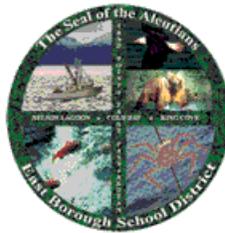
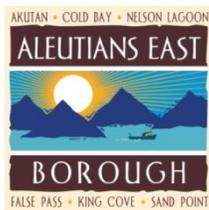


## In the Loop



Bringing the Aleutians East Borough, the AEB School District and Eastern Aleutian Tribes together by sharing common goals.

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## Southwest Community Leaders and Residents “Seas the Day” at SWAMC’s Annual Gathering

More than 200 community leaders and residents from throughout southwest Alaska gathered in Anchorage March 4 – 6, 2015 for SWAMC’s annual Economic Summit & Membership Meeting. The Conference featured speakers from Alaska’s Congressional Delegation, the State of Alaska as well as those with expertise in commercial fisheries, energy, transportation, education, communication technology and behavioral health.

### Update from Senator Lisa Murkowski

On Day 1 of the conference, Alaska’s U.S. senators joined SWAMC via Skype to provide attendees with a legislative update from Washington, D.C.

Senator Lisa Murkowski began by talking about how, in early March, during the SWAMC conference, the threat of a few inches of snow was threatening to shut down Washington D.C. the following day. She said she and Senator Dan Sullivan were among the half dozen senators still in their offices that afternoon on capital hall.

“I think of the communities that you all represent within the southwest region,” she said. “Kodiak, if you get an airplane in, you’re happy. Of course, there’s King Cove, infamous for trying to keep community residents safe while attempting to access the Cold Bay Airport. I’m going to continue to fight with (U.S. Interior Secretary) Sally Jewell over that (authorization to build a single-lane gravel road connecting the two communities).”



Senator Lisa Murkowski (R – Alaska) told SWAMC members via Skype that she will continue to battle U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell over the King Cove road issue.

Senator Murkowski also discussed the Antiquities Act and monument designations. She said she and Senator Dan Sullivan have co-sponsored legislation to ensure there is congressional oversight and approval as well as state approval when a national monument is designated.



“Currently, there are mechanisms that the president can use and has used where he can unilaterally take offline areas onshore and offshore to development,” she said. “We have legislation, introduced in the past, that puts limitations on the Antiquities Act for areas that are designated on land. I introduced this legislation to extend that to designations on land and offshore as well.”

Senator Murkowski referred to the Bering Sea Canyons Area, which has been under consideration. She also raised the issue of the unsuccessful nomination of the Aleutian Islands Marine Sanctuary. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and

several environmental organizations submitted the nomination. The proposed sanctuary would have encompassed all federal waters along the entire Aleutian Islands archipelago to the Alaska mainland, including federal waters off the Pribilof Islands and Bristol Bay, which is approximately 554,000 square nautical miles -- an area nearly equal to the entire land mass of Alaska. PEER indicated that a marine sanctuary designation could set the stage for a rapid designation as a national monument by the president under the Antiquities Act.



Audience members listen to Senator Murkowski address the SWAMC conference via Skype on March 4, 2015 in Anchorage.

“Not only would it have prohibited oil and gas exploration, but what else would it preclude?” she asked. “What about the commercial fisheries? What about just maritime commerce moving through Unimak Pass? The extent of this was just mind-boggling.”

After several resolutions and letters of opposition from tribes, communities, boroughs and organizations

were sent in, NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries determined that the nomination, as submitted, was not sufficient, mostly based on a lack of support from community interests.

“When you think about the limitations on our ability to access our lands and our waters for economic benefit and the health of our communities, it really is quite troubling,” she said. “So know that your delegation is working aggressively on this and keeping a very close eye on what’s going on.”

Senator Murkowski then turned to the topic of energy. As Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources, she and other lawmakers are working on trying to build out a broad energy package. The bill would include provisions to help marine hydrokinetic energy advance as an industry and become less costly to install and more dependable to operate.

Murkowski cited Kodiak as one example of a community that has harnessed abundant amounts of wind as well as hydro resources to significantly lessen its dependence on diesel. She also mentioned the village of Igiugig as another example of a community that’s showing real promise in developing ocean and river current energy.

“When we have more affordable local energy solutions, we’ll be able to stop out-migration in the villages,” she said. “So know that we’re working on that every day.”

