.

The spring survey came before businesses knew whether the summer would show a recovery of the pandemic years of 2020-2021, she said.

"This summer has turned out to be decent," Rushmore said last Thursday. "I think there would be a difference (in the survey) now."

Even with a good summer, she acknowledged that businesses continue to face a shortage of workers and the community continues to deal

with a lack of housing.

The lack of workers is not a problem unique to Wrangell. "I don't know of a single organization that is fully staffed and not looking for employees," said Robert Venables, executive director of the Southeast Conference.

He called labor shortages and high fuel prices "storm clouds on the horizon" that could rain on business owners' optimism.

Setting aside the problems of hiring staff and paying fuel

costs, Venables said he was "a little surprised at the magnitude of the optimism" in the survey responses. However, he believes it is a valid number. "One thing about business owners is they have the best fingers on the pulse" of their communities," he said.

Survey respondents across Southeast listed limited housing availability, rising freight costs and high construction costs as the biggest barriers to business growth.

Almost 70% of survey re-

spondents said home prices are too high for their staff, and 63% say rental prices also are too high. About the same numbers said there are not enough homes on the market to attract and retain workers, or enough rentals to meet the housing needs of their workforce.

In Wrangell, 86% of survey respondents said there are not enough homes available for purchase to attract and retain workers.

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# Southeast towns look for answers to limited public restrooms

By CERI GODINEZ  
For the Wrangell Sentinel

Most every town in Southeast faces a similar summer problem: Boatloads of visitors and not enough public toilets.

Some communities have built additional restrooms, and Sitka this summer is paying downtown businesses willing to open their facilities to the public.

Under a new grant program, Sitka has succeeded in opening six business restrooms to the public this summer, relieving a strain on the limited public facilities downtown. The incentive program is part of the town's effort to handle a record-setting cruise ship season.

"We were maxed out in terms of infrastructure before we were looking at record numbers," Sitka planning director Amy Ainslie said.

Following completion of a new, privately owned cruise ship dock, Sitka could receive as many as 400,000 passengers this summer, 100,000 more than the previous record. The town could see as many as 8,000 visitors in a single day, roughly equal to its population.

The idea for the grant arose from the observation that several organizations and businesses were already opening their facilities to the public during tour-

ism season, Ainslie said.

"We thought it would be nice to be compensated for that because what they're doing is not free. ... But also, if we can get others to do the same, it's a great use of existing facilities," she said.

In exchange for keeping bathroom facilities clean and open to the public during business hours between May 1 and Sept. 30, participating businesses and organizations receive a minimum grant of \$1,000.

Funding for the program comes from Sitka's share of the state's commercial passenger vessel excise tax, a fee levied on cruise ship companies based on passenger numbers. The law requires revenue go toward infrastructure and services used by passengers.

So far, Sitka's program has been getting a positive response, Ainslie said. "Between businesses opening their doors and having new temporary restrooms as well, we seem to be meeting demand."

The challenge of bulking up infrastructure to meet a seasonal visitor influx is one that many Southeast communities have faced over the years.

Even with a fraction of Sitka's cruise ship traffic — fewer than 20,000 passengers this summer — Wrangell also gets a significant number of independent

travelers walking through downtown, in need of a rest stop.

There are two public restroom facilities in downtown Wrangell — at the Nolan Center, and the small borough-owned and maintained structure behind the Elks Lodge. The borough contracted for porta-potties over the Fourth of July and is looking at other, more long-term options, Borough Manager Jeff Good said last week.

Expanding the facilities behind the Elks could cost several hundred thousand dollars, he said, but the borough has researched the possibility of bringing in portable toilets in trailers, something a little nicer than porta-potties. Connecting any restrooms to the borough's sewage system, rather than using a holding tank that needs to be pumped out, would add to the cost, Good said.

At the high end of visitor traffic are Skagway and Juneau, each with several large ships on the same day for much of the summer.

Skagway recently completed construction of a \$2 million public restroom using a mix of cruise ship passenger tax and sales tax revenue.

The new bathroom took eight months to build, Skagway Mayor Andrew Cremata said.

"In Juneau, (a restroom shortage) is definitely something that we've experienced in the past," said Alexandra Pierce, the borough's tourism manager. "We've put a lot of effort into using (cruise ship passenger tax revenue) to build additional restrooms," she said, noting that this year Juneau's restroom facilities appear to be meeting demand.

It can take years to secure funding for a new restroom, and then bid and build it.

"In Haines, it took us over a decade to figure out the restrooms by Port Chilkoot dock," said Southeast Conference executive director and former Haines Borough Manager Robert Venables. Figuring out who was going to use the facility and, therefore, who should be responsible for the cost of building and maintaining the facility took a long time, he said.

Sitka is uncertain whether it will continue the \$1,000 business grant program next year. "The way that we wrote our plan is that we're heavily focused on the 2022 season. We will reassess in the fall what worked and what elements we need to change," Ainslie said.

Sentinel writer Larry Persily contributed to this report.

