



Aleutians East Borough

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2025

Message from the Mayor

Hello, everyone. It has been another productive and eventful year for the Aleutians East Borough. The Cold Bay Clinic Renovation and King Cove School Water Piping Projects have been completed, and the Sand Point Harbor and Sand Point School Rehabilitation projects should be finished soon. I am proud to see these projects come to fruition after years of planning and know they will benefit the communities and the residents. These types of projects support the Borough's mission.



Mayor's Message Continued

Fishing continues to be challenging. The Borough staff and I continue to advocate for the Borough, the communities, and the fishermen. The Natural Resources Department participates in numerous meetings and conducts studies to support the fisheries. We will continue to attend meetings and disseminate information; conduct and support several fishery related projects and communicate with the Alaska Legislature and Alaska Delegation regarding the dire situation of the fishing industry and what communities are facing. We remain committed to supporting our communities and fishermen when and where we can.

Finally, like many other municipalities, the Borough is facing some tough fiscal realities. With the downswing in fishing, increase in expenditures, and the ongoing fiscal obligations of the Borough, maintaining fiscal stability is increasingly difficult. Despite these challenges, the Borough Assembly was able to pass a balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2026, prioritizing education, bond debt, transportation links, maintenance, and other Borough obligations.

It continues to be a privilege to serve as Mayor of the Aleutians East Borough, and I remain committed to working with you and welcome conversations about projects and areas of concern.



Mayor and Assembly Members

Mayor

Alvin D. Osterback

Assembly

Warren Wilson
Paul Gronholdt
Chris Babcock
Brenda Wilson
Jim Smith
Josy Shangin
Tom Hoblet
Sam McNeley

Community

King Cove
Sand Point
King Cove
King Cove
Sand Point
Akutan
False Pass
Nelson Lagoon

Seat

A
B
C
D
E
F
G
Advisory

Fisheries Management/Advocacy

The Aleutians East Borough tasks the Natural Resources Department (NRD) with the advocacy of sustainable fisheries within the Borough through the study, investigation, and monitoring of fish and by providing assistance and guidance on managing these resources. The NRD continually strives to communicate with and listen to our local fishermen. Working with stakeholders, the Borough continues to develop priorities for federal fisheries programs and State fisheries that impact local fishermen. Throughout the year, the NRD Staff met with fishermen in our fishing communities as well as in Anchorage and virtually on Microsoft Teams.

Federal Fisheries Issues

The Borough provides input to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and closely monitors issues before the Council. The NRD staff maintains membership in NPFMC committees, including the Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee and the Community Engagement Committee. Staff members also sit on the Advisory Panel to the North Pacific Research Board and the Aleutian Islands Waterways Safety Committee. Staff are also active in the NPFMC Groundfish Plan Team process and other Council committees.

The NRD Staff again provided testimony to the NPFMC this past year during the review of the Chum salmon bycatch in Bering Sea pollock fisheries analysis, in support of our communities that receive pollock deliveries. The NRD Staff testified and submitted written comment to the Advisory Panel and Council in June on the 7-year review of the American Fisheries Act that governs the Bering Sea Pollock fishery. What's at stake is the potential loss of pollock processing within the Borough if a processor leaves. As a result of Borough staff testimony, Council staff will be including information in this and subsequent reviews on the importance of pollock to dependent communities, including the Borough.

The Borough closely monitors all salmon issues at the Council including salmon bycatch and genetics from federal fisheries, as well as Council action on the Cook Inlet Salmon Fishery Management Plan Amendment that will have future implications for the traditional net fishing area near Sanak Island, in federal waters, outside of 3 miles.

