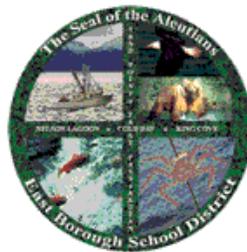
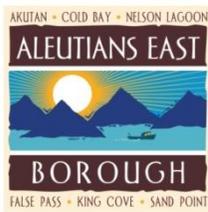


## In the Loop



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

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## Highlights from the 2017 Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

### **Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott: Demand a Finalized Fiscal Budget for Alaska**

Lt. Governor Byron Mallott addressed those attending SWAMC early last month (March 2 – 3, 2017), focusing mainly on the critical need to finalize the state budget and close the \$3-billion-dollar deficit.

He prefaced his remarks by praising legislators who represent southwest Alaska.

“Your three regions have a wonderful, strong knowledgeable legislative delegation,” Lt. Gov. Mallott said. “Those that represent you are in a good place, therefore, you’re in a good place. You



Lt. Governor Byron Mallott said because the legislature didn't reach a fiscal solution in 2015 and 2016, Alaska is going backwards while the rest of the world is advancing.

have the speaker of the house, key members of the leadership of the coalition in the house, and the opportunity and the need, in this session of the legislature, to finally finalize a fiscal plan. The table's set.”

Mallott said because legislators did not reach a fiscal solution during the 2015 and 2016 sessions, it essentially put Alaska on hold.

“Of course, you’re not really on hold,” he said. “You’re going backwards because the rest of the world is advancing. There was no meaningful action or discussion on anything that grew Alaska.”

Mallott said if the current legislative session fails to resolve our fiscal crisis, we will have had three full years of Alaska remaining at a standstill.

“We are at a point where Alaska is slipping rapidly into a growing recession,” the lieutenant governor said.

As of today, legislators have less than two weeks left in the 90-day session. They have yet to reach an agreement on several key bills designed to close the budget gap. Some of those bills include an oil tax measure, a restructured permanent fund, cuts to the operating budget and an income tax. However, at this point, lawmakers remain deadlocked.



“Those who say we can continue to cut the budget are whistling past the graveyard,” Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott said.

“We do not have fiscal certainty,” Mallott said. “We have not resolved our own future. Those who say we can continue to cut the budget are whistling past the graveyard. We have to have revenue to grow Alaska again.”

Mallott said there's still too much partisan politics getting in the way of finding a solution. He suggested to those attending SWAMC to go to Juneau and demand that a fiscal plan be adopted this year.

"Watch out for partisan maneuvering," he said, "or someone who says, oh, we're going to wait until the end of the session. We're going to make these deals. We're going to pull it all together at the end. Do it now! Do it now!"

The audience applauded, as the lieutenant governor continued. He said partisan political advantage has to stop.

"Forget the kinds of stuff that has brought America and Alaska to a standstill," he said. "Do what's right. Our children will look back on us at this time and will either say they did right or they did wrong. This partisan crap has got to stop, at least for now. It requires your voices to be there, to urgently, fervently, say get this job done."

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## Legislators Discuss Alaska's Budget Crisis



"We have to figure out a way to get through this," said Alaska Senator Gary Stevens. "There's such division between the house, the senate and the governor."

All three Alaska legislators who appeared on a panel at SWAMC agreed that reaching a consensus on dealing with the state's budget deficit has been very difficult so far.

"We're all in this stew together as we deal with this terrible situation right now," said Alaska Senator Gary Stevens (District P).

Stevens said while an agreement on several key bills has remained elusive, there is a consensus that the permanent fund must be a part of the solution, using some percentage of market value and some portion of the earnings reserve. He said lawmakers

are also discussing serious cuts to education.

“We have to figure out a way to get through this. There’s such division between the house the senate, and the governor,” Stevens said. “Hopefully we can come to some solution and conclusion soon. It must lead to a sense of compromise, a sense of collaboration. We have to get beyond these immediate issues that divide us and try to find something that can bring us together.”

Senator Lyman Hoffman said if the legislature is unable to come up with additional revenues or savings, lawmakers will have to cut the budget by three billion dollars. However, he said even if the state laid off every trooper, teacher and every state employee, the budget still wouldn’t be balanced. Hoffman said structural changes are being considered. He said one plan would reduce



“We are in a crisis with our budget today,” Alaska Rep. Hoffman said.

the revenue sharing program by 50 percent to save the state 30 million dollars. Restructuring the dividend would be another component of that plan. Senators have also examined ways to make cuts to the university system, DOT and education, all of which comprise 80 percent of the state budget.

“We are in a crisis with our budget today,” Hoffman said. “However, I would point out that four years ago, we were spending north of eight billion dollars on state government from general funds. Today, we’re spending 4.1 billion dollars.

So, we’ve made major reductions, but right now, we’re at this momentous stage in our history. We’re hopeful we can come up with a solution that can protect the people’s dividends at an amount that is in the historical average.”

Representative Louise Stutes (District 32) discussed HB 115, the bill the house has worked on to address the budget shortfall.

“It protects the permanent fund and allows it to go on into perpetuity,” she said. “The bill also has some pretty significant cuts, but it allows for forward funding of the schools for next year so we won’t be in this big crisis over the schools again.”

