Lack of radiation monitoring irks scientists, public

By Diana Haecker

The lack of radiation data collected from Alaskan waters worries the public and scientists alike as the plume of radioactive ocean water from the failed Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear plant is predicted to arrive on the U.S. West Coast in spring of 2014. Subsistence hunter Merlin Koonooka of Gambell said in a phone conversation from his home that he is very worried about the effects radiation may have on the marine mammals that are a food source for most residents on Saint Lawrence Island. “We keep hearing about radiation coming our way,” he said. “We hope that the state or federal people keep on top of it. We sure like to see someone out there taking water samples.”

“We are concerned about the health of marine mammals and our own health,” Koonooka said. Despite public worries, no monitoring is done or concerted effort is being made to track seawater or subsurface sources for radiation.

“The public is upset,” said Nome-based UAF Marine Advisory Program agent Gay Sheffield. “I am concerned about the lack of data, the lack of a coordinated and comprehensive response between state and federal agencies.”

She reiterated the fact that communities around Nome heavily rely on wild food gathered from the ocean and that this is an issue of food security. The lack of data is not comforting, even so state and federal agencies assure the public that no harmful radiation levels were detected in the seawater and in fish samples taken in Washington or Oregon.

Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Larry Hartig said in a presentation before the Senate Resource Committee that the DEC does not conduct its own radiation monitoring, but is relying on data collected in Washington and Oregon from the federal Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental Program Specialist continued on page 4

Food Policy Council meets in Nome

By Diana Haecker

Several representatives of the Alaska Food Policy Council traveled to Nome last week to kick off a series of statewide meetings. The goal was to hear from rural residents what works and what doesn’t in the Alaskan food system.

The Alaska Food Policy Council is a coalition of agencies and individuals representing federal and state agencies, tribal entities, schools, university programs, farmers, fisheries, and businesses. The role of the council is to find solutions to food system problems and as such, their intent was to hear from Nomeites on what works, what doesn’t and how the Nome food system can be improved.

Gary Ferguson, APHC board member and the director of Wellness and Prevention at the Alaska Native Health Consortium, addressed the crowd of about 50 who showed up at the Mini Convention Center to talk food for two hours on Friday afternoon.

Food, he said, is something very personal. Depending on what one eats, it can nourish the body or cause disease.

Alaskans spend $2.5 billion on food per year. 95 percent of the food consumed in Alaska is imported – as opposed to 50 percent in the 1990s – and the food industry accounts for 115,000 jobs in Alaska.

Ferguson preached to the converted when he said that subsistence foods such as fish, seal or wild berries are more healthy and nutritious than processed and imported foods. He said that unhealthy food choices and the lack of exercise could be attributed to the rise in obesity and chronic disease in Alaska, costing the health system $459 million per year.

Lorinda Lhotka, program manager of the Food and Safety program at the Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation further explained that continued on page 5

Nome experienced fifth warmest January on record

By Diana Haecker

Weather statistics back up what Nomeites felt all along. The last weeks of irritatingly balmy temperatures in Nome are officially going into the record books as the fifth warmest January on record since the National Weather Service began gathering data in 1907.

Deenng can boast to have had the state high on Sunday, with 48°F.

On Friday, Gambell had the distinct honor to be the State’s hot spot as the mercury soared to 48.7°F. Gambell hunter Merlin Koonooka reported that he had launched his boat right from the beach to go seal hunting. After a successful trip, he said, the water became choppy and the sky foggy as the hunters returned.

In front of Nome, open seawater shows small wind waves on the surface, where last year ice miners pitched their shacks.

Chickadees chirp in the budding willows. Brown tundra and icy side-walks are the norm. And while the sun is shining, it is warm, an unusual phenomenon for January at this latitude. What is this?

“This is a preview of what the future brings,” said John Walsh, Chief Scientist at the International Arctic Research Center at the UAF Climate models suggest that winters such as the 2013-2014 season could become more common toward the end of the century, Walsh said.

“It’s not going to happen every year, but it will happen more often.” continued on page 16

HARBINGER OF SPRING— A boreal chickadee (Poecile hudsonicus) perches on a willow branch in Nome.
Dear Editor,

I am writing in regards to Senate Joint Resolution 9 (SRJ 9) & House Joint Resolution 1 (HR 1). These bills would result in a ballot measure that would allow a vote of the public to change the Alaska’s constitution to allow public K-12 funding to be directed to unaccountable, private and for-profit religious and secular schools. Other legislation would then be used to finance the schools through a voucher system under the pretense of “parent choice.” Please do not allow this to happen. Research has shown that the voucher system is very expensive and leaves even fewer resources for public education. These resolutions do not support all children and I am against them. Since rural Alaska highly depends on public school funding, I believe it is crucial that this resolution does not become a reality.


She quoted Diane Ravitch, the former US Assistant Secretary of Education under President George H. W. Bush, who was originally a strong proponent of school vouchers, but as the data emerged she changed her way of thinking. She says: “Protecting our public schools against privatization and saving them for future generations of American children is the civil rights issue of our time.” I strongly agree with her. Please do not support SRJ 9 and HR 1 and other legislation that would result in reduced funding for our public schools.

Sincerely,

Salli Keller
Nome, AK 99762

P.S. I encourage others in our region to write to Donny Onion and other legislators to stop SRJ9. The voucher system cannot work in our villages where there is only one school to attend. This means more funding for the urban schools and less for rural schools.

Dear Editor,

The truth is! The truth is that to resolve a problem, you have to first admit to and accept the fact that you have a problem!” As a matter of fact, there are so many lies bouncing around out there that most people wouldn’t know the truth if it is jumped up and bit them in the backside!

With so many political and media buzzards circling over our heads, and waiting to devour what is left of our economy, our ethics, our morality, and our common sense, we have become so brain washed that we can no longer differentiate between good and evil, truth or lies, or even up or down! Unfortunately however, this is (in my opinion) exactly the way that society is being re-engineered to operate these days!

H. Rick Tavares
Camp Pendleton, California 92056

Dear Editor:

In the January 30 issue, Dr. Robert Spies compares climate change to a train wreck. Our leaders seem to be largely ignoring it, but we are already seeing the effects, especially in the Arctic. There is an all-volunteer international organization that can help you get involved: the Citizens Climate Lobby. citizensclimatelobby.org. Currently, we are focusing on a carbon tax (with all revenue returned to households) to encourage development of renewable energy alternatives. Go to the web site and find out more. There are things you can do as a concerned citizen.

