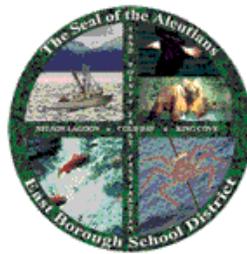
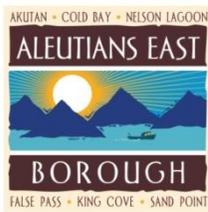


In the Loop



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

Sea Lion Attacks Fisherman at Dock in Sand Point

Michael “Mack” McNeil never saw it coming when a sea lion jumped on board a commercial fishing vessel, clamped onto his leg with its jaw and slammed him to the deck.

“It was the worst pain I’ve ever felt,” McNeil said.

The attack happened on Jan. 23, 2017 on board the F/V Cape St. Elias. The boat was tied up to the Peter Pan Seafoods dock in Sand Point. Owner/skipper Ben Ley said the attack was totally unprovoked.

“We were taking off a pollock net and putting on our cod net at the time,” he said. “There were zero fish on board. That’s what’s kind of eerie about this.”

The crew members were moving a net forward off of the reel and stacking it so they could put it away. McNeil was standing with his back to the stern ramp.

McNeil said before the attack occurred, none of the crew members saw the sea lion swimming around nearby.

“This was completely out of the blue,” he said. “I was running hydraulics, and I walked around to clear the backlash. The sea lion came up all the way out of the water, jumped up over the stern ramp and up onto the deck, several feet up.”

McNeil said the sea lion grabbed him before it even hit the deck of the boat. The other crew members grabbed McNeil before he got any closer to the stern ramp.

“He took a couple hops back toward the water, but then let go,” McNeil said. “It was extreme pain, right from the start. It bit all the way down to my bone.”

The other two crew members took him to the tool room and helped him remove his boots, oilskins, sweatpants and long underwear. At first, McNeil was unsure how bad the injury was.

“It hurt really bad,” he said. “I reached down and grabbed a handful of skin flap. At that point, I knew I was in trouble.”

The crew members called for help.

“It was called in as a medical injury,” said Sand Point Police Officer Eric Tupper. “I responded to the initial call. Once I arrived, I figured out very quickly that it was a sea lion bite. It was a pretty nasty wound.”

“It took a good chunk and ripped his calf muscles,” said skipper Ben Ley.

McNeil was transported to the clinic. Health care providers cleaned out the wound and stitched it up until he could get to Anchorage. Soon afterward, he was on board a plane and then transported to an Anchorage hospital. An orthopedic surgeon operated on his leg later that evening.

“The muscles in my calf were partially severed,” said McNeil, “so the surgeon reattached them. “Some of the stiches were to hold my muscle up where there was a hole. Another hole looked just like a shark bite.”

McNeil said although he was given pain medication, his body doesn’t seem to respond to it.

“I haven’t been pain-free at all,” he said. “Not once.”

He’s currently recovering at home in Deer Park, Washington, with the help of his wife. He’s unable to walk right now. McNeil said he has to keep his leg elevated at all times to prevent swelling. In another month, his leg will be placed in a boot. He said it’s expected to take at least 12 weeks for his calf muscles to heal. Then he will begin physical therapy.

Looking back on the attack, McNeil said he doesn't know how or why this happened.

"It's something I've done a hundred times before. The net was clean. There were no fish on board. This was an unprovoked attack, as far as I'm seeing it. It happened quick. I'm a big guy. I'm 6'3" tall. I was wearing bright orange oilskins. There's no way the sea lion could have mistaken me for a piece of fish."

McNeil and Ley are concerned that if an attack like this had happened to a child, the consequences could have been far worse.

"I've seen kids walking on the docks," said McNeil. "That sea lion could do the same thing to them."

"This isn't the first time something like this has happened, and it won't be the last," said Ley. "If a small kid got bit in the leg the way Mack did and was pulled into the water, he wouldn't be able to swim back to the surface."

Ley said in the past 12 years that he's come to Sand Point, he has noticed that some sea lions in the area have become more aggressive.

"It sure seems to me that they're worse than I can ever remember," he said.

NOAA's office of law enforcement in Kodiak is unclear why the sea lion attacked McNeil after reviewing the report from the Sand Point Police Department. Lieutenant Tim Gould, supervisory enforcement officer, said he also heard that the deck was totally clean without any fish on board.