Rep. Stutes said the house is also working on a bill to address subsidies the state is currently paying to oil companies, to decrease them.

“They’re just not sustainable,” she said. “We’d be foolish to think it’s not going to send our state further down into a spiral. We have to do it, and we have to do it this year to move our state forward.”

Stutes said she doesn't believe everything will get done this year.

"It just isn't," she said. "That's what happened last year. We had all these issues on the table, and you couldn't address one because the other one was backing it up. We're taking them one at a time, and it's going to take some time."

Stutes said the house is not only looking at reformation of the permanent fund, we're also looking at an income tax now. I know the senate isn't happy, but that's the position that the house is taking. We must generate some revenue. It just has to be done to sustain our state. She said the house is also looking at another broad-based tax, a fuel tax.

"The motor fuel tax hasn't been raised since 1962," she said. "We still will have one of the lowest motor fuel taxes in the country, once it's been tripled. The anticipation is that it will go up 8 cents."

Stutes said lawmakers are also looking pretty heavily at our fishing industry to help move the state out of this fiscal crisis.



Rep. Louise Stutes said the house is working on a bill to address subsidies the state is currently paying to oil companies, to decrease them. "They're just not sustainable," she said.

"So we want to be cautious not to put them on their knees," she said. "After all, that's our number one sustainable, renewable resource in this state, as long as we take care of it. We have to make sure they remain sustainable, healthy and renewable."

Stutes told the audience she doesn't want anyone to come away feeling discouraged.

"We're on the cusp," she said. "We all see the same light at the end of the tunnel. We'll get there. That's our job. You're depending on us, and we know that. I'm excited to be a part of this."

## ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten Updates SWAMC on Fisheries

ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten focused on several issues within the Department of Fish & Game as well as within the fishing industry. Cotten said he and other department heads are often asked how they will be able to do their jobs amidst the state budget reductions.

“We’re just going to get along with maybe less money,” he said. “We’ll figure out other ways to do things.”



ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten says he and his department are pleased that the legislature is supportive to fisheries issues.

Cotten said this year, the governor’s budget had very few reductions within the Department of Fish & Game. He said so far, the House of Representatives has a much more positive view and a better appreciation for the importance of fisheries to coastal Alaska.

“So we’re pleased to have a legislature that’s willing to be more supportive to fisheries issues in general,” he said.

Cotten said last year, the legislature passed a bill to increase hunting and fishing license fees, which put more dedicated funds into sport fish and wildlife.

“So that freed up some general funds, perhaps for commercial fishing,” he said.

Cotten said ADF&G has also worked to form partnerships with organizations that contribute funds for projects within the department.

“That may allow us to do additional work on things like the Togiak herring, additional aerial surveys, and other survey work to improve our ability to do our job. There has also been a strong effort from the processing side to try to influence the legislature to take a more positive look at the funding requirements for the Department of Fish & Game. We certainly appreciate that.”

Cotten said over the years, many people have criticized the process within the Alaska Board of Fisheries or made suggestions on ways to make improvements.

“This year, there are a couple of bills in the legislature that Rep. Stutes has taken some risks to advance to get them on the table. One is to relax some of the conflict of interest rules that currently govern who can and cannot participate at fish board meetings.”

Another bill would expand the board from seven to nine members.

“That’s generally a little more controversial,” Cotten said. “A lot of people think it might be a good idea because some regions are left out just because there are only seven seats. Other people think a bigger committee doesn’t work very well. So, there are pros and cons there.”

Another bill would change the cycle from a 3-year to a 5-year cycle.

“Again, there’s a lot of pros and cons,” Cotten said. “From a manager’s point of view, it would improve ease of management. It might cost a little less money. But those are never as important as how it impacts the public, how it impacts fisheries, and how it impacts your ability to make changes when necessary.”

ADF&G also deals with numerous federal issues. One of them is the tanner crab fishery in the Bering Sea. Cotten said he has heard from many community representatives, reminding him of the myriad of tax and revenue implications to local governments because of not having that fishery this year.



ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten discussed several bills impacting fisheries, including one that would expand the Alaska Board of Fisheries from seven to nine members. “That’s generally a little more controversial,” he said.

“We certainly take it very seriously,” he said. “I understand that the harvesters and processors in the communities are very dependent upon fisheries like that, so we’re working closely with the federal government, their scientists, and the Board of Fisheries to bring that issue back up again next month and possibly have a special meeting in June to hopefully come to some resolution there.”

A few other federal issues ADF&G has dealt with include the so-called gulf rationalization or catch share programs in the Gulf of Alaska.

“At the last council meeting, members voted on my motion, 8 to 3, to postpone indefinitely action on that issue,” Cotten said. “All six Alaska members and the representatives from Washington and Oregon voted in favor of the motion. It’s a very important issue. Kodiak is perhaps the most affected, but certainly the entire Gulf could be affected. It just came to a point where we’re going to have to take a different approach at trying to resolve some of those issues.”

Cotten also discussed the implications of the new federal administration.



Cotten told SWAMC attendees that he and others at ADF&G have heard that a couple of Alaskans, including Mead Treadwell and Chris Oliver, might be in line for very important positions at the federal level.