Philip D. Somervell
Anchorage, AK 99507
Alaska Arctic Policy Commission

The Alaska Arctic Policy Commission is in the process of preparing its preliminary report to the Legislature this week. The 131-page report is seen as a draft of the final report that is due January 2014.

"2014 is the Year of the Arctic for the Alaska Legislature. There is a need to make Alaska and in the captain’s seat as Arctic decisions are made that will affect all Alaskans today and for hundreds of years," said AACF co-chair Senator Lewis McGuire. "Planting a flag in the Arctic is like planting a flag on the moon. It is an important symbolic message to us push bound- ary and move with purpose toward Arctic endeavors. This report is a great step in that direction."

The preliminary report addresses expanding involvement in the Arctic Council, developing programs to improve communities and local inclusion in decision making through state-co-ordination of multi-agency permits, state and federal coordination of permits and plans and meaningful involvement of regional state holders in development activities or plans that affect them.

The report also addresses science and research with the recommen- dation to increase state funding to the University of Alaska’s Arctic Research and Planning and infrastructure should be assessed by conducting a comprehensive Arctic region eco- nomic and infrastructure assessment. Energy, transportation, and minerals are also included in the report. The report has goals for the state and federal agencies.

"AAFC introduced two bills. Representative Bob Herron, co-chair of the Alaska Arctic Policy Commission, introduced two pieces of legislation last week to begin im- plementing recommendations that came out of the commission’s one year worth of work and meetings around the state.

House Joint Resolution 24 urges the United States Department to work with the state when the United States becomes Chair of the Arctic Council in 2015. The resolution also asks that the State Department con- fer with Alaskan officials while con- sidering an individual to lead the Arctic Council.

House Bill 28 is the companion measure for Senate Bill 148, which was introduced by Alaska Arctic Pol- icy Commission co-chair Senator Lewis McGuire. HB 28 creates a new hub and HB 28 cre- ates financing mechanisms backed by Alaska Industrial Develop- ment and Export Authority to attract private investment for Arctic infrastructure projects like roads, ports and broadband internet.

HERRA investment would cover one-third of a total project cost, however the committee does not cover the rest, said Herron. "This type of public-private partnership provides the most benefit for the least cost to the state. It is a proven way to make an economic opportunity zone," Herron said.

New member on AACPC

Education Elizabeth Debra Hersrud asked the policy committee for support in passing legislation last week to create a new position for a policy director in the Department of Education and Early Development, she said. Hersrud’s role would be to lead a new office to coordinate the department’s work on climate change at a national level. She talked about how after a storm, they had to evacuate their house and upon coming back, their back stairs were crumbling in the cliff above. "Shishmaref is changing faster than I thought it would," she said. "This is a problem that we need to take care of, and I’m not sure we have the power to solve myself," she said. She also said that Tonkon talked about the residents’ fear that Shishmaref is be- coming the next King Island. It is common practice, he said, that peo- ple put their homes on skids to move them when their houses start or settle down. Last year, 18 homes were put on skids and 20 homes had to be re- located into an area with other peo- ple who don’t appreciate our way of life," she said. "Our hunting seasons are being cut back to one-third of a total project cost, however the committee does not cover the rest, said Herron. "This type of public-private partnership provides the most benefit for the least cost to the state. It is a proven way to make an economic opportunity zone," Herron said.

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continued from page 1

int Marty Brewer with the DEC con-
curred, saying that the DEC relies on
data from federal agencies and that there is no concern.
The EPA and FDA are the opera-
tional lead agencies conducting radi-
ation monitoring.

Shortly after the Fukushima Dai-
ichi nuclear power plant disaster on March 11, 2011, the EPA deployed portable gamma
ray monitors in Nome and Dutch Harbors. The Nome machine was op-
erational from March 22 to May 17. It was taken down and serviced ear-
dly again. The only constant air monitoring sites are in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau.

The Food and Drug Administra-
tion tests only commercial foods but
not subsistence foods outside of the Bering Sea. The Territorial Eds/3X
spokeswoman Heather Handyside
said that although radiation concerns were raised, research had explained the
nerve disease that caused skin lesions,
hair loss and lethargy in ice seals in 2011, concerns still linger. There can be arguments made that it is not in Fukushima,” said Alu-
ma. “Even though we’re told there is no concern, that’s not enough for us to be concerned about, we don’t know. There is no data to back it up.”

Dr. Dougesh, Research Pro-
fessor at the Institute of Marine Sci-
cences at the University of Alaska, was
flabbergasted by the lack of radiation
contamination from the Fukushima accident appear to be present in the U.S. supply in food at levels that would pose a public
health concern.” They test FDA-reg-
gulated food products imported from
Japan and U.S. domestic food prod-
ucts, including seafood caught off the coast of the United States. “Conse-
quently, FDA is not advising consu-
mers to alter their consumption of
specific foods imported from Japan or
dominantly produced foods, in-
cluding seafood,” she said.

Since the Fukushima incident oc-
curred, Dr. Matthew Dasher, a
radiologist at the Medical Center of West Virginia, has been monitoring the area.

For radiation, but is tracking marine debris patterns.

Fellowing with Senator Lisa Murkowski, Dasher said in an email exchange with the Nugget that the beta radiation from the
Fukushima incident is weak and the envi-
enment to try to optimize funding for
subsidies but also to crowdsource data by scientific data,” he wrote. However, if the testing was due to the threat in
the federal level the government would seek the most responsible course of action.

While all testing to date indicates that levels of radiation and cesium-137 have not been at alarm-

istering government, non-government
researchers.”

The renowned Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Cape Cod, Madison, Massachusetts, is tackling the funding problem in a unique way. Three weeks ago, WHOI marine chemist Ken Buesseler’s launched a crowd-sourcing campaign and citi-
zen science website, “How Radiocac-
It’s a shame that despite Senator Begich’s efforts and continued monitoring to make sure pre-
sumption levels to be dangerously high in

According to a projection, the
plume will be able to see its arrival,” Buesseler said.

Last year, Senator Begich spon-
sored a Senate bill briefing on
Fukushima fallout at the Nome Nugget. Dr. Buesseler. Dr. Buesseler has sam-
ples from locations in the water at the reactor site and elsewhere in the
ocean, or sea ice, and 62 percent of
samples taken in the Kuroshio Current that flows from North America and back to-
ward the Antarctic. The Kuroshio Current spreads 5,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean. Rossi’s model projects that the
plume will hit the Pacific coast in April 2014, according to a scientific model de-
scribed by oceanographer Vincent Rossi. Rossi’s model projects that tracings of Fukushima’s cesium-134 have been detected in Bue-
sseler’s analyses yet and the levels of contamination have not been at alarming

register, we have to have something to do with the Fukushima, as the plume spreads 5,000 miles across the Pa-

ice and Alaska.