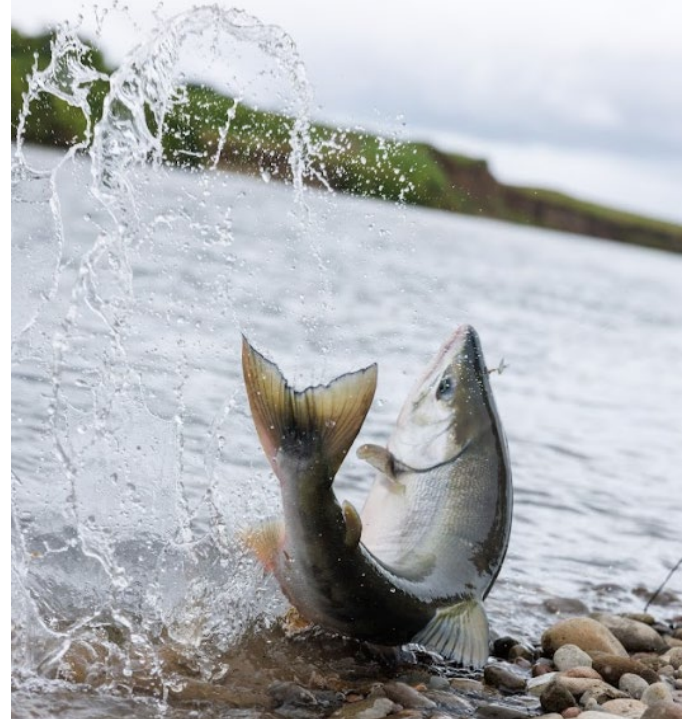
The NRD Staff have been working for several years along with other crab dependent communities, including Akutan and King Cove, to advocate for fair funding following the disaster determinations for the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 Bering Sea Red King and Snow crab disasters. That needed funding finally came through in January 2025. The Borough Assembly also petitioned the Governor through Resolutions 25-20 and 25-21 to request fishery disaster determinations for 2024 Alaska Peninsula Pink and Sockeye salmon seasons. Those requests to the Secretary of Commerce are pending determination.

State Management of Salmon Fisheries

The Borough supports state management of local salmon fisheries and fully participates in the Board of Fisheries process. The 2024/2025 Board cycle (from October 2024 to April 2025) included Prince William Sound, Southeast Alaska, and Statewide shellfish and was expected to be a quiet Board year for the Borough, as Alaska Peninsula salmon will not be on the Board agenda again until the February 2026 Board of Fish meeting. However, agenda change request (ACR) 13 was submitted to the Board that again targeted salmon fishing reductions for Alaska Peninsula fishermen. The Borough Staff, the Area M Seiners Association, Concerned Area M Fishermen (CAMF), and Silver Bay Seafoods all submitted comments and attended the October 2024 Board Work Session to oppose ACR 13 that would reduce the maximum depth of hand and purse seines and regulate purse seine leads in Alaska Peninsula commercial salmon fisheries. The Board failed ACR 13 with one vote one to support and five opposed, with only new member Curtis Chamberlain supporting ACR 13. The NRD Staff also provided support to fishermen submitting proposals in April 2025 for the 2025/2026 Board cycle that will include Alaska Peninsula salmon and Pacific cod meetings.

The Borough engages with the State Legislature on fisheries issues as needed. This year, the NRD staff worked with Mayor Osterback and the Cities of King Cove and Sand Point to provide written opposition to Senate Bill 161 that would prohibit bottom trawling in state waters. The Borough Assembly passed Resolution 25-47 opposing HB 111 and SB 108 that would allow fish farming in Alaska. The Borough staff also engaged with the Joint Legislative Seafood Industry Task Force, at their monthly meetings September 2024 through January 2025, that would

make recommendations for state policies to address the economic crisis in the seafood industry. One recommendation from the Borough was included in the Task Force's final report and resulted in Senate Bill 135, that would increase municipalities' share of the fisheries tax revenues that are split between the state and local governments.



Area M Adaptive Fleet Management Salmon Portal

Since 2023, the Borough has been working with Chordata LLC to support the South Peninsula fishermen by developing a data portal that provides near real-time data sharing and analytics that allows fishermen to make informed time and/or area closures in response to chum presence. The portal has been consistently successful in helping fishermen achieve their objectives as outlined in Record Copy 104 (Version 3) and provide defensible post-season reports each year since 2023.

