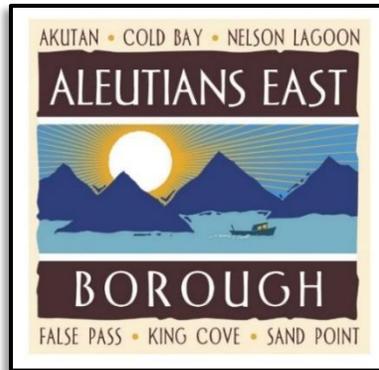
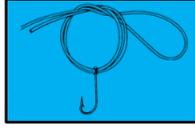


In the Loop



Eastern Aleutian Tribes Ramps up Testing during COVID-19 Pandemic

Provides Extra Care to Community Elders, High School Seniors

Healthcare workers around the globe have been called superheroes for good reason. Responding to one of the largest public healthcare crises in modern history has been a daunting task, and these professionals are on the front lines of this battle against an invisible enemy. Putting a plan in place to provide coronavirus testing in eight remote Alaskan communities (Adak, Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, Sand Point and Whittier) spanning more than 100,000 square miles across some of the most challenging and remote terrain in the world has been an additional challenge for Eastern Aleutian Tribes (EAT). While the task may seem monumental, the small health organization has risen to the occasion in a big way.

“We still have zero confirmed positive cases,” said EAT Interim CEO Paul Mueller.

Since April 12th, Eastern Aleutian Tribes has conducted COVID-19 community testing in all eight of the communities it serves after receiving four Abbot ID Now Analyzers and the accompanying rapid test kits. Results are available in less than fifteen minutes.

People living and working in Nelson Lagoon and False Pass were the first patients in the EAT service area to be tested for COVID-19. EAT began the process by sending the analyzers from Anchorage to Sand Point.



Eastern Aleutian Tribes healthcare provider Joe McMillan from Sand Point with two Abbott Analyzers. Photo courtesy: Eastern Aleutian Tribes.

“Then, on Easter Sunday, I had a provider from Sand Point jump on a charter with both (analyzer) machines after certifying them,” Mueller said. “He flew to Nelson Lagoon and False Pass on Easter Day.”

Informing community residents has often consisted of word of mouth and sending notices to P.O. boxes as well as posting them in key locations.

“In Nelson Lagoon, we did VHF radio announcements,” said Mueller. “We posted notices on the clinic door and window. We made phone calls.”

All community residents were invited.

“Community testing is what we were going for,” he said. “I think we hit 100 percent of the population.”

Within the same day, the healthcare provider flew to False Pass to conduct another round of testing. More than 70 people have been tested in False Pass and Nelson Lagoon so far.

“We had a great turnout for the residents of each community,” said Mueller.

The healthcare provider then flew to Cold Bay, spent the night there, and started back up the following morning, testing more than 20 people. At the end of that testing session, the provider jumped back on the charter plane and headed to King Cove.

Once there, he trained providers inside the clinic on how to use the Abbott Id Now Analyzer machine and testing supplies.

“One of the machines was physically left in King Cove,” said Mueller. “King Cove is now its permanent home,” he said.

The provider then jumped on a charter to fly to Akutan on April 15th. Unfortunately, as often

happens in the Aleutians, he was weathered out. He ended up spending the night in Dutch Harbor. The following day, Mother Nature still refused to cooperate.

“So, I reached out to our community partner, Trident Seafoods, and said, I need your help,” Mueller said.

Trident agreed and put the machine and the testing supplies on the Sea Trader, which were later transferred to the EAT clinic in Akutan. Following the training, the provider conducted more than a dozen tests on Day 1.



**Community testing in Sand Point during the week of April 20th.
Photo courtesy: Eastern Aleutian Tribes.**

“That was just in the afternoon,” Mueller said.

So far, more than 50 people have been tested in Akutan.

“Based on what we saw, the entire population wanted to get tested,” Mueller said.

