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*

The Nome Nugget

Alaska's Oldest Newspaper

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VOLUME CXXVI NO. 23 June 11, 2026

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 Kigluaik 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 was canceled by the Brevig Mission Traditional Council, saying that the June 1 meeting date was set by the company without tribal con-

continued on page 4

Photo by Ariana Crockett O'Harra

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.***

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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Letters

How do we feel?

At last year's Graphite One presentation in Brevig Mission, G1 Vice President Michael Schaffner and his company claimed that "We won't be doing any drilling the next few years as we go through the permitting phase, so as far as helicopter traffic goes, it will be quieter than it has been the past few years."

But here we are, just one year later, and Schaffner and his company have already broken from their "honesty," "trust," and "transparency" claims by applying for a state permit to drill 20 more holes this summer for geotechnical drilling for their proposed access road.

Maybe they've got to do something to show their stockholders that they are still active up here since their stock price has, according to the G1 website on 06/06, dropped 60% of its value, from $1.91 to $0.77 a share, since the end of January. I'm not a stock analyst, but I do know enough to think that a drop that significant might be a sign of an unhealthy company.

My wife Annie, a Brevig Mission tribal member, and I could not attend the latest round of Graphite One lectures, but we did read about them.

We learned that Graphite One is still craving the construction of a "temporary" barge landing pad at water's edge in the Imuruk Basin. Tribal members from both Brevig and Teller have expressed unwavering and adamant opposition to Graphite One accessing the basin through Port Clarence Bay, Grantley Harbor, or Tuksuk Channel. It's a vital waterway to five spawning salmon species that feed not only their people, but residents of Nome.

G1's use of the word "temporary" seems disingenuous, at best, as anyone who lives in or around this area knows that the damage to historic, culturally significant sites has been real and the scars will be permanent, not temporary.

The company uses the word acres to describe this proposed pad's size, but few people think in terms of acres. A better picture of this proposed "temporary" pad would be that its size is equivalent to nearly four professional American football fields.

But Annie asks why people outside her tribal area are believing this company's claims. She wonders why anyone would trust them (or any company that will purchase them in the future) with her people's most precious wealth around - the sustainable future food security resources of the Bering Sea-to-Imuruk Basin Waterway.

For years, Schaffner and his company have touted the jobs that would

continued on page 6

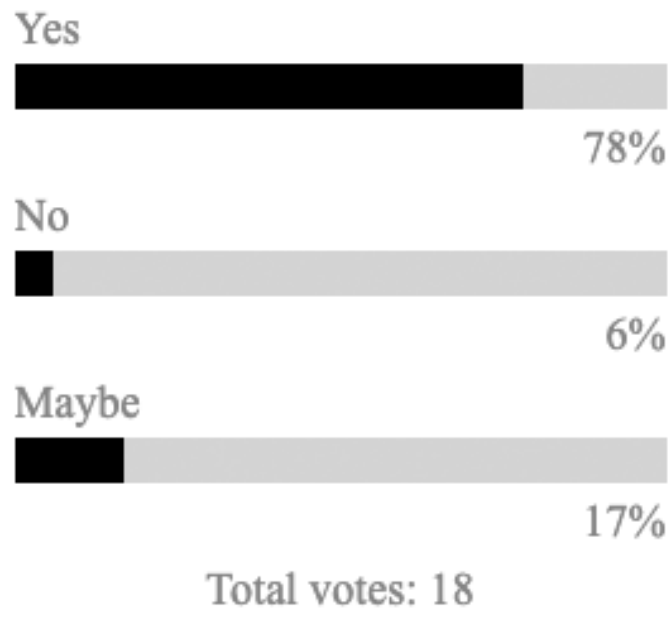
Editorial

It ought to be a first that Alaska Airlines could not fly to Nome because a federal agency couldn't do its job and adequately staff the FAA's Flight Service in Nome. Flights were cancelled not due to weather or mechanicals.While failing components for the ASOS systems are not out of the ordinary, the combination of both failures resulted in cancelations of freight and passenger flights. Every time a flight cannot get here means that people are greatly inconvenienced, that they incur extra costs and that businesses don't get their supplies or products delivered to Nome and the outlying communities. Mail is not moving and perishables are sitting somewhere in Anchorage, rotting away. Can it be that the Trump administration's contempt for the federal work force and DOGE cuts show real life ramifications for us? —D.H.—

Results from our June 3 - June 9 online poll.

*(Go to **nomenugget.net** in order to participate)*

It's spring clean up week. Are you planning to clean up your house/yard?



The Nome Nugget's submission policies:

Letters to the Editor: The maximum length of a letter to the editor should be around 300-500 words. The letters may be edited for length and clarity. You must provide your full name and mailing address to The Nome Nugget. Your name and mailing address are printed alongside your letter. Letters may be submitted by email to diana@nomenugget.com or mail to PO Box 610, Nome, AK 99762. We don't print anonymous letters unless the author is known to the Nugget and/or has reasonable fear for repercussions. We will not print material that is potentially libelous, discriminatory, obscene, threatening, copyrighted or promotional. We do not print letters that contain provable falsehoods and misinformation. We do not print letters written to endorse products or a political candidate. If you'd like to promote your for-profit product or a political candidate, please see our advertising rates and deadlines by contacting ads@nomenugget.com

OP ED: Maximum length: 700-800 words; must reflect the opinion of an individual with expertise in the subject. OP ED submitted on behalf of political parties, PACS, corporations, or signed by several people for or against political candidates or ballot measures are considered ads.

Announcements: The Nome Nugget publishes obituaries, birth and wedding announcements as a community service free of charge. We require submissions of announcements or obituaries to be factual and fair as they are not independently researched by Nugget staff.

Illegitimus non carborundum

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Alaska's Oldest Newspaper

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Tide Predictions are brought to you by

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

Nome Norton Sound Tide Predictions

(High & Low Waters)

Date	Day	Time	High Tide		Time	Low Tide		Time	High Tide		Time	Low Tide	
06/11	Th	01:55 a.m.	1.07		07:06 a.m.	0.62		01:38 p.m.	1.58		08:46 p.m.	0.42	
06/12	Fr	03:06 a.m.	1.13		07:50 a.m.	0.80		01:56 p.m.	1.64		09:26 p.m.	0.22	
06/13	Sa	04:17 a.m.	1.21		08:37 a.m.	0.95		02:15 p.m.	1.71		10:11 p.m.	0.06	
06/14	Su	05:34 a.m.	1.32		09:27 a.m.	1.09		02:43 p.m.	1.75		11:01 p.m.	-0.06	
06/15	Mo	06:39 a.m.	1.44		10:25 a.m.	1.18		03:22 p.m.	1.75		11:55 p.m.	-0.13	
06/16	Tu	07:32 a.m.	1.54		11:32 a.m.	1.23		04:18 p.m.	1.72				
06/17	We	12:50 a.m.	-0.15	Low	08:24 a.m.	1.62	High	12:38 p.m.	1.23	Low	05:56 p.m.	1.68	High

Daily variations in sea level due to local meteorological conditions cannot be predicted and may significantly effect the observed tides in this area.
All times are listed in Local Standard Time. All heights are in feet referenced to Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW).

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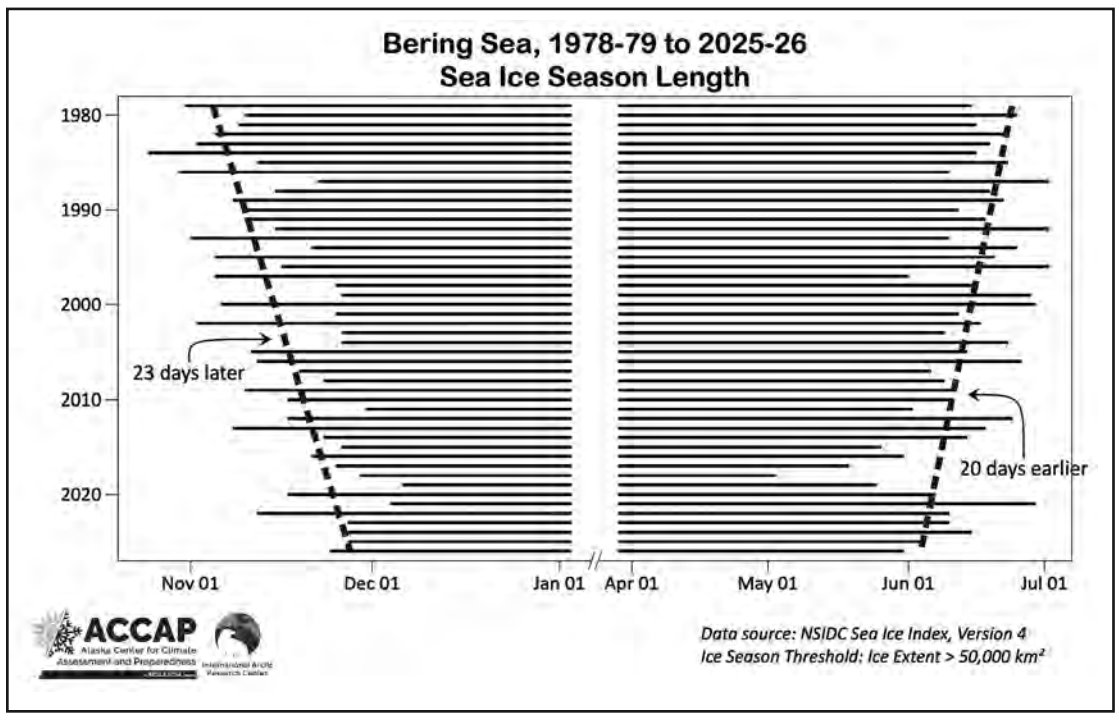


Climate Watch

By Rick Thoman
Alaska Climate Specialist
Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Preparedness
International Arctic Research Center/University of Alaska Fairbanks

Most of the winter sea ice has melted out of the Bering Sea and the last remaining bits will melt in the next week or so.

One of the most obvious changes in the past half century in the northern Bering Sea is the decreasing length of sea ice season— the time when sea ice is present.

This is evident from the local viewpoint through Elder's observations of a lifetime at the Bering Sea. For the large scale we are reliant on daily sea ice estimates from satellite. Available since the winter of 1978-79, we can construct start and end dates for the Bering Sea "sea ice season."

When we do this, we can immediately see that there has been a substantial change in the past 48 years toward later ice formation in the autumn and earlier melt out in the spring.