For 2024, results showed the harvest of chum was 14.7% below the 10-year average and 6.8% below the 20-year average, and a 112% year-over-year (YOY) increase from 2023, 22% YOY decrease from 2022 harvest, and a 63% decrease from 2021. In total, there were 193.7 hours in the Shumagins and 175.2 hours in South Unimak of foregone fishing time and/or time and area closures above and beyond what is required in regulation. In 2025, the harvest of chum was 67% below the 5 and 10-year

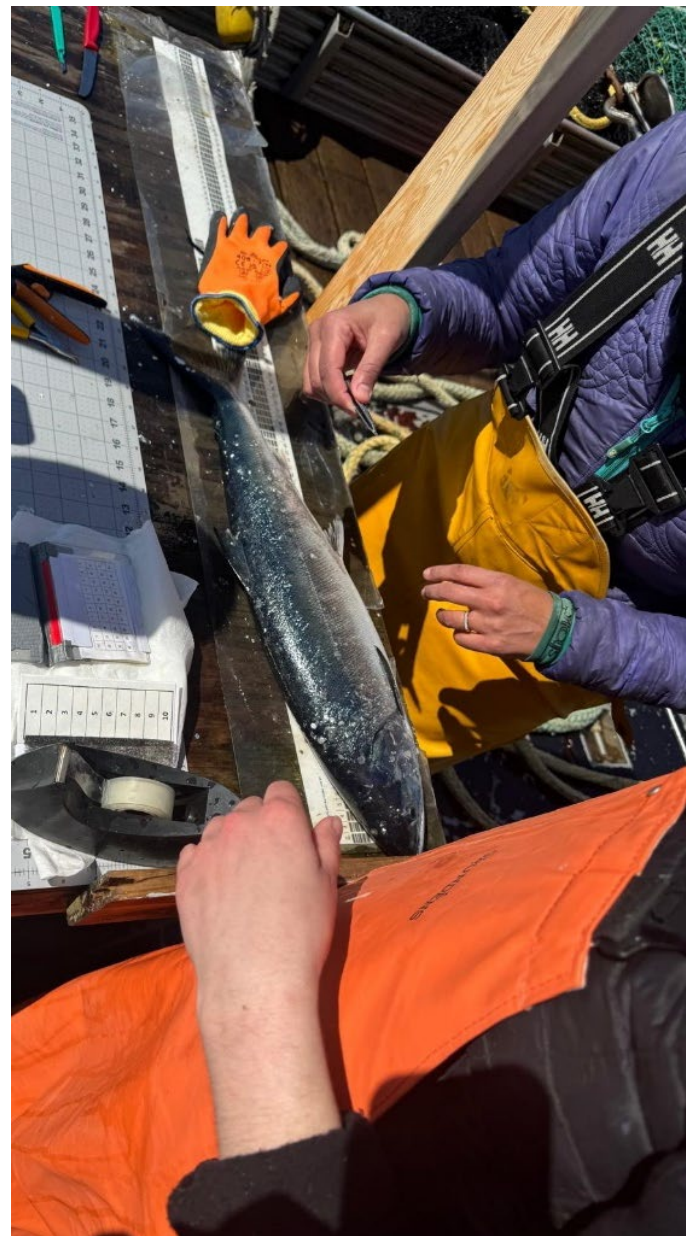
average and 63% below the 20-year average, and a 62% YOY decrease from 2024. The seine fleet implemented 132.48 hours of mandatory and 107.73 hours of voluntary foregone fishing time and/or time and area closures above and beyond what is required in regulation, for a total of 241.43 hours.

Also in 2024, the Borough started working with CAMF board to develop a modified version of the portal for the drift fleet. However, given the very different fishing operations between drift and seine vessels, the data portal and management structure were not as easily adopted by drift vessels. Because drift vessels move while fishing (as opposed to being stationary) it is difficult to assign spatial data to catch for the purposes of monitoring chum salmon presence, making portal data less useful for making real-time fishing decisions. Instead, in 2025 drift vessels could still login to the portal and see seine closures to inform their own fishing decisions, and vessels could voluntarily log their own stand downs in an online form. In July 2025, we compiled the data, and the results show 28 drift vessels participated in logging stand downs for a collective total of 554.75 hours of foregone fishing time. Of those hours, 155 hours were due to avoiding chum, 105 hours were due to religious holidays, 262 hours due to weather conditions, 24 hours due to travel time, and 8 hours from mechanical. To date, the Borough has funded roughly \$46,615 through the Chordata contract for this work.

