



BABIES—A momma moose and her two newly born babies trot across the tundra outside of Nome, on Tuesday, June 9.

Photo by Diana Haecker

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Teller residents voice concern over proposed graphite mine

By Diana Haecker

Torn between the prospect of jobs and the fear of losing subsistence grounds that have nourished the people of Mary's Igloo, Teller and Brevig Mission for generations, Teller residents voiced their reservations to representatives of a company that proposes to mine a large deposit of high-grade graphite on the northern slopes of the Kigluak Mountain range.

Graphite One Inc. representatives visited Teller last Tuesday for private

meetings with the Native entities before holding a public gathering at the school. In these private meetings, Graphite One proposed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the tribal entities to spell out verbal commitments to the communities, but no concrete agreements have been signed.

Joy Huntington with Uqaqti Consulting, community relations manager for Graphite One, said during the public meeting that she floated the idea to create a Memorandum of

Understanding between Graphite One and the tribal and Native entities to "set the tone how the company and the different communities would communicate." That MOU, she said, would address work force development, training opportunities, transparency, sharing of environmental baseline information and studies, housing, safety, drug and alcohol testing, among other things. Huntington said the MOU would be co-written by Graphite One and the tribal entities, and would serve to set

in writing commitments made by the current leadership of the company. "It is not a letter of support. It is not taking away any of your rights to speak your minds," Huntington said.

Mentioning leadership changes in the past at the company, she added "it's good to have another way to formalize relationships and be accountable to commitments that were made."

Meeting

The Teller public event featured a

pizza lunch, soda and door prizes that included AC gift cards, fishing poles, kids' bikes and camping gear. In the audience were mostly families with young children, but also Bering Straits Native Corporation representatives and board member Tyler Ivanoff. A meeting planned for Brevig Mission Traditional Council, saying that the June 1 meeting date was set by the company without tribal con-

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E-WASTE—Jacob Martin, Andrew Lancaster and Kym Stevenson sort through e-waste at Kawerak's e-waste recycling storage on Friday, June 5. See story on page 5.

Photo by Ariana Crockett O'Harra

Nome holds spring cleanup week

By Ariana Crockett O'Harra

Last Saturday, community members roamed town with bright yellow trash bags in the annual effort to rid the city of trash and debris as the winter's snow cover has melted, exposing old "treasures."

The City of Nome's spring cleanup week culminated in a community wide push to clean up town and take the trash out, on Saturday, June 6.

From 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. KICY, the Nome Winter Sports Association and the City each hosted a location where bags of trash could be dropped off. Eight truckloads full of the yellow garbage bags were collected from Old St. Joe's, the Icy View Firehall and the Nome Rec Center.

Over the course of the week, residents dropped off 92 loads at the monofill. An additional 65 loads were dropped off by businesses. The City's U-Call, We-Haul service saw

51 requests during that same time.

Public Works Director Cole Cushman said that the haul was on the "light side of average." Last year, Nomeites dropped 118 loads off at the monofill and the city cleared away 60 dump trucks full of garbage. Cushman was not bothered by the slight dip in numbers. "I like to think it's because Nome's getting cleaner," he said.

Cushman said that cleanup week gets Nome just that much cleaner as trash emerges out of melting winter snow. "Coming out of the winter, there's a lot of garbage that gets mixed in with the snow," he said.

Patty Burchell of KICY was hosting the drop off station outside Old St. Joe's. She explained that trash could be traded for the chance to win a bicycle. "If you bring in a bag of

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Researchers test harvested birds for avian flu

By Diana Haecker

Nomeites are used to odd sights. But huge cardboard signs saying, "Bird Flu Testing" and "Free Shells" propped up against a rental car at East End Park did warrant a double take. Turns out, researchers were in Nome last week, conducting avian flu testing of subsistence hunted birds, inviting hunters to bring by

their harvest for a quick swab.

The researchers were Dr. Lisa Kercher, with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital from Memphis, Tennessee, and U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center Director of the Molecular Ecology Lab Andy Ramey from Anchorage.

The question that Dr. Kercher has to answer often is why is the children's hospital interested in the avian flu? "St. Jude Children's Hospital has done avian flu research for 50 years," said Kercher in an interview with the *Nugget*. In 1966, Rob Webster with St. Jude figured out that the reservoir for avian flu is waterfowl, establishing how influenza travels as a zoonotic disease from birds to mammals, including humans, she said. The St. Jude Children's hospital treats catastrophic diseases in children, and if a child is sick with cancer or other serious diseases, getting a respiratory disease can be devastating, hence they do research on

respiratory diseases and all kinds of influenza viruses, including the bird flu.

There are different kinds of strains of avian flu. Some are more serious than others and the bird flu of concern is called the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, HPAI for short. Of that, the H5 strain is of special concern.

In a Strait Science presentation, hosted by Northwest Campus and the Alaska Sea Grant program in Nome, USGS Researcher Andy Ramey provided an overview and update on HPAI.

He explained that the H5 or H7 strains of the highly pathogenic bird flu are devastating to domesticated poultry. Since 2022 more than 200 million domesticated birds have been affected in the United States alone, Ramey said. That has led to massive

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Photo by Diana Haecker

EGG SWAB—Dr. Lisa Kercher swabs a gull's egg freshly collected from the nearby tundra for HPAI testing, on Thursday, June 4 at East End Park in Nome.

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