Additionally, the change is nearly balanced, with only a slightly greater change in the autumn than in spring. In the early 1980s, typically there was significant sea ice in the Bering Sea by early November and it would not melt out until late June. That timing has shifted so that nowadays there usually isn't significant ice until the last days of November and melt out is largely accomplished by early June. Overall, this is about a decrease of seven weeks in the Bering Sea "sea ice season."

Airport weather station status update
Week ending June 8, 2026

Community	Status
Brevig Mission	Intermittent
Buckland	Intermittent
Deering	Reporting
Elim	Intermittent
Emmonak	No temperatures or winds
Gambell	Intermittent winds
Golovin	Reporting
Koyuk	Intermittent
Nome	Reporting
Savoonga	Reporting
Shaktoolik	Reporting
Shishmaref	Reporting
St. Michael	Reporting
Teller	Intermittent
Unalakleet	Reporting
Wales	Reporting
White Mountain	Intermittent

Weather statistics
are brought to you by

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

Weather Statistics

Sunrise	06/11/2026	04:26 a.m.
	06/17/2026	04:20 a.m.
Sunset	06/11/2026	01:35 a.m.
	06/17/2026	01:44 a.m.

High Temp	+72°F	06/03/2026
Low Temp	+34°F	06/09/2026
Max Wind	17 mph N	06/03/2026

National Weather Service
Fairbanks, Alaska
(907) 458-3700

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Thursday, June 11

Richard Foster Building - Library M-Th 12 noon to 7 p.m., F-Sa 12 noon - 6 p.m.
Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum Tuesday-Saturday 12 noon - 5 p.m.

*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
*Summercise	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:15 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.
*Drop-in volleyball	Nome Rec Center	8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
*Strong Nation	Nome Rec Center	5:45 a.m. - 6:45 a.m.
*Full Send (Spin Class)	Nome Rec Center	6:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.
*Summercise (weather permitting)	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*Brazilian jiu-jitsu	Nome Rec Center	7:30 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.
*Summercise	Nome Pool	1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
*Family/laps	Nome Pool	5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Friday, June 12

Richard Foster Building - Library M-Th 12 noon to 7 p.m., F-Sa 12 noon - 6 p.m.
Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum Tuesday-Saturday 12 noon - 5 p.m.

*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:30 a.m. - 9:55 a.m.
*Free Kindergym	Nome Rec Center	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	12:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
*Drop-in Volleyball	Nome Rec Center	6:00 p.m. - 7:55 p.m.
*Drop-in Soccer (Age 15+)	Nome Rec Center	8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
*AMP'd	Nome Rec Center	6:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.
*Yoga w/ Pete	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

AA meeting - Nome Church of the Nazarene - 7 p.m.

Have you got a drug problem? Narcotics Anonymous has a solution!
NA Meeting is held on Friday night at 7:00 p.m., at the Katirvik Cultural Center

Saturday, June 13

Richard Foster Building - Library M-Th 12 noon to 7 p.m., F-Sa 12 noon - 6 p.m.
Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum Tuesday-Saturday 12 noon - 5 p.m.

Nome Rec Center CLOSED
Start of Summer Scheduling.
Closed on weekends until Labor Day.

*Rentals	Nome Pool	12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 14

No Kings Rally For Democracy
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Anvil City Square

Richard Foster Building - Library M-Th 12 noon to 7 p.m., F-Sa 12 noon - 6 p.m.
Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum Tuesday-Saturday 12 noon - 5 p.m.

Nome Rec Center CLOSED
Start of Summer Scheduling.
Closed on weekends until Labor Day.

*Lap swim	Nome Pool	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Monday, June 15

Richard Foster Building - Library M-Th 12 noon to 7 p.m., F-Sa 12 noon - 6 p.m.

*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
*Kindergym	Nome Rec Center	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
*Summercise	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:15 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
*Summercise (Weather permitting)	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*Yoga w/ Pete	Nome Rec Center	6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
*Summercise	Nome Pool	1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

AA meeting - Nome Church of the Nazarene - 7 p.m.

Tuesday, June 16

Richard Foster Building - Library M-Th 12 noon to 7 p.m., F-Sa 12 noon - 6 p.m.
Richard Foster Building - Museum M-F 12 noon - 5 p.m.

*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
*Summercise	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:15 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.
*Pickleball	Nome Rec Center	7:00 p.m. - 7:55 p.m.
*Drop-in Indoor soccer	Nome Rec Center	8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
*Full Send (Spin Class)	Nome Rec Center	6:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.
*Summercise (Weather permitting)	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*Brazilian jiu-jitsu	Nome Rec Center	7:30 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.
*Summercise	Nome Pool	1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
*Family/laps	Nome Pool	5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
*H2O	Nome Pool	7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 17

Richard Foster Building - Library M-Th 12 noon to 7 p.m., F-Sa 12 noon - 6 p.m.
Richard Foster Building - Museum M-F 12 noon - 5 p.m.

*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
*Kindergym	Nome Rec Center	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
*Summercise	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*Open Gym	Nome Rec Center	5:15 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
*Strong Nation	Nome Rec Center	5:45 a.m. - 6:45 a.m.
*Summercise (Weather permitting)	Nome Rec Center	12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
*REFIT	Nome Rec Center	5:45 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.
*AM Laps	Nome Pool	6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
*Lunch laps	Nome Pool	12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
*Summercise	Nome Pool	1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
*Lap swim	Nome Pool	7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

AA meeting - Nome Church of the Nazarene - 7 p.m.

Community Calendar sponsored by Northern Air Cargo

Photos by Diana Haecker

WHAT'S IN IT FOR TELLER? (*top*) — Teller resident Elle Garnie asks Graphite One COO Mike Schaffner about Graphite One's financial projections and whether the company plans to pay reparations if the land was irreparably damaged by the mine.

PUBLIC MEETING— Graphite One representatives inform Teller residents in a meeting on June 2 at the Teller James Isabell School gym on updates to the proposed graphite mine.

• Teller

continued from page 1

sultation and that the "chosen date coincides with a time that the ice is moving out of Port Clarence Bay, a crucial period for tribal members to take part in vital marine mammal harvesting activities." In a press release, the traditional council stated that they are open to "collaborative dialogue with Graphite One" but continues to oppose "the creation of a 1.1-mile long, 1,340-foot-deep open pit, or any pit of any depth, and all associated roads, gravel pads, and stream diversions in and around the hunting, fishing, and cultural grounds traditionally used by the people of Brevig Mission, Teller, and Mary's Igloo."

Project overview and update

Graphite One's Chief Operating Officer Mike Schaffner gave a brief overview of the project, starting with making the case why graphite is needed – citing a rising demand for electric vehicle batteries mostly— and the plan that the mine at Graphite Creek would produce 175,000 tons of graphite concentrate per year, stored in 8,600 20-ft shipping containers, which would be trucked to Nome on a daily basis and shipped out from the Port of Nome in the summer time for further processing at a plant in Ohio. He highlighted the ongoing commitment to incorporate community feedback via subsistence advisory committees that were stood up in 2018 to inform the company of the communities' concerns. One of the most pressing points is the resistance to barge or shipping traffic through Grantley Harbor to the Imuruk Basin to pre-stage materials for the beginning phases of construction. Schaffner acknowledged the concerns and the company is looking at a work-around.

Vice President of Mining Kevin Torpy delivered a project summary. In broad strokes, the project would entail an open pit mine, a processing plant that would process 10,000 tons per day; a mixed dry and wet tailings storage facility including a dam to contain the wet tailings, water management and treatment facilities and a substantial power plant to power the mill. In order to build the mine, an access road over state land from the state-owned and maintained Kougarok Road — a rough gravel road in no shape to accommodate industrial trucking traffic— is needed.

The company's plan is to operate the mine and mill year-round, to truck concentrate from the mine to Nome on a daily basis, to truck fuel from Nome to the onsite powerplant and to shuttle mine employees daily from Nome to the mine and back.

This summer, the state has permitted geotechnical drilling along the proposed access road corridor. The proposed access road would start at mile 30 of the Kougarok Road, be a double lane road, cross over several streams via single-lane bridges, lead through Mosquito Pass and by Windy Creek to the northside of the Kigluaiks. Incorporating concerns voiced during Subsistence Advisory Committee meetings over the fear that people traveling from Nome would use the road to access subsistence resources and put undue hunting and fishing pressure on Teller and Brevig Mission, Graphite One plans to propose that the road would not be open to the public.

According to Torpy, the plan is to cover the crushed ore stockpile to control dust, saying that photos one sees in the media of Chinese graphite mines showing communities covered in fine black graphite dust, won't be possible in the USA due to regulations. For dust control on the roads, Torpy said capping of the Kougarok and access roads as well as running watering trucks should keep dust caused by traffic down.

A slide in the presentation showed how the partnership with Bering Straits Native Corporation resulted in community commitments, such a company contributions to SAR equipment, washing machines, four-wheelers and contributions to the seasonal emergency shelter NEST in Nome, scholarship accounts and promises of preferential hiring of BSNC shareholders or descendants.

Reactions

At the end of the presentations, questions and comments centered on the proposed access road, the feared permanent loss of an unspoiled subsistence area and jobs. An audience member said bluntly: "If this mine goes in, we're going to starve to death."

When will the mine open? Schaffner said the earliest would be 2029. "That is if everything goes perfectly," he said. First, the access road needs to be built and Graphite One needs to secure permits from the state to do so. To get a head start on building the facilities, Graphite One proposed to barge some construction materials through Grantley Harbor, Tuksuk Channel to the Imuruk Basin but the proposal met resistance to the point that the company reconsidered.

Another audience member asked pointedly how much the company will make in revenue and what will be in it for Teller? Schaffner answered saying that it is hard to predict the price of graphite on the world market. He said this year alone tariffs on graphite have changed 13 times, which influences the price of graphite, but he expects the mine to break even.

When it's time to close the mine, what if the land is irreparably harmed will there be reparations paid? Schaffner answered that Grapite One has to place a bond with the state and if damage or harm is done, the state would take over and a legal case could be made against Graphite One.

Company commitments

The land of the mine is a state lease, and the access road corridor is also on state land. Since the area is not located in an organized borough, none of the communities would see a tax benefit from the mine. In an interview with The Nome Nugget, Mike Schaffner mentioned the possibility of payments in lieu of taxes to be negotiated.