## Update from Senator Dan Sullivan

Senator Dan Sullivan said he's excited about his recent assignment to committees, such as the Commerce Committee, which has oversight of fisheries, aviation, infrastructure, the environment and public works. Senator Sullivan is the Subcommittee Chair on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife.

"So we're well positioned to move forward on a number of areas that are the focus of this organization, which I think is great," he said.



Senator Dan Sullivan (R – Alaska) said he and other lawmakers are working on an infrastructure highway bill.

Sullivan said he and other lawmakers have started work on an infrastructure highway bill, and they're hoping to move that out in the next month or two. The senator said the Secretary of Transportation recently appeared in front of the committee, and Sullivan asked him questions about how to move projects forward on a much more efficient timeline.

"A critical and basic function of the federal government is to build our ports, bridges and roads that connect our ports. Right now, it takes about eight years simply to permit a bridge," he said. "We have to change that. We are looking at ways to move through legislation and get our infrastructure moving much more quickly and efficiently."

Another issue important to Sullivan is easing the burden of some of the many federal regulations on our fishing industry.

"One that I think is very important to the members of SWAMC was the Incidental Discharge Permit. We've already moved forward a permanent injunction for vessels 79 feet and below," Sullivan said. "That was recently moved on in the Commerce Committee."

As a member of the Senate Arms Services Committee and of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Sullivan is also passionate about the Clay-Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, legislation which he co-sponsored. It was signed into law on Feb. 12, 2015.



Senator Sullivan provides SWAMC members with a legislative update from Washington, D.C. via Skype.

“As you know, Alaska has the highest rate per capita of people serving in the military,” he said. “I was very proud to address an issue that’s a critical one for our veterans, and that is the very high rates of suicide.”

The Act will enable the administration to take additional steps to address mental health and prevention of suicide among veterans. Those steps include requiring annual third party evaluations of the VA’s mental health care and suicide prevention programs. Another requirement includes collaboration on suicide prevention efforts between VA and non-profit health organizations.

## **Update from Governor Bill Walker**

On Day 3 of SWAMC, Governor Bill Walker addressed the conference. The governor talked about the need for Medicaid expansion. He also discussed the imminent budget cuts due to the low price of Alaska oil.

“You know, we’re in tough times,” Governor Walker said. “We’re going to have to make some really tough decisions – decisions that impact people’s lives, and that’s not much fun. I haven’t met anybody that feels good about cutting services and funding to programs. However, we can’t continue to do the same thing and act like nothing is amiss.”



**Governor Bill Walker discussed the need for Medicaid expansion and talked about impending budget cuts.**



**“Alaska doesn’t have a wealth problem,” Gov. Walker said. “We have a cash flow problem. However, we have reserve funds like no other state.”**

The governor told the audience that the good news is, Alaska doesn’t have a wealth problem.

“We have a cash flow problem,” he said. “However, we happen to have reserve funds like no other state. We have the biggest deficit in the nation, yet we have the highest bond rating in the country because of what prior legislators and administrations have done – putting money away for a rainy day. Well, it’s raining right now, and I’m glad it’s there. But we can’t assume it will always be there. I always analogize it to fishing. If we have a hole in our boat, another pump isn’t going to fix the problem. We need to fix the hole, and then we need to go from there.”

Walker also discussed energy.

“My message is, Alaska is the most energy-rich state in the nation. It’s not a matter of a lack of energy,” he said. “It’s a lack of distribution and getting it to Alaskans.”

The governor brought up the irony of how Alaska, the most energy-rich state in the nation, has the highest cost of energy.

“We have the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ – those who have affordable energy and those who don’t,” he said. “What if Kotzebue, for example, was sitting on a field of gas, like Barrow? We’d want to find a way of exploring that,” he said. “I think the best way to find natural gas and oil is to drill some wells and find out if

that’s available.”

The governor said there are also a lot of alternative options across the state that he’d like to see the state explore.

“We need to go to work and get some of these projects done and bring the cost of energy down so it’s affordable in areas without affordable energy,” he said. “That’s our job as a state.”



“Alaska is the most energy-rich state in the nation,” Gov. Walker told SWAMC members. “It’s not a matter of a lack of energy. It’s a lack of distribution and getting it to Alaskans.”