During the week of April 20th, EAT sent out additional supplies for Sand Point. The plan was to focus on testing the elders, the vulnerable and the chronically ill with the Abbott Analyzers and

using the multi-collect (nasal swab) test kits for the remainder of the community. The ultimate goal was to test everyone that wanted to be tested in the EAT service area. More than 180 people were tested for COVID-19 at the two large sites, Sand Point and King Cove. EAT is still performing community testing at those sites. Eastern Aleutian Tribes has also tested more than 55 people in Adak, and so far, has test 47 people in Whittier.

Testing in the Aleutians has been anything but simple. In early April, RavnAir announced it was suspending all flight operations and filed for bankruptcy. That meant the region was losing scheduled air service to Cold Bay, Sand Point and Unalaska. Despite that, EAT found a way around this hurdle.

“It has been very challenging,” Mueller said. “I took advantage of any plane heading south, whether it was Precision Air or ACE Cargo,” Mueller said. “I didn’t want to lose out on an opportunity to get supplies into the region.”

Add to that, the unpredictable weather, which is always a challenge in the Aleutians.

“The weather has to be acceptable for flying,” he said.

Mueller said the seafood processing companies (Trident, Silver Bay Seafoods and Peter Pan

Seafoods) in Akutan, False Pass, Sand Point and King Cove have demonstrated they are excellent community partners. Each company submitted strict protocols and procedures to the State of Alaska to protect the communities.

For example, in Akutan, Trident's plant is gated off from the City of Akutan, and their protocols do not allow employees to venture into the community, located about ¼ of a mile away. Trident has their own medical provider. However, EAT temporarily stepped in earlier this month to lend a hand when Trident's provider had a personal emergency.

"I spoke to local Trident management and their corporate risk manager, and we came up with a plan," Mueller said. "I was going to share a provider. To do that, they wanted to make sure they respected the City of Akutan. We came up with a plan that was acceptable to the Mayor of Akutan."

That plan included testing the EAT provider before that individual left the home base of Sand Point.

Trident arranged for a charter to pick up the provider in Sand Point, met her at the tarmac in Dutch Harbor, arranged van transportation, followed by a boat to Trident's plant in Akutan. The plan also called for her to wear a mask for the 14 days while working at the Trident clinic as well as taking twice daily temperature checks.

"Guess what? It was a success," Mueller said. "Our employee provided great care for the Trident employees."

After nearly two weeks, the provider was transported back to Dutch Harbor. She returned back to her home base in Sand Point. Upon immediate entry into the clinic, other health providers suited up and tested her for COVID-19.

"She tested negative," Mueller said. "We are doing everything we can, and that's really what I want to emphasize."

Mueller said he has received the same cooperation in False Pass, where EAT is the provider for both Trident and Silver Bay Seafoods.

"We ramped up to have two providers in False Pass for the summer season," he said. "I have been working with both organizations on how we can best protect the City of False Pass and the employees of Trident and Silver Bay."

Eastern Aleutian Tribes and Peter Pan Seafoods are continuing their strong community relationship.

Mueller said if a test results in a confirmed positive COVID-19 case in EAT's service area, Eastern Aleutian Tribes is prepared to handle the situation.

"In any of our communities, whether it's Whittier to Adak, and everywhere in between, if somebody has a confirmed positive test, and they're medically stable, we provide them with a set

of instructions about how they need to essentially live for 14 days,” he said. “If they don’t have a facility where they can isolate from other family members, we have quarantine units throughout the region.”

Mueller said working with community partners, such as the seafood processing partners and community leaders, has made a big difference.

“They have been fantastic,” he said. “Everybody has been part of the team.”

Mueller said he is constantly advocating for additional supplies, whether it’s for community members or for other private industries, including employees working for telecommunication companies who enter the communities.

“I want to be able to test them,” he said. “I want to have enough supplies to protect our communities.”