But the biggest concern is not about money or jobs and has no price tag attached to it. It is what residents of Teller and Brevig Mission express over and over: The land is sacred to those who live nearby and have deep connections to the water, land, plants and animals. Schaffner said he is sensitive to these concerns. "How can we do this without changing the way you live?" he said. "The only thing we want to do is make things better for you, give you opportunities." Asked for clarification that the objective is not to mine and sell graphite but that the betterment of the local residents is the driving force behind the mine, Schaffner pointed to his past experiences of running mines that improved communities by offering housing incentives. "The one thing that showed clear and true benefit was how that community of Battle Mountain developed and evolved, because we set up the same housing that we're proposing for here," he said. The mine would employ about 250 workers, and proposes to develop a subdivision in Nome, to co-sign mortgages and after a set time of paying rent and working for Graphite One, the employees would end up owning the house. "You heard the comments about no housing," Schaffner said. "I am sincere when I say we need to make the quality of life better here, so you can believe it or not believe it."

He added, "You can see my passion on this is because you can't go in like an old mining company and rape, pillage, plunder and get out. You cannot do that, and you shouldn't do that."

He added that this is where the MOU is intended to add a layer of accountability to verbal commitments made. "The MOU is a starting point," he said. Graphite One so far is an exploration company with the goal to become a producer. It has no track record of operating a mine, but Schaffner said that between him and Kevin Torpy, they have a combined 70 years of experience in the mining industry. As Graphite One Inc. is a Canadian-owned company with an Alaskan subsidiary. The company is a publicly traded and a buyout or

continued on page 5

Photo by Diana Haecker

JOBS AND SCHOLARSHIPS— Graphite One COO Mike Schaffner responds to a question on jobs and scholarships.

Summer Reading Program 2026

Registration continues this week at the Kegoayah Kozga Public Library.

Weekly youth programs:

Tuesdays (Recommended ages 3-7):

Storytime & Crafts 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

(Children must be accompanied by an adult and adults must be accompanied by a child for storytime.)

Thursdays (Recommended ages 8-13):

Crafts and Activities 10:30 a.m. - 12 noon

Kegoayah Kozga Public Library • 443-6628

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.

Photo by Diana Haecker

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

• Teller

continued from page 4

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 landfill 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 subsistence resources.

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.

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.

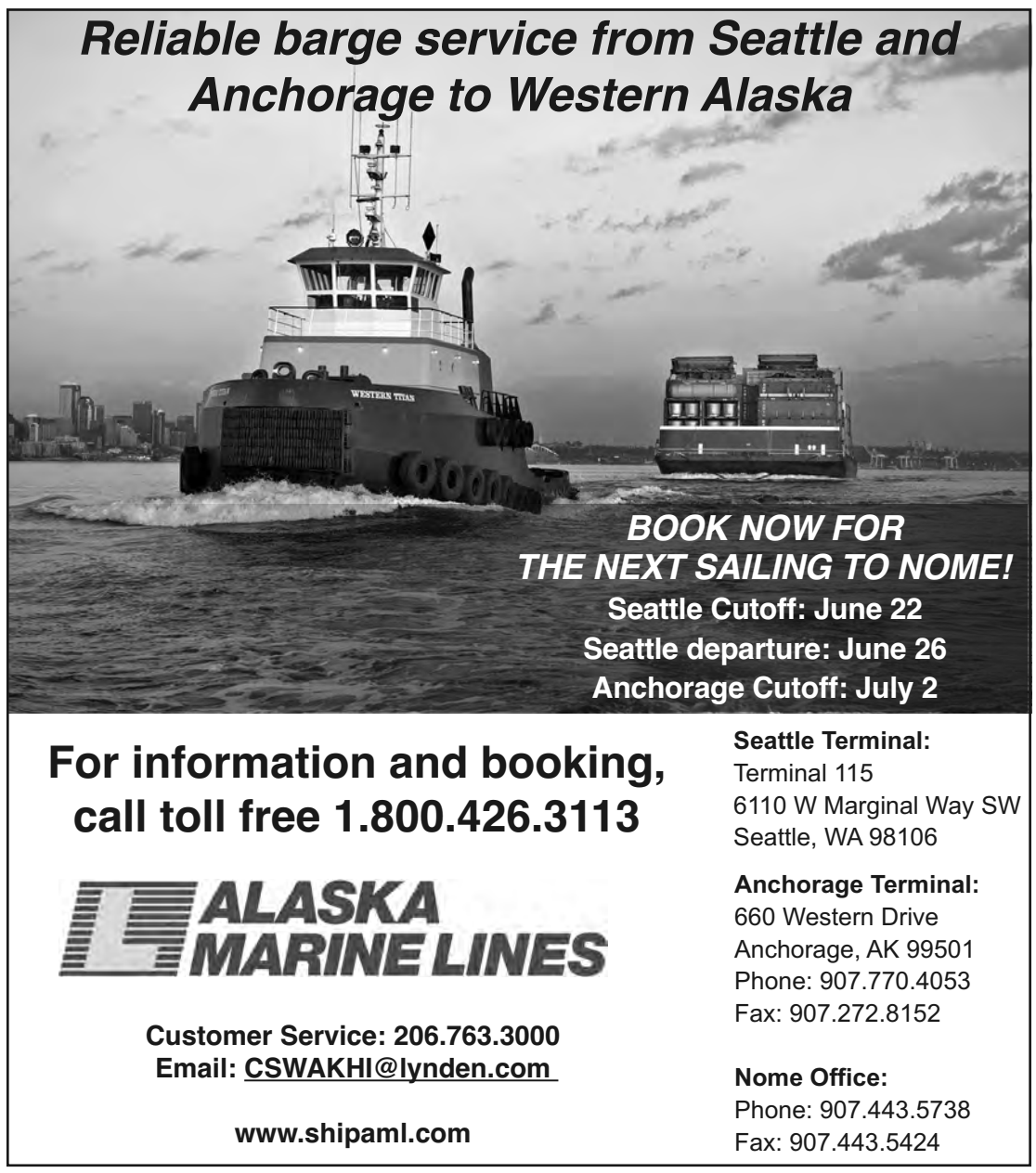


Photo by Diana Haecker

SMALL BOAT HARBOR— The floating docks are put in the water, as of Tuesday, June 9. A busy summer is expected for the boat harbor and Port of Nome.

ARTIST Act passes the US House, heads to President's desk

By Ariana Crockett O'Harra

A bill to protect the sale of Alaska Native artwork made from marine mammal ivory, bone or baleen was passed by the U.S. House on June 3 and is close to become law after a 10-year effort.

The Alaska's Right to Ivory Sales and Tradition, or ARTIST Act, aims to prevent states from banning artwork made from marine mammal ivory, bone or baleen. Some states have enacted ivory bans to protect against poached elephant ivory. State level bans in the Lower 48 can dissuade tourists to Alaska from purchasing ivory, cutting off artists from an income source.

Megan Onders, King Island Native Community Tribal Chief, traveled to Washington D.C. in March to testify before the House Committee on Natural Resources in support of the bill. In that testimony, Onders pointed out that carving is culturally informed employment and a job that young people in Alaska Native communities can take up.

Onders called the passage of the act by the U.S. House "A huge win for our ivory carvers across the region and a vote for American support for our Native way of life."

Vera Metcalf, Director of the Eskimo Walrus Commission, said in a statement that the bill is the result of a 10-year effort and thanked Alaska's congressional delegation, Kawerak, the Indigenous People's Council on Marine Mammals, Inuit Circumpolar Council, World Wildlife Fund and Alaska Native communities for their support. "It is the connection between our cultural identity, our food security, our local economy, and our worldview and wellbeing that any threat to one aspect can substantially undermine a community and its people," she said. "State ivory bans reduce the market for our handicrafts and art and unnecessarily harms our cultural identity, local economy, and wellbeing."

The bill passed the Senate on October 8, 2025 and is now waiting to be signed into law by President Donald Trump.

The Dock Walk

With the sea ice having completely left Norton Sound and the Nome port and harbor, the Port of Nome is already starting to become a busy place. Trucks are rolling to bring rock from the Cape Nome quarry to staging areas near the port as the first phase of the port expansion is underway. On Monday, the floating docks were installed at the small boat harbor and the entire fish dock was filled with fishing vessels. The gold dredge fleet is also already busy, taking to offshore claims to extract gold from the ocean floor. The first barge of the season arrived on May 31. Here is what Harbormaster Lucas Stotts reports to the Nugget for the season's first Dock Walk:

On Sunday, May 31, Alaska Marine Line's Polar Ranger/Pacific Trader arrived at causeway.

On June 1, Kiewit's Maia H/Klinkwan and Lois H/Hunter Bay arrived with equipment for phase 1A of the Port of Nome expansion.

On Tuesday, June 2, the Polar Ranger/Pacific Trader departed, along with the Maia H/Klinkwan. Alaska Marine Line's Greta arrived with village freight.

On Wednesday, the Greta departed. The Lois H/Hunter Bay departed south. The research vessel Norseman II arrived.

On Thursday, June 4, Cruz Marine's Dana Cruz/Innoko arrived with equipment.

On June 5, the Dana Cruz/Innoko and the Norseman II departed. The Lois H/Bainbridge offloaded equipment at Cape Nome before departing south.

No one arrived or departed on Saturday, June 6.

On Sunday, the Greta, a village freighter, arrived and departed.

On Monday, June 8, the jackup mining vessel Maria arrived.

The Dock Walk is brought to you by

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

• Letters

continued from page 2

be created by this project. Goals stated on the G1 website include, "Adding 250 jobs to the skilled Alaskan work force." But in regard to that claim including local hires from Brevig and Teller, he is quoted as saying, "When we start, that's probably not going to be a realistic goal."

One of the most interesting things we read was that a Bering Straits Native Corporation Board of Directors member attended the Teller Meeting to "get a feeling of how the shareholders feel." Is that board member asking these questions?

1) How do the people of the Bering Sea-to-Imuruk Basin Waterway feel about being asked to trade their future food security resources for G1 sweatshirts, pizza, and washing machines?

2) How do the people of the Bering Sea-to-Imuruk Basin Waterway feel about giving up their land to Outsiders who are already getting rich and would continue to get richer off their traditional hunting, fishing and sacred cultural sites?

3) How do the people of the Bering Sea-to-Imuruk Basin Waterway feel about the very real possibility of irreversible and irreplaceable damage to one of the most biologically rich watersheds in the State of Alaska?

4) How do the people of the Bering Sea-to-Imuruk Basin Waterway feel about the Bering Straits Native Corporation allowing Graphite One direct access to the Imuruk Basin?

5) How do the people of the Bering Sea-to-Imuruk Basin Waterway feel about the Bering Straits Native Corporation not honoring its own pledge to protect the land so that its shareholders can continue to subsist?

The people have spoken out in meetings, written comments to the government, and submitted multiple resolutions The answers to these questions are crystal clear and should have been known by the board member before setting foot in the Teller gym.

