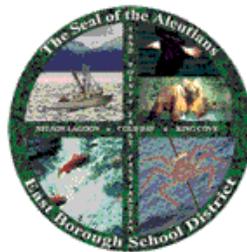
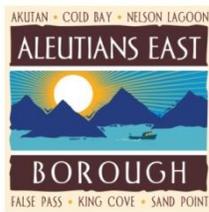


## In the Loop



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

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## Highlights from 2018 SWAMC Conference

### **Governor Walker Discusses King Cove Road, State Budget, Economic Opportunities**

SWAMC's 2018 Economic Summit and Membership Meeting (March 1 – 2, 2018) was packed with engaging topics and speakers, ranging from updates from the governor, state lawmakers and federal officials to Alaska's opioid crisis, broadband, and managing a \$4.2 billion fishing industry in times of change. The theme of this year's conference was Resilient Communities Meeting the Challenges of Tomorrow.

During his speech, Governor Walker focused on several topics, including the King Cove land exchange agreement, the state budget, economic opportunities and the opioid crisis. The governor said if anyone had asked him a year ago to pick one of three things: oil production in a portion of

ANWR, the King Cove – Izembek road or a natural gas project with China, he would have been thrilled if any one of them moved forward.

“But as I stand here today, all three of those have been accomplished in the last 12 months,” Governor Walker said. “I don’t know of another time that we’ve had so many things happen in such a short period of time.”

Governor Walker said the signing of the King Cove land exchange agreement represents the importance of perseverance. He said witnessing the signing of that document was very emotional.

“It’s a statement to all of you to never give up,” he said. “Just never, ever, ever give up. Stay the course. Nelson Mandela said everything is impossible until it’s done. The King Cove road was one that many people thought was impossible. But it’s not impossible if you stay with it, and you stayed with it. We’re proud to be a part of that.”



Governor Walker discussed the King Cove road, the natural gas project, the state budget and economic opportunities in Alaska during the SWAMC Conference.

Governor Walker also discussed economic opportunities for Alaska following an agreement signed with China regarding the state’s liquefied natural gas project. Last fall, state officials announced that Chinese firms and the Alaska Development Corporation signed a joint development agreement to move the project forward. The project is expected to provide about 12,000 jobs, nearly \$1.1 billion to the state annually for 20 years as well as affordable natural gas to communities.

“That’s great during those years,” he said. “So what happens after that? That’s where the ongoing funding source for energy projects in rural Alaska comes into play. Some places will have natural gas. Some will have LNG brought in on barges.”

Governor Walker said in British Columbia, they’re using LNG on their ferries to significantly bring down the cost of fuel.

“There are things we could be doing differently with this energy,” he said.

The governor also remarked how Alaska continues to deal with the opioid crisis.

“No one has escaped this unscathed,” he said. “Last year, we issued a declaration of disaster. We have passed legislation. It’s been a team effort. We continue to work with public safety on this.”

Governor Walker said he has a lot of optimism about what’s happening in Juneau.

“I think when you go through a fiscal situation that we’ve gone through, we have to sort of reassess ourselves a bit,” he said. “The main thing is that we don’t forget who we are, we don’t hurt education, and we continue to be good stewards of this state and of our children going forward.”

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## **Southwest Alaska Legislators Provide Update on Budget Crisis, Key Issues**

Four southwest Alaska lawmakers provided SWAMC conference attendees with the latest information on the debate surrounding the budget deficit, as well as an update on several issues affecting the region. Speaker of the House Bryce Edgmon, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Gary Stevens and Rep. Louise Stutes tackled a variety of issues from funding the ferry to education and the budget gap. Rep. Edgmon kicked the discussion off with the thorniest of issues, how to resolve the fiscal challenges facing the state for the past few years.



House Speaker Bryce Edgmon discussed the challenges of how to resolve the fiscal challenges facing the state.

“The questions before the legislature are paradox-shifting questions,” Rep. Edgmon said, “such as how much are we to take from the earnings of the permanent fund to pay for essential services? I can tell you, the size of the dividend is hugely controversial. Some want to constitutionalize the dividend. Others want a full dividend. Others think smaller dividends are the way to go to keep programs sustainable well into the future.”

Rep. Edgmon said the permanent fund trustees have projected that over a 10-year period, with inflation-proofing and the volatility of the stock market, there will be times that the reserve may be down to zero.

“That’s a really frightening thought,” he said.

Sen. Lyman Hoffman said there are strong opinions in both the House and the Senate on how to resolve this issue.

“The deficit is approximately \$2.7 billion dollars,” he said. “I agree that we need to come up with additional revenues. But the House has put a provision that we have to have some broad-based tax. Not to criticize the house, but sometimes the perfect gets in the way of the possible. In politics, there is a fine line.”

Sen. Hoffman said he’s concerned that lawmakers will come to loggerheads and nothing will get resolved this year.



Sen. Lyman Hoffman said he’s concerned that the legislature won’t be able to agree on a budget fix and nothing will get resolved.



Sen. Gary Stevens said he is most concerned about education.

“This is a worse-case scenario for a legislature and for everyone concerned,” he said. “We need to put our heads to the grindstone and look at each issue on its merits. Maybe the solution is to talk about putting things on the floor of the House and the Senate and see where the votes are.”

Edgmon said regardless of party affiliation, all four lawmakers have similar concerns when it comes to protecting the small communities in southwest Alaska.

“We’re fierce defenders of small communities, community assistance, power cost equalization, school funding and funding for the ferry system,” he said. “We work very hard to keep those intact.”

Sen. Gary Stevens said his biggest concern is education.

“We’re trying to solve the pink slip problem, and it’s an enormous issue,” he said. “When you don’t know what your budget is going to be, you have to let your teachers go.”

Sen. Stevens said there’s a bill in the house and another in the senate addressing funding for education.



Rep. Louise Stutes believes forward funding the Alaska Marine Highway System will help with scheduling and reliability.

“I hope we will find a way to early fund education, and I think we’re on the road to doing that,” he said.

Funding the ferry system is another key issue. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, Gov. Walker signed House Bill 321, the “fast track” supplemental appropriations bill, addressing urgent funding needs and shared priorities, including the ferry system. The bill will help tide over agencies such as the ferry system until the start of the state’s fiscal year on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Meanwhile, Rep. Louise Stutes is hopeful forward funding will be a possible solution in the near future for the Alaska Marine Highway System.

“It’s pretty clear that if you have reliable and scheduled service, you’re going to increase revenue,” she said. “People aren’t riding it to the degree they used to in the summertime because they don’t know if it’s going to be dependable. I think all the work that the Southeast Conference has done in relation to a public-private partnership model is incredible. They have some really valuable information, and I can see it may be moving in that direction.”