Although Buesseler does not ex-
pect levels to be dangerously high in
the ocean or as seafood at the plume
spread, 5,000 miles across the Pa-

ice, he believes this is an evolving
situation that demands careful, con-
scion monitoring to make sure pre-
dictions are true. No tracings of Fukushima’s cesium-134 have been detected in Bue-
sseler’s analyses yet and the levels of contamination have not been at alarming

levels, either.

The reason why we see such low levels of radiation in these samples is because the plume is not here yet. But it’s coming. And we’ll actually be able to see its arrival,” Buesseler said. “That baseline data is critical.”

Senator Begich said he agrees with Dr. Buesseler that continued monitoring is necessary, but he also said, “Funding for such research is difficult to find in this tight budget environment and we spoke about a collaborative scientific effort includ-
ing government, non-government and academic researchers.”

The project currently has sponsors interested in collecting samples from 16 unique locations from San Diego to British Columbia and one in O’ahu, Hawaii. However, none have been proposed yet from Alaska, where the plume is predicted to be detected first.

“Optimally, we’d like to be able to sample and analyze about 20 sites from Alaska to San Diego at regular intervals every few months. We even have had interest from the public as far away as Japan, New Zealand, Guam, and one sailing vessel travel-
ing from Hawaii to Japan this sum-

ner, but the West Coast time series is a highest priority,” says Bue-
sseler.

2014 CHILD FIND FAIR
Monday, February 17, 2014
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

• Speech Screening (1-5 years old)

• Developmental Screening
(Birth - 5 years old)

• Hearing Screening

• Vision Screening

Registration for:
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Nome Preschool District
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Uviitl Play & Learn Center
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880 E. 1st Ave.

Contact Information:
Sandy Harvey, Nome Public Schools, 443-6209
Dev Towbridge, Head Start, 443-9051
Patty Oldmire, Infant Learning Program, 443-3298

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House Bill 39 raises subsidy for rural electric bills

By Sandra L. Medearis

Legislators are consistently paying through the nose to turn on the lights are pushing HB39, a measure to increase the PCE subsidy for those who use high-cost electric energy.

The Power Cost Equalization program directly lowers the cost of electricity for 60,000 customers primarily living in rural Alaska where a kilowatt-hour cost up to a dollar.

HB 39, introduced by Rep. Bryce Edgmon (D-Dillingham), would restore parts of the original program, as it existed before 1999. It would raise the consumption cap on residential power covered by the program from 600 kilowatts-hour to 600 kilowatts per month, and it would allow commercial customers to enter the pool of entities eligible for PCE, also at a cap of 400 kilowatts per month. These subsidies are currently determined by a formula that specifies which power consumers are eligible, and none consume more than 2,400 kilowatts per month. Presently, such businesses—which are important contributors to bush economies—are not eligible to receive subsidies. Rep. Bob Herring (R-Homer) supports HB 39.

Under the current program, residential customers of Nome Joint Utility System pay around 38 cents for the first 500 kilowatts on monthly usage. Nome residents pay almost twice that amount for kilowatts used over 500 kilowatts a month. The AFPC was backing attempts to get the program increased. Government assistance for the electric bill is a key to the economic independence. “Halifajak! Six hundred kilowatts is better than nothing,” John Handeland, NJUS manager said Monday. “We have been advocating for a number of years to return to 700 kilowatts when it was 500 kilowatts in 1999. The difference was $4 a month when they tear a new open a electric bill.

“Most of us in rural areas, due to the hours of darkness we experience, use a lot more power. Even plugging in vehicles, necessitated by the extreme cold temperatures, adds to family power costs,” Handeland added.

“HB 39 seeks to extend a lifetime to rural Alaskans during the harsh winter months. Undoubtedly, it will support small business owners, strengthening their viability as local job creators and enabling them to make goods and services more affordable in remote communities,” Edgmon said in his sponsor statement.

The annual number of kwh used by Alaska residential ratepayers is about 700 kwh. Over the United States, the national averages show that most accounts show a use of over 1,000 kwh. The annual use dispersed over all the rural communities in Alaska was 310 kwh according to a March 2012 report by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER).

In committee, Rep. Neal Foster pointed out that usage is low in small communities because of high costs. Indeed, research shows that throughout the year, rural residents strive to conserve power and remain below the present 500 kwh ceiling. In fact, on average PCE-eligible customers consume less than 400 kilowatts per month, more than 700 kwh is required to maintain a reasonable level of comfort and result in lowered electric bills. The AFPC's intent is to make renewable energy more affordable in remote communities, “HB 39 seeks to extend a lifetime to rural Alaskans during the harsh winter months. Undoubtedly, it will support small business owners, strengthening their viability as local job creators and enabling them to make goods and services more affordable in remote communities,” Edgmon said in his sponsor statement.

The Power Cost Equalization program (PCE) is a program created and supported energy programs that in time will significantly improve the long-term sustainability of our remote towns and villages. The legislation you have before you is an important interim measure to stabilize those same communities while permanent solutions are established.

Throughout the year, rural residents strive to conserve power and remain below the present 500 kwh ceiling. In fact, on average, PCE-eligible customers consume less than 400 kilowatts per month—more than 700 kilowatts per month is required to maintain a reasonable level of comfort and result in lowered electric bills. The AFPC's intent is to make renewable energy more affordable in remote communities.

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IDEAS—During last Friday’s townhall meeting at the Mini Convention Center, Holly Spoth-Torres led a discussion on the Iditarod overflow housing program. She wanted to make more money and joined the Iditarod overflow housing program. She wanted to make more money and joined the Iditarod overflow housing program.

ThurDSaPth FRoMBruY 06, 2014 5

Local

Host applications needed.
Want to make some extra money?

If you have an empty house, spare bedroom or a spare couch, you can sign up as a host for the Iditarod overflow housing program.

For more information call the Nome Visitor Center 443-6555 or email visit@myNomealaska.com

The AFPC aims to collect the meeting in Alaska and receive funding from the government and help local residents. The AFPC has received funding from the city and state and was able to make repairs for the Alaska ski club.