### **Bycatch: The Big Picture - Update from ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten**



ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten

Commercial fishing in Alaska’s coastal communities is another critical resource for the state. However, managing bycatch has been a big challenge. ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten walked the SWAMC attendees through some of the bycatch programs fishermen have been involved with as well as some of the programs that will likely be implemented in the future.

“Bycatch control is a very high priority for me and for Alaska,” Cotten said. “It has also been a top priority with the (North Pacific Fisheries Management) Council for a long time. We’ve taken many actions in various fishing sectors to minimize bycatch while trying to allow the prosecution of the nation’s

largest groundfish fisheries.”

Cotten said one of the issues that the Council is poised to take action on next month is Gulf of Alaska chinook salmon. In 2010, it peaked at about 55,000 fish.



Commissioner Cotten said one of the issues the Council is poised to take action on next month is GOA chinook salmon.

“That really got people’s attention,” he said. “The Council ended up putting some hard caps in 2012. The following year, the Council established a hard cap of 25,000 for the pollock fishery and 7,500 chinook salmon for the non-pollock fishery, and that’s further divided.”

Cotten said there’s been some action on halibut bycatch recently, as ongoing declines, both the total and the exploitable biomass in the Gulf of Alaska, have increased concerns about the level of bycatch in the groundfish fisheries. He added that this year’s stock assessment for halibut indicated a more stable biomass in the Gulf, possibly even slight increases in some areas, including the Alaska Peninsula.

The Council is expected to take final action on the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands halibut bycatch limits at its June meeting in Sitka. Cotten said the changes are expected to go into effect in 2016. In recent years, the exploitable halibut biomass in the Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands experienced a sharp decline.

“It’s been a growing concern and kind of came to a head this year when the catch limits passed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) for the commercial halibut fishery around the Pribilof Islands were too low to support even a minimal fishery,” Cotten said.



The Council is expected to take final action on the BSAI halibut bycatch limits at its June meeting in Sitka. Cotten said the changes are expected to go into effect in 2016.

The commissioner explained that over the past decade, we’ve seen lower halibut biomasses resulting from natural declines in halibut recruitment and reduced growth rates. Cotten said current data on halibut distribution and migration through tagging studies from the IPHC indicate that the Bering Sea exports halibut of all sizes to other regulatory areas, including southwest Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. He said reducing bycatch in the Bering Sea

should serve to also increase the net exports of halibut that eventually recruit to the fisheries in other areas.

“In addition to reducing bycatch limits that have remained essentially unchanged for two decades, it’s clear we have to move to a different approach for halibut management,” Cotten said. “We’re looking at a future of perhaps a new way to share the conservation burden between the halibut bycatch users and the directed halibut users.”

## **Coming and Going: Southwest Transportation Systems**

### **Airlines:**

Residents in southwest Alaska rely heavily on air and ferry transportation. With that in mind, SWAMC invited speakers from Alaska Airlines, PenAir, Grant Aviation and the Alaska Marine Highway System to discuss some of the successes and challenges in serving those markets.



About 342,000 Alaskans are members of Alaska Airlines’ Club 49 program.

Scott Habberstad, Director of Sales & Marketing with Alaska Airlines, said one of the programs the airline is most proud of is Club 49. The program benefits state residents by allowing those passengers to take two bags free on flights. They also can take advantage of 30 percent off coupons on last minute fares.

“Currently, we have about 342,000 members in Club 49,” said Habberstad. “Club 49 members saved about \$18 million in bag fees, special fares and last minue 30

percent off special coupons.”

Habberstad said Alaska Airlines will soon be eliminating the digi players that it offers passengers after the airline launches its new entertainment package.

“We’re attempting to make the customer service experience that much better,” he said.

PenAir is celebrating a milestone as the airline marks its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service to southwest Alaska. Kristin Folmar, PenAir’s Director of Sales and Marketing, said the airline has plans to expand its fleet. She said it’s all part of the company’s diversification to

build and make PenAir even stronger.

“We have a new customer service program that we’re



PenAir is celebrating a milestone as the airline marks its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service to southwest Alaska.

working on internally right now,” she said. “You’ll start to see it evolve externally. It’s called, My Commitment, My promise.”

Another airline, Grant Aviation, expanded into southwest Alaska a couple of years ago. However, Bob Lowrance, President & C.O.O., said it didn’t go that well and the airline faced a number of challenges.