“That means new people at the U.S. Department of the Interior, which is the National Parks Service, USFWS, BIA, BLM – many agencies, that one way or another, affect our job and our ability to manage fish, location, methods and means,” Cotten said. “The Department of Commerce is obviously a big deal for

fisheries, the National Marine Fisheries Service and NOAA.”

Cotten said he and others at ADF&G have heard rumors that a couple of Alaskans might be in line for very important positions.

“Mead Treadwell has been mentioned as a potential for heading up NOAA,” Cotten said. “Chris Oliver, the executive director at the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council has been mentioned as a potential candidate to head up the National Marine Fisheries Service. Most of us feel that would be a benefit to Alaska to have people with that kind of knowledge in an important position in Washington, D.C.”

## **Panel Members Share Perspectives on Threats and Opportunities to the Alaska Seafood Industry**

Several well-known community leaders and seafood industry representatives took part in a SWAMC panel discussion focusing on short and long-term threats and opportunities for the Alaska seafood industry.

Julie Bonney, owner and executive director of the Groundfish Data Bank, and longtime Kodiak resident, said she believes the biggest threat in the short term is the pollock market.

“We’re seeing some weird behaviors in the fishery because the vessels I’ve worked for can’t make a living based on the ex-vessel price of pollock, so they’re scrambling and trying to find other opportunities to balance the books and at least make a profit.”



**Julie Bonney, owner and executive director of the Groundfish Data Bank, said she believes one of the long-term threats to fisheries includes climate change.**

Bonney said it’s going to take two or three years for them to dig their way out of that.

“If you look at the State of Alaska, really what makes the world go ‘round is pollock, groundfish and salmon,” she said. “Pollock is the biggest value and highest volume. So, we need that to be hitting on all cylinders so there are profits.”

Bonney said the longer-term challenges include climate change.

“My fishermen are telling me about changes in the ecosystem,” she said.

“We’re seeing whale die-offs and bird die-offs. So, on a policy level, we’re going to have to determine management structures that give flexibility so that we’re not in all these weird boxes while it takes two to three years to make regulation changes.”

AEB Natural Resources Director Ernie Weiss agreed with her perspectives on climate change.

“Anybody who’s gone to the Alaska Marine Science Symposium in any of the last four years would know that there are incredible threats coming at us,” he said.

Shannon Carroll, a fisheries policy director for the Alaska Marine Conservation Council, said an important component of the changes to the ecosystem include ocean acidification.

“Funding that supports research is also important, as well as the ability of managers and communities to adapt to those changes,” he said.

Carroll said at the federal level, the NOAA budget is going to experience some dramatic cuts.

“I think that directly affects our ability to run a science-based management program. As an NGO (non-governmental organization), we can lobby to increase funding for the stock assessments and climate-change research. I think that’s critical,” Carroll said.

Unalaska Mayor Frank Kelty agreed with Bonney’s assessment of short and long-term challenges. He added that if ex-vessel prices are low, it has a trickle-down effect.

“If ex-vessel prices are low, the landing taxes are going to be low. State share taxes will be low. So, it affects not just municipal governments but your support sectors -- businesses. People might be doing less business because money’s tight, so you have these types of impacts.”



**AEB Natural Resources Director Ernie Weiss said he disagreed with Unalaska Mayor Frank Kelty regarding impacts to fisheries that aren’t rationalized. “There are some threats to rationalized programs,” Weiss said. “I certainly understand there are some advantages, but it would cause a loss of jobs.”**

In addition, Kelty said fisheries that aren’t rationalized have impacts.

“You have your bycatch impacts that could shut down fisheries,” he said. “So, you also have that issue.”

Weiss said he disagreed with Kelty regarding impacts to fisheries that aren’t rationalized.

“There are some threats to rationalized programs,” he said. “I certainly understand there are some advantages, but it would cause a loss of jobs.”

Nicole Kimball, vice president of the Pacific Seafood Processors Association, said she believes one of the short-term threats is also one of our biggest long-term threats -- our ability to have a fiscal policy that allows us to continue to get the biological information necessary to manage the fisheries. She said that includes meeting sustained and optimum yield, which means harvestable



**Nicole Kimball of the Pacific Seafood Processors Association said she believes one of our biggest threats to fisheries is our ability to have a fiscal policy that allows us to continue to get the biological information necessary to manage the fisheries.**

surplus for people in communities to take as much of the fisheries that they can in a sustainable way annually.

“I think sustainability is rooted in our ability to have that information,” Kimball said. “On the federal side, it’s important to continue to have our marine surveys, stock assessments, everything that we do on an annual basis that we take for granted right now because of federal funding.”

Kimball said as far as the state is concerned, it’s important that in-season management projects such as weirs and aerial surveys don’t decline.

“We don’t want to chip away at those sources,” she said. “All that does is decrease income for fishermen because of fewer fish coming across the docks, resulting in less municipal revenue sharing and less state revenue. So, I see that as a big one.”

Kelty added that support for the regional council process and the Department of Fish & Game is very important.

“We passed a resolution earlier, supporting no further cuts to ADF&G,” he said. “Also, every time we go back to Washington, D.C., we tell our delegation about the importance of annual surveys and the importance of the NMFS budget so it can be protected as much as possible because it’s critical. If we don’t have the surveys or the information on climate change, things like that, we’re going to be in a world of trouble.”