## New 988 mental health crisis line starts up in Alaska

By LISA PHU  
Alaska Beacon

Alaskans who find themselves in a mental health crisis can now call or text 988 to access a trained crisis counselor. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to individuals of all ages.

The three-digit number for suicide prevention and mental health crisis support became operational in Alaska and across the nation on July 16.

Leah Van Kirk, statewide suicide prevention coordinator with the Alaska Division of Behavioral Health, said 988 "provides an easy to remember three-digit number for someone to use when they're in crisis or when they're in emotional distress."

"It's for anyone that's experiencing emotional distress, mental health crisis, substance use crisis, thoughts of suicide, and also for someone who maybe has a friend or a loved one who they're worried about and they want to get help," she said. "It's to support those in crisis and those who are maybe trying to help someone in crisis and aren't sure how."

Callers in Alaska using the three-digit number from a 907 area code will be connected to Careline Alaska based in Fairbanks. Counselors are trained to respond to a crisis, provide emotional support and connect callers with local resources. Confidential support is available to anyone in crisis, including non-English speakers and those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

"The Careline and 988 are answered by Alaskans for Alaskans because we know what it's like here," Van Kirk said. "Having a call center

"Sometimes when people call, they just need someone to talk to. ... So being able to reach out and talk to somebody helps reduce risk."

Leah Van Kirk

Alaska Division of Behavioral Health

here run by Alaskans is really important."

In 2020, the suicide rate in Alaska was 28.1 per 100,000 people, more than twice the national average, according to Van Kirk. That same year, suicide was the second leading cause of death overall for youth and young adults ages 15 to 34 in Alaska. It's also preventable.

"Sometimes when people call, they just need someone to talk to. One of the things that we know about our crisis call center is that it decreases suicidality. So being able to reach out and talk to somebody helps reduce risk," Van Kirk said.

Between 2017 and 2020, Careline Alaska received over 20,000 calls each year. Van Kirk expects that to go up with the implementation of 988. The state has allocated \$1.3 million to support increases in staffing, technology and a small media campaign targeting youth and young adults. The money comes from federal pandemic assistance funding.

The AlaskaBeacon.com is a donor-funded independent news organization in Alaska.

## Little increase in donations despite large dividend payout

By CERI GODINEZ  
For the Wrangell Sentinel

This year, deposits of about \$3,200 each will begin appearing in Alaskans' bank accounts on Sept. 20, but so far the promise of a record-high combined Permanent Fund dividend and energy relief payment hasn't translated to more charitable giving.

Since the Alaska Legislature approved the large payout in May, Alaskans had donated an additional \$14,000 as of last week through Pick.Click.Give, the online charitable giving program linked to the PFD.

"This is typical for this time frame, every year," Pick.Click.Give senior program officer Jessie Lavoie said July 11.

Permanent Fund dividend recipients have until Aug. 31 to go online and donate to their favorite charities or increase their giving.

Over the course of the past 10 years, Pick.Click.Give has raised an average of \$2.8 million annually. Lavoie said donations will likely pick up as the pledge deadline approaches, but she doesn't expect trends this year will look remarkably different from previous years.

Data from the past 10 years of Pick.Click.Give shows little correlation between the size of the Permanent Fund dividend and the total amount raised through the program.

While Pick.Click.Give raised a record high \$3.3 million in 2015, the same year the PFD hit its previous all-time high, \$2,072, the program raised nearly the same amount the following year after the dividend had been halved.

Between 2019 and 2020, the PFD decreased by 38%, but the amount raised through Pick.Click.Give increased very marginally.

"We would argue that the larger PFD doesn't mean larger donations but more donations as more individuals tend to participate, but they pledge smaller amounts," Lavoie said.

Year-to-year increases in dividend size have not translated to increases in the average Pick.Click.Give donation. A record number of people participated in Pick.Click.Give in 2015 — 33,421 — but the average donation amount hit a record high \$108 the following year.

This year's \$3,200 payment doesn't appear to be affecting where people are choosing to pledge either, according to Lavoie. The breakdown is similar to previous years, with human services the top selection for donations.

Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation is one of several Southeast organizations that participates in Pick.Click.Give. Executive Director Julie Decker, of Wrangell, said over the years she's noticed little difference in the amount the organization receives through the program.

"I would say we do see a slight uptick when PFDs are high, but I don't know if we consistently saw that and it wasn't a significant amount more," she said, adding that the amount the organization receives is usually quite small.

Other organizations serving Wrangell that participate in Pick.Click.Give are Catholic Community Services, KSTK and The Salvation Army.

## Legislature works on new policy for members' social media pages

By JAMES BROOKS  
Alaska Beacon

With two of its members facing lawsuits for their social media practices, the Alaska Legislature is contemplating new advice and policies to cover its 60 members.

The joint House-Senate Legislative Council unveiled its first draft of a new policy last Thursday, but individual lawmakers voiced objections to the proposal and further revisions are expected before a final policy is settled.

As explained by legislative staff,

the draft policy is an "everything or nothing" approach that advises lawmakers to not discuss legislative issues or business on their personal social media accounts.

If a lawmaker runs an official legislative account on social media, the policy recommends that the lawmaker either prohibit all public comments or allow all comments, regardless of their content.