“For those of you who have flown with us, many of you have had very positive experiences,” he said. “Some of you, regrettably, have not.”

Lowrance has been with the company for about seven months. He said his expertise is turning around companies and fixing what’s broken.

“We’ve done a good job of taking care of the most important thing, which is getting people to and from their destinations safely,” Lowrance said. “What we’ve not done a good job on is doing it consistently, reliably and timely. So over the past six months or so, I removed every single manager in the company, with the exception of our Director of Operations and a couple of other individuals. So there’s been a lot of change at Grant.”



“We’ve done a good job of taking care of the most important thing, which is getting people to and from their destinations safely,” said Bob Lowrance, President & C.O.O. of Grant Aviation.

Lowrance said when working with a struggling organization, it’s critical to have the right people in place. He said he has invested the majority of his effort to recruiting people that are sincerely committed to providing timely, reliable air service. The other initiative he’s working on is community engagement.

“I was pretty surprised by the lack of involvement that Grant had in every single level of the markets we serve,” he said. “Hopefully going forward, we’ll be far more visible and active. You’re going to see a lot of activity as we fly out to our hubs and to the villages, spending an immense amount of effort talking about the challenges you face and how we can improve air service for you.”

### **Tustumena Ferry:**

With state budget cuts looming on the horizon, Alaska residents will soon see a decrease in service across the board from the Alaska State Marine Highway System. According to Michael Neussl, Deputy Commissioner of DOT&PF overseeing ferries. He said it will mean spreading the “pain” throughout the system.

Neussl also discussed how the state is moving ahead with the final design of the replacement of the M/V Tustumena, the 50 year-old vessel that serves southwest Alaska.



Currently, Alaska's DOT&PF is moving ahead with the final design of the replacement of the M/V Tustumena, a vessel that's more than 50 years old.

"It's still capable. We use it every day," he said. "But it needs to be replaced to avoid major schedule disruptions."

Neussl said the \$237 million vessel will most likely be a cost-share between state and federal dollars. The new vessel is expected to be 34 feet longer than the

current Tustumena. It will also be 11 feet wider for more car depth and vehicle space,

with 415 lane feet of space down on the car deck. Sixteen additional vehicles and 76 more passengers will be accommodated.

"You should see a final design in December of this year," said Neussl. "Between now and then, we'll work on how to get it constructed and funded."

## **Reclaim Alaska**

Behavioral health and treatment for alcohol and substance abuse was another hot topic at SWAMC. One of the greatest challenges for the region is that those who get treatment outside of their communities sometimes struggle when they come home. One of the toughest challenges can be remaining sober if they spend time with friends and family members who are using. Reclaim Alaska, a movement established by several local tribes and organizations, held meetings and a summit during the past year to discuss the problem and come up with solutions.

"So what do we do to combat this problem and bring our community back to wellness?" Tiffany Jackson, Executive Director of the Qagan Tayagungin Tribe of Sand Point asked. "Together, we decided there are two priorities we really want to



Tiffany Jackson, Executive Director of the Qagan Tayagungin Tribe of Sand Point, said increasing support for people who have gone through a rehabilitation program for drugs or alcohol abuse is a top priority.

focus on. Our top priority is increasing access to healthy (social) opportunities for our youth and young adults, whether it's through our culture camps or other events in the communities.”

Jackson said the second priority is providing more support for those who have already gone through a rehabilitation program for alcohol or substance abuse.

“So we need to increase the support in our communities for people to come back home so they can be successful in their recovery,” she said. “We want to have an Oxford House model, which is for people who are sober, in recovery, living in a house together and supporting each other in their recovery. We wanted to look at doing something like that in the region because we don't have anything available like that in rural Alaska right now. So we got on the phone and talked to tribes, to Aleutian Housing Authority. We invited people to meetings, and it really took off.”

Jackson said Eastern Aleutian Tribes stepped up and took charge of moving forward on this priority.

*Oxford House:  
Building Community*



“It's looking pretty likely that we will be able to move forward with something like this in our community,” Jackson said. “We have someone from the state coming out in June or July to check out the community. We have some funding, and we're looking for more financial support. So that's something positive coming out of this.”

Jackson said no one has the magic solution. However, if everyone contributes to the solution, it will make a difference.

“If we all work together and we all do something, then we will move towards being a healthier community and a healthier region,” she said.