People identified the fast food and soda culture as not working in the Arctic, the sea and local food systems. The dependence on imported food becomes painfully clear when transportation is a big issue in food systems. The dependence on imported food becomes painfully clear when transportation is a big issue in food systems. The dependence on imported food becomes painfully clear when transportation is a big issue in food systems.

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NVFD provides winter travel and ice safety tips

With the recent warm temperatures the Nome Volunteer Fire Department/Seach and Rescue compiled a list of things to consider when venturing into the countryside for hunting, recreating or traveling. Always tell someone where you are going, how many people you’re traveling with, names of other individuals in your group, a date and time when you expect to return, and contact information of someone who may provide us with additional details if needed. The description of your vehicle/ATV used for travel (i.e. color/make/model) is very important, as we need to know what we’re looking for. Also add clothing description.

Ice Safety Tips:
Recognize that ice will never be completely safe. Conditions and unknown or unknown factors can render seemingly safe ice suddenly dangerous. Take all care and precautions to avoid mishaps and to put rescue plans into immediate action should something go wrong.

Create an emergency safety plan. If something does go wrong while you are testing or recreating, already have in place the safety procedures that you will carry out for immediate rescue.

For starters, you should be adequately dressed in full cold weather attire. Wear some form of flotation device, even a floating life jacket, especially if you are testing or snowmobiling. Carry an ice pack, which can assist in giving you grip should you fall in. Never go without a buddy or two. Tell other people where you and your buddy are and what time you expect to return home. This is not an occasion for casual spontaneity.

Have a spare set of warm dry clothes in a waterproof bag handy. That way you can reduce the risk of hypothermia by changing the wet clothes immediately. Other useful supplies to have as part of an emergency kit include an emergency blanket, hand and foot warmers, thick socks, candles and matches. Pack such emergency items for all winter sports outdoors, even for skating outdoors.

Recognize that determining the safety of ice is dependent on a combination of factors, not on one factor alone. Ice safety is determined by assessing the following factors together:
- Appearance of the ice - its color, texture and features
- Thickness of the ice - there are recommended thicknesses for different uses
- External temperature over a period of time and on the day
- Snow coverage
- Depth of water under ice
- Size of water body
- Chemical composition of water - whether water is fresh or salt
- Local climate fluctuations and the extent of ice

Observe the ice. Look at the ice to see if you can see any cracks, breaks, weak spots or abnormal surfaces and to identify the colors of the ice. You cannot rely on your eyesight alone. This is just an initial look to help you to decide if it is even worth proceeding to the next step of testing the ice. If you see any of these signs, you may wish to abandon any further attempts to go on the ice.

- Flowing water near or at the edges of the ice
- Flowing springs under the ice in spring fed ponds and lakes
- Water flows under and out of the ice-in- over water body
- Cracks, breaks or holes

Ice that appears to have thawed acts as an insulator; ice under snow is generally thinner and weaker than ice under pure water. Snow coverage - Is it on a Location of the ice
- Presence of snow on the ice
- Size and depth of the water body - Larger bodies of water take longer to freeze than smaller ones.
- Weight on ice - What are you putting on the ice? Just you or you and a vehicle? There is a big difference in the weight distribution between a body of water and a snowmachine with said body on top.

City wants land, lotsa land

By Sandra L. Medearis

The City of Nome has stepped up to claim the land lying adjacent to the eastern end of Port Road, eying it as a site for expanded port facilities and relocation of Nome’s fuel storage tanks.

After many years of planning, U.S. Air Force has declared its tank farm and fuel depot site that has been idle for 10s of years as a white elephant, eligible for surplus.

The Air Force said it wouldn’t stand in Nome’s way to get the property transferred to ownership and use for economic development. What has to happen?

Environmental issues with fuel residue have slowed the sale. Clean up has to satisfy the federal General Services Administration before it will release the land. Discussions on potential liability are ongoing.

The City could use the six acres to expand Port of Nome facilities and operations, to relocate fuel storage and to help traffic run through port facilities and relocation of Nome’s fuel storage tanks.

The City and Port of Nome are planning to expand and update Port of Nome facilities as receding ice uncovers opportunity for Nome to step into the limelight as either a deepwater port or a transshipment port supporting new resource development and marine transportation infrastructure in Arctic waters. Nome also has a strategic location near the Bering Strait as a center for search and rescue operations and a jump-off point to support ships demonstrating U.S. sovereignty in northern waters. Because of contamination that several organizations have been working to address, the property, a site of military activities in World War II followed by other industrial uses, has been a no-use zone for 40 years. Various agencies have performed environmental monitoring, remediation and cleanup tasks over the past 10 to 15 years.

The property lies in a area zoned for industrial use, not residential use. Therefore, the City has received support for mitigation of soils where they are, rather than more stringent regulations required for residential use. This means that the fuel-contaminated soil could be capped and contained, rather than removed, according to John K. Handeland.

Additionally, the City is trying to get ownership of a near-owned parcel known as Block-20 Nome Airport to construct a facility for combined maintenance response and Nome Joint Utility System office building.

City, Port of Nome can make good use of the six acres, rather than more stringent regulations, and City could have significant economic benefit.

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GRC gives back. What has the other guy done for you?
Education Bill

Governor Sean Parnell has introduced an education bill that would increase the Basic Student Allocation (BSA) for Alaska’s schoolchildren. The BSA is the amount of money per enrolled child each district receives from the State of Alaska. The funding has remained stable for several years, and Parnell’s proposal would see an increase, over a three-year period, based on percentage increases in public employee contracts.

Parnell’s legislation repeals the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, which is currently required for students to receive a high school diploma. In its place, the bill would give students a choice of taking the SAT, ACT, or WorkKeys assessments as a measure of credentials.

While the increase in funding is good news for many districts, many proponents of public education disagree with the use of state dollars to fund private, charter and residential schooling, as would be parents’ choice with the new system. Last year, Nome’s school board came out in opposition to a “voucher” system, which essentially allows the allocated dollars to follow a student, whether they earn their credits through traditional routes or achieve them through college courses or vocational training.

In a statement released January 24, Governor Parnell stated, “No one knows better how to help a student succeed than his or her own family. The measures in this bill will increase opportunity for families to make wise choices regarding their student’s education in the public school system, ensure that the essential needs of Alaska’s students are met, provide flexibility in assessing achievement and the earning of necessary educational credits to suit an individual student’s needs; and incentivize broader opportunities for students as they prepare to enter Alaska’s workforce.”