"Regardless of whether what's being written or commented is hateful, defamatory

Continued on page 9



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# Policy review: Mining impacts on salmon underestimated

By MAX GRAHAM  
Chilkat Valley News, Haines

A science and policy review concludes that mining risks to salmon habitat have been underestimated across the Pacific Northwest, including Alaska and British Columbia.

The report discusses the limitations on governance of mining operations and calls for greater transparency to prevent future damages.

The study was written by 23 scientists and policy analysts and published July 1 in the peer-reviewed journal "Science Advances."

"Despite impact assessments that are intended to evaluate risk and inform mitigation, mines continue to harm salmonid-bearing watersheds via pathways such as toxic contaminants, stream channel burial and flow regime alteration," the authors wrote. "The body of knowledge presented here supports the notion that the risks and impacts of mining have been underestimated across the watersheds of northwestern North America."

Lead author Chris Sergeant said it is the first peer-reviewed paper that synthesizes North American mining risks to salmon using data from scientific studies, mining companies, government agencies and news reports. There are nearly 4,000

mines — from small-scale placer to major hard rock mines — in the paper's region of focus, which stretches from the Columbia River in Oregon north through British Columbia, the Yukon Territory and Alaska.

"There was a lot of scattered information about mining and salmon and how mining has the potential to impact salmon populations. We never saw a definitive comprehensive source of information in one place," said Sergeant, who lived in Juneau for 10 years and now works as a research scientist at the University of Montana Flathead Lake Bio Station.

The authors discuss how some mining policies do not accurately account for a mine's cumulative ecological impacts or the effects of climate change on mining operations.

One of the paper's takeaways is that there has been little scientific analysis comparing observed impacts with predictions made during permitting and environmental assessments. Sergeant said the authors originally wanted to do a systematic before-and-after analysis but such a study wasn't feasible due to a lack of robust public data.

"We couldn't do it — because either the data are not available, or they're reported over some time frame that isn't helpful, or ... even if the data are available, they aren't statistically robust," Sergeant said.

The authors said they knew of only one paper that draws comparisons between predicted and observed environmental impacts among North American mines.

That study, conducted by the nonprofit Earthworks, found that out of 25 hard rock mines, 16 "exhibited poorer water quality than predicted in the environmental impact statements, representing clear failures in water quality mitigation."

Sergeant acknowledged that Alaska's mine permitting system is "extensive" but said "the case we make in the paper is even though there are the governance structures in place, we still see accidents happen fairly frequently."

One example the authors cite is Red Dog Mine in northwestern Alaska, where unforeseen permafrost thaw in 2020 caused a backup in the mine's water treatment system and forced facility upgrades costing millions of dollars.

A first step toward preventing accidents and mitigating impacts, Sergeant said, is greater transparency.

Alaska Department of Natural Resources spokesperson Lorraine Henry, said in a written statement: Alaska's permitting system is "justifiably robust to ensure any resources development is responsibly conducted."

"DNR works with numerous state agencies, including the Department of Envi-

ronmental Conservation as well as Fish and Game to oversee mineral activities on every project phase," she said. "From the time people are exploring for deposits, through the phase of producing at a mine, to ensuring sites are properly closed and the environment is reclaimed, to post-closure monitoring, state of Alaska professionals are keeping mines designed and operating to avoid, minimize, and mitigate significant environmental impacts."

Such measures include "caring for any potential loss of fish habitat," ensuring that state water quality standards are met, monitoring surrounding ecosystems and reviewing compliance and environmental data associated with major mine authorizations every five years, Henry said.

Beyond the scope of the "Science Advances" paper is the economic impact of mining — a topic addressed by a separate report published earlier this year by two researchers at the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER).

That paper's authors, ISER research professors Bob Loeffler and Brett Watson, wrote that in the state's more economically diverse regions, including Southeast, a new mine "will bring a significant addition of high-paying jobs and important local government tax revenues."

## Coast Guard heads out on annual North Pacific fisheries patrol

By MICHAEL S. LOCKETT  
Juneau Empire

Multiple vessels were targeted with fines as a result of enforcement by the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bertholf during an annual fisheries patrol last year. The announcement comes as the Coast Guard's annual fisheries patrol, North Pacific Guard, is about to start once again.

"Everyone eats on the planet. Everyone needs food. Everyone needs fish. It's a problem for everyone," said Lt. Collin McClelland, who works in the international section of the Coast Guard District 17 in Juneau, coordinating the patrols. "That is why it has become a priority for us: it is affecting national security and our national food safety."

Four countries are participating in concert this year, McClelland said: Canada, Japan, South Korea and the U.S.

The U.S. may have the most visible contribution, deploying 418-foot cutters, like the Bertholf, and HC-130 Hercules aircraft, but other countries are heavily involved as well, McClelland said. Participating countries may provide crew for boarding teams, aircraft or conducting patrols at sea with their own vessels, McClelland said.

"It's a collaborative effort between all of us."