Sincerely,

Annie Conger, Native Village of Brevig Mission

Keith Conger, 42 years living in the region

PO Box 1333

Nome, AK 99762

Photos by Diana Haecker

TESTING— Zona Fitka brought gathered snipe and gull eggs to Dr. Lisa Kercher for testing.

TESTS AND SHELLS— Dr. Lisa Kercher set up shop at East End Park, enticing subsistence waterfowl hunters to bring by their harvested birds for avian flu testing. The hunters could receive free shotgun shells.

EGGS— Zona Fitka shows the eggs she collected off the tundra and brought for avian flu testing.

• Bird flu testing

continued from page 1

culling of poultry and a shortage and price increase in eggs.

But the disease is no longer just a deadly disease of chickens. Ramey said that prior to 2002, HPAI has been exclusively a poultry disease, but since 2021 HPAI has become a global wildlife disease, reaching into remote corners of the world, except for Australia, where it has not been documented yet.

Ramey called it an unprecedented spread of HPAI and mortality in wild birds, globally, and said it has jumped to other wildlife. "As of early October 2025, over 610,000 birds (116 species) and 56,000 mammals, were found dead in association with HPAI H5N1 outbreaks with most of the mortality having occurred from October 2022 to December 2023," a slide in a Strait Science presentation read.

From elephant seals in Argentina to massive die-offs of cranes in Israel, HPAI is taking its toll.

Closer to home, Ramey said, there have been 19,480 confirmed cases in all states of the U.S., including 811 cases in wild and domestic mammals, over 200 million in poultry and 1,109 dairy herds were affected. In 13 states, 71 humans had been infected with HPAI, and the CDC reported two human deaths associated with the disease.

The virus has become more complex, but for the lack of large-scale poultry or dairy production in Alaska, the state sees the spread mostly among wild birds and animals.

According to the USDA, only 576 confirmed cases of HPAI were documented in Alaska since 2021, including seven red foxes, one arctic fox, three polar bears, a black bear, a brown bear, an ermine and a mink.

Locally here in Nome, 126 samples from game management unit 22 revealed HPAI in four animals: two red foxes, a mink and an eider. Last year USDA tested samples from 249 spring subsistence harvested birds, but no evidence of HPAI was detected. USDA conducts a fall sampling program, and Ramey conducts a USGS research program, sampling waterfowl at Izembek Lagoon out of Cold Bay.

Ramey said that it seems that HPAI is now an established wildlife disease and is unlikely to go away anytime soon.

To fill gaps with sampling, Dr. Kercher spent the week in Nome, working out of the back of her rental car parked at East End Park. A woman came by, with a handful of snipe and gull eggs. Kercher obliged, bringing out the test kit and swabbing gently the eggs. "This is a first," she said. "I've never tested eggs." Usually, she takes samples by running the swabs in the bird's throats and the rear end.

Kercher traveled from Memphis, Tennessee to Nome with her mobile lab including the instrumentation to run molecular test to see if the birds have HPAI. "This is sort of just like a pilot test run," she said. "What I want to do is meet everybody here and just see what your issues are and listen to the community. Then we can go from there and maybe we can figure out a way forward that helps us do research and helps you guys get some information that you normally would not get."

At home, she has a camper and drives her lab up and down the Mississippi flyway. She called the Pacific Flyway enormous and her visit to Nome was a first attempt to see if a collaboration with other entities would work and to find out what are the gaps are on the ground. "We are here to ask the scientific questions and learn how the disease is working in these birds," she said.

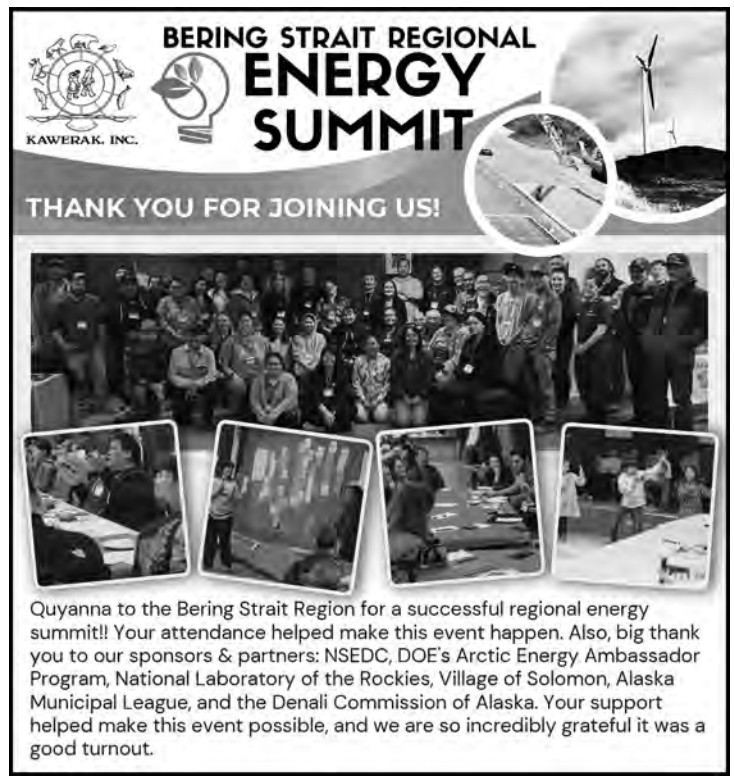
She added that the bird flu that is circulating now has killed more wild birds than the highly pathogenic flu has ever killed in the past. This strain of bird flu spreads fast and kills birds within 48 hours. "This particular strain is pretty promiscuous," she said. "It can go pretty quickly into lots of different species." The strain is also affecting the birds or animals neurologically.

When in the past it was hard to detect bird flu in affected birds, now people see birds with bobbling heads, swimming in circles and being disoriented or lethargic.

The bird flu can be picked up by small terrestrial mammals, they die and their carcasses are scavenged by larger mammals, and then they will get the neurological disease. "So that's the thing that's changed, and that's what's motivating me and St. Jude and other researchers to get out here and do more surveillance and think about how the disease is working now, because it's different than it was back in 2006 or 2007," Kercher said.

The virus is transmitted by contact, but also the virus ends up on the ground, and it survives on even the cold ground of northern Alaska. Kercher said in the Lower 48, she tests the sediment as well but not much testing of the soil has been done here in Nome or the region.

The results of the testing done over the past week are pending.



Unalakleet girls win first state relay championship

By Ariana Crockett O'Harra

During the Division II women's 4x400 meter relay at the Track and Field Championships, Unalakleet's Isabella Eller took an early lead. Eller passed the baton to Turi Busk, who maintained the team's position near the front. When Turi passed the baton to Violet Jack, disaster struck and the baton dropped. Jack snatched the baton up from the ground and began closing the gap. Homer runners led the race by about four seconds when Jack passed the baton off to Ourea Busk, Unalakleet's anchor leg and 400-meter state champion title holder. Ourea began reeling in the Homer runner and passed her competitor just before the last 100 meter straightaway, crossing the finish line in first place. In just 4:13.25, Unalakleet had won their first relay state title.

Ourea said that when she started her anchor leg, she was just in the moment. "Everything was happening, I just kind of knew what I had to do," she said. Afterwards, she was excited. "I was just really happy that I was able to pull it off."

At that same meet, Ourea also won her fourth state title in the 400-meter race. She's a year-round athlete, competing in cross country, volleyball, skiing, NYO, basketball and track.

She said that there can be a lot of pressure, but she tries to focus on how she feels during a competition over her results. "When you've done well before, and everyone kind of expects you to do well again, I guess it feels like you have this kind of obligation to not let them down," she said.

When she first started competing at bigger meets, she felt at first a little bit out of place. "Obviously, where we come from is really different, but that doesn't mean that we can't do it any better than they can," she said. "We just gotta go out and do it."

Mori Jack-Busk, the Unalakleet coach and Ourea and Turi's mother, echoed that sentiment. "We come from a very different place than these teams that we compete against at all of these meets," she said. "Our high school is about 40 students, and the girls' population is less than half, so what they accomplished here is really, really incredible."

Jack-Busk said that the relay team in particular – Isabella Eller, Turi Busk, Violet Jack and Ourea Busk – are very good friends. Ourea and Turi are sisters, and Violet is their cousin.

This was a bittersweet end to the season – Eller is moving, and Jack and Ourea are graduating. "It's pretty special, knowing that these girls are so connected and just the best of friends, and knowing it was kind of their last time they're going to run together," coach Jack-Busk said.

Watching the relay had her heart in her mouth. "It was kind of like a roller coaster, like, 'We're in the lead,' and then there was like a huge drop when they dropped the baton, and everybody's heart sank," she said. "But luckily, Violet did exactly what she needed to do."

Jack-Busk said that the friendship between the girls enabled them to perform well. "They all had a job, and they knew that if they all did their job, Ourea would be able to finish the job," she said.

This is Unalakleet's first state relay title, but the school only got started with a track team four years ago, when Ourea was a freshman. The team trains in the school halls before snow melt and on a few stretches of road when it warms up. They're unfunded, so the athletes must fundraise all year long. "It takes a huge commitment, but they've worked really hard to create these opportunities for themselves," said Jack-Busk.

Ourea plans to attend UAF in the fall, and as of this spring, has not committed to competing any sports.

Photo by Ray Hafen

RELAY— Isabella Eller, left, successfully passed the baton to Turi Busk, during the Division II State Championship 4x400 meter relay. Despite a bad handover later in the race, the team recovered to win first place in the event.

Nome-Beltz's track season

Nome-Beltz wrapped up a short and sweet track and field season on May 29 and 30 at State Championships at Dimond High School in Anchorage.

Keegan James Musich pulled off personal bests in both the 100-meter and 200-meter preliminary heats, missing out on the top eight finish required for a spot in the finals by only a few tenths of a second each time. Granite Peacock ran a personal best in the 400-meter dash, finishing in 12th place with a time of 55.57. He placed 15th in the 800-meter race overall. Cassidy Martinson, Audrey Bruner-Alvanna, Aurora Walker and Noel Pardee finished in eighth place for the girl's 4x100 meter relay. The boys 4x100 relay team – Levi Pederson, Kendall Ulroan, Drake Medlin and Keegan Musich – finished in seventh place. Both relay teams netted their best-ever times. Freshman Noel Pardee placed ninth in high jump and 15th in long jump. Young Erikson placed 16th in shot put and ninth in discus. Kendall Ulroan placed 15th in long jump.