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## Officials with the Trump Administration Highlight

### Federal Issues for Southwest Alaska

Officials with the Trump Administration from the Interior Department and USDA Rural Development emphasized several accomplishments and programs at the SWAMC Conference that are critical for southwest Alaska communities.

Steve Wackowski, Senior Advisor for Alaskan Affairs with the U.S. Department of the Interior, said DOI has ten priorities.

“One of them is restoring trust with our tribal and state partners,” he said. “The King Cove road is part of that.”

Wackowski said many people have asked him whether U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke had a difficult decision to make when it came to the King Cove land exchange agreement.

“It wasn’t hard at all,” he said. “He said it was one of the easiest decisions he has ever made as Secretary.”

Critics of the King Cove road has argued that the single-lane gravel road would disrupt the feeding grounds of the Pacific Black Brant and other migrating birds in the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge.



Steve Wackowski, Senior Advisor for Alaskan Affairs with the U.S. Department of the Interior, said one of DOI’s top priorities includes restoring trust with tribal and state partners.

“But how are you going to exchange that for the lives of a thousand Alaska Native people who need access to an airport (in Cold Bay), especially during medevacs?” Wackowski asked.

Wackowski said Secretary Zinke, a former Navy seal who trained in the Aleutians during the 1980s, is looking forward to returning to the area when the single-lane gravel road corridor is constructed.

“I know he wants to get back out there when we break dirt,” he said. “We’re going to get sued along the way, but my boss said bring it on. This is the right thing to do.”

Wackowski said other DOI priorities include allowing for better managed hunting on federal lands.

“That means trying to devolve some local decision making to our subsistence representatives,” he said.

Wackowski said in the past, government to government consultations with tribes has been more about lip service.

“That isn’t lost on us. The Secretary is going to ensure that sovereignty means something,” Wackowski said. “We’re looking at models such as the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, the Marine Mammal Commission, the Migratory Seabird Treaty and the Seal Otter Commission. We’re looking at ways where we can actually devolve some of our decision making down to local tribal members and municipalities so you guys will have a voice.”

Becoming energy-independent is another high priority.

“That puts America on the stage and on equal footing from a geopolitical and military perspective,” Wackowski said.

Jerry Ward, the State Director with USDA Rural Development said President Trump believes the resources in Alaska are one of the keys to making America energy-independent.



Jerry Ward (left), State Director with USDA Rural Development, said one of the Administration’s priorities is to bring prosperity to rural Alaska.

“When I first met with the President, his knowledge of Alaska kind of surprised me,” said Ward. “The first words out of his mouth were resource development. He’s counting on Alaska, while working with our governor and the Congressional Delegation, to produce that.”

Ward says part of the Administration’s direction is to bring prosperity to rural Alaska. He said vocational training will be a part of any vital enterprise that develops the resources in Alaska.

“This Administration has said we will train Alaskans,” Ward said. “It’s going to be actual companies that have the jobs, so people will be trained for those particular jobs.”

Ward said part of what USDA Rural Development does is offer loans for a variety of things to help improve the quality of living in rural Alaska, including homes, community centers, sewer, water, hydro, dams, bridges and roads.

“USDA is here to help communities and start putting in place some of the things that help Alaska,” he said. “You actually have a pretty direct line to this Administration. We have the right president and the right Congressional Delegation. As Alaskans, we need to use this while we can. Bring the projects forward, and we will try to help.”

## Managing a \$4.2 Billion Dollar Fishing Industry in Times of Change

As most people know, fisheries are constantly in a state of flux. During a SWAMC panel titled, “Managing a \$4.2 Billion Fishing Industry in Times of Change,” Glenn Merrill, NOAA Assistant Regional Administrator, focused on two examples of where the agency is seeing the greatest amount of change. He also provided some perspective on how the system can adapt.

Merrill said the dramatic drop in Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Pacific cod stocks is an unfortunate case of change. Last fall, a NOAA survey reported a 71 percent decline in Pacific cod abundance in the Gulf since 2015. As a result, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council reduced the GOA cod quota for 2018 by 80 percent compared to the previous year. Research suggests the decline in cod was caused by a mass of warm water in the Pacific known as “the blob.” Merrill said the high temperatures have extended all the way down the entire water column. Therefore, a high number of cod were unable to find cooler waters to use as a refuge, causing increased mortality.



NOAA Assistant Regional Administrator Glenn Merrill said warm temperatures in the Gulf of Alaska, which caused a drastic decline in Pacific cod stocks, is a pattern that's expected to continue for several years.

“These are some of the highest water temperatures that we’ve ever observed in the Gulf of Alaska. We’re expecting that this pattern is going to continue for several years,” said Merrill. “We don’t have that recruitment of the new fish coming into the fishery to offset the losses we’re seeing.”

The other example Merrill focused on is Pacific halibut. Just a few days before the March 24th start of the halibut opener, U.S. federal fisheries managers revealed that commercial catches for Alaska dropped by 10 percent from last year for a total of 17.5 million pounds. In Area 3B/Western Gulf, the commercial halibut catch is 2.62 million pounds.

“We’re in a period in which we’re having overall commercial catch limits that are particularly low compared to the long time average,” Merrill said. “That obviously provides fewer opportunities

for many of the smaller coastal communities throughout Alaska. It's something that we're very concerned about."

Merrill said a bright spot in all of this is that NOAA is trying to minimize one of the sources of mortality of the Pacific Halibut fishery while also balancing Alaska's needs for the resource.

"We're trying to address the bycatch in our groundfish fisheries off Alaska," said Merrill. "In the past year, there have been some dramatic reductions. The 2017 halibut bycatch was the lowest on record."

Merrill said there was a 33 percent reduction in bycatch over the last three years and a 47 percent reduction over the last decade. Another SWAMC panel discussed some of the industry efforts undertaken to reduce halibut bycatch in groundfish fisheries. Merrill said NOAA will continue to



ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten talked about a variety of issues coming up at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and at the Board of Fish. He also discussed the Pacific cod fishery disaster in the Gulf of Alaska.

work with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and the State of Alaska to further reduce the challenges that exist in our fisheries and adapt to the changes as much as possible.

ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten, the second panel member, discussed a variety of changes, how they're affecting Alaska fishermen, and issues on the horizon to watch.

Cotten said at the last Council meeting, an issue was brought up about the halibut quota, who owns it, and who gets to use it. Cotten said the original intent of the

program was owner on board. When the program went into effect, 15 percent of the quota was given to hired masters.

"So you own the quota, but you didn't have to go out fishing yourself because that had been your business practice," he explained. "Today, it's about 40 percent, and that was not the original intent. We've been able to stop that growth, but there's a suggestion now that maybe we should consider accelerating that turnover to people that would actually be on the boat. So immediately, that would affect a lot of people."