Patrols, both airborne and seaborne, will sail the North Pacific, surveilling for potential violations of fisheries agreements. "They're cooperative organizations between Pacific Rim na-

tions," McClelland said. "I'd say they're kind of akin to U.N. nations where they come together to agree on specific conservation and management measures."

Upon identifying possible violations of the rules of the regional fishing management organization, the cutter may board the vessel, McClelland said. Violations can be as simple as obscured signage on a vessel, or catching the wrong kind of fish using the wrong kind of gear, McClelland said.

Staff of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's fisheries group accompany the patrols. Boarding teams will document the potential violation, and have the ship's master sign off their acknowledgement in the presence of a translator before re-

turning to the cutter, McClelland. From there, the package with the complete write-up of the violation is passed on to the potential violator's flag nation.

"For the most part we leave it to the flag state to police their own. It's a respect of sovereignty and all to encourage coordination as well," McClelland said. "When you start to question a country's sovereignty and how they enforce their fishing laws on their vessels, it could get hostile real quick."

Eleven vessels refused to be boarded in 2021, according to a Coast Guard report. Those included 10 from the People's Republic of China and one from Russia. This is itself a serious regulations violation, according to the report. Issues where vessels

may not be compliant are handled at a higher level, McClelland said, generally between the foreign ministries of the nations.

"It is a very tactful approach to what we have to do. On one hand you don't want to discourage countries, making them a pariah by making it super hard. On the other hand, there are mechanisms to hold them accountable," McClelland said.

Nearly \$250,000 in fines were imposed for multiple vessels and officers by the Fisheries Agency of Taiwan as a result of the Bertholf's actions, according to a Coast Guard news release.

The Bertholf and its crew were deployed to the region in late summer of 2021, boarding 15 different vessels and identifying 32 potential regulations violations.

## Social media

Continued from page 8

... the recommendation is you don't delete, you don't block, you don't hide. Everything goes or nothing goes is the safest way to avoid risk of litigation," said Jessica Geary, director of the Legislative Affairs Agency, which provides administration support to lawmakers.

"I can't support this as written," said Senate Majority Leader Shelley Hughes, a Palmer Republican. Hughes was among the lawmakers who said the policy as currently written could create a platform for negative acts.

"I don't want an X-rated Facebook page and I don't want to enable criminal action," she said.

Thursday's discussion came in response to a series of legal disputes between legislators and people blocked from their social media pages.

In 2021, Sen. Lora Reinbold, an Eagle River Republican, was sued by a Chugiak resident who alleges that Reinbold violated her free-speech rights when she was blocked from Reinbold's Facebook page. That case is now in the hands of an Anchorage Superior Court judge, who has yet to issue a ruling.

Rep. Kevin McCabe, a Big Lake Republican, was sued in June by Mark Kelsey, the former publisher of the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman newspaper, on similar grounds.

Senate President Peter Micciche, a Soldotna Republican, was sued

in 2021 by a constituent who was blocked from his account on Twitter. She dropped the case after he lifted the block.

In general, legislators have said that they need to be able to block abusive commenters who discourage others from participating online.

"We don't want to create a loophole for hate, bullying or slander," Reinbold said during Thursday's meeting.

Courts in various jurisdictions have ruled in different ways, with some saying that blocking constituents amounts to government restrictions on free speech. Alaska has no case law on the issue. The suit involving Reinbold is the first of its kind.

The Legislature's existing social media policy hasn't been updated since 2011, and Geary said the draft came about after lawmakers consulted with national organizations including the Council of State Governments and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

She said the draft is modeled after a similar document in Colorado.

In response to criticism, Rep. Sara Hannan, a Juneau Democrat and the chair of the Legislative Council, said that Thursday's document is only a draft and may change significantly before final adoption.

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# NOAA will study critical habitat area to protect North Pacific right whales

By MARK THIESSEN  
The Associated Press

The U.S. government on July 11 agreed to a request from environmental groups to study increasing critical habitat designations in Alaska waters for North Pacific right whales, one of the rarest whale species in the world.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries estimates there are about 30 of the whales left after centuries of hunting, ship strikes and fishing gear entanglements have devastated the species.

The agency in 2008 designated about 1,175 square miles in the Gulf of Alaska and approximately 35,460 square miles in the southeast Bering Sea as critical habitat for the whales.

Two groups, the Center for Biological Diversity and Save the North Pacific Right Whale, in March petitioned the agency to expand the habitat by connecting the existing two areas.

This would extend the Bering Sea boundary west and south to Alaska's Fox Islands, through Unimak Pass to the edge of the continental slope, the agency said in a statement.

The proposal would also extend the critical habitat area off Kodiak Island east to the Gulf of Alaska to include new feeding grounds the Center for Biological Diversity has said were confirmed by new research.

"Safeguarding the North Pacific right whale's habitat is crucial to protecting these magnificent animals," Kristin Carden, a senior scientist at the

Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement. "The threats to North Pacific right whales grow with each passing day. This review has come not a moment too soon."

The size of the proposed new habitat was not immediately available from NOAA Fisheries or the environmental groups.