Freshman Noel Pardee placed ninth in high jump and 15th in long jump. Young Erikson placed 16th in shot put and ninth in discus. Kendall Ulroan placed 15th in long jump.

Coach Lahka Peacock said that the team was focused on improving and netting a few personal bests. "We weren't expecting kids to come out of there with first place finishes and things like that," he said.

The team had an unconventional start to the season, beginning practices a month later than normal. There is no track in Nome and the athletes trained inside in the early days of the season. They had one and half meets under their belt heading into state – one day of racing in Soldotna, and regionals at Susitna Valley High School.

At regions two weeks before, Nome-Beltz had come in ranked second to last and finished ranked second. Peacock said the team was a little down about not netting another performance like that at state. "We were saying, 'Hey, you guys improved every single meet,'" he said. "'Imagine if you had another month, and be proud, you guys set personal best times again.'"

Peacock said that turning up to a State Championships as an athlete from a small, rural school can be nerve-wracking. "They were really nervous going into their events," he said. "After it's all said and done, they were all super happy and proud about where they ended up at."

Peacock sees the meet as a success. Many of the athletes got personal best times or made it to state finals. Just qualifying for state means that athlete is top sixteen in that event in Alaska.

Another highlight from this season's state meet? Watching Unalakleet. Peacock said that the historic 4x400 meter victory got him excited for coaching. "It's pretty incredible," he said.

Photo by Ray Hafen

DROP— Behind the Homer runner, Unalakleet team drops baton but rallies to win on Ourea Busks anchor leg.

• Spring cleanup

continued from page 1

trash, you get a blue ticket, and for 10 blue tickets, you get to trade it in for a red ticket," she said. "That red ticket goes into a bucket, then, for a chance at a bike."

Kinley Krift, dropping off bags of trash at Old St. Joe's on Saturday afternoon, was raring for the bicycle. "My bike is really, really small. It's smaller than my own brother's, and I really wanted to get a new bike, because I always bike to my friends' houses," she explained.

Kinley said she feels like her family were heroes. "We just picked up a whole lot of trash."

Her brother Fisher Krift agreed with the sentiment. "I think it's fun and nice to pick up the trash, so that the environment stays healthy," he added.

Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum Director Cheryl Thompson stepped up to help organize the event this year.

Thompson said the city-wide push to collect trash makes the town feel cleaner. "There's old washers and dryers that probably have been in some yard for years, and then somebody says, 'Okay, this is a good time to make a pile and have them pick it up.'"

Inside Old St. Joe's, Presley Reader and Sophia Piscoya were handing out hot dogs to anyone who showed proof of a ticket. AC had donated the hot dogs, condiments were donated by Hanson's and a cooler held sodas, purchased by NJUS.

Burchell said she's volunteered for KICY at the event for years. The city offers $100 to nonprofits to man a dump station. "There are people that do make an effort to go out on the streets as well, but for a lot of them, it's a good time to clean up the yard," she said. "Things blow all winter, and whether it was initially your trash or not, there's trash in your yard, and it's nice to just pick it up and get it out of there."

If you missed the chance to clean up, not to worry. The city's landfill accepts trash for free every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and there will be a second cleanup in the fall – Cushman said they're pushing for the middle of September.

Photos by Ariana Crockett O'Harra

HAULING TRASH— Rachel Ventress, left, unloads her car with the help of Patty Burchell, center, and City Manager Lee Smith in the Old St. Joe's parking lot at the city's spring cleanup on Saturday, June 6.

Photo by Shane Smithhisler

KEEPING NOME CLEAN— Sigurd Dale Smithhisler enjoys his favorite day of the year during Nome's Community Cleanup Day, helping collect trash and debris to keep the community beautiful.

FAMILY AFFAIR— Fisher, Tim, Dawn and Kinley Krift unload trash from the back of a truck with the help of City Manager Lee Smith in the Old St. Joe's parking lot at the city's spring cleanup on Saturday, June 6.

NOME CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
I ♥ NOME
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Federal Subsistence Board acts on special action requests for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – At its June 3 public meeting, the Federal Subsistence Board considered three Wildlife Special Action Requests pertaining to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. The board's decisions followed public testimony from an April 9 public hearing, analyses from the Office of Subsistence Management, input from Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tribes and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Corporations, National Park Subsistence Resource Commissions, the Interagency Staff Committee, and public testimony received at the meeting.

Wildlife Special Action Request WSA26-01 asked to reduce the caribou harvest limit in Units 22, 23, and 26A west of the Colville River drainage upstream from the Nuka River and drainages of the Chukchi Sea, south and west of and including the Kuk and Kugrua river drainages (Unit 26A SW) to 4 caribou per year, only one of which may be a cow for the 2026/27 regulatory year.

Wildlife Special Action Requests WSA26-02 and WSA26-03 asked to close federal public lands to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users for the 2026-2028 wildlife regulatory cycle in Units 22 and 26A SW, respectively.

The Board adopted WSA26-01 with a modification to eliminate the cow caribou hunt through the 2027/28 regulatory year and to defer action on reducing the bull caribou harvest limit until the board's fisheries regulatory meeting in February 2027. The board stated that eliminating cow caribou harvest would have the greatest impact on WACH conservation and recovery, and this change was supported by both the Seward Peninsula and Northwest Arctic Councils. The board noted that ADF&G recently issued an emergency order closing the cow caribou hunt under state regulations, and this modification would maintain regulatory alignment, supporting a unified conservation approach and clear public messaging.

The board deferred action on the harvest limit reduction because bull to cow ratios indicate bulls may still be harvested without impacting conservation. In addition, the Alaska Board of Game will consider similar proposals at its January 2027 meeting, and the board determined it was appropriate to revisit the issue after that discussion.

The board also adopted WSA26-02 and WSA26-03, stating both closures are necessary for the conservation and continued subsistence uses of the WACH as well as to maintain a subsistence priority as required by law and in deference to the Councils.

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Alaska drops to 47th in the nation in overall child well-being, new report says

Alaska's ranking declined seven places, with the steepest decline in education, where the state ranked 49th of 50 states

By Corinne Smith, Alaska Beacon

Alaska dropped seven places to rank 47th in the nation in overall child well-being, according to a nationally recognized survey by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Advocates say the decline is troubling and reflects years of declining investment in Alaska children and families.

The scoring system is part of Kids Count data book, an analysis of all 50 states to gauge how children are faring across 16 indicators in four areas — economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. The latest score reflects outcomes over a five-year period from 2019 to 2024, to compare between states and against the baseline of 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alaska received an overall score of 385 out of 1,000.

Alaska's overall score dropped 41 points since 2019, among the largest decline of any state in the nation.

"Dropping seven spots in a single year is not a data point — it's a warning," said Trevor Storrs, president and CEO of Alaska Children's Trust, in a statement highlighting the survey. The non-profit advocacy group focuses on supporting Alaska children and families and preventing child abuse and neglect.

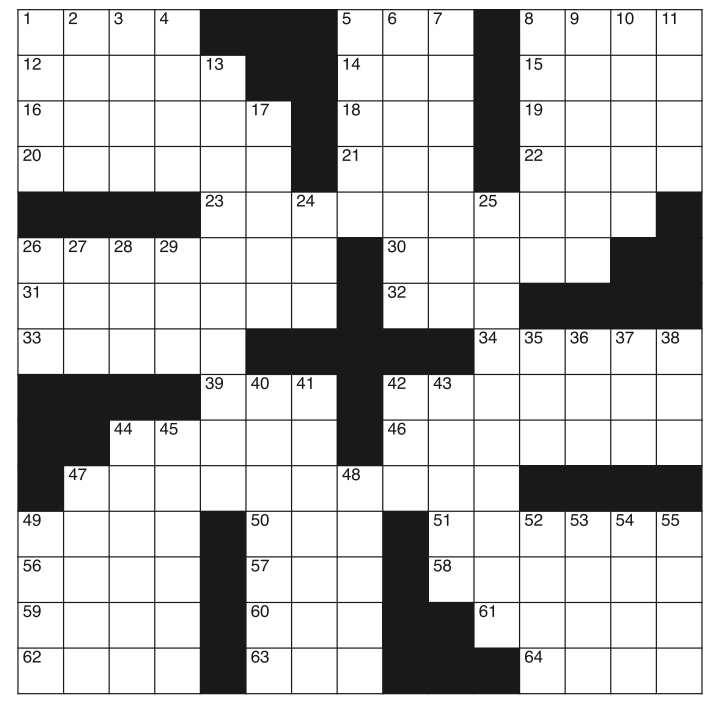
"We have been seeing year after year the overall trend of Alaska's investment in children and families going down, and that is automatically going to result in less success or less thriving children and families," Storrs said in an interview Monday. "So us not doing as well as other states is not a surprise, and dropping to 47th is a major step backwards."

Alaska saw the steepest decline in education, where the state ranked 49th in the nation, just above New Mexico. In 2024, 78 percent of Alaska fourth graders were not proficient in reading, and 78 percent of eighth graders were not proficient in math, several points worse than 2019 levels. In the five-year period, 64 percent of young children — ages 3 and 4 — were not in school. Among high schoolers, 22 percent did not graduate on time in 2024.

In economic well-being, Alaska ranked 48th in the nation. Thirteen percent of children were living in poverty in 2024, with no change since 2019. Roughly one third, or 34 percent of children's parents lacked stable employment, up from 29 percent in 2019. Eleven percent of teens were not working and were not in school.

In the health and family and community sectors, Alaskans fared slightly better — ranking 38th and 30th respectively. However, 31 percent of children and teens were overweight or obese, and 9 percent of children had no health insurance. Teen birth rates improved slightly to 15 per 100,000, but infant mortality rates and child death rates worsened over the five-year period.