Additionally in 2025, in direct response to the ADF&G Emergency Order #4-FS-M-SP-04-25 for the post-June fishery, the fleet requested to leverage the data portal infrastructure to monitor Chinook salmon through July in the Shumagin Islands Section. The portal generally only functions during the month of June for sockeye and chum, but we have modified to now track Chinook harvest through daily reporting from the processors, allowing the fleet to monitor how harvest is accruing toward the limit and use these data to inform fishing.

Salmon Tagging Pilot Study

At the March 2025 Assembly Meeting, the Assembly approved Resolution 25-48 approving a pilot study to satellite tag salmon and allocate up to \$180,000 from the Fisheries Research account. The objective was to



study the post-release survival of *Oncorhynchus keta* (chum salmon) from seine vessels in the South Peninsula June fishery. Fishermen in this region are interested in finding management tools that balance achieving conservation goals without overly restricting fishing opportunity that may not result in meaningful conservation benefit.

One tool used in state managed fisheries is the retention and/or non-retention of certain species to achieve various goals, either through regulation or Emergency Order. While this tool is successfully used for several species of Pacific salmon, less is known about the post-release survival of chum salmon specifically when released from commercial seine vessels. One of the primary goals of this pilot is not only to understand post-release survival, but also the

feasibility of an “optimized” non-retention program. In this context, “optimized” refers to the tradeoff between ideal release conditions for survival of non-Asia chum and disruption to fishing operations, where a mandatory non-retention of all chum would be logistically challenging (particularly for large hauls) and unnecessary to achieve the objective of conserving non-Asia only chum.

Pop-up satellite tags (PSAT) that are deployed on fish can collect high resolution data on depth, temperature, light intensity, and tilt and acceleration allowing researchers to understand movement pathways, swimming behavior, habitat occupancy, and mortality. PSATs have been used in other studies to assess fisheries’ non-retention viability as well as infer causes of mortality, however there is very limited information on satellite tagging chum salmon. We received a permit from ADF&G and field staff support to tag chum released from seine vessels contracted for the June 8-10 test fishery in the Shumagin Islands. Each day, nine chum salmon were tagged across 3-4 sets for a total of 27 tags. Tags were programmed to pop up after 25 days, which we estimated to be the longest deployment possible without risking the tags entering freshwater where they might malfunction. To mimic real fishing conditions, the fishermen were asked to use normal catch handling practices and have experienced crew members conduct all sorting.