The extended habitat would overlap with productive fishing areas and high-volume marine transit routes, NOAA Fisheries said, but it also coincides with visual sightings and acoustic data of the large whales.

The environmental groups said in their petition that physical and biological features in the proposed critical habitat require special management considerations and protections, which could include vessel speed limits like those that are already enforced to protect North Atlantic right whales.

"I think it would be a tragedy to let them go extinct without doing all we can, and we see this as a step towards doing the things that we can," said Kevin Campion with the Save the North Pacific Right Whale group.

"Certainly, it's not everything," he said, "but it is a step in the right direction for making sure these animals get to exist on the planet."

North Pacific right whales have been listed as endangered since 1973.

NOAA Fisheries is taking comments on the proposal until September and must publish its decision within a year.

# Humpback whale carcass washes up in Sitka Sound

By GARLAND KENNEDY  
Sitka Sentinel

A dead humpback whale that had been seen floating in northeastern Sitka Sound is probably the same one that washed ashore a few miles away in May, a marine mammal expert said July 12.

Lauren Wild, applied fisheries assistant professor at the University of Alaska Southeast, ran her skiff up into the southern end of Nakwasina Sound on July 12 to investigate the carcass. The location is a well-traveled waterway near Olga Strait and Dog Point, Sitka's portal to the Inside Passage.

Wild said the juvenile male humpback had undergone significant decomposition.

"We found the whale, and it's definitely pretty far gone — we'd call it 'advanced decomposition' on our data sheets," Wild said. "I was able to get a piece of skin that was still on the whale ... and I'm hoping I can send it to the NOAA Stranding Network team in Juneau and they can compare to the skin we collected off the May whale and see if it matches."

The size, sex and state of decomposition indicate it's likely the same carcass found beached on a small island near Gagaran Island in May, Wild said.

Dead whales usually are left to decompose and feed scavenging animals, and Wild said that's probably the proper course of action in this case.

"We'll get the skin to Juneau and wait for the genetic work to be done. In terms of what to do with the carcass, usually if a whale is that decomposed we'll just leave it.

However, I need to chat with the NOAA folks about what they want me to do because it's right along a main 'highway' with lots of boat traffic so lots of people are seeing it," she said.

Wild is the Sitka volunteer coordinator for NOAA's Alaska Marine Mammal Stranding Network.

For now, the whale is beached near Dog Point, at the western end of the Lisianski Peninsula, but Wild said a high tide could refloat it.

Wild urged people not to approach or touch the carcass. "We'll now let nature do its thing, and if the public can help let nature do its thing by not disturbing it, that would be great," she said.

The whale carcass Wild investigated in May was likely killed by orcas.

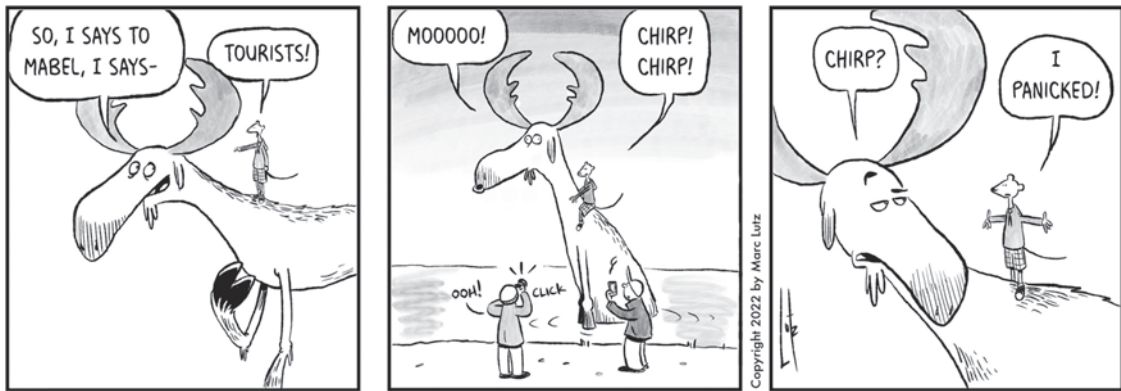
"There was a lot of damage to the head. ... Killer whales kill gray whales or humpback whales in this area. They eat the tongue, that's kind of the first thing they go for a lot of time. When that whale was first reported back in mid-May, there was a lot of blood around the head area and the rest of the body seemed fairly intact," she said. "Transient killer whales and families of killer whales had been seen in Sitka Sound in the same area the day before and the day after. All of those signs pointed to possible killer whale predation for that whale."

May's whale investigation was cut short by a brown bear sow and two cubs feeding on the carcass.

This month, Wild received information that the carcass was slowly floating northeast, past Middle Island and toward Nakwasina.