**For more information on this presentation and others, visit SWAMC's informative links below:**

[\*\*2015 SWAMC Recap\*\*](#)

[\*\*SWAMC Resolutions - 2015\*\*](#)

[\*\*Conference Presentations - 2015\*\*](#)



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# **Construction of New Duplex in Akutan to Launch this Summer**

## **The Goal: To Retain Essential Employees**

*By Mary Tesche, Assistant Administrator, City of Akutan*

This summer, the City of Akutan plans to build a new duplex to house health professionals and a VPSO working in the village. The City applied for an Alaska Housing Finance Corporation 2015 Teacher, Health Professional and Public Safety Officer Housing program grant. This grant awards funding for new construction or rehabilitation of housing, specifically for teachers, health professionals or public safety professionals working in rural Alaska. In November 2014, the City was notified that AHFC intends to award Akutan with a little more than \$694,000 to build a new duplex. We are in the process of executing a grant agreement that should be signed sometime in April.

The total project cost is estimated to be about \$868,000, with the City contributing about \$173,000. The duplex will be about 2,200 square feet and will achieve a 5-Star plus BEES rating. We are currently in the process of finding a general contractor that will head the project. Our engineering firm, Mead & Hunt, is conducting the architecture work. The project will begin late this summer and is scheduled for completion by late summer of 2016.

There were two main reasons we wanted to start this project. First, we want to find a way to recruit and retain health care and public safety professionals coming to work in the village. Having comfortable housing available specifically for those individuals coming into the village for work is one way to make sure they stay in the village for the long term. Secondly, we want to add to the housing stock by freeing up the apartment units currently being occupied by the nurse and VPSO. The goal is to rent those units out to other families in the community who need their own place to stay.

# King Cove Police Department's K9 To Receive Bullet and Stab-Proof Vest

The King Cove Police Department's K9, Faro, has been awarded a ballistic vest, thanks to a non-profit organization, Vested Interest in K9s, Inc., and the Alaska K9 Center. The organizations raised \$1,452 for Faro's vest.

"It is extremely important to protect the dog with a ballistic vest," said King Cove Police Officer Brad Schneider, the dog's handler. "Just like every police officer, Faro has a very dangerous and important job."

Faro, a two-year old German Shepard, and Officer Schneider were trained in narcotics detection and tracking at the Kasseburg Canine Training Center in New Market, Alabama. The training lasted five weeks. Faro and Schneider received certification through the National Narcotic Detector Dog Association in November 2014. Faro was put into service with the police department on Nov. 28, 2014.

"Faro has done a couple of searches," Officer Schneider said. "Demonstrating to the community that we have the capability to use a K9 officer might make an individual think twice about using or dealing drugs."

Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. is a 501c (3) charity located in East Taunton, MA. The charity's mission is to provide bullet and stab-protective vests and other assistance to dogs of law enforcement and related agencies throughout the United States. Each vest costs \$950 and has a 5-year warranty. The non-profit was established in 2009 to assist law enforcement agencies with this potentially life-saving body armor for their four-legged K9 officers. Through private and corporate sponsorships, Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. has provided 1,317 law enforcement dogs in 49 states with protective vests since 2009 at a cost of more than \$1.2 million.

The organization orders the U.S.-made vests exclusively from distributor Regency Police Supply in Hyannis, Massachusetts, which also does the custom embroidery on the body armor. Vests are manufactured by Armor Express in Central Lake, Michigan.

Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. announces their 7" plush stuffed German Shepherd K9 Hero, "Cesar", and company ambassador of Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. now for sale online for \$15 at [www.vik9s.org](http://www.vik9s.org). Proceeds from the sales will provide bullet and stab-protective vests for police dogs actively working without the potentially life-saving equipment.



The King Cove Police Department's K9, Faro, has been awarded a ballistic vest, thanks to a non-profit organization, Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. and the Alaska K9 Center.

The organization orders the U.S.-made vests exclusively from distributor Regency Police Supply in Hyannis, MA, which also does the custom embroidery on the body armor. Vests are manufactured by Armor Express in Central Lake, MI.

New K9 graduates as well as K9s with expired vests are eligible to participate. The program is open to law enforcement dogs who are U.S. employed, certified and at least 19 months of age.