"There was nothing that would instigate it," he said. "They (the crew members) were not doing anything other than maintenance on the boat."



Steller sea lion males average 2,500 pounds and females average 800 pounds. Photo courtesy: NOAA

Gould's office is in charge of the Gulf of Alaska, from Kodiak Island out to Dutch harbor, to the EEZ (exclusive economic zone), bordering Russia and Japan. He said his office has also received reports over the years from Dutch Harbor and Kodiak of fishermen getting bitten by sea lions

in the back side in or near harbors.

In March 2004, according to a Juneau Empire newspaper article, a sea lion leaped out of the water and grabbed 19-year old Ray Dushkin Jr. as he was working on his grandfather's docked boat, pulling him into the water at the King Cove harbor. They had just returned from cod fishing a day earlier. Dushkin was standing next to the fish hold just inside the railing, about two feet from the edge of the boat, when it happened.

"He went over like a rag doll," Dushkin's father, Ray Dushkin Sr. told the Anchorage Daily News.

A few moments later, the animal let him go, leaving him with an inch and a half scrape on his back side, but fortunately no bite mark. His coveralls and the pants worn underneath were torn. It's unclear what prompted the animal to grab Dushkin Jr. in the first place.

"Sea lions have been around for a long time, and they know the sound of the gear," said Tom Gelatt.

Gelatt leads the Alaska Ecosystem Program that conducts research on Steller sea lions and northern fur seals for NOAA.

"If there's food around – not saying they're being fed, but if there's fish or fish byproduct going into the water or nets with fish, sea lions can become less frightened of people over time," Gelatt said.

Gould said in the past, there have been cases where fishermen in his enforcement area have dumped fish parts near docks or in harbors. He said as a



Steller sea lions range along the North Pacific Rim from northern Japan to California. Photo courtesy: NOAA Fisheries – Alaska Fisheries Science Center.

result, some sea lions may view fishing boats as a food source. In other cases, there have been instances where tourists or residents have fed sea lions, resulting in hefty fines. Gould said NOAA has conducted positive outreach to the general public to let everyone know that feeding sea lions is illegal. He said over the years, NOAA has placed articles in newspapers and installed signs at fish cleaning stations as part of its education campaign.

According to NOAA, feeding changes the natural behaviors of sea lions, decreasing their willingness to find their own food, and increasing the chances they will steal fish from fishermen.

As a result, sea lions may lose their natural wariness of humans and associate people with food. This often results in dangerous and unpredictable behavior towards people. These behaviors may be passed to other sea lions.

“Sea lions can get aggressive when they don’t get fed,” Gould said.

That can cause problems for fishermen who are doing everything right. It’s still a complete mystery as to why the sea lion attacked McNeil last month in Sand Point. In any case, fishermen such as Ley and McNeil are wondering what people can do to protect themselves if a sea lion confronts them in an aggressive manner.

For example, in the case of bears, you are permitted by law to kill a bear in defense of your life or property under the following conditions: If the attack was not provoked or caused by negligently leaving human, pet food or garbage in a manner that attracts bears and if you have done everything else you can to protect your life and property.

However, in the case of Steller sea lions, it is an entirely different matter.

“There’s nothing we can do about it, honestly,” said Gould. “We can’t do anything that will harm Steller sea lions. They are federally protected animals under the Marine Mammal Act. Our hands are really tied in this situation. They’re aggressive animals, and they need to be left alone. We just try to educate the public.”

Sand Point Police Chief John Lucking to Retire

After more than three decades in law enforcement, Sand Point Police Chief John Lucking is retiring at the end of March. Lucking launched his career with the Unalaska Police Department in 1984 and rose through the ranks to become chief. He left in 2003 to serve as the chief of the Soldotna Police Department from 2003 to 2012. His next move was to Sand Point where he has enjoyed many successes within the department.

“I think we have really reestablished a police department that is integrated with the community,” said Lucking. “Since my arrival, it has been very important to make people in Sand Point feel like this is their police department, instead of having a police department on one side and the community on the other.”

Lucking said he also believes the department has made great strides in drug enforcement.