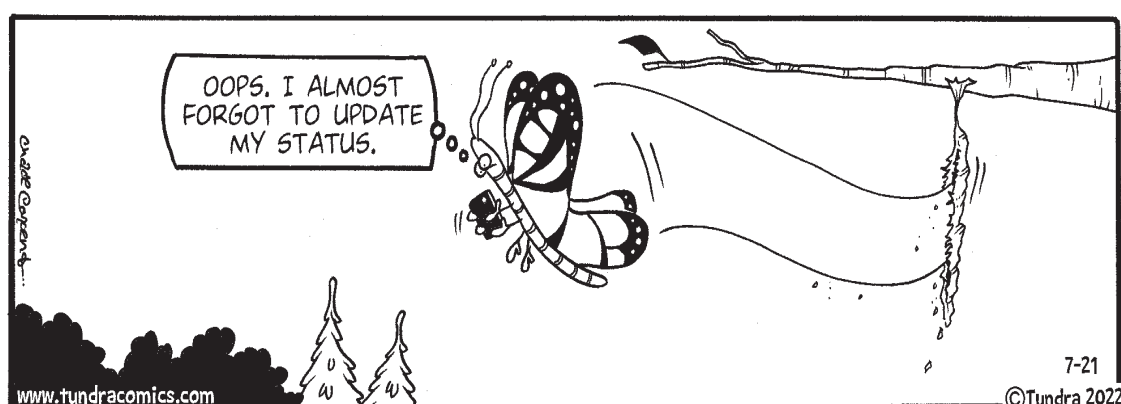
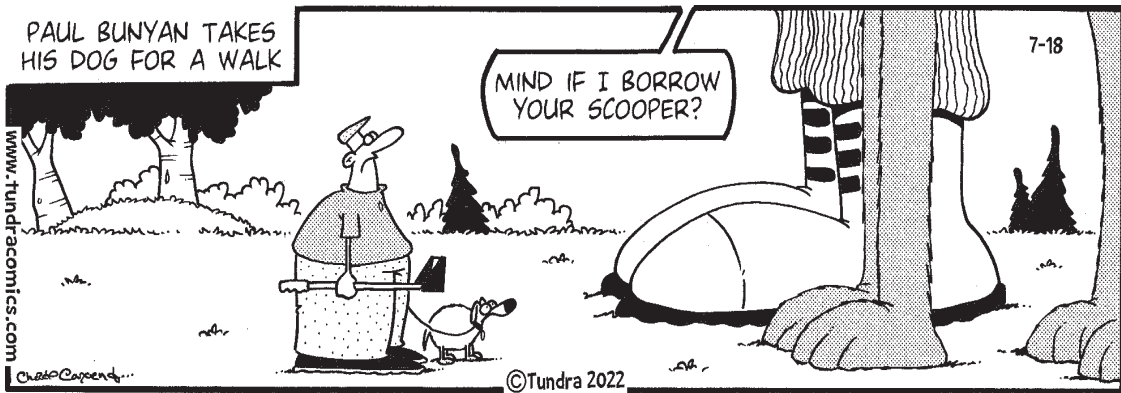
## Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



## Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



## Police report

**Monday, July 11**  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Agency assist: Department of Transportation.  
Civil issue.  
Found property.

**Tuesday, July 12**  
Alarm.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Found property.

**Wednesday, July 13**  
Forgery.  
Parking complaint.

**Thursday, July 14**  
Citizen assist: Unlock vehicle.  
Letter served for removing a person from a licensed establishment.  
Civil matter.  
Traffic hazard.  
Civil paper service.

**Friday, July 15**  
Assault: Unfounded.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.

**Saturday, July 16**  
Driving under the influence: Arrest.  
Citizen report: Driving under the influence.  
Agency assist.  
Verbal warning.  
Traffic complaint.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Traffic stop.

**Sunday, July 17**  
Dog complaint.  
During this reporting period there were five agency assists for the Hoonah Police Department.

### 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.



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# It would cost billions to replace power lost from removing Snake River dams

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS  
The Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The Biden administration on July 12 released two reports arguing that removing dams on the lower Snake River may be needed to restore salmon runs to sustainable levels in the Pacific Northwest, and that replacing the energy created by the dams is possible but will cost \$11 billion to \$19 billion.

The reports were released by the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

“Business as usual will not restore salmon,” said Brenda Mallory, chair of the council. “The Columbia River system is the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest.”

If the four Snake River dams were ultimately removed, it would be largest such project in U.S. history. In 2012 the Elwha Dam on Washington state’s Olympic Peninsula was removed to restore habitat. At the time, the National Park Service said the elimination of the Elwha Dam was the largest such project in U.S. history.

Many salmon runs continue to decline, which environmentalists blame on dams, Mallory said, and her office is leading multi-agency efforts to restore “abundant runs of salmon to the Columbia River

Basin.” Mallory cautioned that the Biden administration is not endorsing any single long-term solution, including breaching the dams.

A draft report by scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found changes are needed to restore salmon, ranging from removal of one to four dams on the lower Snake River to re-introduction of salmon to areas entirely blocked by dams. A second report studied how power supplies could be replaced if dams are breached.

“These two reports add to the picture — that we are working alongside regional leaders to develop — of what it will take over the decades ahead to restore salmon populations, honor our commitments to tribal nations, deliver clean power and meet the many needs of stakeholders across the region,” Mallory said.