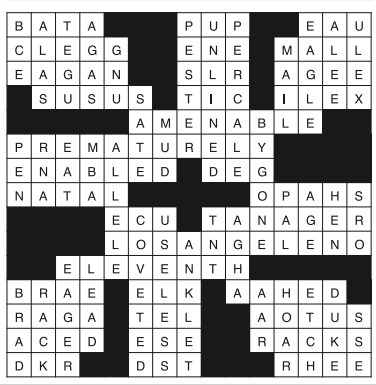
continued on page 14



CLUES ACROSS
1. Sealed with a kiss
5. Large sandwich
8. Swiss city
12. Japanese persimmons
14. When you hope to get somewhere
15. Wings
16. A name of God
18. Elected official (informal)
19. Abnormal breathing
20. "Seinfeld" character
21. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
22. Something for sale
23. Gets rid of
26. One who touts
30. Blemished
31. Less than exciting
32. Born of
33. N. German town
34. Notes
39. Move away from land
42. Vulcanite
44. More ignoble
46. Child actor Kirk
47. Written works
49. Sea vessel
50. Residue
51. Engraved
56. Having sufficient skill
57. One and only
58. Erase
59. Broad inlets
60. Nightmarish street
61. Play again
62. Formerly (archaic)
63. Add a color to change the color
64. Move swiftly and lightly

CLUES DOWN
1. Scottish island
2. River in the Netherlands
3. Asian people
4. Fuzzy fruit
5. Ninth month (abbr.)
6. An idealistic social reformer
7. What you owe
8. Colorless mineral
9. Overjoyed
10. Rattling breaths
11. Tropical Old World tree
13. A citizen of Senegal
17. Greek mythological beauty
24. Wrath
25. Instrument to measure wind speed
26. Luxury carmaker
27. Bitterly regret
28. Not or
29. Google certification
35. Midway between northeast and east
36. Space station
37. Relating to the ears
38. Congressman
40. Yelled at
41. Rudely assertive
42. Defunct European money
43. Shared one's soul
44. Onion rolls
45. A way to state clearly
47. Relating to a lobe
48. Underlying message
49. Hollywood pig
52. Indicates pitch
53. Filament of a feather
54. Small ornamental ladies' bag for small articles
55. Diminish

Previous Puzzle Answers



HOROSCOPES

June 11 to June 17

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
Collaboration is your secret weapon this week, Aries. Putting two heads together will be better than one. Take a walk or exercise to get away and gain perspective.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, you may find yourself getting a small bonus or increase in pay, proving your financial luck is looking up this week. Enjoy the surprise and treat yourself to something.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
Gemini, this is a great week for writing or presentations since you will have creativity flowing through you. A fun text message can be a catalyst for a great weekend.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Your nesting instincts are in full swing right now, Cancer. You might be inspired to turn your space into a peaceful sanctuary. A family-related piece of news can bring peace.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Courage may come naturally this week, Leo. Speak your truth right when it is needed. Your warmth can be a magnet for others and new friendships may develop.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, learning a new skill will be easy for you right now. Take pride in your progress. You are becoming more versatile and vital.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Share your heart and listen closely to what a partner has to say, Libra. A romantic or platonic relationship will reach a high point. The connection built will be exciting.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
You're at peak productivity right now as you tackle your to-do list with great focus, Scorpio. By the end of the week you'll be ready to dive into a mysterious or fun hobby.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
A sense of humor will be a great asset this week, helping to diffuse any tension by laughing, Sagittarius. Start looking ahead to travel plans.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Wisdom is flowing through you and you may find you are the go-to person for solid advice, Capricorn. Your grounded nature helps everyone around you.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, innovation will help you find clever shortcuts for problems that have proven tough to solve. Your unique style may start earning you praise, but remain humble.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Empathy allows you to connect with others on a deep level, Pisces. A creative project that you have been building finally starts to bloom in unexpected ways.

Photo by Diana Haecker
SHINY COAT— A muskox moves along the Nome-Teller highway on Tuesday, June 2.

Trump administration $100,000 visa fee for highly skilled foreign workers struck down

By Ariana Figueroa,
States Newsroom
Washington D.C.

WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Massachusetts Monday struck down the Trump administration's efforts to require a $100,000 visa fee for highly skilled immigrant workers, finding the policy is an unlawful tax.

Judge Leo T. Sorokin found the hefty fee placed on the H-1B visa by President Donald Trump exceeded his authority by creating a tax, something that falls under Congress' authority.

"The President has no authority to levy a tax unless such a power is delegated by Congress through statute," Sorokin, who was nominated by former President Barack Obama, wrote. "For these reasons, the Court finds that the Policy imposes a tax on H-1B petitions without the requisite delegation by Congress."

The H-1B program allows a U.S. employer to hire a noncitizen worker in a specialty occupation for a maximum of six years, ranging from the technology industry to healthcare workers. At a minimum, visa applicants have to hold a bachelor's degree.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said in a statement to States Newsroom that the agency disagrees "with this blatant judicial activism dismantling President Trump's historic efforts for immigration reform."

"The recent changes to the H-1B visa program, including the increased fee, are intended to address concerns about program integrity and the impact on the U.S. workforce," the spokesperson said. "The policy aims to ensure that employers prioritize hiring U.S. workers, particularly in high-skilled fields. The Trump Administration remains committed to safeguarding opportunities for American workers and maintaining the integrity of employment-based visa programs."

The suit was brought by 20 states: California, Massachusetts, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington state and Wisconsin.

In September the Department of Homeland Security issued a proclamation requiring employers to pay a $100,000 fee for a noncitizen to enter the U.S. under a H-1B visa.

The Alaska Legislature unanimously passed a resolution in May that urged the Trump administration to waive the steep visa fee to allow the continued recruitment and hiring of international teachers. Alaska school districts increasingly rely on international hiring to fill an ongoing teacher shortage across the state, particularly in rural and remote districts, and the fee hike put the cost for that solution out of reach.

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Lasagna With Zucchini and Meat Sauce

Makes 9 servings

- 2 large zucchini, rinsed and trimmed
- Salt
- 12 dried lasagna noodles
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground black pepper
- 1 small green bell pepper, rinsed, trimmed and diced
- 1 onion, peeled and diced
- 8 ounces tomato paste
- 15 ounces canned tomato sauce
- 3 1/2 tablespoons red wine
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 cups low-fat ricotta cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 cups grated Parmesan cheese

1. Preheat oven to 325 F. Coat a deep 9 x 13-inch baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Slice zucchini lengthwise into very thin slices. Sprinkle slices lightly with salt; set aside to drain in a colander.
3. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the noodles and cook until al dente, 8 to 12 minutes. Drain, immerse in cold water to cool and drain again. Lay the noodles in a single layer on a baking sheet and cover with plastic wrap.
4. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, set over medium-high heat, cook and stir the ground beef and black pepper for 5 minutes. Drain excess grease from pan. Add in green pepper and onion; cook and stir until beef is no longer pink. Stir in tomato paste, tomato sauce, wine, basil, and oregano. If sauce is too thick, add a small amount of warm water. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer sauce for about 20 minutes, stirring frequently.
5. Meanwhile, stir egg, ricotta, and parsley together in a bowl and mix well.
6. To assemble lasagna, spread 1/3 of the meat sauce into the bottom of prepared pan. Then layer 1/3 of the cooked lasagna noodles, 1/3 of the zucchini slices, 1/2 of the ricotta mixture, 1/3 of the mozzarella cheese. Repeat the layers ending with a layer of zucchini followed by a layer of noodles. Spread Parmesan cheese evenly over the top; cover with foil.
7. Bake for 45 minutes. Remove foil; increase oven temperature to 350 F, and bake an additional 15 minutes. Let stand for 5 or 10 minutes before serving.

Tip: This may be assembled a day ahead. Refrigerate until ready to bake.

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Pastor Mike Zabel
Sunday Worship - 11:00 am
Checkpoint Youth Center - James Ventress - 841-4333

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Saturday Morning Worship: 11 a.m.

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Sunday Morning Worship: 11:00 am
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For an application or a complete job description, visit www.nsedc.com or contact NSEDC Human Resources via phone, (907) 274-2248 (Anchorage) or 1-(800)-650-2248 (toll-free), or via email: hr@nsedc.com.

BSRHA

RECRUITMENT BULLETIN

Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority is recruiting for the following positions:

- **PT Custodian**
- **Maintenance Compliance Inspector**
- **Housing Occupancy Specialist**

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY:
Application and full job description can be downloaded from the website www.bsrha.org, picked up at the BSRHA Office: 1008 East Front Street, Nome, Alaska, or by emailing HR@bsrha.org. Applications may be turned in, mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to BSRHA.

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Clean Waters Crew Member (Stebbins & St. Michael): Assists in project implementation, logistics and field work for cleanup projects in area beaches, rivers and sloughs.

Seafood Processor (Nome*, Unalakleet* & Savoonga): Responsible for the proper processing of salmon, crab, halibut and other seafood. Work to provide a high-quality product in a sanitary environment.

Fish Buyer (Nome*, Unalakleet*, Golovin, Elim, Koyuk & Shaktoolik): Assists fishermen at the dock, loads and unloads tender and fishing vessels, issues fish tickets, produces ice, operates a forklift and crane, maintains a clean work environment and transports seafood products to the airport.

Quality Control Coordinator (Nome* & Unalakleet*): Responsible for supervising quality production and packaging of salmon, crab, halibut, and other seafood. Work to assure a high-quality product in a sanitary environment.

Refrigeration Technician (Nome*): Responsible for the proper operation of facilities and equipment in seafood plants and buying stations. Applicant must be certified in basic electrical operations.

Cook (Nome* & Unalakleet*): Responsible for daily meal planning and preparation, cleaning and maintaining kitchen area, and grocery shopping as needed.

Security Guard (Nome* & Unalakleet*): Responsible for monitoring the assigned plant for NSEDC and ensuring the security of the premises.

Bunkhouse Supervisor (Nome* & Unalakleet*): Responsible for monitoring the NSSP bunkhouse, ensuring security for property and residents, performing various custodial duties and maintaining inventory levels.

Regional residents from outside of Unalakleet and Nome who work in NSSP operations in those two communities may be eligible for housing and travel support.

For an application or a complete job description, visit *www.nsedc.com* or contact NSEDC Human Resources at (907) 274-2248 (Anchorage), 1-800-650-2248 (toll-free) or *hr@nsedc.com*.

Trooper Beat

No current "Daily Dispatch" C Detachment, Nome Post for 5/29–6/4/2026

Seawall

Nome Police Department
Weekly press releases
Activities reported between
6/1/2026 – 6/7/2026

During this period there were 150 calls for service received at the Nome Police Communications Center; 45 (67%) of these calls involved alcohol. The Nome Police Department dispatched 35 ambulance calls to NSHC. The Nome Volunteer Fire Department responded to 0 fire calls during this period.

NPD responded to 0 calls reporting intoxicated persons needing assistance. Nobody remained at the hospital for medical evaluation/treatment.

Non-arrests

There were two citations given for Minor Consuming Alcohol, and three citations for Open Container violations.

Arrests

A total of 11 arrests were made, with 10 (90%) alcohol related

Monday, June 1, 2026
Charge: Criminal Trespass in the first degree. Name: Denzel Washington. Location: E I St.
Charges: Assault in the fourth degree and Disorderly Conduct. Name: Donald Oliver. Location: Front St.
Charge: Warrant Arrest. Name: Adam Saccheus. Location: Front St,

Tuesday, June 2, 2026
Charge: Warrant Arrest. Name: Stephen Berg. Location: Nome.
Charge: Two counts Violating Conditions of Release. Name: Ethan Evan. Location: E. 4th Ave.