The tremendous amount of work Eastern Aleutian Tribes has put in to take care of the communities within its service area is just part of what the organization has been involved with during the pandemic. EAT has also sent boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables to elders within the communities.

“I’ve been working with our elder manager and Lorna Osterback in Sand Point,” Mueller said. “They put together a list of elders in our service area. Lorna does a great job and has a passion for taking care of elders.”

Recently, EAT also sent out other supplies with Easter baskets, which included food, coloring books, crayons, Sudoku games, puzzles, a washcloth, hand soap and hand sanitizer.

“We want to keep people upbeat because we know being isolated is tough,” Mueller said.

In addition, it takes some pressure off for grocery shopping. Mueller said taking care of the elders is a wonderful opportunity. The experience has turned out to be a rewarding one.

“We also gave each of the elders a box of stationery and stamps. I have a card sitting in front of me,” Mueller said. “It’s from one of the elders, and it said, ‘Thank you for the Easter basket.’ One of the elders used some of the stationery EAT provided to send as a thank you card. I shared that with my entire staff. Those are the moments that make it all worth it.”

The elders aren’t the only seniors who are getting extra care during this pandemic.

Mueller said another member of Eastern Aleutian Tribes’ executive team suggested that EAT also do something special for high school seniors.

“These kids have spent their entire lives getting to where they are,” Mueller said.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has prevented them from celebrating their proms and graduation ceremonies publicly, surrounded by family and friends.

“So, we’re working on senior gifts to congratulations them on their achievements,” Mueller said.

EAT is going the extra mile, not just in its COVID-19 testing capacity, but to show the eldest community members, as well as some of the younger ones, that the health organization cares.

“Together, we will get through this. I believe that with every ounce of my being,” Mueller said. “From the community leaders and members, to the seafood companies, the governments, the tribes and the healthcare organization, we are all in this together. We have an opportunity,” Mueller said. “Now is the time to shine in a crisis.”

Latest Info on COVID-19 Confirmed Cases Statewide

According to Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services, as of 11 a.m. today, here's the latest information regarding COVID-19 confirmed cases statewide:

355 total cases

0 new cases yesterday

252 recovered cases

36 total hospitalizations

9 total deaths

For more information, visit:

<https://coronavirus-response-alaska-dhss.hub.arcgis.com/>

(Sharing – from SWAMC)

AK Can Do COVID-19 Response Fund – Housing, Utility, and Childcare

As this unprecedented pandemic unfolds, our neighbors across the state are experiencing unprecedented hardships. United Way of Anchorage and The Alaska Community Foundation, with support from the Rasmuson Foundation, partnered to organize a statewide COVID-19 relief fund, and people and businesses across Alaska have been donating money. Dollars raised from the campaign will assist our neighbors who have been devastated by the pandemic. After all, we’re Alaskans, and that’s what we do.

United Way of Anchorage will grant some of these funds to the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC) as the provider to distribute in its region to support neighbors in need of housing support, utility assistance, and childcare, to be used as follows:

I. Purpose: To help people economically impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic access critical housing assistance, childcare, and utilities assistance. **Funds will be sent directly to landlords, utility and childcare providers on behalf of the applicant.**

II. Scope of Assistance:

- Current or imminent need for rent. Mortgage assistance only in rare circumstance when not subject to stimulus law protections. Past due balances from before the pandemic related economic loss are not eligible. Maximum is \$1,000 per household.
- Current or imminent need for utility assistance. Arrearages are not eligible.
- Emergency childcare, especially for “essential” workers like first responders and medical personnel.

III. Eligibility Criteria:

General Guidelines:

- Funding is for recently unemployed due to lay-offs, furloughs, or loss of income due to closures or shelter in place orders.
- Complete application and provide necessary documentation.
- While providers will be given discretion on whether an individual can receive multiple lines of support, the funder preference is to help as many people as possible.