More than a dozen runs of salmon and steelhead are at risk of extinction in the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Billions of dollars have been spent on salmon and steelhead recovery, but the fish continue to decline, speakers said, and it is time to try a different approach. Dam breaching is opposed by grain shippers, irrigators, power producers and

other river users. Dam supporters blame declining salmon runs on other factors, such as changing ocean conditions.

“We need to go to larger-scale actions,” NOAA scientist Chris Jordan said in a briefing on the report July 11.

“We are at a crucial moment for salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin when we’re seeing the impacts of climate change on top of other stressors,” said Janet Coit, an administrator for NOAA Fisheries.

Six Republican members of Congress from the Northwest blasted the reports as biased. “They are cherry-picking points to justify breaching the Lower Snake River Dams, which will permanently and negatively impact our way of life in the Pacific Northwest,” the six said in a prepared statement.

Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, which is comprised of river users, said electricity ratepayers will see higher bills if the dams are breached. “The study confirms the fact these dams are irreplaceable for the region if we want to meet our emissions reduction objectives and maintain a reliable grid at an affordable cost,” Miller said.

The issue has percolated in the Northwest for three de-

cadec, sparking court fights and political debates over the future of the four dams on the Snake River that environmentalists blame for the decline in salmon and steelhead.

Breaching the dams would significantly improve the ability of salmon and steelhead to swim from their inland spawning grounds to the Pacific Ocean, where they spend most of their lives, and then back to their original spawning grounds to procreate and die, Sen. Patty Murray, of Washington, and the state’s governor, Jay Inslee, said.

Major benefits of the dams include making the Snake River navigable up to Lewiston, Idaho, allowing barges to carry wheat and other crops to ocean ports. Eliminating the dams would require truck and rail transportation improvements to move crops.

The dams also generate electricity, provide irrigation water for farmers and recreation opportunities for people. Breaching the dams would require an act of Congress.

In the late 1800s, up to 16 million salmon and steelhead returned to the Columbia Riv-

er Basin every year to spawn. Over the next century and a half, overfishing whittled that number down. By the early 1950s, just under 130,000 Chinook were returning to the Snake River.

Construction of the first dam on the lower river, Ice Harbor, began in 1955. Lower Monumental followed in 1969, Little Goose in 1970, and Lower Granite in 1975. The dams stretch from Pasco, Washington, to near Pullman, Washington, and stand between migrating salmon and 5,500 miles of spawning habitat in central Idaho.

The dams have fish ladders, but too many of the salmon die as they swim through the dams and across slack water reservoirs on their migrations.

In 1991, Snake River salmon and steelhead were listed as endangered species, requiring production of a federal recovery plan.

The U.S. government has spent more than \$17 billion trying to recover Snake River salmon, through improvements to fish ladders and other measures, with little to show for it.

## CLASSIFIED

### WANTED

The Wrangell Chorale is looking for a piano player to accompany them to prepare for a Christmas concert in December. No pianist, no concert! Call Bonnie Demerjian at 907-796-9632 for more information.

### WANTED

Looking for an antique small typing table that is square and made out of wood. Call Rosemary Ruoff at 609-492-2474.

### WANTED

Quarter to half a cord of seasoned and split firewood. Call Jim at 907-254-1224.

### FOR SALE

New 1-bedroom, 1-bath 12-foot-by-24-foot cabin for sale. Ready for you to move. \$35,000 cash, firm. Call Rusty at 360-535-0367 or 907-874-2044.

### FOR SALE

16-foot Lund with trailer, \$1,500. Call 907-660-7256.

### FOR SALE

Remote property for sale on South Wrangell Island (Thoms Place subdivision). 1.88 acres, waterfront. Lot 18, Block 2, Unit 3 of Alaska State Land Survey No. 81-234, Wrangell Recording District. Phone or text 907-321-3240.

### FREE

Community compost at the community garden. Add compostables to the bin labeled ADD and cover with three yellow buckets full of browns

that are located in the fish tote. Fruit and vegetable scraps only please, no meat, bones, fats, breads or potatoes.

### FREE

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

### FREE ADS

Do you have something to sell? Having a garage sale? Looking to buy something? Classified

ads for individuals and community groups are free in the Sentinel. Contact Amber at 907-874-2301 or email wrgsent@gmail.com.

## THANK YOU

Thank you to the businesses for making our quilt show a success.

Stikine Stitchers

### WRANGELL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION NOTICE OF JOB OPENING Receptionist

The Wrangell Cooperative Association is seeking a receptionist.

Complete job description and applications are available outside at the WCA Office at 1002 Zimovia Highway or by emailing wcatribes@gmail.com. Contact Esther Ashton at 907-874-4304 with questions. Open until filled.

**Publish July 20 and 27, 2022**

### CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING Nolan Center Coordinator

The City and Borough of Wrangell is recruiting for a Nolan Center Coordinator to help develop and organize programming that supports the museum and community events throughout the facility.

This person will work closely with the Nolan Center Director to supervise staff and support in developing and working various museum programs, events, movies, retail sales and daily operations. **Applicants must be willing to work a flexible schedule which requires evenings and weekends on a regular basis.** This is a full-time (40 hours per week) position with full benefits, at Grade 12.