According to Nome School Board President Betty Brennan, “Education is hot on the burner in the legislature this year.” Brennan, along with board members Barb Nickels and superintendent Gast, have traveled to Juneau for the legislative fly-in session next week to meet with legislators and discuss the upcoming changes and what they might mean for Nome.

Brennan maintains that, “public education means public,” and she indicated that Parnell may be using the education reform platform as a means to sway legislators in other arenas. Supporters of the bill say it would allow parents more choice in where they send their kids to school, but critics worry that it will take money away from public education. In his State of the State address last month, Governor Parnell called on lawmakers to debate the measure and send it to voters, to let them decide.

At their work session last week, members of the school board started talks on next year’s budget. Each year, districts plan their financial year based on the number of projected students. Paula Coffman, the district’s business manager, told the board that the district had planned for 690 students and enrollment has actually reached 711, so that some of the money will need to be recovered from the fund budget. Of the planning process, Gast added, “We don’t want to over-predict, though some kids came after the count, but you have to budget for what you think you’re going to have in October, so we’ll budget for next year at 695.”

Following the resignation of both the elementary and high school principals, the board is readying to review applications for potential replacements. “It looks like we’re going to have a pool of about 20 to 25 applicants for each position.” Gast told the board. He added that many more applied, but those applicants with no administration experience were excluded from potential interviews.

In a discussion about qualifications, Barb Nickels said, “My biggest point for a principal would be to make sure they have at least three years of curriculum and data experience. If they can’t read our data, they won’t know our kids. It shouldn’t be a “preference,” but a requirement. With three new curricula being intro at the elementary school, the principal needs that experience.”

Board members will review the applications to further narrow the pool. Gast added that he contacted local NEA Board President, Erica Rhodes, to offer representation on the hiring committee. Board member Barb Amarok asked whether a representative from the Native Education Commission would also be involved. It bothers me that of the 13 or 14 committee members on the hiring committee, only one is an Alaska Native, and the school population is mostly Native.” Amarok said. Board member Barb Nickels agreed with the assessment and added, “but most of the faculty and staff are not Alaska Native.”

With 30 principal positions open in Alaska, Nome is not alone in their search. Of his experience over the last two years, outgoing elementary principal Bob Grimes said, “I’ve enjoyed my time here in Nome. It’s been a fun and educational experience, and I hope to leave the school in a good shape, in a good way.” Members of the board declined to elaborate on the resignations of either Bob Grimes or Scott Hanley.

Photo by Kristine McRae

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 06, 2014 7

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS—Students in the 3rd and 4th grades competed Monday in the annual “Battle of the Books,” at which they had to answer detailed questions about titles from 15 different authors. Congratulations to the team of Sara Bioff, Jennae Matson, Lupe Callahan, and Sadie Ellison for scoring the most points at the competition.

Now accepting nominations for the statewide BP Teachers of Excellence program. Nominate your favorite teacher at bpteachers.com by February 14th.
Sports

Messages must be received by Monday, Feb. 10 to be published in the Feb. 14 edition. Contact ads@nomenugget.com for more information.

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 06, 2014 THE NOME NUGGET

Photos by Janeen Sullivan

JUMP SHOT— Nome Nanook Jr. Varsity player Ian Smith goes up for 2 points in the Intra Squad game.

TOUGH DEFENSE— Nome Nanook James Horner makes his way to the basket in the Jr. Varsity game against the Unalakleet Wolfpack.

HEAD TO HEAD— Nome Nanook Daniel Head shoots the ball in the game against the Unalakleet Wolfpack. The Nanooks won both games against the Wolfpack.

Tell that special someone how much you care with a Valentine message in the Feb. 13 issue of The Nome Nugget!

UNALAKLEET WOLFPACK— The Unalakleet Wolfpack Varsity team competed against the Nome Nanooks. Pictured are (left to right): Coach Steve Ivanoff, Francis Ivanoff, Jayden Wilson, Gage Ivanoff, Tristan Ticket, Kadyn Erickson, Paul Agibnik, Taylor Harvey, Aucha Johnson and Assistant Coach Nick Hanson.

JR. HIGH GIRLS— Kerry Ahmasuk, in blue, travels with the ball during the Intra Squad game.

Photo by Paul Ivanoff III

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Nome Nanooks pack the Unalakleet Wolfpack at games

By Sarah Miller

The Nanooks met the Unalakleet Wolfpack on its home turf twice over the weekend, winning both games in an exciting and friendly tournament.

Unalakleet’s team, under the direction of long-time coach Steve Ivanoff, was recovering from two weeks of illness due to the flu and made Nome work for its victories. Ivanoff commented that some of the players were even ill prior to the game on Friday.

The Wolfpack demonstrated their determination not to let the flu slow them down by managing to score 32 of its final 46 points in the first half alone. Nonetheless, the Nanooks stepped up their defense and, with 25 points on the board from Tyler Eide along with 18 from Cass Mattheis, won the game 68-46. Eide also set a school record with 13 steals in this game, and is averaging 4.9 steals per game over the season.

However, by Saturday the Class 2A Wolfpack was ready to even the score, and nearly upset Nome’s Class 3A team. Three-pointers by Unalakleet, steals from Eide, and a fast pace kept the game exciting right up until the end. Gage Ivanoff of Unalakleet contributed 16 points, 11 of which he scored in the second half of the game. Klay Baker made some key shots in the fourth quarter, and the Nanooks improved their defense and rebounding over Friday’s performance. With 1.9 seconds left to play, the Wolfpack closed the gap with another three-point shot, bringing the score to 44-42 (Nome). A free throw from Alex Gray added one more point to the final score of 45-42.

Callahan commented, “We also did a nice job of running our delay game in a pressure situation at the end of the game.”

Ivanoff stated, “I have a lot of respect for Pat Callahan and the way he coaches his team. This weekend was a win-win for both teams. We get to help each other prepare for regionals.”

Nome-Beltz Coach Callahan reciprocated in an email, “Steve Ivanoff-coached teams always play hard, play a tough schedule, and improve over the course of the season. It was a real honor to coach against Steve Ivanoff again.” Ivanoff was greeted by many Nomeites after Saturday’s game, demonstrating the high regard held by each team toward one another and adding a spirit of camaraderie to the competitive tournament.

The Nanooks travel to Kotzebue this weekend for back-to-back games on Friday and Saturday.
Smoker’s Dementia: Research links heavy smoking and Alzheimer’s disease

By Bob Lawrence, MD
Alaska Family Doctor

You may have heard of the smoker’s cough, that persistent raspy clearing of tar-stained phlegm heard in those who smoke. Younger smokers, but have you heard of the smoker’s dementia?