Cotten also discussed Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska.

“The state fish board may decide again to make some adjustments on how many fish go into state waters as opposed to federal waters,” he said. “They have the authority to do that.”

The mothership issue was also discussed at Council meetings recently.

“That’s where you can, as a catcher vessel, deliver to a mother ship instead of a shore plant,” Cotten said, “which has implications that affect Alaska’s interests as well.”

The commissioner said currently, there’s an open-access, non-rationalized cod fishery in the Bering Sea that’s available to trawlers.

“That was brought to a lot of people’s attention because of the fact that mother ships were taking deliveries out there, so there’s an interest in addressing that.”

Cotten said there’s a lot of anguish when it comes to Chinook salmon, especially in southeast Alaska.

“We’re dealing with a Pacific salmon treaty, and we’re supposed to re-sign that 10-year agreement this year,” he said. “We’re having difficulties with the Canadians. They may be saying they’re having difficulties with the Americans.”

Cotten said it isn’t an easy task to get an agreement there, and it’s not just with the treaties.

“Some of the wild stocks in southwest Alaska are at their lowest levels ever,” he said, “and this year, it looks even worse.”

In addition, Cotten said the northern district of Cook Inlet doesn’t look very good this year.

“Around the state, we’re seeing a lot of continued Chinook issues, and that’s bad timing for the trawl interests that have asked the Council to increase their bycatch allowance for Chinook salmon.”

During the SWAMC conference, Cotten discussed the Governor’s decision to declare the 2018 Pacific cod fishery in the Gulf of Alaska a disaster.

“Typically, you would wait until a disaster happens, but for the cod fishery, we know it’s happening,” he said. “I’m sure you’re all aware that Congress has allocated some money. The word we got from NMFS is we shouldn’t expect any checks before July. I thought it would be light speed if we did get anything by July.”

Cotten said overall, he’s pleased that the relationship the State of Alaska, the Alaska Delegation and the Council have with NMFS is improving in recent years.

“Alaska’s interests are getting a good reception,” he said. “We’re being heard more often. “We’re able to make our case better, and we have people that are actually listening to us. One of the reason for that is we have a strong delegation on the Council from Alaska. I think we’re finding we’re more a partner with NMFS, and we’re working well together.”

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## Fish Take Flight – The Growing Importance of Air Cargo in Marketing Seafood

Four panel members at SWAMC discussed the significance of air cargo’s expansion in marketing Alaska’s seafood. As many people are aware, Alaska’s seafood industry is a robust economic engine for the state and the nation. Alaska is also a major player in markets throughout the world.



Dr. Darren Prokop said about 95% of all U.S. salmon landings take place in Alaska.

“In 2016, there were 5.7 billion pounds in seafood landings valued at about \$1.7 billion,” said Dr. Darren Prokop, Professor of Logistics at the University of Alaska Anchorage. “About 95% of all U.S. salmon landings take place in Alaska.”

Prokop said on a global marketing scale, 52% of Alaska’s exports by value are seafood. About 65% of Alaska’s exports go to China in the form of seafood. Prokop said implementing high quality processing and quality packaging makes a big difference in terms of

adding value to Alaska’s seafood.

“Generating the willingness to pay an Alaska premium for live seafood and/or freshly processed seafood is what’s necessary to increase that value to weight ratio,” Prokop added.

One of the key players in transporting Alaska seafood is Alaska Airlines. According to Shannon Stevens, Regional Cargo Sales Manager with Alaska Airlines, more than 21 million pounds of fresh Alaska seafood are transported each year from fishing towns throughout the state to markets

and restaurants across the country and the world via the airline's global partners. Alaska Air Cargo operates the most extensive air cargo operations on the U.S. West Coast of any passenger airline.

“We continue to educate our staff that fish is food, and it can be on our table tonight,” she said. “We need to make sure this is always at the top of our radar. We need to keep it moving because it's time-sensitive.”

Stevens said about 12 years ago, the airline took shipping seafood to a whole new level.

“We put together a special commodity rate for seafood at a priority level,” she said. “So when the seafood came in the door,

and we were booking it at that time, we could see this was a priority. From there, we created a call center for folks to call and book their product.”

That included tracking and tracing the product. She said that provided improved visibility for the customer and the end user of where the product was going and when it would arrive. “With our technology, folks can now go online and have more accessibility,” Stevens said. “They can also track and see the progress of their shipment.”

Last year, Alaska Airlines replaced its fleet of Combis with three 737-700 freighters.

“We have a much larger payload and increased capacity,” she said.

In July, Virgin American, acquired by Alaska Airlines earlier this year, will start moving cargo.

“So now we'll have more cargo ability. We'll be able to take your fish from King Salmon all the way to the East Coast with improved regular service,” Stevens said.

One fish processing company that transports a large amount of seafood is Golden Alaska Seafoods based in Adak. The company transports seafood throughout the United States, to Brazil, Portugal and to China. Manager Garrett Parker, one of the panel members, said his company uses a barge



Shannon Stevens of Alaska Airlines said more than 21 million pounds of fresh Alaska seafood are transported each year from fishing towns throughout the state to markets and restaurants across the country and the world via the airline's global partners.

once every other month for seafood. In addition, Golden Alaska charters planes and uses Alaska Airlines during its twice weekly flights to Adak to transport live crab to China. He said currently, planes must go through Anchorage, clear customs, then fly back over Adak directly to China.



From left to right: Shannon Stevens of Alaska Airlines, Garrett Parker of Golden Alaska Seafoods, and Troy Larue of Statewide Aviation, DOT/PF.

“When you’re dealing with live crab, you don’t want to have it out of the water for that long,” he said. “We need to keep those relationships going with Asia. To do that, we need to cut down on the time. So we’re working on becoming a port of entry, which is a very important issue to us.”

The State of Alaska has the largest aviation system in North America, according to Troy Larue, Division Operations Manager for Statewide Aviation, DOT/PF. Of the 700-plus airports registered in the state, 242 are owned and operated by the State of Alaska.

Larue, another panel member at the SWAMC Conference, said the aviation industry is a key player in supporting Alaska’s economy, to the tune of \$3.5 billion.

“If you look at what the system contributes to the economy, it’s huge,” Larue added.

Larue said many people approach statewide aviation to request a longer runway when they are planning to harness additional resources in their community.

“Unfortunately, the FAA does not operate on ‘if you build it, they will come,’” Larue said. “In order to justify purpose and need, the FAA evaluates the highest performing aircraft going into that community with over 500 operations.”

One scheduled flight per day (a landing and a takeoff) is two operations a day. The state’s standard runway length for most small communities is 3,300 feet.