The full job description and employment application can be found online at [www.wrangell.com/jobs](http://www.wrangell.com/jobs). To be considered for this position, submit a cover letter, resume and completed employment application to [rmarshall@wrangell.com](mailto:rmarshall@wrangell.com) or in person to City Hall. This position will be opened until filled. The first round of application reviews will begin on July 25, 2022.

The City and Borough of Wrangell is an equal opportunity employer.

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

**Publish July 20, 2022**

### CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE Work Session and Public Hearing

The Borough Assembly will be holding a Work Session on Tuesday, July 26, 2022, from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. on the following item:

#### Discussion regarding General Obligation Bond Issuance

Although a quorum of the Borough Assembly will be present at the Work Session, no action will be taken.

#### The Regular Assembly meeting will begin at 7 p.m.

During the Regular Assembly Meeting of Tuesday, July 26, 2022, starting at 7 p.m., there will be a **PUBLIC HEARING** on the following item(s):

Request to Purchase City-Owned Tidelands described as Lot 6, Block 84B, Tidelands Subdivision ATS 83, requested by Shirley Wimberley and Benn Curtis.

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

**Publish July 20, 2022**

### CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING Harbor Maintenance/Security

The Wrangell Harbor Department will accept in-house applications from current IBEW-represented employees for the position of Harbor Maintenance/Security through July 22, 2022, at 5 p.m. This is a permanent position with all City and Borough benefits and is part of the IBEW collective bargaining agreement.

This position has considerable responsibility for operations at Port and Harbor Facilities. The post comes with autonomy, but also the duty to coordinate and cooperate with those outside the Harbor Department.

This position provides daily maintenance of all Port and Harbor Facilities and maintains a preventative maintenance program for all Port and Harbor Facilities. The work is performed under the supervision of the Port and Harbor Director but considerable leeway is granted for the exercise of independent judgment and initiative. The nature of the work requires that an employee maintain effective working relationships with other city departments and employees, State and Federal officials, business and community organizations and the public. Performs duties as part of the Department of Homeland Security Port Security Plan.

Requires knowledge of marine construction and maintenance operations. Requires basic carpenter skills. Requires boat handling skills. Requires basic computer skills. Requires the ability to weld steel and aluminum, or ability to learn those skills. Requires basic plumbing skills.

A High School Diploma or GED is required. Must have a valid Alaska driver’s license, valid TWIC card, and basic First Aid/CPR certification or the ability to obtain all within 6 months.

Applications and job descriptions may be obtained and returned to Robbie Marshall at City Hall, 205 Brueger St., PO Box 531, Wrangell, AK 99929, or email to [rmarshall@wrangell.com](mailto:rmarshall@wrangell.com).

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

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

**Publish July 13 and 20, 2022**

## WRANGELL REAL ESTATE

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your hometown agent,  
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# ALASKA VOTER ADVISORY

## August 16 Statewide Election

The **REGULAR PICK ONE PRIMARY ELECTION** and **SPECIAL GENERAL ELECTION** are on the same ballot.



**THE AUGUST 16<sup>th</sup> ELECTION WILL BE AN IN-PERSON ELECTION**  
with polling places open on election day 7am-8pm

**WANT TO VOTE BY MAIL?**

Apply for an absentee by-mail ballot by August 6!

### RANKED CHOICE VOTING: HOW TO MARK YOUR BALLOT

**Fill in only one oval per candidate, in each column.**

You do not have to rank all the candidates. Your second choice is only counted if your first choice candidate is eliminated.

State Senator District B					
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Larry Doe (Registered Democrat)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mac Allen (Registered Republican)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Edna Mode (Undeclared)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tiffany Strait (Nonpartisan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### MISTAKES TO AVOID

State Senator District B					
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Larry Doe (Registered Democrat)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mac Allen (Registered Republican)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Edna Mode (Undeclared)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tiffany Strait (Nonpartisan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**If you skip a ranking** your next ranking moves up. Here, if your first choice candidate is eliminated, your third choice counts as your second choice and your fourth choice would count as your third choice.

State Senator District B					
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Larry Doe (Registered Democrat)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mac Allen (Registered Republican)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Edna Mode (Undeclared)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tiffany Strait (Nonpartisan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**If you give more than one candidate the same ranking**, nothing after those candidates will count. Here, only your first choice counts.

State Senator District B					
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Larry Doe (Registered Democrat)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mac Allen (Registered Republican)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Edna Mode (Undeclared)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tiffany Strait (Nonpartisan)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Your vote only counts once**, even if you rank a candidate more than once. When a candidate is eliminated in a round, they are eliminated from all future rounds.

State Senator District B					
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Larry Doe (Registered Democrat)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mac Allen (Registered Republican)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Edna Mode (Undeclared)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tiffany Strait (Nonpartisan)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-In:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**If you skip two or more rankings in a row** only the rankings before the skipped rankings will count. Here, your first choice counts and the fourth choice would not count.

For more detailed information, sample ballots, and explainer videos, visit [www.elections.alaska.gov/rcv.php](http://www.elections.alaska.gov/rcv.php).