According to research published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, middle-aged heavy smokers are more than twice as likely to develop dementia than non-smokers who smoke a half pack per day and progressively increases to a doubling of risk in people who smoke over two packs per day.

It is important to understand that studies like this are designed to exclude any confounding factors. Therefore the study is showing that a person who smokes at increased risk of developing dementia even if the person has a perfect blood pressure with no sign of diabetes, has a normal cholesterol level, maintains an ideal body weight, eats a healthy diet, and exercises on a regular basis.

The researchers point out that the risk of dementia is likely underestimated in studies like this one because many patients who smoke are more likely to die from other diseases associated with the tobacco use like heart attacks, strokes, pancreatic cancer, and lung cancer. Many patients may have died with dementia, not from dementia, succumbing to some other disease before the end of the study.

Here is the good news. Quitting smoking by mid-life reduced the risk of developing dementia. Smokers who quit had the same risk as those who never smoked. Thus the new data presents another powerful reason to stop smoking. Quitting turns out to be a smart way to stay…smart.

In almost 29 years in law enforcement, this is a discussion I have had with many people – both young and slightly older. It’s an important part of being a police officer – to let people know that mistakes don’t define who you are and that there is always another chance. It is important to re-evaluate that good or bad, we OWN our decisions. They belong to no one but the person who has the power to affect their own life - today and the tomorrows that follow. It takes making tough choices sometimes, but those who make them are the people who will impact others.

I see many young people stepping up and making the choice not to drink, smoke or use drugs. I would like to salute these brave young people. I also see many older people that have lived a hard life, with their misfortune and success are caught in the net of poor choices. But somehow, they found the strength to make tough choices and changes in their lives. It is my day they fight to stay sober and do the right thing. I admire their courage and dedication. It is inspiring. I would list names, but they know who they are. I can only offer my admiration and support.

Alcohol is visible in the community.

Chief’s Notes: Drug abuse on the increase

By John Papasodora, Nome Chief of Police

It seems that few days pass before I am engaged in a conversation with someone about the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse in our community. The involvement of alcohol is quite widespread. Each week in the Seawall, I try and include the statistic that 90% of alcohol abuse is taking a huge toll on the people of Nome. This impacts all people regardless of age and is particularly devastating to families whose children are the future. Many times it has been said that “children are the future”, however children will model the behaviors they have been exposed to. If that is alcohol abuse and the behaviors that accompany it, that may very well be their future if change is not made.

I had a conversation last week with a young person who made some interesting choices. She is a hard working young person, who possess great intensity and potential. But like many young people, she made a choice that resulted in negative sanctions. We talked about that, all people make mistakes, all people make poor choices at times; and that all people have the power to influence their life. We talked about accountability – taking responsibility for our decisions and our actions. We talked about not trying to blame our choices on others; our circumstances, or whatever bad things happened that day. We talked about how decisions today can have long-term impacts on who you want to be tomorrow and that it was important to have dreams. Without dreams, we have no reason to achieve. But in order to achieve, you have to personally commit yourself; you have to want it and be willing to work for it.
Drug abuse on the increase

Gast explained that he is working on extremely harsh winds. Superintendent also the issue of safety during ex- lies –so they can get high. Young their habit. People steal from each other for a tablet. Many times children will go to the drug store to fill a prescription. Illicit prescription Drugs are expensive. Though a jug of alcohol is $200 or more. Illicit prescription Drugs are powerful. They can contract pupils, drunk-like behav- ior, dilated pupils, them mines, hyperactivity, irritability, anxiety, morning (Xanax, Valium, Oxycontin, Hydrocodone, etc.) – contracted pupils, drunk-like behav- ior, difficulty concentrating, slurred speech, sleepiness. Lack of the odor of alcohol. Stimulants (cocaine, amphetamine, crystal meth) – dilated pupils, hyperactivity, irritability, anxiety, lack of sleep activity, weight loss. Heroin – contracted pupils, no re- sponse of pupils to light, needle marks, sleepiness or sleeping at odd times, twitching, loss of appetite. Cocaine use may cause a small isolated community, but the facts is that drugs are being used in Nome. They are being actively sold to people of all age ranges, and the devastating effects transcend age or social status. ALL of the drugs listed above are being sold in this community by peo- ple who have no regard for those who choose to buy from them. The question arises, “If the police know that drugs are being sold and used – why aren’t they doing some- thing about it?” The answer is that the police are constantly working to- wards making Nome a safe place to live, but there are still some police offi- cers to cover the work that’s being done – most of which involves alco- hol. But there were 40+ arrests for related calls and 14 arrests. ALL of them involved alcohol. Drug use and transactions are con- ducted in the shadows. Those who sell drugs in your community are careful – they don’t want to go to jail and lose the profits they have made by destroying lives. In order to ef- fectively address drug abuse, the COMMUNITY will have to get in- involved and send a message that this is not what your community wants or needs. The COMMUNITY will need to stand together and provide accur- ate and accurate information to the police to take enforcement action. Rumors and vague information will not help, what is needed are people who are willing to provide evidence. Nume must decide what they find acceptable. The people will need to decide if they are willing to accept the use of drugs in the community and the consequences to the people around them. Then, action must be taken to change behaviors and hold those responsible accountable for their decisions. The Police Department exists to do the work of the COMMUNITY, and only the COMMUNITY can effectively address drugs use, the police can only operate with the sup- port and direction of the community with which they provide services. It is time for the people of Nome to make a decision and promote accountabil- ity, decision-making, and role mod- els. If you wish to report drug activity, you are encouraged to call 445-5362. You may provide information by calling and leaving a message on the CRIME LINE: 445-8509. IN doing so, you will be making Nome a safer place for all. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please remember, your po- lice department is here to help. Call 445-5250 if you have questions or concerns.

Director of Alcoholism Services

Saying it Sincerely

By Rev. Karen Sonnay, Our Savior Lutheran Church Member, Regional Ministerial Association “Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heavens” Matthew 5: 16 A past student wrote and told us about one of his experiences. “Your talent is God’s gift to you. What do you do with it is your gift to God.” It has hung there for years and is one of my favorite quotes. Two of the issues young people struggle with the most are a sense of iden- tity and a sense of purpose. I suppose many adults struggle with these issues too. The Christian faith beliefs we are all children of God, created in God’s image. That is our number one identity. Whether we are single or married, Norwegian or Inupiat, young or old — we belong to God. And God sees our worth. God does not see our single status or our married state for the sake of others and for the sake of God. Often we hear that Jesus is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. But the scripture quoted above from Matthew 5:16 emphasizes that that light of God is also carried by us! “This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine!” sing out the children. Eleanor Roosevelt said it another way, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

The Bible passage considered to be the basis of this belief is the First Epis- tol of Peter, 2:5-9

But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, a people God owns. You are his possession, that is why you show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

So, do not be afraid. You are gifted. Nurture your gift. Share it. In so doing, you will discover joy as you live out your identity and purpose given to you by God.