## Founder & Publisher of SeafoodNews.com Presents a Global Perspective on Fisheries

Founder and Publisher of SeafoodNews.com, John Sackton, provided a global perspective on Alaska fisheries, as well as the threats to seafood value and how to protect it. The first topic Sackton touched on is what makes seafood valuable. He presented a graph on Bering Sea opilio (snow crab) and the current price of well over \$8 per pound, which is a record price.

“This price comes from a supply shortage, and it’s artificial,” Sackton said. “It’s not what makes seafood valuable. What makes seafood valuable is the investments that people put in all along the supply chain in the fisheries management – the harvesting, the production, the marketing of seafood. Unless you can get the buy-in of that investment all along the supply chain, you lose value.”

Sackton said although the price of opilio set a record high, it’s somewhat misleading.

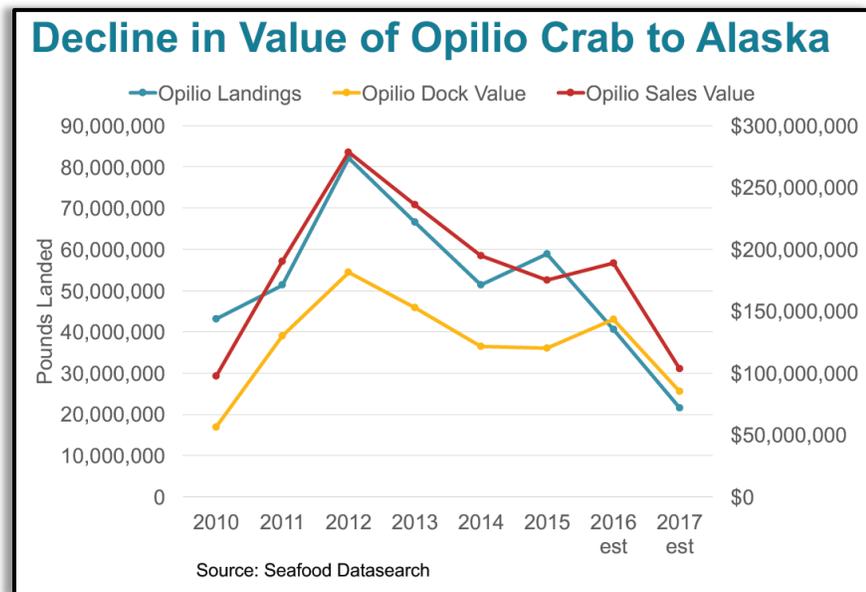
“If you look at the total value of the fishery this year (on the far right of the graph), it’s the lowest it’s been in over ten years. So, that high price is kind of a false signal because what’s actually the problem here is there wasn’t

enough opilio in the TAC (total allowable catch) this year,” Sackton explained. As a result, the overall value of the fishery is much lower.”

Sackton said the point is that at every level of the supply chain, partners invest money to promote seafood value.

“Unless we can embrace that collaborative understanding of value, we risk devaluing our fisheries and not getting the value out of Alaska fisheries that really should be there,” he said.

Sackton discussed how harvesters have vessel costs, permit costs and operational costs. Processors put in labor and capital equipment, raw material costs and marketing costs.



“All of that is very visible in all the communities where harvesters and processors operate,” Sackton said. “But the buyers, customers, retailers and food service companies also make very significant investments in seafood and in selling seafood. That’s the part that’s invisible to you if you’re looking at it from the perspective of what’s coming across the dock. However, it’s very important because if you lose their investments, you lose your market.”



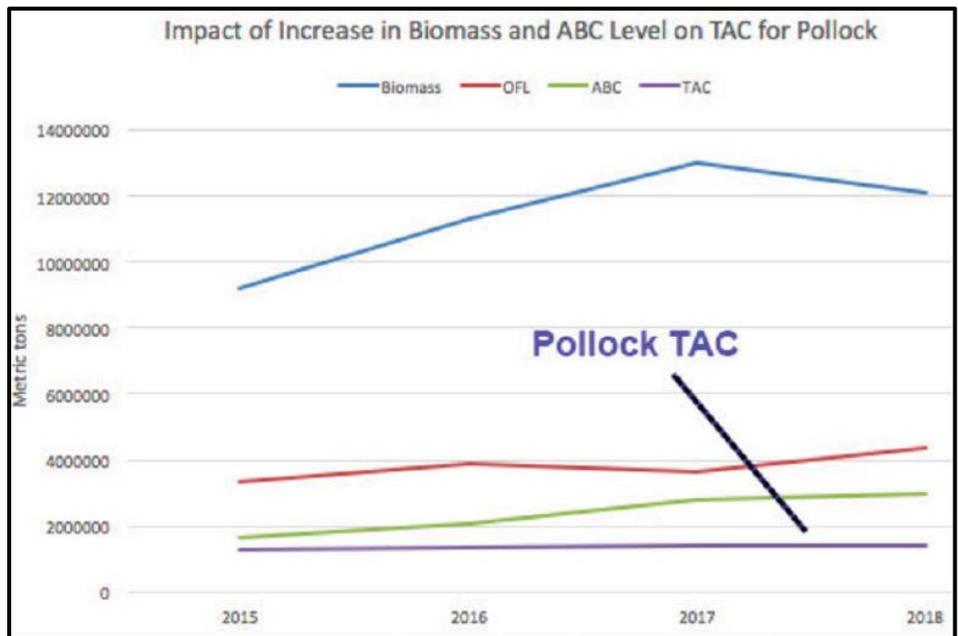
**John Sackton, publisher of SeafoodNews.com, said partners invest money to promote seafood value at every level of the supply chain.**

Sackton said there are many external factors that put all of these investments at risk, whether you’re a harvester, processor or another entity. There are fluctuations in the biomass and the stocks, as was the case with opilio. Currency changes are another factor.