“You’re not going to get a lot of seafood out of a 3,300-foot runway,” he said.

Larue said with the state’s financial situation right now, it’s very difficult to find the general fund dollars to put towards making a community’s runway longer. In addition, the FAA will not fund a runway extension for economic development purposes. However, a runway extension can be built with other funding sources, and thinking outside of the box can yield the necessary results.

“There have been some creative ways that we have been able to help fund runway length extensions,” he said. “The community of Platinum wanted to build a seafood plant. So they started

working with the State of Alaska to form a public-private partnership. They were able to secure funds through a general obligation (GO) bond to extend their runway and make that plan viable.”

The GO-bond for Platinum was a small portion of the large Transportation General Obligation Package, which was voted on in a statewide general election. That vote obligated the state and its citizens to make the bond payments.

In Adak, the state had to close the community’s crosswind runway because the pavement was decayed. Alaska Airlines uses the other one, runway 5-23, as its primary runway.

“So we’ve been able to keep that runway operational,” he said. “I believe that with more seafood coming in and out of Adak, we’re going to reach those 500 operational counts for the large aircraft. That will help us to federally fund this airport in the future.”

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### **SWAMC Votes to Pass Resolution in Support of Changing the Transferability of Limited Entry Salmon Permits**

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, SWAMC members voted to pass Resolution FY18-09 in support of changing the transferability of limited entry salmon permits. The resolution urges the legislature to pass legislation redefining the transferability of limited entry salmon permits by allowing two additional names to be listed on permits in rural communities.

The goal of the resolution is to help curb the out-migration of permits, which has escalated mainly



**Aleutians East Borough Mayor Alvin Osterback shares background information about a resolution he authored on changing the transferability of limited entry salmon permits.**

due to the graying of the fleet. The resolution seeks to mentor young fishermen in the community and help transition them into the fisheries. In addition, the resolution would allow a surviving spouse of a permit holder to maintain that permit in her name and provide a young fisherman the opportunity to sell salmon with no other ownership.

The original SWAMC resolution, authored by Aleutians East Borough Mayor Alvin Osterback, proposed listing one additional name on the permit. However, during the membership meeting, an amendment was passed to allow two additional names on the permit.

On January 11, 2018, the Aleutians East Borough (AEB) passed Resolution 18-23, submitted by Mayor Osterback. In the AEB Resolution, only one additional name would be listed on the limited entry salmon permit. The Mayor also wrote a [white paper](#), explaining the background behind his proposal.

Mayor Osterback said following the SWAMC meeting, he heard concerns from some people who were confused about the SWAMC resolution, believing that this would be a way to get more boats into the fishery. However, the resolution would not allow the mentored fisherman to fish one permit and the permit owner to fish a different permit at the same time or during the same opening. Mayor Osterback said that is not the intent of the resolution, and added that this does not allow someone to lease the salmon permit out.

“While mentoring an individual in a salmon fishery, you can only fish that one permit,” Mayor Osterback explained. “There cannot be deliveries on more than one permit during a commercial fishery period.”

Mayor Osterback said he would like any legislation that may come out of his resolution to list only one additional name on the permit for mentorship purposes.

“I think this would do a lot for our young folks in our communities,” he said. “They would know they do have a future in the fisheries.”

During SWAMC’s Membership Meeting, members also voted on nine other resolutions. Visit the link below for more information.

**Link to all 2018 SWAMC resolutions:**  
<https://swamc.org/issues-advocacy/resolutions/>

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## **AK’s Opioid Crisis: Cause, Enforcement, Treatment & Community Response**

Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental deaths in the United States, according to Dr. Andy Jones, Chief Medical Officer for the State of Alaska and one of four panel speakers addressing the SWAMC Conference. He said in 2016, more Americans died of drug overdoses than during the entire Vietnam War.

“That’s scary,” said Dr. Jones. “This problem isn’t a world problem. It’s really a North American problem,” he said.

Jones and three other panel members focused on the cause of Alaska’s opioid crisis as well as enforcement, treatment and community response.



**Dr. Andy Jones, Chief Medical Officer for the State of Alaska, said often opioid addictions begin with prescription pills.**

“This opioid epidemic is devastating America, American communities and families,” Jones said. “In Alaska, we like to say we’re unique, but when it comes to this epidemic, we’re no different than the rest of the country. So how did this happen? High availability of prescription medicines and a low sense of risk.”

Jones said the high availability began in the 1990s, and at the same time, illicit drug use declined. He explained it’s common for patients to think prescription opioids are safe because their doctors prescribed it.

“But opioids can be abused,” he said. “A lot of times, it starts with pills.”

“Let’s say you take a prescription over a few weeks, and you start to build a tolerance to it,” Jones explained. “Once you get off it, you get withdrawal symptoms. If you’ve ever seen someone go through withdrawal, it’s like the flu times 50. So they continue to take it to feel normal. Their version of normal is to continue use just so they can function.”

Jones said Alaska has struggled economically due to drug use.

“It has affected our criminal justice system, our health care system and social services,” he said.

Lt. Steven Adams with the Alaska State Troopers said Alaska not only has an opioid problem, it also has a methamphetamine problem. He said



**Lt. Steven Adams with the Alaska State Troopers said Alaska not only has an opioid crisis, it also has a methamphetamine problem.**

cocaine is also making a comeback. Fentanyl is also a big threat.

“And this adds a whole new level of danger to not only the drug users, but to anybody handling the drugs from law enforcement to postal carriers and anybody who comes across fentanyl,” he said.

Adams said because of the drug problem, Alaska has seen a substantial increase in property crimes and gun violence.

“These are people trying to support that habit,” he said.

As law enforcement tries to combat this problem, it becomes even more problematic with limited resources and shrinking budgets. To deal with the challenge, troopers are forming strong partnerships with federal, state and local organizations. That includes regional commitments, such as the Southeast Alaska Cities Against Drugs.

“They’re not dedicating people or money,” he said. “But they’re saying when you guys need a hand in doing a drug raid in your city, we’re going to send some people to help you.”

Adams said the opioid epidemic requires a three-prong whole-community approach.

“It’s going to require smart enforcement, education and prevention to reduce the demand, and it’s going to require a strong treatment and recovery to get people off drugs,” he said. “The truth is,



**Dr. David Lessens (left) and Dr. Shane Coleman from Southcentral Foundation discussed their multi-disciplinary approach for patients in treatment, which includes primary care doctors, behavioral health consultants, chronic pain consultants and physical therapy.**

we will never arrest our way out of this problem.”