Wednesday, June 3, 2026
Charge: Violating a DV/Protective order. Name: Charlene Iyapana. Location: Gold Ave.
Charge: Violating Conditions of Release. Name: Raymond Larsen Sr. Location: Front St.
Charges: Three counts Assault in the fourth degree; Resisting or interfering with arrest; Criminal Mischief in the fifth degree and Disorderly Conduct. Name: Gabrielle Nayokpuk. Location: Front St.

Friday, June 5, 2026
Charge: Violating Conditions of Release. Name: Vivian Foster. Location: Lomen St.
Charges: Criminal trespass in the second degree and Violating Conditions of Release. Name: James Blankenship. Location: Front St.

Sunday, June 7, 2026
Charge: Assault in the fourth degree. Name: David Menadelook. Location: Division St.

Traffic

NPD made 1 traffic stops, with 0 citation and 1 warnings issued. NPD responded to 1 report of a motor vehicle accident.

This is a record of activity. The issuance of citations or the act of arrest does not assign guilt to any identified party. Officers refer all cases to the DA for action

Court

Week ending 6/4/2026
Civil

Not published v. Jessica C.R. Brown Stalking: Short-Term

Not published v. Darin Douglas; Domestic Violence: Short-Term

Lonzell Graham Lanier v. Chelsea Belinda Hilda Nassau; Petition for Expedited Enforcement of Non-Registered Custody Order

Not Published v. Mark Buck; Stalking: Short-Term

This is a record of court filing activity. The civil filings of protective order petitions do not reflect that the court issued an order or made a judgment.

Small Claims

Cornerstone Credit Services LLC v. Azure Lynne Stanford; Small Claim more than $2,500

Criminal

State of Alaska v. Marcus Wayne Barr (11/12/90); Dismissal; Count I: Violation Of Conditions Of Release; This count is being dismissed here and added to Case 2NO-26-127CR Filed by the AGs Office 4/27/26.

State of Alaska v. Luke Phillip Topkok (7/8/88); 2NO-20-522CR Judgment And Order Of Commitment/Probation; CTN 001:

continued on page 13

Classifieds

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•Court

continued from page 12

Assault 3 - Commit Assault 4, 2+ Convictions; DV Class: C Felony; Offense Date: 8/3/20; The following charges were dismissed: CTN 002: Violate Conditions of Release for Misd; Offense Date 8/3/20; Dismissal Reason: 43a Dismissed by Prosecution; Sentencing Date: 5/13/21, with counsel, Office of Public Advocacy, Rural Defense Section, and the DA present; CTN 001: 4 years with all but time already served suspended; Surcharges due; Submit DNA; Probation for 3 years; General and Special Probation Conditions set; Any appearance or performance bond in this case: is exonerated; Effective Date: 5/13/21, Romano D. DiBenedetto.

State of Alaska v. Lorraine Saccheus (11/8/85); Petition To Revoke Probation #3; Arrested; In-Custody Remand; Locate Information: AMCC; Petition Filing Date: 6/2/26; Assigned Officer: Devin Bodine; Violation of General Condition #10; See Allegation, on file; Court No. 2NO-23-144CR.

State of Alaska v. Elias Norris (10/22/04); 2NO-26-10CR CTN 001: DUI-Operate Under Influence Alcohol/Drug; Any outstanding appearance or performance is exonerated; CTNs Dismissed: 002, 003, 004, 005; 3 days, 0 days suspended; Unsuspended 3 days must be immediately with credit for time served; Fine: $1500 due 6/2/27; Surcharges due; Cost of Imprisonment: 1st Offense: $330 due 6/2/27; Complete treatment: Contact ASAP 264-0735 within 30 days; Complete prior to end of probation; Pay all costs; Obey Driver's License Directives; driver's license is revoked for 90 days; After you regain privilege to drive, us an IID as directed in IID Information Sheet for 6 months; Costs of IID will be credited against fin imposed if you give proof of payment to court clerk before the fine due date.

State of Alaska v. Elias Norris (10/22/04); 2NO-26-107CR CTN 001: Assault 4 - Recklessly Injure; DV; DOV: 4/4/26; CTNs Dismissed: 002, 003; Any appearance or performance bond in this case is exonerated; 180 days, 90 days suspended; Unsuspended 90 days must be served immediately with credit for time served; No Contact, effective immediately, and until unconditional discharge; defendant will have direct or indirect contact with (unpublished); Treatment, ordered to attend and complete the following treatment program: ASAP concurrent with 2NO-26-10CR; Suspended Jail Surcharge, due; Probation for 1 year (effective date: 6/2/26); Complete with all direct court orders listed above by the deadlines stated; Obey all state, federal, and local laws, specifically no jailable offenses; Do not consume or possess alcohol; Do not enter a place where alcohol is the primary item for sale; Subject to warrantless testing and arrest upon any violation.

State of Alaska v. Albert Washington (2/3/03); Petition To Revoke Probation #2; Arrested; In-Custody Remand; Locate Information: Anchorage Jail; Petition Filing Date: 6/2/26; Assigned Officer: Gail Smithhisler; Violation of General Condition #10; See Allegation, on file; Court No. 2UT-22-152CR.

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- **Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator**
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- **Yup'ik Language Mentor**
- **Inupiaq Language Mentor**
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- **Head Start Teacher** *(Koyuk)*
- **Child Care Program Specialist**
- **Childcare Provider**
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Photo by Diana Haecker

SPRING MOLT— A willow ptarmigan is alert on Tuesday, June 2, along the Nome-Teller highway.

•Alaska drops to 47th in the nation

continued from page 10

Alaska continues to have among the highest rate of youth suicide in the nation. In 2024, teen deaths by accident, homicide or suicide were nearly double the national average at a rate of 70 per 100,000.

Nationwide, challenges and progress were reflected across all states: 29 states saw overall declines, 15 states saw improvements and six states were stable, across the scoring system. Education outcomes remain the most concerning across the board, according to the Kids Count analysis – nearly every state, or 47 in total, saw declines in education since 2019, highlighting the pervasive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Storrs and Alaska education advocates across the state say state funding has failed to keep up with Alaska school districts' needs, as costs increase and budget deficits have ballooned, resulting in severe budget cuts and the closure of 12 schools statewide this year.

"Our education isn't doing poorly because of not the right teachers or not the right system, it is literally being strangled and deprived of the options that it needs to survive, and that is the funding," Storrs said.

Storrs said that greater investments in Alaska's schools alone won't improve educational outcomes, as health and socio-economic factors greatly impact how a child shows up at school.

"Children and families live in an ecosystem, and we need to make sure all aspects are well maintained, because if one goes bad, it can and will impact. And we're definitely seeing that the educational side is not doing so well, that's definitely impacting so many areas of our state," he said.

Storrs said despite the decline, recent policy investments in childcare and broadened access and funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program has been beneficial, Storrs said, as well as legislation that passed this year to expand paid parental leave, increase funding for early intervention programs, and establish a mental health curriculum in schools.

An analysis by the Alaska Children's Trust found that the state last year reduced funding levels for services and programs to specifically support Alaska children, youth and families by an estimated 21 percent compared to average funding levels from FY2014–2017, adjusted for inflation.

Storrs said the group is advocating for more funding "upstream" for support services, rather than "downstream" funding for things like corrections. Storrs pointed to the all-time high budget approved for the Alaska Department of Corrections this year.

He said the organization is also urging serious consideration and development of new state revenue measures that would provide funding for social services and support for families.

"It's a warning that if we continue to do this, our numbers are only going to get worse," Storrs said. "Our children and families are going to suffer, and we're going to continue to see trends, not just in the sense of poor outcomes, but people leaving our state."

As Alaska is headed into a major election year, set to vote on a new governor, U.S. Senator, U.S. House Representative and dozens of Alaska House and Senate members, Storrs said he hopes Alaskans will ask questions and push candidates to consider these complex issues, and investing in children and families.

"Kids make up about 25 percent of our population, but 100 percent of our future," Storrs said.

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Legals

KAWERAK, INC.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

KAWERAK TRANSPORTATION

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER/GENERAL CONTRACTOR (CM/GC) FACILITATION AND INDEPENDENT COST ESTIMATION (ICE) SERVICES

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For a complete Solicitation Notice please contact Kawerak before July 2, 2026, in writing (by email). Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted via email no later than June 19, 2026.

Kawerak Transportation Program
Attention: Benajmin Payenna, Transportation Program Director
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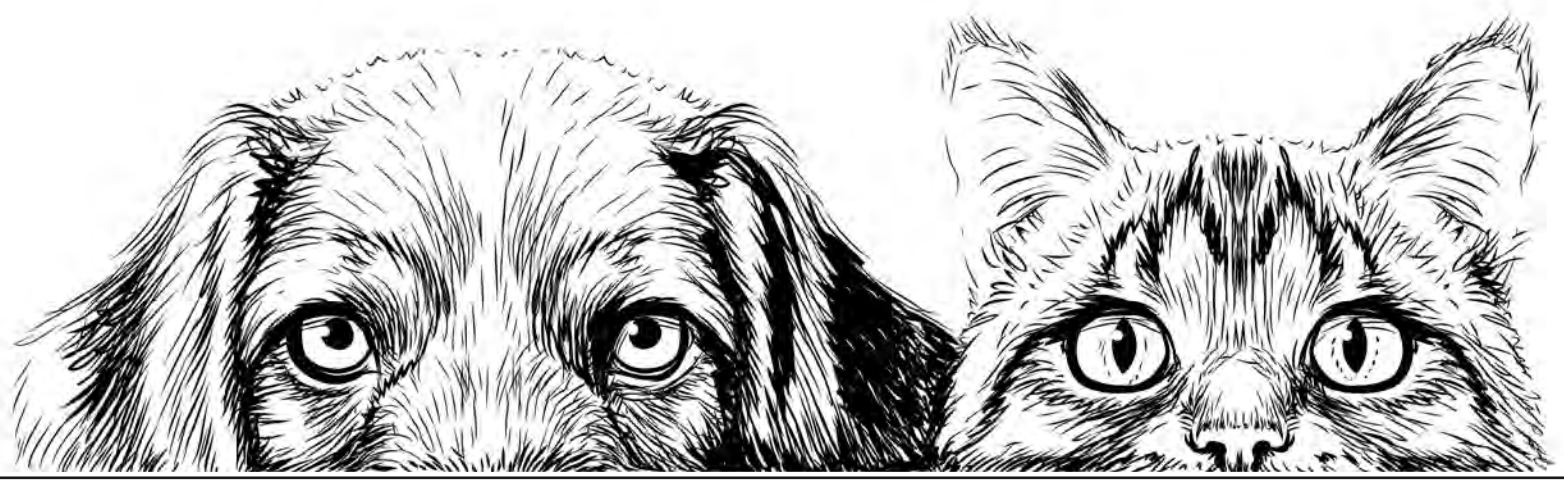

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Sitnasuak Native Corp. buys 1,700 acres along Nome River

By Diana Haecker

Sitnasuak Native Corporation and a national land conservation fund partnered up to put 1,700 acres along 14 miles of the Nome River in a permanent protected status. Sitnasuak bought the land from the Conservation Fund with the intent to protect the land and make the river accessible.