School Board

continued from page 7

initiated a conversation about school closure policy after the recent bouts of freezing rain and dangerous conditions. Some other members of the board were contacted by parents who expressed their district’s policy concerning not only the closure, but also the issue of safety during ex- tremely harsh winds. Superintendent Gast explained that he is working on an appeal to the commissioner about the half-day cancellation, and that the district is required to have a cer- tain amount of days in a school year before the board can decide to order in order for a day to count as “full.” Reader suggested that the district could keep a log of the days to avoid any disputes.

The Nome Community Center Tobacco Control Program, Nome Joint Utility System, Tundra Toyo and Grizzly Building Supply. Don’t get too far away from a radio this season!

Don’t miss a minute as Nome Nanook basketball comes your way on KICY AM-850. Brought to you by The A/C Value Center, Bering Air, Nome Outfitters, Airport Pizza, The Nome Community Center Tobacco Control Program, Nome Joint Utility System, Tundra Toyo and Grizzly Building Supply. Don’t get too far away from a radio this season! Or, listen online at www.kicy.org.

Church Services Directory

Bible Baptist Church 443-2144 Sunday School 10 a.m. Worship: 11 a.m.

Community Baptist Church-SBC 108 West 3rd Avenue • 443-5448 • Pastor Bruce Landry Sunday School: 9:30 a.m. Worship: 11 a.m.

Community United Methodist Church West 2nd Avenue & C Street • 443-2805 Pastor Charles Brown Sunday: Worship 11 a.m. Monday/Tuesday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday & Thursday: 7:00 to 8:30 p.m

Nove Church of Nazarene 101 Bering Street • 443-2855 • Pastor Harvey Saturday: 10 a.m. Worship; 11 a.m. Worship Wednesday: Youth Group 6:30 p.m (443-8063 for more info) Thursday: Faith Fellowship Church 6 p.m. • 7 p.m.

Our Savior Lutheran Church 5th Avenue & Bering • 443-5295 Sunday: worship 7 p.m. (2nd and 4th Sunday only) Handicapped accessible ramp. North side 

River of Life Assembly of God 405 W. Seppala • 443-5333 • Pastor Mike Christian Jr. Sunday: worship 9:00 a.m. Sunday: Morning Worship 11:00 a.m. Sunday: Youth Meeting: 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. (ages 6-12) Tuesday: Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

St. Joseph Catholic Church Corner of Breadan & Breadan Place • 443-5527 Weekend Masses: Saturday: 5:30 p.m. / Sunday: 10:30 a.m. Wednesday: Mass: Most Holy Trinity (907) 441-2106 O Holy Family Cathedral (907) 276-3455

Thursdays in Lent

Theodore Roosevelt said it another way, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Native Village of St. Michael and Kawerak Transportation Program
Long Range Transportation Plan & Tribal Safety Management Plan Update
Monday, February 10, 2014
1:00PM at City Hall

Questions? Contact: Sean McKight, P.E. (907) 443-4395 or smckight@kawerak.org

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Native Village of Stebbins and Kawerak Transportation Program
Long Range Transportation Plan & Tribal Safety Management Plan Update
Tuesday, February 11, 2014
1:00PM at City Hall

Questions? Contact: Sean McKight, P.E. (907) 443-4395 or smckight@kawerak.org

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Native Village of St. Michael and Kawerak Transportation Program
Long Range Transportation Plan & Tribal Safety Management Plan Update
Tuesday, February 11, 2014
7:00PM at the IRA Hall

Questions? Contact: Sean McKight, P.E. (907) 443-4395 or smckight@kawerak.org

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Native Village of Shaktoolik and Kawerak Transportation Program
Long Range Transportation Plan & Tribal Safety Management Plan Update
Saturday, February 15, 2014
1:00PM at the IRA Hall

Questions? Contact: Sean McKight, P.E. (907) 443-4395 or smckight@kawerak.org

Soliciting Artists for artwork proposals for the newly renovate Shaktoolik K-12 School. Per State Statute .5% of the Shaktoolik schools remodel budget will be spent on art for the school, this amounts to $36,142. We are asking interested artists to submit art proposals for the school. Shaktoolik is an Inupiat Eskimo community of 250 sitting on the Eastern shore of Norton Sound. Activities like berry picking, hunting land and sea animals along with commercial and subsistence fishing are an important part of daily life. The K-12 schools mascot is the wolverine and the school colors are maroon and gold. Art proposals are not limited to style, medium or size. If interested it is strongly recommended that you contact the school for areas that may fit your ideas. The school can provide you dimensions and photos. A selection committee will award the artwork contracts to the selected artists. For additional information please contact Principal Sammons at (907) 955-3021.

For consideration you will need to submit:
- 2 a dimensional portrayal depicting your proposal
- Written narrative of your proposal
- Portfolio of prior work
- A lump sum cost of your proposal, also a cost breakdown of your proposals budget
- 2 references

An attempt will be made to return proposals to the artists after a selection has been made.

Proposals need to be submitted by Feb 15, 2014 to:
Shaktoolik School
C/O Principal Sammons
P.O. Box 40
Shaktoolik, Alaska 99771

Sitnasuak Native Corporation
Notice of the 41th Annual Meeting of Shareholders
- Saturday, May 31, 2014
- 10 a.m.
- Nome Elementary School
- Nome, Alaska

BUSINESS CONDUCTED WILL INCLUDE:
• Election of Four (4) Directors for three year term
• Other shareholder business

SOLICITATION OF CANDIDATES FOR BOARD POSITIONS
• Written Letter of Candidacy and Nominee Information Questionnaire
• Candidates must be 19 years old or older by filing date.
MUST BE RECEIVED BY March 3, 2014 by 5:00 p.m.