Dr. Shane Coleman and Dr. David Lessens from Southcentral Foundation presented the primary care and behavioral health perspective. Dr. Coleman said providing a multi-disciplinary approach, which includes several services, has proven to be effective while treating patients. He said that can include primary care doctors, psychiatrists, behavioral health consultants, dieticians, chronic pain consultants and physical therapy.

“So it’s really broadening our approach, not just to a generic medical problem, but more on a whole-person, whole-life approach regarding what’s going on and what kind of changes can we help folks make,” he said.

Additionally, Dr. Coleman said as they looked at recent federal opioid prescribing guidelines, Southcentral Foundation worked internally to compare, contrast and fine-tune their own guidelines.

“I think that’s a really important piece of helping to prevent future cases of opioid addiction that can occur in the office when opioids are over-prescribed,” he said. “We can make sure, as a system, to shift towards lower quantities and shorter durations of prescriptions.”

Community is another key component in response to the drug epidemic. Carol Wren, another panel member, said in January 2017, Bristol Bay communities came together and formed the Bristol Bay Drug & Opioid Task Force. Wren is the group’s co-chair. The organization’s mission is to use a holistic approach, empower individuals, families and communities to live a drug-free, healthy lifestyle.

“There isn’t a single solution to this issue,” she said. “There are a lot of complex things impacting the epidemic itself.”

With that in mind, the task force formed committees ranging from law, to education, health and a budget committee that looks at resources to help put an end to this epidemic.

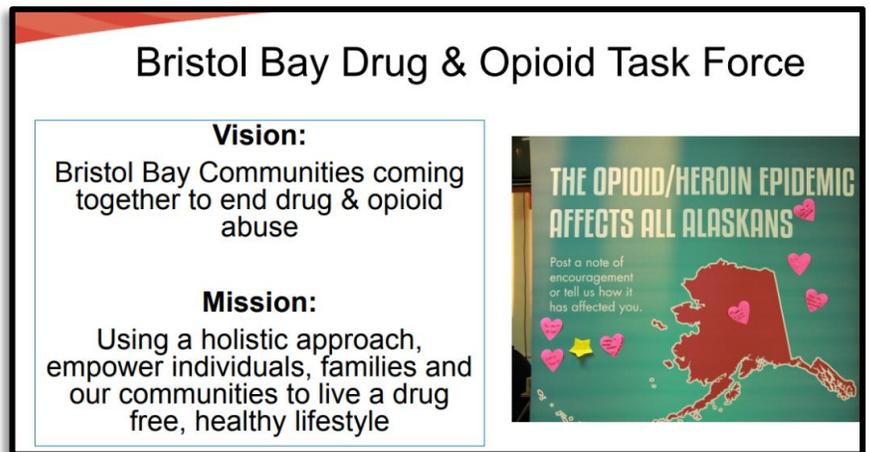
In addition, the task force invited members of the community, government and tribal entities, schools, health care organizations, law enforcement, treatment facilities and children’s services.

“We also invited those who are in recovery so they can give insight into the challenges they’re experiencing and what it took for them to move onto the path of recovery,” she said.

Providing education for youth and adults has been another essential feature with the goal of preventing them from ever having the desire to use drugs. The task force created a Facebook page that provides information on the issue.

“Community public health has started providing what they call the Hope curriculum, which is community overdose prevention education,” she said. “It’s education about understanding the risks of taking drugs, and why this epidemic, together with recovery, is so difficult.”

As part of this effort, Narcon kits have been distributed to communities, through Project Hope,



and they've saved lives. In addition, the Dillingham Police and public health officials have been conducting outreach to known drug users.

"They go to homes, ask to be invited in and let them know they care about them," she said. "They give them Narcon kits and tell them how to use them while encouraging them to seek treatment if and when they're ready."

Wren said getting treatment in rural Alaska isn't always easy.

"Getting access to treatment, the timing of their engagement and actually having treatment that's available is difficult, especially in rural Alaska," she said.

She said once they do get treatment, and then return home, the relapse rate is high.

"We're looking at how we can create a network that supports a drug-free lifestyle for our community members," she said.

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## **GCI Changes Course, Plans to Lay Fiber Optic Cable Along Southern Route for Aleutian & Southern Alaska Peninsula Communities**

For years, communities in the Aleutians and the southern Alaska Peninsula have been struggling with slow Internet, and at times, unreliable cell service. However, GCI is currently exploring a plan to lay fiber optic cable along a southern route, changing the dynamics of internet speed and the reliability of cell service.



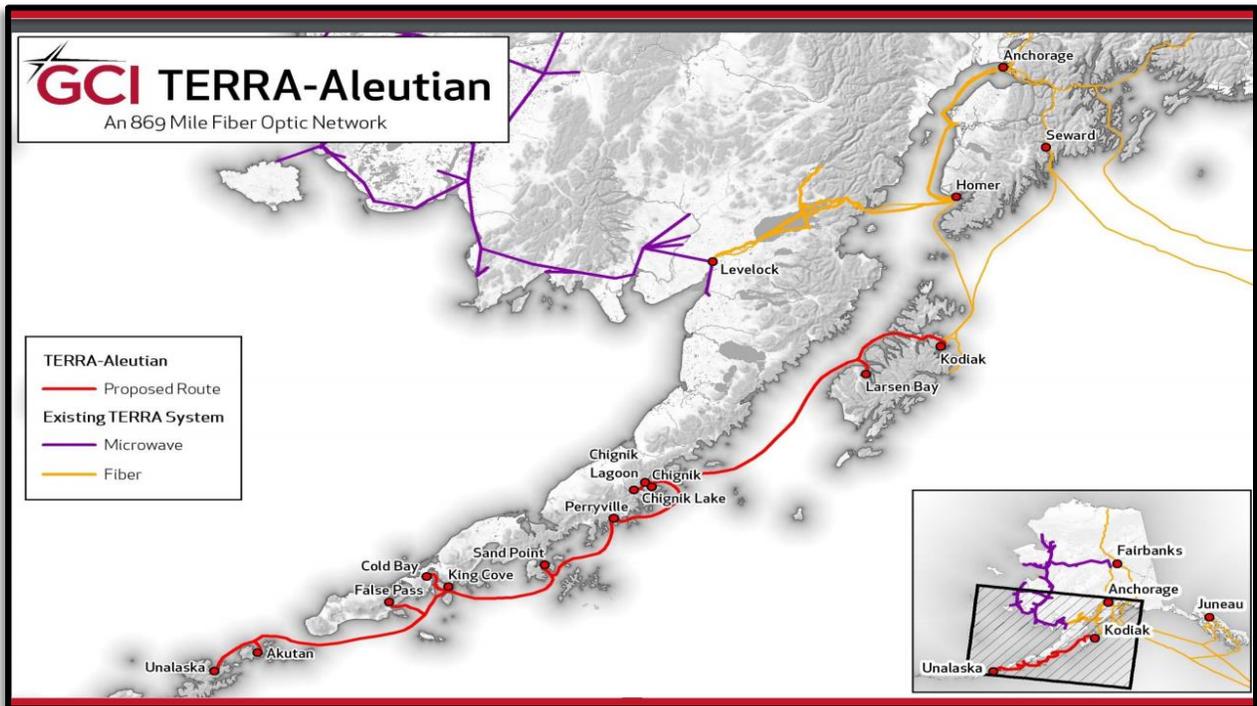
GCI Vice President Dan Boyette

In December, during the Aleutians East Borough's planning session, GCI Vice President Dan Boyette shared plans to follow a northern route, which included laying a 670-mile long stretch of undersea fiber optic cable from Levelock to Unalaska with stops along the way, which included most of the AEB communities. The company conducted studies, initiated a permitting process and completed an undersea survey. GCI spent about \$2.5 million to figure out what the best undersea