Rental Assistance:

- Maximum of one-month rent or mortgage payment, not to exceed \$1,000 per household;
- Must be used to maintain current housing (this is not financial support to get into housing or to sustain housing for someone unemployed before the pandemic-caused employment loss);

Childcare Assistance:

- Prioritization will be given to essential workers like first responders and medical personnel, but other workers deemed essential will also be eligible.

IV. Applicant Documentation Required:

- Valid ID;
- Completed application;
- Rental or lease agreement or mortgage statement;

- Most recent paystub or self-employment documentation;
- Most recent utility bill;
- Most recent childcare invoice or receipt.
- The provider may be flexible on how such documentation is secured, given the difficulties due to shelter in place restrictions, large regions to serve, and the limitations on the availability of IT, including applying any measures/work-arounds the provider has adopted in response to COVID-19.

Due to limited funds and staffing at the Anchorage SWAMC office, we will only consider applications that are fully documented and verifiable. This project is planned to run through May 31st. Utilize your City Clerk's office for copies, current utility bills, and proof of property ownership of your rental or mortgage. You can mail the attached application form with the required documentation copies listed above to:

SWAMC

3300 Arctic Blvd, suite 203

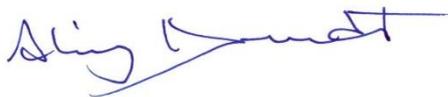
Anchorage, AK 99503

Or send electronically to:

smarquardt@swamc.org

SWAMC and its Board of Directors are hopeful that we will be able to send critical help to our regions where needed and are truly grateful for the work of The United Way and the Rasmuson Foundation for spearheading the AK CAN DO project and partnering with us to make a difference in Southwest Alaska communities.

Sincerely,



Shirley Marquardt, Executive Director SWAMC

AK Can Do COVID-19 Response Fund Application

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Total in household: _____

I am applying for:

Utility Assistance: __ Provider: _____ Ph: _____

Rental Assistance: __ Landlord: _____ Ph: _____

Childcare Assistance: __ Provider: _____ Ph: _____

Income Sources:

Place of Employment: _____

Manager's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Were you laid off or furloughed due to the COVID-19 State and Local closures or shelter in place rules?
_____ Date of last day worked _____

Please provide a copy of a valid ID, your rental or lease agreement, most recent paystub, most recent utility bill or most recent childcare invoice or receipt. All applications will be verified before consideration, and payments will go directly to landlords, utility providers and daycare facilities or providers.

The purpose of these funds is to help people economically impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic that results in an inability to pay April rent, current utility bills or Childcare. Maximum rent payment is not to exceed \$1,000.00 per household and will be considered only with a complete application as listed above. These funds are being collected by the United Way through donations and disbursed by the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC). The program is scheduled to end May 30 or when funds are depleted.

Mailing address for SWAMC: 3300 Arctic Blvd, Suite 203 Anchorage AK 99503

Email address: smarquardt@swamc.org

To view these documents separately, visit:

<https://bit.ly/2KNINZB>

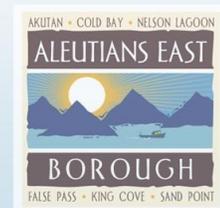
PUBLIC NOTICE

NELSON LAGOON DOCK CLOSURE

POSTPONED UNTIL 2021



The Aleutians East Borough will be **postponing** repairs on the Nelson Lagoon Dock until 2021 to limit the exposure of COVID-19. For more information please contact Anne Bailey at (907) 274-7580 or at abailey@aeboro.org



If you have news you'd like to share or if you'd like to subscribe, please email ltanis@aeboro.org .



*Thank you for reading **In the Loop**. If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe, please send an email to ltanis@aeboro.org. For more information about our communities, our people, and our fisheries, please visit us at www.aleutianseast.org and www.aebfish.org. For the latest news, find us on Facebook:*

[**Link to AEB's Facebook page**](#)

[**Link to King Cove's Facebook page**](#)

[**Link to Cold Bay's Facebook page**](#)

[**Link to Sand Point Department of Public Safety page**](#)