“We have a period of a strong dollar,” he said. “That is devastating to an export-oriented fisheries like in Alaska because it makes everything more expensive.”

Sackton pointed out that when the dollar gets strong, European currency gets weak. Therefore, the price being paid by customers in Germany or in England, goes up considerably. However, the reason Alaska seafood has thrived and built a reputation is because of its stability.

“The two million-ton cap in the Bering Sea is something that came in the very beginning with the fisheries management system in the early 1980s, and it has been incredibly effective at maintaining the biomass,” he said. “If you look at the major fisheries basins around the world, whether it’s the North Atlantic, South Pacific, South Atlantic – every single primary ocean basin in the world has experienced major fisheries



**The Alaska seafood industry has thrived because of its stability. Source: Seafood Datasearch.**

collapses, with one exception. That one exception is the North Pacific in Alaska. So, there’s a tremendous value here, which proves that management can be done right.

Sackton said there has also been strong and consistent marketing here in Alaska.

“I have always been a fan of ASMI, which is practically industry-supported at this point,” he said. “It’s been a collective effort to promote an Alaska brand. That brand is worth real money, which has been demonstrated in survey after survey. Also, among the regional councils, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council has one of the best reputations in terms of professional management.”

Sackton said one of the challenges has been maintaining stability. He touched on the state budget cuts, which have hit ADF&G.

“We have to make choices about salmon management,” he said. “It costs money to provide the fishing opportunities that we all need. So, if you don’t have money for a counting station or a tower, you have a more precautionary approach.”

In addition to stability, is the critical importance of maintaining control of the supply. Sackton said buyers will only commit to those companies that they trust to follow through with supply.

“They will also invest in species that are reliably available,” he said. “The combination of volume and stability has put Alaska in a unique position.”

Sackton said the export markets remain the key to profitability of some fisheries. The export markets are the main pillar of value for pollock – single frozen block sales to the European Union, surimi sales to Japan, and H& G sales to China. For cod, it’s the H & G sales to Japan. For salmon, it’s the canned exports to the United Kingdom, frozen sockeye exports to the European Union and pink exports to China. For crab, it’s the sales to Japan and China.

Sackton said stability is an excellent economic goal as well as a resource. Alaska’s premium seafood brand has largely been built on three pillars: stability for the resource, quality and sustainability, and infrastructure to deliver fish.

“The current budget pressures that lead to less responsive management can erode all of these things,” Sackton explained. “The biggest danger is a reversion to short-term thinking to just get through the bad patch.”

Sackton said it’s important for all sectors to work together. He said the strong dollar, higher management standards and less restricted competitors will continue to challenge Alaska marketers.

“Keeping Alaska seafood as a premium brand and extracting a higher value depends on not undermining the processing, harvesting and management that brought us here.”

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## Rural Justice: New Approaches to Keeping Us Safe

Officials from Alaska’s Department of Public Safety and the Department of Law discussed state budget cuts and bills in the legislature that will change how law enforcement and justice is handled in rural Alaska.

Walt Monegan, the commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, said budget constraints caused the loss of 41 trooper positions in his department since 2015.

“That’s significant,” Monegan said. “That does curtail our ability to respond more readily when we’re requested to do that. But we will continue to respond to everything that we can with the resources and troopers that we have.”

Monegan also discussed Senate Bill 91, signed into law by the governor last summer.

“The concept of SB91 is absolutely right on,” said Monegan.

The bill’s objective was to reduce the prison population by 13 percent over the next decade, divert millions previously spent on housing inmates to strategies proven to keep people out of prison and reduce recidivism. The bill is projected to save the state \$380 million.



Walt Monegan, Commissioner of Alaska’s Department of Public Safety, discussed impacts of budget cuts to his department and how legislative bills will affect crime.

“It was very handy and expedient for police to lock individuals away as part of that tough on crime stuff, but it didn’t necessarily prove right for the individual locked up,” Monegan said. “We just made them better criminals. Instead of learning their lesson, they learned it the other way, so I’m on board with SB91.”

John Skidmore, director of the Criminal Division for the State of Alaska, Department of Law, said he has also been a supporter of SB91.

“I think that as time goes on, we’ll find out that SB91 turns out to be an overwhelming success. Many of the concepts that we have within the bill are good ones,” Skidmore said. “Are there going

to be rough spots as we implement? Yes. There likely will be. So, as we go forward, we may find there's a slightly better approach to it. We may find at times there are unintended consequences."

After SB 91 was signed into law, some of the changes were unpopular with the public as crimes, such as theft, increased. Senate Bill 54 would roll back some of SB 91's provisions. It would include increasing penalties for theft in the fourth degree, enact a presumptive term of 0 to 90 days for Class C felonies for first-time felony offenders and a recommendation that violation of conditions of release be returned to misdemeanor status, punishable by up to five days in jail.