route would be for that northern route. However, since then, GCI has changed course.

“The one that we’ve decided to pursue now is what we’ve termed the south route,” Boyette said. “It has a lot of good options for us and picks up the most communities and more of the population in that part of Alaska than the north route would have. It also stays ice-free year-round.”

The south route, which GCI is calling TERRA-Aleutian South, is a festooned fiber which starts in Kodiak, heads south to Larsen Bay, then to Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, Perryville, Sand Point, King Cove, Cold Bay, False Pass, Akutan and terminates in Unalaska. GCI plans extensive onshore work in Unalaska, where GCI is planning a cable plant build throughout the community.



“The intention is to make sure we reach the customers directly,” said Boyette.

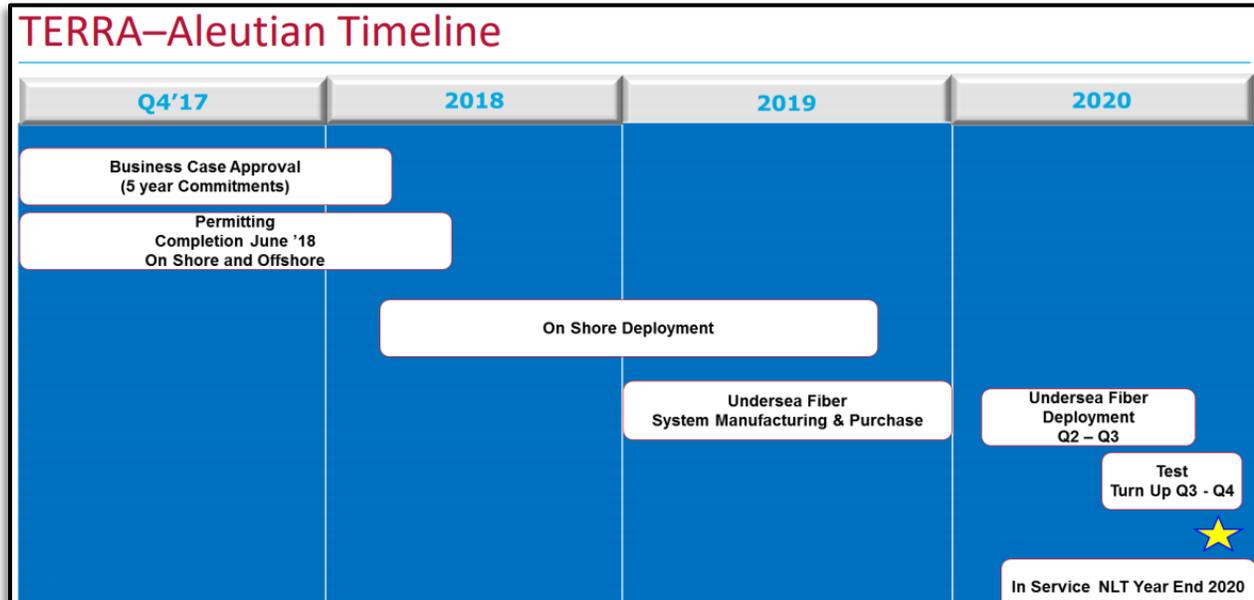
The goal now is for GCI to develop the business case and get it approved.

“It’s an expensive project, so we have a lot to do to make sure we get the business case approved,” Boyette said. “Our CEO, Ron Duncan, has set the bar pretty high, so we’re working hard to make sure we can move forward and get this job done.”

Part of getting the business case approved includes obtaining commitments from some of the businesses in Unalaska as well as from a couple of the other communities. Unalaska has a year-round population of 4,700. That figure nearly doubles during the fishing season. As a result, Unalaska is considered to be one of the main communities that could move this project forward. GCI is asking for a binding 5-year commitment that would expire at the end of 2020 if the

telecommunications company does not complete the project. Commitments that have been signed by businesses include Unisea, Westward Seafoods and Alyeska Seafoods. Verbal commitments received include Icicle Seafoods, Lynden Transport, Trident Seafoods, Kloosterboer/American Seafoods, Peter Pan Seafoods and American President Lines.

“We have a pretty good start on getting the fiber commitments,” said Boyette.



GCI is shooting to get the business case approved sometime between the first and second quarter of this year. The permitting process has been adjusted from the northern to the southern route.

“We’re going ahead and spending the money to start that permitting,” Boyette said.

Once that’s completed, the onshore deployment and development of the facilities needed in each community can begin.

“We would have landing stations in each community so we can terminate the fiber there,” Boyette said. “That engineering and development process will start later this year and will extend through 2019.”

In 2019, GCI would purchase the fiber, load it onto a ship and deploy it in 2020.

“That’s the current schedule as of today,” Boyette said. “As you’re all familiar with schedules, they can be pretty fluid.”

The slate of business product offerings for Unalaska include enterprise data offering, managed services, wholesale, telehealth and school access, bulk video and LTE cellular. Consumer product offerings for Unalaska include video services, internet – cable modem, LTE cellular and long distance. These services mirror what is being offered in western Alaska regional centers.

“In the other communities, it’s essentially the same thing except for video,” said Boyette. “We’re not planning to deliver video to the other communities, but all of the other services would be available.”

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## **SWAMC 30 Years Later - Incorporators of SWAMC in 1988**

SWAMC is celebrating a special anniversary this year – 30 years as a powerful regional organization representing southwest Alaska Boroughs and cities. In 1988, municipal leaders from southwest Alaska created a partnership to advocate for the needs of rural communities, which included responsible development of the region’s primary economic drivers – commercial seafood harvesting and processing. During SWAMC’s 2018 Economic Conference, the incorporators of the organization discussed significant issues and milestones over the years since its inception.