For more information or to learn about volunteer opportunities, please call 508-824-6978. Tax deductible donations accepted via mail to: Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. P.O. Box 9 East Taunton, MA 02718 or via the website: [www.vik9s.org](http://www.vik9s.org).

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## Sand Point High School Student Enjoys Participation in Statewide Poetry Out Loud Competition

It's been an exciting month for Sand Point high school junior Jillian Bjornstad. Earlier this year, Bjornstad won a poetry contest at her school after demonstrating her impressive memorization and performance techniques. That was just the beginning. Afterward, she found out she was selected to represent the southwest Alaska region in the statewide Poetry Out Loud contest in Juneau on March 10<sup>th</sup>. The days leading up to the trip were filled with memorizing and polishing her performances of three poems. Then the day



Sand Point high school student Jillian Bjornstad (center) and other students and chaperones visited the governor's mansion while in Juneau earlier this month.



Sand Point high school 11<sup>th</sup> grade student Jillian Bjornstad participated in the statewide Poetry Out Loud competition in Juneau on March 10, 2015. Courtesy: 360 North.

finally arrived to head to Alaska's capital to begin the next phase of her academic adventure.

"We got there at about 10 pm and went straight to the hotel room," said Bjornstad. "Then we had to get up at 6 am to get going. We had some practice and microphone training. We also had a flash tour of several things in Juneau. It was all super-fast," she said.

Then it was time for the evening competition, which was broadcast on television ([360 North](#)) and on the web. While

that knowledge would be enough to get the adrenaline flowing in just about anyone who isn't used to being in the spotlight, Bjornstad had more immediate concerns.

"I think it was more the people who were there watching that made it nerve-wracking for me," she said.

Bjornstad performed three poems: [Caged Bird by Maya Angelou](#), [In School-Days by John Greenleaf Whittier](#) and [Auto-Lullaby by Franz Wright](#).



"I felt that I did pretty well in the first two rounds," Bjornstad said. "Then they (the judges) called whoever performed the best – the top four. They picked the winner and the runner up from there. I was crossing my fingers for getting into the finals, but I didn't. They didn't give rankings after first and second place. I know I didn't get anything wrong, and I was pretty close."

So close, in fact, that one of the judges pulled Bjornstad aside to offer her some advice.

"He said if I had performed my last poem in the earlier round, I probably would have gone into the finals," she said. "He thought I should have performed *In School-Days* first."

Despite not getting into the finals, Bjornstad is grateful to have participated in the competition, and said she learned quite a bit from the experience.

“It was pretty cool getting tips on poetry, microphone situations and camera angles,” she said. Bjornstad is hoping her school will offer a poetry competition again next year.

“I’d try again, if the school does,” she said.

As this school year winds to a close, Bjornstad is preparing for an exciting summer, academically. She recently found out that she has been accepted into UAF’s Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI).



Bjornstad is hoping her school holds another poetry competition. “I’d try again,” she said. Photo courtesy: 360 North.

RAHI provides rural and Alaska Native students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the college experience for six weeks. High school junior and senior students live in the dorms and take college level courses.

“It allows students to get some of the basic college credits out of the way, such as English,” Bjornstad said.

Students also learn study skills and time management. By the end of the program, records have shown these students are prepared for the challenge of succeeding in college.

“My sister went during her 11<sup>th</sup> grade year, too,” Bjornstad said.

After Bjornstad finishes her senior year at the Sand Point School and graduates, she plans to attend college at UAF. Following her recent accomplishments with poetry, she was considering language arts as a college major – at first.

“I was thinking about it, but then my sister became an English major,” Bjornstad said, chuckling.

Now she’s thinking about forging her own path.

“I really like economics and business,” she said. “So I’m thinking of something in that field.”

If the attention she has received recently for her academic success is any indication, the sky’s the limit for this Sand Point high school junior.



Bjornstad visited Mendenhall Glacier while she was in Juneau.

Missed seeing the 2015 statewide Poetry Out Loud competition broadcast on television or on the web? Watch it now by clicking [here](#).