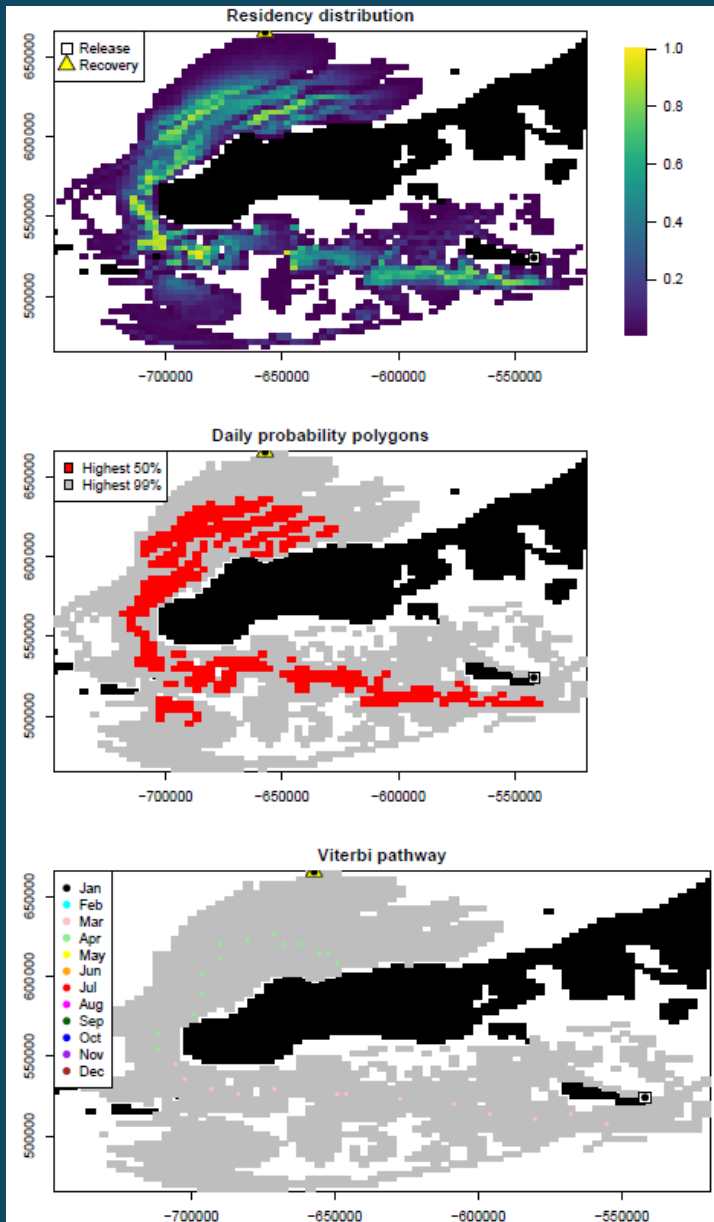
There have been limited chum satellite tagging studies to inform tagging effects, so we attempted to create a “reference” treatment where the first tagged fish of every set was immediately dipnetted from the water after pursing, to ensure the least amount of handling and air exposure. Once a “reference” fish was selected, the vessel continued operations as normal, lifting the purse and transferring the remaining catch from the net to the sorting deck. Crew were asked to sort fish with some care (e.g. not handling using the eyes or gills), as is common under a mandated release program. To understand how long the sorting process takes (and how this may impact survival), crew were asked to out chum from other species beginning with fish >25” (i.e. eligible for non-retention) and selecting two more for tagging. Once all the chum eligible for non-retention were sorted, this marked the end of the sort. Our second objective was to assess if experienced fishermen could visually differentiate between chum, and to collect population demographic data. We had the crew segregate the remaining chum they thought were of Asian origin or

non-Asian origin, then subsampled up to 10 fish from each group for length, ageing scales, genetics, visual maturity, and morphometrics for a total of 163 specimens. Additionally, data on tow time, purse time, sort time (air exposure), ratio of “Asian” to “non-Asian” chum were recorded for covariate analyses. We anticipate starting the analysis in late summer, with preliminary results available shortly after and a full report available by the 2026 Board of Fisheries meeting.



Western Gulf of Alaska Trawl Electronic Monitoring

Since 2019, the NRD has supported the piloting and implementation of electronic monitoring (EM) in the Western Gulf of Alaska (WGOA) pollock trawl fleet. To complete this project, the Borough has been awarded five National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grants from 2019 through 2024 totaling over \$2.5 million in funding. Regulatory implementation started in 2025, and the Borough was recently awarded the final NFWF grant that covered both WGOA and Central Gulf of Alaska



The chart above shows the preliminary pathway for a tag released in the WGOA in March 2024, showing release and recovery locations as well as residency distribution (top), daily location estimates at 50% and 99% probability (middle) and the estimated pathway with point estimates color coded by month (bottom). This fish was tagged near Sanak Island in March 2024 and travelled to the north side of Unimak Island by April 2024, where the tag popped off early.

(CGOA) vessels in partnership with Alaska Groundfish Data Bank to bridge the funding gap in 2024. We did not expect any major new developments to occur with this funding. However, we were able to leverage unspent funds and receive project extension from NFWF that allowed us to make unanticipated modifications to eLog prior to 2025. As the WGOA team was preparing to