Lamar Cotten, former Lake and Peninsula Borough Manager, and the Aleutians East Borough’s first administrator, said the reasons SWAMC formed aren’t surprising.

“The area was in a state of change with the fishing industry, transportation and a lot of issues with local government – everything from municipal boundaries to fishing issues seemed to be the hot issues,” he said. “Probably our area was the one experiencing the most change. It was, in a lot of ways, unknown to many parts of the state.”

Many of these issues were being put in the spotlight far beyond the local level.

“The issues weren’t just regional, often they were state issues and sometimes national issues,” Cotten said. “In some cases, they were international issues, particularly with the City of Unalaska, and I’m sure, to some degree, with the Kodiak Island Borough. The weakest player in all of this were the individual communities.”

Cotten said a lot of people in the region were questioning whether they had the right strategy as changes occurred.

“All we were doing is occasionally showing up at city hall, but we weren’t speaking with a regional voice,” he said. “So one of the basic reasons that SWAMC was formed was to be a platform, not only to talk amongst ourselves, but to talk to leaders outside the region.”

Cotten said that also meant state legislators and the governor.

“As everybody knows, waterfronts cost a lot of money,” he said. “Airports cost a lot of money. We knew, as we developed SWAMC and the voice of SWAMC, that we had to be proactive and look for friends.”



“One of the basic reasons that SWAMC was formed was to be a platform, not only to talk amongst ourselves, but to talk to leaders outside the region,” said Lamar Cotten, former Lake and Peninsula Borough Manager and the Aleutians East Borough’s first administrator.

Cotten said in 1986, several people from southwest Alaska were in Kodiak. At the time, Governor Sheffield was running for reelection.

“Sheffield, very wisely, wanted to make sure he got in front of us,” Cotten said. “He didn’t end up winning, but it reminded all of us that it’s about more than getting your picture with the governor. We needed to start thinking about having these opportunities, formulating a clear message and getting him in front of us on a more frequent basis.”

Cotten said during a SWAMC meeting in King Salmon in 1990, three politicians made presentations, Alaska Senator Arliss Sturgulewski, then-gubernatorial candidate Tony Knowles, and former Alaska Rep. John Lindauer.

“We had this good platform and a strong presence,” said Cotten. “The take-away from that SWAMC meeting was we needed to interface directly as cities and Boroughs with these people. We made the pitch for airports, docks and things that support the industry and that generate income.”

Another panel speaker, Leon Braswell, the former mayor of Dillingham, said he’s very happy to see how far SWAMC has come and how well the organization has brought people together.

“So I think we should continue to pull together with our fisheries and other resources that we have so our people can benefit from them,” he said. “It’s going to take people like you and me to talk to one another, get people’s ideas and to keep working together. I think the key to working well together is having respect for your neighbors.”

Panel member Glenn Reed, a former Sand Point Administrator and before that, the Unalaska Assistant City Manager, said one of his first duties in Unalaska was to organize a SWAMC meeting in 1989.

“I remember back when the organization was put together, it was to increase the political clout of the region,” he said. “We put aside our differences for that period of time and worked on issues that we had in common. We brought together a broader base of political clout.”

Reed said during the past 30 years, SWAMC has done a good job of bringing issues to the state level and using its regional platform to get the attention of government leaders.

“You have their attention because you’re a broad base group with economic power,” he said. “You have the foresight and wisdom to come together on the issues that you agree on and push forward, and I think it has served you well.”

To view the PowerPoint presentations from SWAMC speakers, go to this [link](#).

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## EAT to Apply for Tobacco Prevention & Control Program Grant for Aleutian Communities



According to Alaska’s Division of Public Health, more Alaskans die every year from the direct effects of smoking tobacco than from suicide, motor vehicle crashes, chronic liver disease, homicide and HIV/AIDS combined. The good news is smoking prevalence has declined from 27.7% in 1996 to 19.2 % in 2015. However, according the Eastern Aleutian Tribes (EAT) CEO Jennifer Harrison, Aleutian villages have the second highest rate of tobacco use in the State of Alaska, exceeded only by the North Slope. That’s a statistic she’s

hoping to change for the better.

“Except for Whittier, EAT’s data shows that 40 percent of the adults we see in our clinics are using tobacco,” she said. “That’s a pretty high percentage for our region.”

With that in mind, Harrison plans to apply for a three-year grant from the state for Tobacco Prevention & Control for the communities EAT serves. Harrison said in the past, only one applicant in the entire southwest public health region could receive the state grant. For years, the recipient of that grant was the Bristol Bay Regional Health Corporation.

“They were responsible for visiting a couple of our communities, APIA and Bristol Bay villages,” she said. “They would go to two out of eight of our villages a year and basically visit the school and the clinic. They would also do prevention activities with the youth.”

Earlier this year, Harrison contacted Bristol Bay to find out how the grant could have more impact for communities served by EAT.

“We found out that they took away the restriction of only one grant per public health area, and that anybody can apply,” she said. “If more organizations apply, then there will be competition for the funding.”

Harrison said Bristol Bay is applying for its villages, APIA is applying for its villages, and EAT is applying for the communities it serves.

“There may be other applicants because the grant is no longer restricted to just health organizations,” she said.

The grant has stringent goals and objectives. To meet those goals, Harrison put together an [action plan](#) for the first year of the grant. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, EAT held a meeting in person and via teleconference to discuss EAT’s action plan. Representatives from EAT, the Aleutians East Borough and the City of Adak attended.

The plan’s first goal includes conducting an assessment to gather in-depth information by June 30, 2019 on which strategy would be most effective for youth in the eight communities. Those strategies include engaging stakeholders (EAT, school, tribal/city employees and community members); provide evidence of the problem; conduct media advocacy/public education; provide resources for environmental and systems change and provide assistance with evaluation/documenting benefits.



The second goal would be to protect the public from second-hand smoke. Strategies include creating smoke-free organizations/events. That would include supporting implementation of smoke-free campus policies with signs for each entrance, training at staff meetings, articles, EAT’s CEO monthly update and patient handouts.

“So I thought, really, I should be cleaning up my own backyard first,” Harrison said. “So my proposal is to work on getting the clinics and the lots that the clinics are on to be smoke-free campuses. It will come down to the landlords deciding that they’re willing to make that lot that our clinic is on, a smoke-free campus.”

The third goal would be to promote cessation of tobacco use among youth and adults. Strategies include promoting public awareness of the health benefits of tobacco cessation and resources for tobacco cessation, including Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW) and other local cessation resources. The other portion would be tobacco user identification, as well as providing treatment, education and support.

“So basically, it's working on improving what we're doing at the clinics (with education and referrals),” Harrison said. “Research shows that the most influential people in getting smokers to quit, besides your kids and spouse, are health providers.”