“That has been very satisfactory,” he said. “I think the fact that the community has remained safe without a significant, major event is a positive thing. My greatest hope is that when I leave, it’s a little better than when I got here, in the view of others.”

Internally, recruiting and retaining staff has been a challenge for the Sand Point Police Department.

“It can be very difficult trying to build a staff of people who care about the community and want to be here and be involved,” he said. “In this day and age, there isn’t a lot of appeal to becoming a law enforcement officer. Often times, we’re viewed as the bad guy. National and state press really builds up when an officer has done something wrong. Of course, that spreads across the whole career field of people who are in law enforcement. So that’s difficult. In addition, recruitment programs statewide have dwindled. It’s just very challenging to find people that want to do it.”



Sand Point Police Chief John Lucking is retiring next month.

Lucking said recruiting officers to rural areas, like Sand Point, can present additional obstacles.

“We’re competing with 15 other police departments across the state,” he said.

However, he said it can be just the right fit for those seeking out the Sand Point Police Department because of the community’s breathtaking scenery and the quality of life it offers.

“When it’s a match, it’s a match for sure,” he said. “There are a lot of attributes to being here and living in a small town where the whole community helps raise the kids. I’ve essentially grown up in the Aleutians between here and Unalaska/Dutch Harbor. There’s no place more beautiful or that offers more to somebody who’s looking for that kind of thing.”

Lucking’s last day is March 20th. At that point, Unalaska Police Sergeant Roger Bacon will take the reins as Sand Point’s police chief. Lucking said his decision to leave is based on necessity.

“I have a stepchild with an illness who needs some attention,” he said. “I’ve also been here for several years, without my wife, and it’s time for me to be with her.”

Lucking will spend his golden years in Deer Park, Washington, located just north of Spokane.

“I have a beautiful piece of property there,” he said. “It’s rural with a lot of wildlife. So I will be working on house and property projects. I’ll also be able to take a deep breath after working in law enforcement for almost 32 years.”

Even though he has a lot to look forward to, Sand Point will continue to have a special place in his heart.

“It’s with regret that I’m leaving,” he said. “Sand Point will always be home, and I will always come back.”

AEB School District Board President Tiffany Jackson Attends NSBA Symposium and Advocacy Institute

AEB School District Board President Tiffany Jackson recently attended the National School Boards Association Equity Symposium and Advocacy Symposium in Washington, D.C. as a representative of the Association of Alaska School Boards. During the second annual Equity Symposium, held on Jan. 28, 2017, school board members, public school advocates and community leaders discussed strategies and best practices to bring about positive changes for academically and economically disadvantaged students in traditional K-12 public settings.

“We talked about what we could do to help students be more successful and address issues of equity, whether it’s racial equity, economic equity or digital equity,” Jackson said. “These are all things we face in Alaska.”



Association of Alaska School Board representatives in Washington D.C. advocating for public education. (From left to right: Tiffany Jackson, Immediate past president/NSBA Director; Pete Hoepfner, AASB President; and Mike Swain, AASB President Elect.

The Advocacy Institute, which took place on Jan. 29 – 31, 2017, is an annual gathering of local school board members who are committed to advocate for their public schools on Capitol Hill and in their home states. One of the sessions included strategies for how local school board members can engage the new administration and influence policy developments impacting public education.

“We talked about the new administration in Washington, D.C. and what public education is going to look like, moving forward, under the Trump

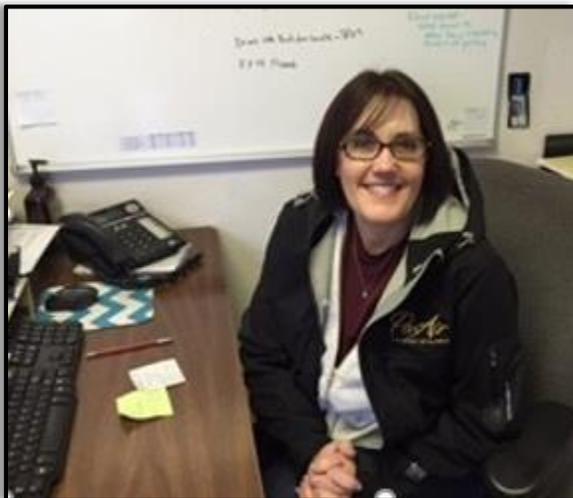
Administration,” said Jackson. “We also had the opportunity to meet with our congressional delegation while we were there. So the Alaska team got to meet with Senators Murkowski, Sullivan and Congressman Young.”