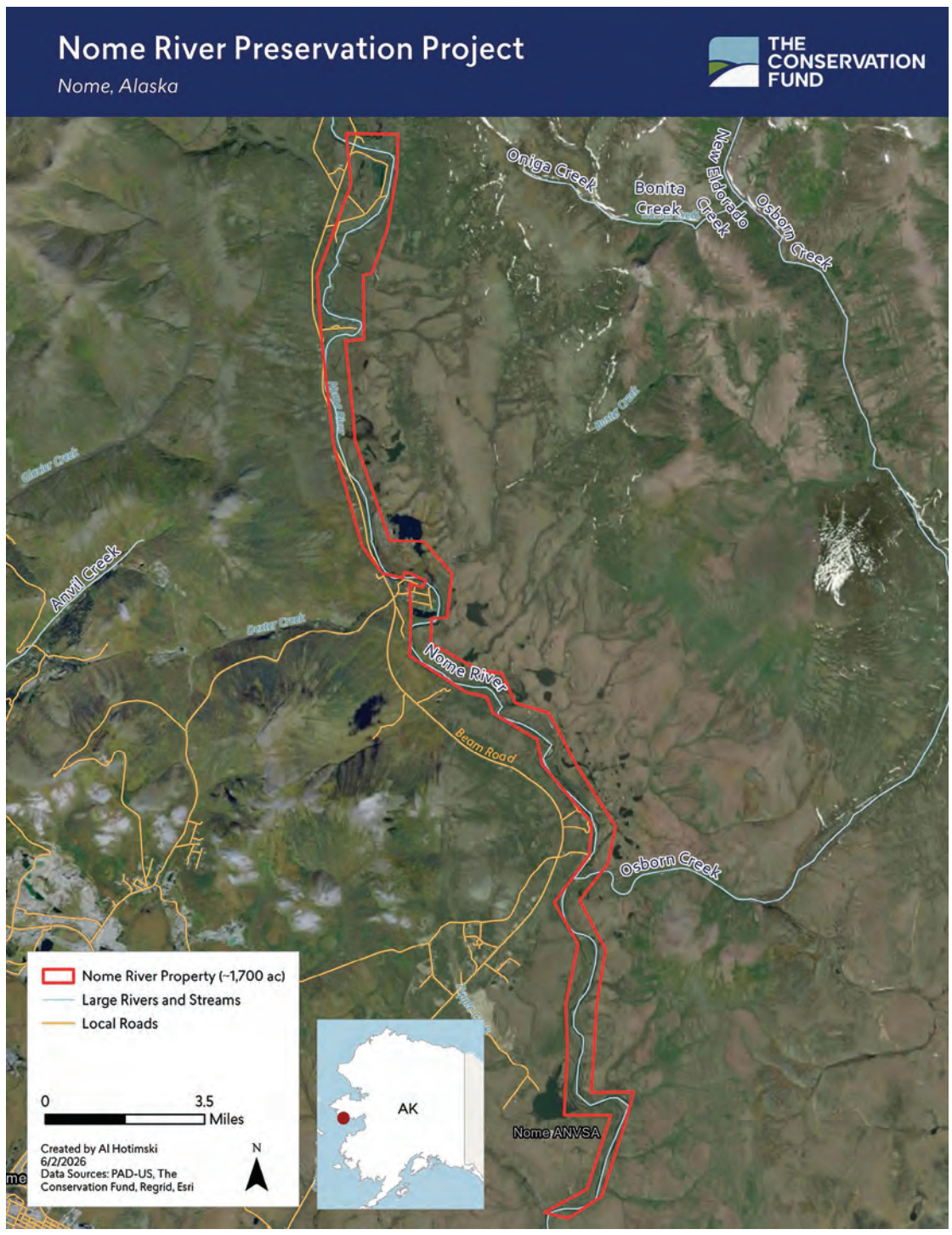
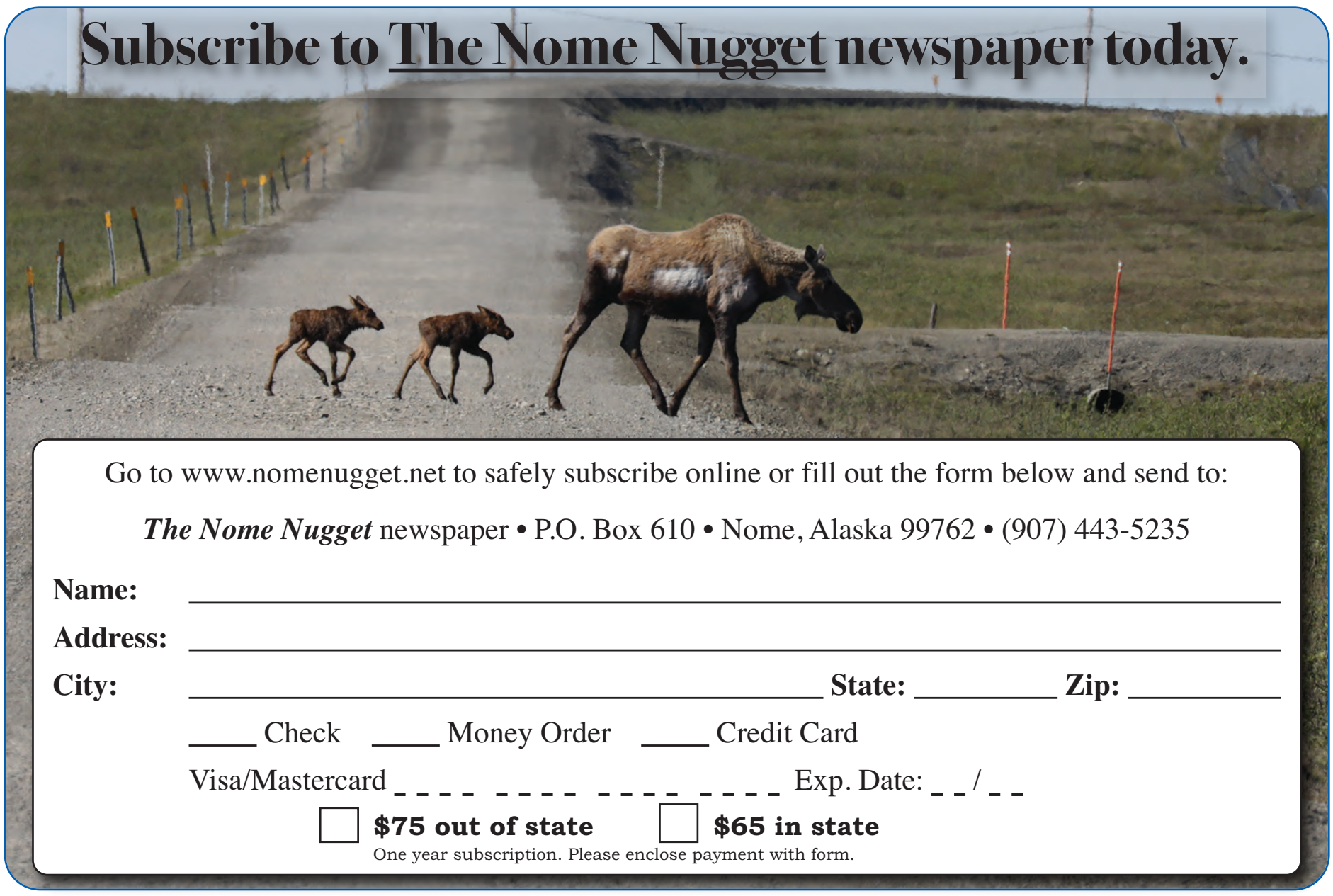
In a press release, the Conservation Fund notes that the land had been privately held under historic gold mining claims. Local residents faced barriers to accessing parts of the river due to private ownership tied to early 20th-century gold prospecting claims. As a result, local residents — including Sitnasuak Native Corporation shareholders — often had to cross private property to continue long-standing subsistence practices such as fishing, hunting and gathering.

Under SNC's ownership, access to the river system is now restored.

"We are very proud to take ownership of this precious piece of land," SNC CEO Charles Fagerstrom said. "Adding this area to our SNC land assets ensures it will be protected in perpetuity for future generations of our Alaska Native People. Safeguarding these waters, land and its resources holds tremendous value to our community, shareholders and descendants whose ancestors have thrived in this region for thousands of years."

Asked how the Conservation Fund ended up with the ownership of 14 miles of Nome River land prior to the purchase by SNC, Leigh Scheffey with the Conservation Fund wrote in an email to the Nugget, "The Conservation Fund specializes in acquiring lands when extraordinary conservation opportunities arise. When this property along the Nome River became available, we moved quickly to purchase it and secure the opportunity for conservation, recreation, and subsistence access."

The permanent protection was achieved during the Conservation Fund's ownership by donating a conservation easement over the property to the Interior Alaska Land Trust. "The easement provides perpetual legal protection for the land's conservation values, ensuring those protections remain in place over the long term," Scheffey said.

Asked about the roles of the Interior Alaska Land Trust, SNC and the Conservation Fund, Scheffey answered that each organization played a distinct role in protecting the property. "The Conservation Fund purchased the land, facilitated the partnership between Sitnasuak Native Corporation and the Interior Alaksa Land Trust, and financed the conservation outcome. The Interior Alaska Land Trust holds a perpetual conservation easement on the property and will act as a stewardship partner to Sitnasuak. SNC acquired the property and will manage it within the terms of the conservation easement and its land use policies."

The effort also comes at a pivotal moment for Nome and the broader Arctic region. As Nome continues to grow as a strategic port and shipping hub, development pressures are increasing across western Alaska. Conservation leaders say protecting intact landscapes now is essential to balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship and cultural preservation.