transition to the regulated program in 2025, we discovered that NMFS would not approve our eLog until it satisfied the same requirements of the Daily Fishing Logbooks (DFL). Our team met with NMFS Alaska Regional Office (AKRO) and Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) to outline what modifications were needed to satisfy regulatory requirements, and we were able to get the eLog approved in time for the 2025 season. We opted to pilot the new eLog on two vessels first to work out any software bugs and the remainder of the fleet was required to submit paper DFLs. After sorting through small software bugs, we are planning to re-implement eLog at-scale during the 2025 B-season. We are also working to automate quarterly reporting to OLE, and integrating the logbooks in the WGOA pollock data portal so fishermen can review/access their logbooks from anywhere (not just on the vessel using their EM system). We also worked with EM4Fish to publish our second article “*Start to finish: a case study of eLog development in the Western Gulf of Alaska*” that showcases the success of the fleet-agency collaborations. *Link for the article:* <https://em4.fish/projects-in-the-field-start-to-finish-a-case-study-of-elog-development-in-the-western-gulf-of-alaska/>

WGOA Pacific Cod Tagging Study

Since 2021, the Borough and Alaska Fisheries Science Center have been conducting ongoing collaborative research to examine the seasonal movements of Pacific cod captured in the WGOA. The Project team successfully completed a 5th year of field work, chartering F/V Destination from March 16th-April 3rd that included 11 sites, five in WGOA and six in CGOA. This was the most challenging weather year yet. We had many weather days and had to rearrange most of our plans and skip several stations including the new one we planned near Unimak Pass. The water was notably warmer than in previous years across the Gulf of Alaska, there were less fish in some places, and the fish were generally smaller and more spawned-out than previous years at the same time suggesting peak spawning may have occurred earlier than normal. We successfully released 57 satellite tags and 12 acoustic tags (6 internal and 6 external) and 2 were double tagged with satellite tags to verify survival. We collected biological samples on approximately 300 fish, but due to lower catch in some areas, a few sites fell below our target sampling goals. With field work complete and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) grant period coming to an end, the project team is almost finished processing

satellite tags for our analysis and preparing the final grant report.

Unimak Pass Acoustic Array Pilot Study

Our recent satellite tagging of Pacific cod in the WGOA suggests that approximately 50% of tagged Pacific cod move from spawning grounds in the WGOA to summer foraging areas in the Bering Sea. This seasonal movement between management areas is a concern for stock delineation and stock assessment. Currently, management strategy evaluations are underway to determine the most appropriate course of action to incorporate this movement information into management of the fishery in the Bering Sea and the GOA. Satellite telemetry studies have provided detailed information about post-spawning migration pathways. However, challenges such as low sample sizes due to satellite tag costs and difficulty detecting return migrations to the GOA in winter suggest that alternative methods to quantify movement between the Bering Sea and the GOA would be valuable.

An acoustic telemetry array at Unimak Pass would provide information on connectivity at time scales greater than one year and lower-cost tags would allow larger sample sizes. Thus, it would improve the ability to estimate the proportion of Pacific cod that move seasonally between the GOA and Bering Sea management areas. We propose a pilot study to estimate the *in-situ* detection range of acoustic receivers in the area along with the effect of tidal currents, vessel noise, and oceanographic conditions. The pilot study is a necessary first step toward designing a larger scale acoustic array that could detect Pacific cod movement between the GOA and Bering Sea. Establishing a long-term acoustic array in Unimak Pass would also facilitate monitoring of transregional migration for many other ecologically and commercially valuable migratory species such as salmon, sharks, pollock and sablefish.

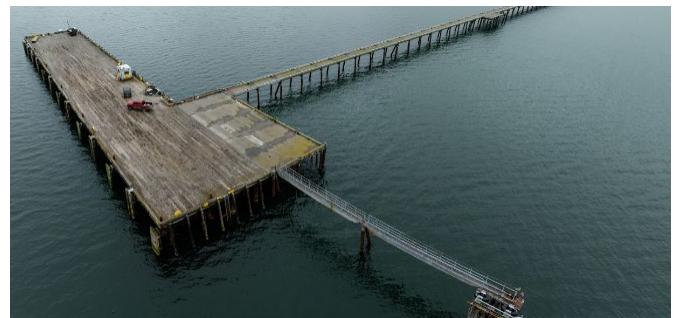
In late 2024, PSMFC notified the Borough that they had additional funds they could provide but would not be able to grant a project extension. The cod tagging team did a significant amount of research to develop this pilot study and requested to use the additional funds for this purpose. This proposal was approved by PSMFC as a budget amendment to reallocate some existing funds in combination with