Jackson said it’s also important to develop a positive relationship with U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy Devos.

“We need to advocate for our students to help them be as successful as possible,” she said. “It’s about what’s best for our students.”

Paige Kremer Promoted to Consumer Affairs Manager for PenAir

Paige Kremer, formerly of Cold Bay, was recently promoted to Consumer Affairs Manager for PenAir, a newly created position. Kremer, who is now based in Anchorage, will act as a liaison between the company and customers in the lower 48 and Alaska. She moved to Anchorage today (Feb. 28th), and will start working at PenAir headquarters tomorrow, March 1st.



Paige Kremer was recently promoted to Consumer Affairs Manager for PenAir.

“I’m very excited,” said Kremer. “I think it’s a great move for the company, and it’s a position that’s much-needed because as we expand into the lower 48, we are acquiring more customers and want to provide excellent service to all of our new and existing communities.”

Kremer says she loves her new position, and is finding it to be very rewarding.

“I’m learning a lot about the new communities we are servicing,” she said. “My biggest challenge is not having enough hours in the day!”

Kremer was formerly the Customer Service Manager, based in Cold Bay, for eight years, dealing with external and internal customer service issues.

Kremer's mom, as well as her son, Wake, who currently attends Bellingham High School in Washington, will be joining her in Anchorage at the end of the current school year. Her husband, Harold "Hap" Kremer, the Cold Bay Airport Manager for DOT, is awaiting a transfer and will join her this summer.

"We are all very excited to be back together again," she said. "It's a big part of the reason for relocating."

Steven Rothy Promoted as PenAir's Customer Service Manager in Cold Bay

Steven Rothy, PenAir's former lead ramp agent, was recently promoted to Customer Service Manager in Cold Bay.



Steven Rothy was recently promoted to PenAir's Customer Service Manager in Cold Bay.

"I oversee all aspects of the operation with an emphasis on providing excellent care for our customers," Rothy said.

Rothy, his wife and two kids moved to Cold Bay in 2012. He started as a ramp agent with PenAir in 2013. About a year later, he was promoted to lead ramp agent. In that position, he oversaw the other ramp agents and made sure they followed all procedures and safety protocol. When he learned that Paige Kremer was being promoted to Consumer Affairs Manager, he decided to apply for her former position.

"Once I found out that I had the position, I was really excited about it," he said. "I love working for PenAir and have decided to make this my full-time career."

The City of False Pass is looking for interested parties to lease the Warehouse next to [City Dock](#) (Formerly Isanotski Grocery)

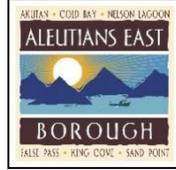
1,500 square feet warehouse, some parking is available, located across from the municipal dock in False Pass on Lot 2C, False Pass Plat # 99-13

The City of False Pass is looking to lease the property or property interest to be used for Economic Development in False Pass and to increase local trade or industry, as per False Pass Municipal Code Subsection 4.23.070(D);

The Warehouse has an insured value of \$200,000

Interested parties should contact the [False Pass City Office](#) @ 907-548-2319 with a written proposal outlining the Economic Development project in False Pass, a proposed amount of rent, and the proposed length of lease.

Interested Parties proposals will be accepted until April 1, 2016 and decisions will be handed to the recipient April 20, 2016



Position Available

Position Title: Borough Administrator

Classification: Regular, full-time, exempt position. This position is located in the Borough's Anchorage office.

Duties and Responsibilities: Manages the Aleutians East Borough, which includes six (6) rural, geographically isolated communities with a combined population of approximately 3,092 people, a permanent fund and capital improvement projects.

Minimum Qualifications : Prefer a bachelor's degree in municipal management, public administration or a related field and five (5) or more years of Alaska municipal management experience at the department level or higher.

Salary: Depends on qualifications and experience, plus benefits.

Closing Date: The closing date is Friday, March 24, 2017 at 12 p.m. or until filled.

The job application, availability and job description can be found by going to the following link: <http://bit.ly/2kXhyLx>

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