**John Skidmore, director of the Criminal Division for the State of Alaska, Department of Law, said the legislature is looking at bringing back some balance between keeping the public safe and rehabilitation, as lawmakers consider Senate Bill 54.**

"Reformation or rehabilitation is one pillar of Alaska's constitution," said Skidmore. "How do we go about making defendants (convicted of crimes) better members of society? The other pillar is an expression of condemnation. How do we make sure the public remains safe? That's one of the core functions of any government. So, the legislature is looking at trying to bring that balance back."

The opioid crisis in Alaska was another important topic of discussion. In January of this year, a [state task force](#) issued a broad set of recommendations to prevent, treat and support recovery

from misuse and addiction to opioids. A month later, Governor Walker declared opioid abuse [a public health disaster](#) in Alaska.

"We have to do everything possible. The drugs come on the ferry, on small planes, in the mail, and on some commercial boats," said Monegan. "Do we have the staff to be able to intervene and inspect all of these? Absolutely not. How law enforcement truly works is you give us those tips. We can't do a lot unless we know specific information. It's people being involved. That's the best kind of police work you can have in any community. Reach out to troopers."

Often, residents question why law enforcement officials don't take drug dogs into airport facilities to detect drugs that are being brought into communities. Skidmore said the Department of Law is considering that issue. However, he said currently the fourth amendment prevents law enforcement from searching someone (with the aid of a drug dog) unless they obtain a search warrant from the court because of a reasonable suspicion or probable cause.

“In the case of drug dogs, they are considered search,” he said. “Are there some ways around that? The answer is we’re looking into that.”

Skidmore said the other issue is the article under Alaska’s state constitution, which deals with search and seizure.

“The Alaska state constitution, as interpreted by state courts, offers greater protections than the fourth amendment. That’s what’s giving us the problem. We are trying to fix that, but I can’t promise that we can. The best I can tell you is we’ll have to wait and see.”

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## Opioid Epidemic and Understanding the Disease

How has the opioid epidemic grown into a crisis and why is the disease so challenging to treat? Dr. Joshua Sonkiss, Chief Medical Officer of the Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, explained the issues behind both questions at the SWAMC conference.

“How did we get here? In large measure, it is an unintended consequence of a very well-meaning policy,” Dr. Sonkiss said. “Back in the 1990s, this idea that pain was the fifth vital sign became very popular. In response to that, state and federal laws and regulations were developed to try to push doctors into treating pain more aggressively.”



**Dr. Joshua Sonkiss, Chief Medical Officer of the Anchorage Community Mental Health Services, explained the reasons behind the opioid crisis and why the addiction is so challenging to treat.**

Sonkiss said at the same time, pharmaceutical companies came out with some new products, opioid medication formulations (pain killers), and they told doctors that they weren’t dangerous or addictive.

“So between those three factors, doctors started prescribing a lot more opioids,” said Sonkiss, “and a lot of people got addicted to them. When patients ran out of money to buy a prescription for opioids, they often turned to heroin.”

Between 1999 to 2013, there was a 172 percent increase in opioid overdose deaths.

“Since then, there’s been a continued meteoric rise in opioid overdose deaths,” he said.

Sonkiss said for addiction to occur, four things need to happen.

“You need tolerance, withdrawal, dependence and lastly, seeking drugs despite the harmful consequences,” Sonkiss said. “Tolerance means you need more and more of a painkiller or heroin in order to get the same effect that you did before.”

Opioids are depressants. Sonkiss said what they do is they essentially step on the brakes in the brain. To stay awake, alert and alive, the body has to step on the gas.

“So there is this push-pull between stepping on the brakes and the gas until both are kind of pushed to the floor,” he said. If you take away the opioids, it’s like suddenly taking your foot off the brake. Then your body is going to peel out and you’re going to go into full-blown withdrawal. If anyone’s ever witnessed someone going through it, it’s fairly dramatic. At this point, you can say you’re hooked.”

Sonkiss said someone who has a broken bone and is spending time in the hospital while getting the bone screwed back together is going to need opioids because of the pain.

“They’re going to need it for a fairly long period of time,” he said. “It’s quite likely that someone with this kind of an injury will end up becoming dependent on opioids.”

Sonkiss said this doesn’t mean that everybody who goes to the hospital with a bad injury will end up becoming an addict. He said patients can wean themselves off painkillers before or after returning home.

“But if you are taking the medication even after the pain is gone, and you steal it from family members, then you start knocking over gas stations just to pay for the habit, you’re moving into an addiction paradigm. That’s the fourth thing: taking drugs despite bad consequences.”

## What causes withdrawal?

- Opioids step on your brain’s brakes.
- Your brain pushes on the gas to stay alive.
- Suddenly you take your foot off the brakes...



Sonkiss Medical Consulting, LLC | [jsonkissmd@gmail.com](mailto:jsonkissmd@gmail.com)

**Dr. Sonkiss said when people go through full-blown withdrawal of opioids, it’s like driving a car and suddenly taking your foot off the brake. “Then your body is going to peel out,” he said.**

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, addiction is a complex but treatable disease.