\$138,000 additional funds provided by PSMFC, and funds were used to purchase equipment and supplies. The project team submitted a supplementary proposal to the North Pacific Research Board to fund salary and charter costs which was successfully awarded for \$246,582 for the period of July 1, 2025, through December 31,

Cold Bay Dock

The Cold Bay Dock serves the Alaska Marine Highway System and is the only fuel source for the community and the Cold Bay Airport. The Dock was built in 1978, and the new dock section was constructed in 1993. It has been determined that the dock will need to be replaced within the next few years.

In May 2023, the Alaska Municipal League and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) submitted a Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) grant application for the design, permitting, geotechnical aspects, and construction of a new dock. In October 2023, the State successfully received \$43.3 million in PIDP funding for this project. On July 23, 2024, the State issued a Request for Proposal, soliciting professional engineering design and environmental services to replace the existing Cold Bay Dock. On August 26, 2024, four proposals were received and reviewed on October 25, 2024, by a selection committee. The State began negotiations with PND Engineers and entered into a contract with them. PND has begun working on the project. A site visit occurred, and environmental/design work is ongoing. The project is projected to be completed in 2030.



Cold Bay Clinic

The Borough was awarded \$2 million in U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration grant funding for the Cold Bay Clinic Renovation Project. The renovations occurred inside the building and included but were not limited to renovations to the exam rooms and trauma room, boiler replacement, generator replacement and indoor air quality

upgrades. It also included the purchase and installation of a fixed dental chair, an eye washing station, an adult exam table and interior paint. Additional work has been performed and paid for by the Borough and Eastern Aleutians Tribes. This work included installing security cameras, fixing the garage door and entry way and exterior painting.

DOWL completed the design and UIC Nappariat, LLC was contracted as a Construction Manager/General Contractor to assist with the 95% design and for construction. UIC Nappariat, LLC completed the project in July 2025.



False Pass Airport

One of False Pass's greatest needs continues to be a reconstructed airport with a longer runway that meets Federal Aviation Administration standards, medevac requirements, and the needs of existing and projected airport operations. The Borough Administration continues to ask the State to look at engineering options to lengthen the existing runway or build a new one.

In the meantime, the State of Alaska DOT&PF has \$35,231,819 allocated to rehabilitate the existing airport surfaces and safety areas, install new airport signage, install FAA-approved L-853 retro-reflective markers on the runway and taxiway edges, replace both wind cone structures, replace segmented circle, and address erosion control at Round Top Valley Creek. The design will focus on significant hydrologic/hydraulic issues prevalent at the site to produce a design for a landing area that is not susceptible to these effects.

In May 2023, DOT&PF issued a Request for Proposal to secure design and construction services for the False Pass Airport Rehabilitation Project. The State selected DOWL for the work. DOWL conducted a site visit in November 2023 and is continuously working on this project. DOT&PF currently has the False Pass Airport Project in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2028 program (for construction) but is being shown as contingent for FFY27.

King Cove Access Project

The draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) was released last fall and public hearings were held in King Cove, Cold Bay, Sand Point, and Bethel, along with video conferences in False Pass and Nelson Lagoon. With the re-election of President Trump, the process changed in January 2025 and finalizing the draft SEIS was put on hold and eventually replaced with a different approach using ANILCA provision 1302(h) which authorizes an equal value land exchange process. This was a return to the same ANILCA process that was pursued during the first Trump Administration that ended in several legal challenges that prompted the-then Biden Administration to pursue a different direction that led to the SEIS. In January 2025, President Trump's Executive Order returned the Izembek Land Exchange and Road Corridor to the ANILCA 1302(h) process and predicated on the expectation that the previous legal concerns can be satisfactorily resolved. In the meantime, DOT&PF continues to pursue field work to assist with the required permitting for the final road design. The DC Delegation continues to be engaged throughout the process and remains very supportive of the issue.