SHAREHOLDER PROPOSAL
A proposal form (fee & signature requirements) will be provided, please contact the Sitnasuak Native Corporation Office 907-387-1200 or 877-443-2632 (toll free)
MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE CORPORATION OFFICE ON OR BEFORE March 3, 2014 by 5:00 p.m.
Please contact Dave Evans, Shareholder Liaison, for more information at 387-1226 or devans@snc.org
www.snc.org

There will be no school for the Nome Public Schools students
Thursday, February 13 & Friday, February 14
due to Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Nome Elementary School conferences will be held on both days from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Parents of NES students should be receiving notification as to what time their conference is.
The Nome-Beltz High School Parent Teacher conferences will be held Thursday, February 13 from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Friday, February 14 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you need a ride, please call the high school office at (907) 443-5201 to make arrangements.

For an application, call
(800) 478-1456 or (907) 786-3676
OR VISIT:
http://www.doi.gov/subsistence

SITNASUAK
NATIVE CORPORATION

Kawerak Inc.
Child Advocacy Center
Did You Know?
Children who have been victims of sexual abuse exhibit long-term and behavioral problems more frequently, particularly inappropriate sexual behaviors.
For more information, resources or help contact the Child Advocacy Center at 443-4379
The Board declined to extend the open season, as the full proposal suggested.

The proposal was submitted by Kawerak Inc., Sitnasuak Native Corp., King Island Native Corp. and Nome Eskimo Community in response to increasing reports of brown bears raiding subsistence racks and subsistence camps and even appearing in town. Last summer, two bears were shot within city limits after having been seen multiple times in neighborhoods, going through trash.

Board of Game increases bear bag limit

In a Board of Game meeting for the Arctic and Western Alaska region last month, the board carried a proposal to change the bag limit of one brown bear every regulatory year to one bear every regulatory year for Game Unit 22.

All Around the Sound

The Board of Game increases bear bag limit

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CALL 907-387-0600  NOME, AK

BERING SEA WOMEN’S GROUP
BSWG provides services to survivors of violent crime and promotes violence-free lifestyles in the Bering Strait region.
24-Hours Crisis Line
1-800-570-5444 or 1-907-443-5444
• fax: 907-443-3748
EMAIL execdir@nome.net

Builders Supply — 704 Seppala Drive
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443-2234
1-800-590-2234

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Indian Face Massage
Aromatherapy
Hot Stone Massage

Terry’s & Terry’s Therapeutic Massage
506 West Tobuk Alley, Nome
Cell: 304-2655
Home: 443-2633
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https://terrysmassage.boomtime.com/lgift

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Invite your customers to see what you have to offer!
Contact the Nome Nugget at
info@nomenugget.com or 443-5235

Indian Court System’s
Family Law Self-Help Center
A free public service that answers questions & provides forms about family cases including divorce, dissolution, custody and visitation, child support and paternity.
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Bonanza Fuel call out cell
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(907) 387-1202

Sitnasuak www.snc.org

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Arctic ICANS
A nonprofit cancer survivor support group.
For more information call
443-5726.
1-800-478-9355

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Dr. Brent Oesteritter
Treating
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• muscle and joint pain
• back pain and stiffness
• sprains and strains

24 hours a day
7 days/wk
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Please call 443-6768 for appointment
120 W 1st Ave.
M-F: 1 p.m. - 7 p.m. • Sat: 11 a.m.- 6 p.m.
Web-site welcome!

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• **Warm January**

The National Weather Service in Nome reports that the average temperature in January 2014 was 21.3°F, compared to the all-time hottest January on record, set in 1985 at 24.4°F. The normal January temperatures is 13°F for high and -3°F for low temps.

Between January 11 and 16, temperatures cooled down to zero and below. As noted in last week’s Nome Nugget, he said, “Now, that’s a so-called positive feedback that would keep the weather from cooling, which would add to the warming trend even more. ‘The key thing to watch is if the ocean refreezes.’” Walsh said this winter would be food for climate studies for years to come. He said he is particularly interested to see if Alaska will recover from the warm spell of if the brown tundra and open, blue water will act as a heat source. This would provide a second coldest winter on record in Nome. The warm weather came courtesy of a large high-pressure system off the West Coast, pumping tropical air from Hawaii to Alaska. There was an intense pressure gradient that created record-breaking winds that resulted in average winds blowing at 12.8 mph in January, breaking the January 2011 record of 12.4 mph. This average does not adequately reflect the drama of a wind event on January 17 when sustained winds ripped through the region at 58 mph and gusted at 63 mph, breaking the all-time record of 56 mph wind set in the winter of 2007/2008.

The NWG in Nome reports that this winter was pretty much a “mid- wintertime” winter in terms of precipitation, but it sure doesn’t look like it when taking into account the bare tundra that should be snow covered. Accumulated snowfall measured 12.2 inches, but again, that doesn’t translate what’s actually on the ground.

When describing a warm, sunny day in January to the Fairbanks-based Dr. Walsh, he said, “Now, that is not normal.” Usually, clear sunny days in January are cold and crisp, not warm and balmy. As Nomeites bathed in the sun, people in the Midwest again complained about the biter cold. “It comes back to the breakdown of the jet stream pattern, which has become wavy,” explained Walsh. “We’ve been averaging warmer temperatures in Alaska than in the Midwest and we were warmer than January temperatures indicated for Detroit.”

The reason is a bend in the polar vortex that transports cold air south instead of keeping the band of cold air flowing around the polar region.

Walsh said this winter would be food for climate studies for years to come. He said he is particularly interested to see if Alaska will recover from the warm spell or if the brown tundra and open, blue water will act as a heat source. This would provide a so-called positive feedback that would keep the weather from cooling, which would add to the warming trend even more. “The key thing to watch is if the ocean refreezes.”

Walsh said, “If it does, it would cut down on longer term impacts such as storms, and perhaps even impacts on the flow of the jet stream itself.”

Just two years ago, January 2012 went into the history books as the second coldest winter on record in Nome. But Walsh predicts that these extreme warm periods that Alaskans just experienced will become more frequent over the next 40 or 50 years. “What seems to be extremely warm right now is perhaps the average type of winter for in 2070 or 2080,” said Walsh. “This may be an early look at what the winters will look like for our grandchildren.”

Even if the world cut CO₂ emissions today, we could not reverse or mitigate these wild climate changes, he said. Past generations have all ready put enough carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to change the climate for the next 30 to 50 years.

**Due to popular demand, Bering Air’s PFD coupon sales has been extended until February 15, 2014.**

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However, for any travel traveling through two hubs (i.e. Point Hope to Savoonga), it will require 3 coupons for round-trip travel.

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