- Drug abuse alters the brain's structure and function, resulting in changes that continue long after drug use has stopped.
- These changes can have a myriad of behavioral repercussions, including the failure to exercise control over the urge to use drugs, despite harmful consequences.
- Recovery from drug addiction is a long-term process and often necessitates numerous episodes of treatment.
- Detoxification alone is seldom enough to help addicted individuals to stay away from drugs.
- Medications are a big part of treatment for many patients, especially when combined with counseling and other behavioral therapies.
- Methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone (including a new long-acting formulation) are useful in assisting people addicted to heroin and other opioids to stabilize their lives.
- Patients should be encouraged to continue drug treatment following detoxification.

For more information, visit the [National Institute on Drug Abuse website](#).

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## **Candace Nielsen Elected to SWAMC Board**

Three new SWAMC board members were elected during the annual membership meeting: Cold Bay Mayor Candace Nielsen, Unalaska Mayor Frank Kelty and Bristol Bay Borough Assemblywoman Mary Swain.

Candace Nielsen said she was inspired to run for the board seat after receiving encouragement and support from many people in the region. She said she cares deeply about each of the communities within the Aleutians East Borough.

“I want all of our communities to succeed and thrive,” Nielsen said.

She said it was very disappointing to see two schools within the Borough (Cold Bay and Nelson Lagoon) close a few years ago.

“It’s devastating for communities when schools close. I just want to be sure that people in those towns have opportunities so their families can continue living in the villages,” she said. “We need to look at ways to grow the communities and get these schools opened back up.”

Nielsen said another big reason why she was motivated to campaign for the SWAMC board seat is she believes it’s very important for the younger generations to get involved in their communities. At the ripe age of 25, she thoroughly enjoys serving as mayor of Cold Bay.



*Cold Bay Mayor Candace Nielsen was elected to the SWAMC board last month. She’s hopeful more young people like herself will be inspired to take on leadership roles. Photo by Hope Broecker*

“I don’t see a lot of younger generations involved in the politics of our industry out here in the Aleutians, especially within the fishing industry,” she said. “Having our youth involved will allow us to have a more sustainable future because our youth are the future.”

Nielsen said the Aleutians East Borough has multiple generations of fishermen, and it’s important to have the youth understand how to keep that going.

“I want to pass that down to my daughter. I think it’s one of the greatest jobs you could ever have.”

Nielsen said she understands why it might be intimidating for young people to step into leadership roles if they’re unaware of what goes on behind the scenes.

“I grew up commercial salmon fishing,” she said. “So when I attended my first SWAMC conference, my eyes were really opened to all of the various aspects of the fisheries and what it takes to run our villages.”

She’s hopeful more young people will step up to the plate and take on leadership roles.

“I believe it would be great to spark their interest while they’re young because it *is* interesting,”

she said. “Some may say, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life, I’m really interested in keeping it going.”



March 30, 2017

**Public Notice – Intent to File an Application with the USDA, Rural Development.**

The City of King Cove has filed an application with the USDA Rural Development for financial assistance to develop The King Cove Solid Waste Processing Facility Project.

The project generally includes the construction of a Solid Waste Processing Facility to be located adjacent to the existing landfill, approximately 1.8 miles from the city center. The project components include an expansion of the existing city-owned and operated landfill to its north by approximately five acres; construction of a sorting and handling solid waste building; the purchase of two air curtain burners; and the use of solid waste handling equipment.

The proposed project would include excavation of about 39,200 cubic yards of overburden and clean alluvial gravel over approximately 4 acres. The excavated area would be graded and compacted to support a waste sorting and equipment storage building and two air curtain destructors. Excavated material will be segregated into topsoil and cover material for future landfill cell closure projects and landfill operations. The force account method of construction would be used for all excavation.

The landfill building will be a Pre-Engineered Metal Building that is 60-feet by 40-feet in size. The building will be located adjacent to the air curtain burners to provide a covered area for solid waste tipping, sorting and storage, and rubber tired equipment storage.

The air curtain burners that will be used are the Air Burners, Inc.'s S-220, skid-mounted, air curtain solid waste burner. Other solid waste handling equipment includes a garbage collection truck, dumpsters, and a skid steer. Holding tanks for sewage (400 gallons) and leachate (500 gallons) will also be purchased.

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## Eastern Aleutian Tribes Monthly Report March 2017



### Service

- **Adak - Upcoming Services:**

- March 26 – April 9<sup>th</sup> - Dr. Michael Costa and Gabby Costa, Dental Assistant
- March 26 – 30<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Lesniak, SCF Optometrist
- April 27 – 30<sup>th</sup> – Eric Einspruch, BH consultant, and Robin Gould, Special Projects/Grants Manager to complete BH community survey



- **Akutan - Upcoming Services:**

- April 7 – 14<sup>th</sup> - Dr. Michael Costa and Gabby Costa, Dental Assistant

- **Cold Bay - Upcoming Services:**

- March 25 - 27<sup>th</sup> – Jennifer Harrison, CEO
- March 29<sup>th</sup> – April 3<sup>rd</sup> - Ben Steward, DHAT, and Kathy Bear, Dental Assistant
- April 14-15<sup>th</sup> - Ben Steward, DHAT, and Kathy Bear, Dental Assistant
- April 26 – May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Tina Cloyd, HR Director
- April 30<sup>th</sup> – Board Committee Meeting (Board and Directors)
- April 30<sup>th</sup> – Community Potluck
- May 1<sup>st</sup> – Board Meeting