During the meeting a suggestion was made to consider adding cessation products into the grant's budget due to the long wait for products to arrive in the mail. Harrison said she would look into that. She reported later that she did add in funding for cessation products. She's hopeful the State will approve the request.

**For more information on EAT's action plan, visit the following link:**

<https://bit.ly/2DZ6KpX>

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## Eastern Aleutian Tribes Press Release February – March 2018



Ortega III, and Wolf Jackson - March 26, 2018.

### Service

- **Adak – Upcoming Services:** -
  - March 31<sup>st</sup> – April 7<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Danita Koehler (Medical Director)
  - April 25 – 28<sup>th</sup>: SCF Optometry, Dr. Palma
- **Akutan - Upcoming Services:** -
  - April 12 – 20<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)
- **Cold Bay - Upcoming Services:** -
  - April 7 – 11<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)
  - April 18- 20<sup>th</sup>: Dr. James (SCF Village Doc)

- June 5 – 6<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)
- **False Pass - Upcoming Services:**
  - May 14 – 18<sup>th</sup>: Jennifer Harrison, CEO
  - May 15<sup>th</sup>: Health Presentation by Dr. Gary Ferguson (in town May 14-16<sup>th</sup>)
  - June 6 – 13<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)
- **King Cove - Upcoming Services:**
  - February 15 – April 12<sup>th</sup>: George Kircher, BH Clinician
  - March 23 - 29<sup>th</sup>: Jennifer Harrison, CEO
  - March 26 – April 6<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)
  - March 27 – 30<sup>th</sup>: Faith Rukovishnikoff (SCF Health Benefits Specialist)
  - March 28<sup>th</sup> – Health Fair at City Gym
  - May 21 – June 8<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Koff (Dentist)
- **Nelson Lagoon - Upcoming Services:**
  - April 12 – 19<sup>th</sup>: Jennifer Harrison (CEO)
  - April 18<sup>th</sup>: EAT Board Meeting
  - May 29 – June 5<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Michael Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)
- **Sand Point - Upcoming Services:**
  - April 7 – 14<sup>th</sup>: Diana and Veronica (SCF Lab Technical Assistance)
  - April 9 – 20<sup>th</sup>: SCF Dental
  - April 16 – 20<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Steinbarger and Guy Knighton (SCF Optical)
  - April 23 – 27<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Hartman (SCF Village Doc)
  - May 1 – 17<sup>th</sup>: Susan Davis (ETT-EMT Bridge Class)
  - May 21<sup>st</sup> – June 5<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)
- **Whittier – Upcoming Services:**
  - April 23 – 27<sup>th</sup>: Dr. Costa and Gaby Costa (Dental Assistant)

## **People**

- Welcome:
  - **Kyle Cardwell**, BH&W Manager (Anchorage and traveling 50%) first day February 22<sup>nd</sup>
  - **Lydia Vincler**, CHA-T (Akutan) will be starting soon.
- Open Positions:
  - Behavioral Health Aide\* - Sand Point
  - Behavioral/Mental Health Clinician – King Cove
  - Community Health Aides\* – Adak, Nelson Lagoon, and Sand Point & recruiting for traveling CHAPs

- Community Health Aide Trainee\* (Itinerant) - King Cove (This position will be paid intermittently/hourly during trainings and required clinic hours, then as a daily itinerant after Level III. It will be based in King Cove and provide coverage for CHAPs in King Cove and must be willing to travel to other clinics when not needed in King Cove.)
- Community Health Aide (CHA)/ CHR\* – False Pass and recruiting for traveling CHAPs
- Community Wellness Advocate/BHA\* (full-time) – Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, or Nelson Lagoon with regular travel to the other three villages
- Dental Health Aide Trainee\* (Sand Point and traveling to all villages) – This entry level position will be trained to Level I in order to do basic dental cleanings and educational outreach.
- Elder Program Manager (RN or LCSW) – Anchorage
- Medical Administrator/Physician (part-time) – Anchorage (May be full-time by providing direct patients services in clinics or Medication Assisted Treatment)
- Nurse Practitioner (NP)/Physician Assistant (PA) – Akutan, Cold Bay, King Cove, and recruiting for traveling NP/PA
- Physician – King Cove
- Registered Nurse/Case Manager – Sand Point

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

- Caught Ya Caring for February: -

- **Susan Bailey** (RN Case Manager, King Cove) I would like to nominate Susan Bailey for her persistence and caring manner. For the past two weeks we have had much difficulty getting an airplane due to weather and soft runway. (Never ending story for King Cove) Susan checks the weather forecast daily to anticipate the need to rearrange travel. Susan has also been contacting on a daily basis, sometimes twice per day, the PPSF cannery, city harbor and any locals that have “the word,” to inquire and arrange for boat travel to Cold Bay for patients to make it to their connecting flight to ANC for appointments. In general, if a patient wants to travel by boat for medical appointments that patient will make their own arrangements. By Susan doing this, I imagine it takes much stress off the patient and in turn makes sure that they are getting the appropriate medical care in a timely manner. Thank You, Susan.



- Caught Ya Caring for March:

- **Esther “Lady” Hamilton** (Billing Specialist, Anchorage): Not sure if we do this still but I would like to nominate Marche and Esther in the billing office. They have gone above and beyond what is expected of them and have kept the billing office running smoothly. They have done this with no complaints and always have a good attitude. Thanks! (In picture on right)

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## **Congratulations King Cove Rookies & T-Jacks!**

### **Great Job at the State Championships!**



Photo courtesy: Small Schools Broadcasting & Promotions



Photo courtesy: Small Schools Broadcasting & Promotions

## **TelAlaska to Award \$1,000 Scholarship to Graduating High School Senior**

This spring TelAlaska will award one \$1,000 scholarship to a graduating high school senior residing in a community served by Interior Telephone Company. Applications must be received by Thursday, April 19. Eligible communities include Cold Bay, King Cove and Sand Point. More information and an application is available at [www.telalaska.com](http://www.telalaska.com).

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### *Isanotski Corporation*

P.O. Box 9

101 Isanotski Drive

False Pass, AK 99583  
907-548-2217 PHONE ~ 548-2317 FAX

The Isanotski Corporation is seeking an Office Assistant/Store Clerk.

The desired candidate will work full-time between the Isanotski Corporation Office and as a clerk at the Grocery Store.

Duties will require the candidate to be able to lift 50-100 pounds periodically. Office skills are needed but not required. Candidate should be extremely flexible with hours. Pay is DOE.

You may submit a resume or contact the Office for job application.

For more information please contact Melanie at 907-548-2217 or email [isanotskicorp@justemail.net](mailto:isanotskicorp@justemail.net)

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## Got News?

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



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