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## Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning in Alaska and Declines in Top Predators

*By Bruce Wright, Senior Scientist, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association*

### **Recap of the Summer 2014 PSP Event**

The summer of 2014 saw a region-wide - Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) event with high PSP levels reported from all of the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association's (APIA) monitoring stations in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea as far north as Kotzebue Sound. On June 12, 2014, the Haines study site in Viking Cove had the highest PSP levels ever reported in Alaska, at 270 times above the FDA limit for PSP in shellfish of 80 micrograms. Sea otters and sea lions were found dead on beaches in the Aleutian Islands, and when tested for PSP, they were found to have high PSP levels. Sand lance, a small schooling fish, had elevated PSP levels all along the coast from southeast Alaska north to Deering in Kotzebue Sound. People



Pacific sand lance from the stomach of a Cook Inlet salmon.

reported dead sand lance washing up on beaches in Haines, Sitka, Cordova, Kodiak, Homer, Seldovia, Sand Point, False Pass, Deering and Barrow, a sign that PSP was killing the sand lance, too. The sand lance samples collected from Haines, Homer (collected 5/12/14 PSP level 255) and Deering had high PSP levels.

In 2012, several *Kittlitz's murrelets* died in Kodiak nesting sites from consuming PSP containing sand lance. The EPA funded APIA to investigate the extent of PSP contaminated sand lance, and to determine the consequences to marine mammals and other predators.

The western Aleutian Islands sea lion population declined by 75% between 1976 and 1990, and decreased another 40% between 1991 and 2000. The extent of this decline led NMFS to list the Steller's sea lion as threatened range-wide under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in April 1990. Harbor seals and sea otter numbers are much lower, too.

The hypothesis (theory): Sand lance are ubiquitous in the Aleutian Islands, occurring on every sandy beach surveyed. The hypothesis is that most of the sand lance become toxic from PSP during the region-wide PSP events like the ones that occurred in 2012 and 2014; and sea lions, sea otters and other predators consume the sand lance, and then become sick or die across the region.

Could this be the cause of declines of sea lions, harbor seals, sea otters and Yukon River king salmon, all of which feed heavily on sand lance in the Aleutian Islands?

If you want to learn more about PSP or see the PSP data for Alaska, check out this website (<http://www.apiai.org/services/community-services/environmental-programs/paralytic-shellfish-poisoning-ppsp/>) or request the information from the author.

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## News from Eastern Aleutian Tribes

February/March 2015

### People

- Welcome our New Hires:
  - **Glennora Dushkin**, Janitor, King Cove (first day: March 26<sup>th</sup>)
- Open Positions:
  - **Behavioral Health Aides\*** – Akutan and Nelson Lagoon
  - **Behavioral Health Clinical Manager** - 50% in Anchorage and 50% small sites



Cold Bay residents celebrate St. Patrick's Day during a community potluck.

- **Behavioral Health Clinician** – King Cove
- **Clinical Information Clerk** – Cold Bay
- **Community Health Aides\*** – Adak, Akutan, Cold Bay, and Nelson Lagoon
- **Human Resources Travel Technician** – Any Site
- **Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant** – Sand Point and Recruitment for Itinerants
- **Planning and Development Director** – Any Site
- **Registered Nurse (RN) Case Manager / Community Health Aide\*** - Cold Bay

\*Note: No experience necessary. Training will be provided.

## Service

- “Caught Ya Caring” Winners from February All Hands Staff Meeting:
- **Vincent Perino, PA, King Cove** - ‘Other Duties as Assigned’ has a new meaning for Vincent. A patient came to the clinic with his dog. It was either in a fight or was beaten by a stranger on Friday evening. Vincent called Suzie in Adak for a consult, since she is a still a licensed vet in 2 states. Vincent was able to give the dog fluids, antibiotics and clean his wound. He was able to get Walmart to fill a prescription and mail to King Cove. When the dog left the clinic, his tail was wagging. Vincent requested to see the dog the next day to recheck his wounds. Thanks Vincent and Susie for going the extra mile, not only for our patients, but also our pets.

- **Elora Newton**, Accounts Payable/Purchasing, Anchorage - Elora spent many hours determining inventories of EAT apartments and monthly cost of utilities. This information was valuable for a meeting of Directors. This work was on top of all of her daily work issuing purchase orders and helping with accounts payable. Elora goes the extra mile without complaints.

- **Linda Mack**, HR Assistant and **Selma Ramsdell**, HR Director, Anchorage - The other day a lady came into the office she thought she was at her doctor’s office and wanted to get her meds. Selma and Linda were watching from a distance as they could see that I wasn’t getting anywhere with this lady and came over to assist me and see if they could make heads or tails of the conversation. We decided to call the Community Service Department as she may have had a medical problem and seemed disorientated. They took her to an ambulance that was waiting outside to give her further assistance. I want to thank Selma and Linda for helping me work with her.