- **False Pass – Upcoming Services:**

- March 27 – April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Jennifer Harrison, CEO
- March 29<sup>th</sup> – Community Potluck
- April 3 – 14<sup>th</sup> - Ben Steward, DHAT, and Kathy Bear, Dental Assistant
- April 19 – 21<sup>st</sup> - Rita Kittoe, Public Health Nurse

- **King Cove - Upcoming Services:**

- March 18<sup>th</sup> – May 15<sup>th</sup> – David Modde, BH Clinician
- April 3 – 8<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Danita Koehler, Medical Director
- April 10 – May 15<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Michael Smith
- April 11 – 14<sup>th</sup> – Rita Kittoe, Public Health Nurse
- **Nelson Lagoon - Upcoming Services:**
  - April 15 – 22<sup>nd</sup> - Ben Steward, DHAT, and Kathy Bear, Dental Assistant
  - May 2 – 4<sup>th</sup> – Brant Mursch, Finance Director
- **Sand Point - Upcoming Services:**
  - March 6 – 24<sup>th</sup> - Dr. Costa and Gabby Costa, Dental Assistant
  - April 17 – 21<sup>st</sup> – Dr. Melodie Isgro, BH&W Director
  - April 17 – 29<sup>th</sup> – SCF Dental Team
  - April 24 – 29<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Daniel Hartman, SCF Village Doc
- **Whittier - Upcoming Services**
  - April 10 – 13<sup>th</sup> - Dr. Costa and Gabby Costa, Dental Assistant
  - April 10 – 12<sup>th</sup> – Jennifer Harrison, CEO
  - April 11<sup>th</sup> – Community Potluck



### **Service Highlights:**

- We implemented our Healthy Passport Program. The first winning passport will be randomly selected on Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you would like more information, please contact your local clinic.



### **People**

- New Hires:
  - **Troy Brandell** (Clinical Information Clerk (CIC), Sand Point) started on February 6<sup>th</sup>
  - **Sunner Stetson** (Behavioral Health Aide (BHA-T), Sand Point) started on February 13<sup>th</sup>
  - **Marche' Meisler** (Accounts Receivable Billing Specialist, Anchorage) started on February 13<sup>th</sup>
  - **Rebecca Dunton** (Clinical Information Clerk (CIC)/Janitor, Adak) started on February 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Open Positions:
  - Behavioral Health Clinician – King Cove
  - Community Health Aides\* – Nelson Lagoon, Sand Point, and recruiting for itinerants

- Community Health Aide (CHA)/ CHR\* – Akutan
- Dental Hygienist(s) – Traveling to all sites
- Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant – Adak, Akutan, King Cove, Sand Point, and Itinerants
- Physician – Recruiting for itinerants (King Cove and Sand Point)

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



- **Annual Award Winners for 2016:** (Sorry for the delay .... Here are the winners that received their annual awards in December 2016.)
- **Employee of the Year – Eddie Mack**, Travel Technician, Anchorage (in picture on left)
- We are Respectful – **Ross Bucher**, IT Technician, Anchorage
- We have Integrity – **Joseph McMillan**, CHAP, Sand Point
- We have Dignity – **Betty Calugan**, Administration Director, Anchorage
- We are Caring – **Bonita Babcock**, CHAP, King Cove
- We have Empowerment – **Dr. Danita Koehler**, Medical Director
- We have Innovation – **Susan Bailey**, RN Case Manager, King Cove

- **Caught Ya Caring Winner for February:**

- **Susan Davis** (EMS Instructor/Itinerant CHAP) - For being so dedicated to teaching EMS in the evenings, and helping expand the squad in King Cove. She never left the clinic before 9:30 pm every night of the week, and was here all weekend long also. She never complained about the long hours, and was always generous with her time. She stepped up to help provide health care to patients during the days, and did all of the float duties while she was here. She is a very worthy candidate for “Caught ya caring”, she proves that she cares every single day with her students, patients and other staff. Thank you Susan! (in picture on right)



- **Caught Ya Caring Winner for March:**

- **Makani Zaima** (CHA-T, Adak) She is a fairly new community health aid in training here. I found out she offers rides home to the elders who come to clinic following their appt. Many do not have transportation and have to walk. I think that is very caring of her. (in picture on the left)



# EASTERN ALEUTIAN TRIBES



**Behavioral Health and Wellness Department**

*Presents:*



## *Sand Point Community Prevention of Heroin/Opioid Overdose*

*When: Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 6:30pm*

*Where: Sand Point City Gym*

*What: Dr. Isgro and the Sand Point Behavioral Health staff will be distributing FREE Narcan (naloxone) kits used to prevent overdose, followed by a short*

*presentation and Fireside Chat about alcohol and  
substance use*

*Anyone and everyone welcome to attend - Learn how to  
save a life!*

**Dessert, coffee, and small door prizes compliments of EAT!**

OPIOID/HEROIN OVERDOSE  
AWARENESS EDUCATION AND  
NALOXONE KIT DISTRIBUTION

**FREE**

**Naloxone**

NALOXONE



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