

Flights cancelled due to FAA staffing shortage, NWS equipment outages

By Ariana Crockett O'Harra
Alaska Airlines was forced to cancel flights to Nome and Kotzebue last week due to staffing issues at the FAA's Flight Service Station, or FSS, and National Weather Service equipment not reporting visibility conditions.

Tim Thompson with Alaska Airlines confirmed that three passenger flights and two freighters for Nome were cancelled, as well as a flight for Kotzebue "due to FAA staffing and equipment (ASOS) issues with the National Weather Service. This forced us to cancel flights per FAA regulations for part 121 carriers," he wrote in an email to the Nugget.

Sources close to the Nome airport

said on background that the Nome FAA's FSS office has been unstaffed for about a week. The Nugget has been unable to independently verify the information as phone messages with request for comment were not returned of press time.

Without an on the ground FSS employee to confirm weather conditions and without a fully working weather reporting system, commercial aircraft cannot fly into communities.

Alaska Climate Specialist Rick Thoman confirmed that the visibility sensor on the Automated Surface Observing System, or ASOS, was intermittently not reporting during the period of June 2 through 4.



KIGLUAIT— The proposed mine would be situated at the base of the Kigluait Mountains and near the Imuruk Basin.

Photo by Diana Haecker

• Teller

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hostile takeover can happen any time. MOUs are nonbinding but Schaffner said that the agreements could be worked into permits that then become binding requirements that would survive if Graphite One was to be bought up by a different company.

Asked what they have learned this time around visiting Teller, Schaffner said, that people were very concerned with the two-year use permit Graphite One has to barge construction materials through the Tuksuk Channel to a landing site at Imuruk Basin. "So we're going to go back and see if we can figure out how to not use that [permit]. It's a bigger cost to us, but again, they were passionate, they were sincere about it, and if we can do it a better way, we'll do that," Schaffner said. Brevig Mission Traditional Council also voiced opposition to the barge and helicopter traffic citing disturbances of fish, marine mammals, fur bearing animals and waterfowl.

Sacred

As the Teller audience dispersed, kids ran off to the playground outside the school. Elle Garnie, supervising her little cousins, spoke to the Nugget, expressing her fear that the

mine is a done deal despite local opposition. Born and raised in Teller, her connection to the land runs deep. She talks of memories of her family going fishing, having campfires there, going berry picking, getting water up there to drink at camp. The land, she says, "connects me to people before me."

"I feel like Kigluait is something that is very sacred and special to us," she said. "I feel like it's something we're going to lose, and I feel like we're not going to see a lot of benefits from losing it."

"Kigluait. It means home mountains, those are our home mountains," Garnie said. "It's just very special to us, and it has an effect on all of what we do and all of how we live, and you can't put a price tag on that. But I know it's going happen whether I like it or not. So I'm just concerned on how the mine is going benefit from this, and how we're just going to be left in the dust, in a way."

Asked her opinion on the prospect of jobs offered for the 22 years of proposed mine life, Garnie said, that the trade-off is not worth it. "I've seen people get these jobs and they had a handful of money, and lost it, and then they were back to being broke," she said. "The negative effects are going to impact us much longer than the money will."

Kawerak gets e-waste out of Nome and the region

By Ariana Crockett O'Harra

On Friday, June 5, the lot across from the Kawerak offices on Seppala Drive was filled with all sorts of e-waste in form of old printers, computer monitors, cords, batteries, CPUs and old TVs as Kawerak's held its annual e-waste recycling event.

Kawerak's Environmental Program Director Anahma Shannon explained that Kawerak works with Backhaul Alaska to coordinate the removal of e-waste from regional villages and from Nome. The electronic trash is backhauled on Bering Air to Nome and then transported by Alaska Airlines or Alaska Marine Lines to Anchorage or Seattle to be recycled. Kawerak sends out about 50,000 pounds a year. The event last weekend netted them about 4,000 pounds.

Last week's event, held on Friday and Saturday, was to highlight the e-waste program, but Kawerak collects e-waste all year round, and stores it until it can be sorted and sent out of the region. By June, it's warm enough to sort and organize the waste outside. "We're opening the connexes, and we're taking out stuff that we've collected from the villages all winter long," said Shannon.

Shannon said that finding ways to get defunct materials like old computers or batteries out of the region is important. "Stuff never leaves, right? It comes up this way and it never returns to market," she said.

When electronics get thrown out, the heavy metals inside can get broken down in the landfill. "They get exposed and into the environment, or the snow and the rain takes it through the landfill, and it hits the water table, and then it affects the water, the groundwater," explained Shannon.

Shannon also said that landfills in the region burn garbage, and e-waste caught up in those landfills burns create toxic smoke. "It's a super toxic burn, and it's very carcinogenic, extremely carcinogenic, and it has cancer-causing dioxins," she said. "The darker the smoke, the more toxic it is."

By recycling e-waste, those toxins can be kept out of the environment and away from villages and subsis-



Photo by Ariana Crockett O'Harra

LOOKING FOR TREASURES— Andy Nayokpuk looks for useful e-waste as Daisy Nayokpuk, on his shoulders, reaches out towards Honuck Peterson at Kawerak's e-waste recycling storage on Friday, June 5.

tence resources.

Back at the connexes, Kym Stevenson was hauling computer monitors and organizing the waste. He said by Friday midday, they'd already gotten about one and a half pallets worth of stuff, mostly monitors, printers, microwaves, flat screen TVs and an old popcorn machine. "We go through it, cut the cords off, take the batteries out, what needs to be taken out, and then we palletize everything, and we send it off," he said.

Stevenson said that recycling the e-waste keeps it out of the landfill, which in turn helps the landfill last just that much longer.

Stevenson explained that some of the pallets are used as ballast weight by Alaska Airlines. "Instead of using their big containers of water for ballast, they use our pallets of e-waste, as long as it's not hazardous material," he said.

Jacob Martin was sorting through some of the boxes of e-waste. He runs a small IT business and was checking the pile for older chargers and random spare parts. Martin is in favor of the recycling program. "The amount of waste that goes to the landfill is disgusting," he said.

Bennie Piscoya was helping sort

the e-waste on the second day of the event, Saturday, June 6. He said that by around 2 p.m. Saturday, they'd collected about 3,100 pounds of waste, less than last year's 5,000 pounds. He wasn't too worried — he said he figures that people have started to realize that the e-waste recycling connex is open 24/7.

Piscoya said that they don't just get junk — like Martin, occasionally they find treasures in the trash. His favorite so far was an old vintage lamp. He said that they might try and set up a Re-Use store, to add another layer of recycling to the region.

Shannon said that there are plans to renovate the building at the monofill to turn it into a recycling facility. They plan to start renovating in July. "We'll be able to have a baler," she said. "We're doing everything by hand right now."

If you have e-waste you'd like to recycle, there are a few options. Shannon said that if you're located in a village, contact your local tribe and see if they have a recycling program. If you're in Nome, you can drop off the e-waste in a connex van located across the street from NAPA Auto Parts on Warren Place, open 24/7.

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