Sand Point Harbor Float Systems Project

The Sand Point Harbor Floats System is a significant economic asset to the community and the Borough. The Borough received a Maritime Administration Port Infrastructure Development Program Grant in the amount of \$5,365,000 and an FY 2023 State of Alaska Harbor Facility Grant in the amount of \$4,125,000 for the installation of a new prefabricated treated timber floating dock within the existing harbor and to conduct in-water and upland improvements. Moffatt & Nichol addressed the grant requirements, which included environmental items, permitting, public notices, completing the NEPA process, and engineering documents. In September 2024, the Borough went out

to bid for this project and three proposals were received by the October deadline. The proposals were reviewed, and Western Marine Construction was contracted to fabricate and install the float system. The floats were built and delivered to Sand Point. Western Marine Construction mobilized to Sand Point in mid-June and began installing the floats. The float project is ahead of schedule and should be completed on or before November 2025.



\$6,811,396, with the State participating share being \$4,427,407 and the Borough's participating share of \$2,383,989. Progress continues to occur on this project. DOWL has been contracted to complete the design, conduct the Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM-GC) selection and negotiation process, conduct construction administration and inspections. UIC Construction, LLC has been contracted for pre-construction and construction through the Construction Manager/General Contractor Qualifications Based Selection Process. To date, the design has been completed and in June 2025, UIC arrived in Sand Point and began construction. The anticipated completion date for the project is November 2025.

Sand Point School Major Maintenance Project

In February 2023, the School District/Borough signed a grant from the State of Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) to conduct major maintenance at the Sand Point School. The project provides for renovations, including:

- Improve HVAC: replace ventilation system and replace kitchen ventilation equipment.
- Improve security: replace door hardware to provide access control and lockdown function.
- Replace the fire alarm.
- Replace intercom system.
- Renovate the pool facility addition: upgrade restrooms and lockers; replace the metal roof and repair the structure as required; reconstruct or repair exterior walls; replace supply ventilation, ductwork, and controls; and improve drainage.

The grant award was \$2,968,577, with the State participating share being \$1,929,575 and the Borough's participating share of \$1,039,002.

Due to the large cost of the project, the Borough submitted a supplemental funding request to the State and in September 2024 received additional funds for the project. The revised grant award is



The Borough's preliminary FY25 financial summary (numbers subject to change) is as follows:

FY25 Financial Summary:	
FY25 Revenues	\$10,043,125
FY25 Expenditures (General Fund, Bonds, Permanent Fund, Maintenance)	\$4,442,851
FY25 Helicopter Transfer	(\$973,141)
FY25 Cold Bay Terminal Transfer	\$14,023
FY25 Bond Fund	(\$1,490,259)
FY25 Permanent Fund Earning Capital Project Appropriations	\$1,466,747

Bond Service Debt


Since 1990, the Borough has bonded \$46,750,000 for Borough projects in Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, Sand Point, and the schools. The general obligation bonds payable on June 30, 2024, are comprised of the following: 2015 Refunding Series One in the amount of \$205,000, the 2016 Refunding Series Three in the amount of \$9,635,000, and the 2021 Refunding Series for refinancing of 2010 Series Three general obligation bonds in the amount of \$2,045,000 resulting in a total bonds payable amount of \$11,885,000.

The annual required installments on all Borough general obligation bonds as of June 30 are as follows:

Year Ending June 30	Principal	Interest	Total
2025	\$2,075,000	\$476,149	\$2,551,149
2026	\$2,200,000	\$381,158	\$2,581,158
2027	\$2,220,000	\$281,852	\$2,501,852
2028	\$2,340,000	\$178,323	\$2,518,323
2029	\$2,445,000	\$68,468	\$2,513,468
2030 - 2031	\$605,000	12,209	\$617,209
TOTAL	\$11,885,000	\$1,397,159	\$13,282,159







Aleutians East Borough
PO Box 349
Sand Point, AK 99661



Our Mission

Provide governmental services to the communities of Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, and Sand Point. These services include education, fisheries support, planning, project management, capital projects, and tax collection.

Our Vision

Healthy People, Healthy Schools, and Healthy Communities

Our Purpose

Ensure the Standard of Living, Well-Being, and Future of our Communities