“Caught Ya Caring” Winners from March All Hands Staff Meeting:

- **Esther (Lady) Hamilton**, Billing, King Cove and **Kathleen Bear**, CHR, King Cove - I would like to nominate these two ladies for always being so willing to help answer the phone or watch the front desk for whatever reason. It really makes the day easier knowing you can count on someone to help you out! Thank you Kathy and Lady!
- **Beverly Johansen**, CIC, King Cove - For doing an awesome job on completing the sliding fee application correctly. Thank you Bev!!

- **Executive Director:**
  - Whittier: March 25-27, 2015 – Potluck on March 26, 2015
- **Dental Services**
  - King Cove: March 16 – April 10<sup>th</sup> (Dr. Costa and Gaby, DA)
  - Cold Bay: March 20 – 29<sup>th</sup> (Ben, DHAT)
  - Sand Point: March 30 – April 17<sup>th</sup> (Ben, DHAT)
  - Sand Point: April 13 – 22<sup>nd</sup> (Dr. Costa and Gaby, DA)
  - Whittier: April 23-24<sup>th</sup> (Dr. Costa and Gaby, DA)
  - Adak: April 27 – May 1<sup>st</sup> (Dr. Costa and Gaby, DA)
- **SCF Village Doctors**
  - Sand Point: April 4 -10<sup>th</sup> (Dr. Hartman)
  - Adak: April 26 - 30<sup>th</sup> (Cutting)
  - King Cove: April 27 – May 1<sup>st</sup> (Saunders)



## Finance

- We received a “clean audit” for FY 2014! **Kudos to the Finance Department!**

## Growth

We received a \$1,500 grant for the Elders Injury Prevention Program. This will help sustain our local fall prevention efforts. Funding will be used to purchase ice cleats, ice melt and four-pronged walking canes for the elders within our communities.

- We are looking for a contractor to help us write the business/operating plan for the Elder housing facility in King Cove. Proposals are due April 10<sup>th</sup>. If you know someone that needs a copy of the full RFP, please contact me.

## Report on Events:

On Monday, March 16, 2015, the **Anna Livingston Memorial Clinic** in Cold Bay hosted a community listening potluck. 30 community members attended. Here are the community members’ responses to our questions:

### **What do you like about the Cold Bay Clinic?**

- Royce, Molly, and Lynn
- The nice people
- Flexible, friendly staff

### **What is your dream or long-term goal for the clinic and/or community wellness?**

- Access to more fresh, organic vegetables, meats, and

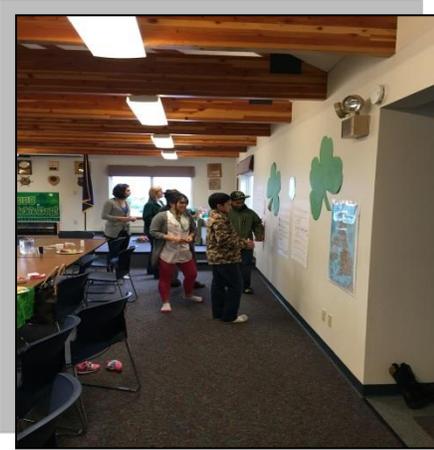


dairy

- Better fitness facility, updated fitness center, needs TLC

### Do you want any of these new/expanded services?

- Increase number and frequency of visits from:
  - Optometrist (eye doctor)
  - Dentist/DHAT
  - Behavioral Health Clinician



- Vet Services – dual function nurse, access Tele-vet
- Increase Prevention/Education:
  - Nutrition
  - Exercise
  - Alcohol/Drug Abuse
  - Tobacco Cessation

### If we had more resources, what could we do to become the healthiest people in the Nation?

- Access to nutrition counselor/dieticians
- Naturopathy, Acupuncture, and herbal medicines

### What is our biggest barrier or challenge to community wellness?

- Cost of clinic services – Lower it!
- Better access to healthy affordable foods
- Lack of facilities

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## Got News?

If you have news you'd like to share, please email [ltanis@aeboro.org](mailto:ltanis@aeboro.org) or call Laura Tanis at (907) 274-7579.



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