Government shutdown causes concern in fisheries

Furlough means there is no one to issue fishing permits, licenses and other services required before setting out

The government shutdown has caused few problems so far in Alaska's fisheries, but concern is growing as it enters a third week.

The shutdown of nine out of 15 federal departments and agencies on Dec. 21 has furloughed about 800,000 workers nationwide, with most with no pay, including fishery oversight and research jobs. In many cases, that means there's no one to issue fishing permits, licenses or other documents and services required before setting out.

"I have not heard of any problems, but that's not to say that there aren't any," said Forrest Bowers, acting director of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's commercial fisheries division, referring to the cod fishery that opened on Jan. 1 and the ongoing Bering Sea crab fishery.

State operations are not directly affected by the shutdown, but fisheries in Alaska waters intertemporal and are closely tied with the federal ones. In the co-manage ment case of Bering Sea crab, for example, the state provide the surveys and science, the state does the rest.

"The state sets the total allowable catch and we handle the in-season management of the fishery, including vessel registrations, observer coverage and harvest tracking," Bowers said.

The cod and crab boats had their paper work in order prior to the shutdown, Bowers said, except for one straggler who needed the services of a furloughed electronic scale inspector and was stuck at the dock.

"They haven't been able to scale that inspection done and it's delaying them. We're hoping they can get that resolved for them," Bowers said, adding that other such "behind the scenes" unavoidable services in the tight furloughed fisheries include causes as more boats come on line this month.

The shutdown also is causing a headache for federally contracted onboard fishery observers who collect stock data and track what's coming and going over the rails. Regulators at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are not holding de briefings for the observers when they return from a fishing trip, which are required before they can sign on to another.

"That's sidelined five of her employees so far," said Stacey Hansen, program manager at Saltwater, an Anchorage-based company that provides observer services to the fleets.

"I've got a group of people that are now stuck. They're just sitting and waiting until they can get on with their lives," Hansen told Alaska's Energy Desk.

Meanwhile, Alaska's largest fishery, pollock, gets underway on Jan. 20 along with openers for flounders and myriad other whitefish.

"I think there is uncertainty right now about what's going to happen," Bowers said.

"Fortunately, we have a pretty sophisticated group of folks in the fishing industry in Alaska who are very professional and know how to do their jobs. It helps a lot when there is a good working relationship with the managers; it makes these uncer tain times go more smoothly."

One is done

Only one person applied for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game commissioner's job and it's the same one who's holding it now.

Doug Vincent-Lang was selected as acting commissioner in early December by Secretary of Natural Resources Mike Dunleavy. The governor said in a statement that he believed it was important to have someone managing the department while the Joint Board of Fish and Game compiled a list of other potential applicants.

State law requires that a new governor select a commissioner from nominees suggested by the joint board and the group will fulfill that statutory obligation on the evening of Jan. 16 in Anchorage.

It will be a quick meeting, said board Secretary Tim Shriver.

"For this particular year, we have one applicant so it's a fairly simple task for the joint board to go through the review process," Haight said. "Anyone could've applied, it's up to the individuals. Sometimes in the past there's been more than 10 names that have come into the department for consideration and sometime less than five or so."

No testimony will be taken at the Jan. 16 joint board meeting but the public is invited to listen in.

Vincent-Lang was director of the division's wildlife department under former Gov. Sean Parnell and was assistant director of the sportfish division in the early 2000s.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game commissioner oversees 1,700 employees at 47 offices across the state and manages approximately 750 active fisheries, 26 game management units and 32 special areas.

The commissioner appointee must be approved by the Alaska Legislature at the end of the upcoming session.

Liquified bio-gas from dead fish and other organic wastes will soon power a fleet of luxury cruise ships as a way to save money and reduce emissions.

The 125-year-old cruise operator Hurtigruten, known for its trips to the Arctic, will operate at least six of its 17 ships on biofuel, a mixture of bio-gas, liquified natural gas and large battery packs by 2021.

"While competitors are running on cheap, polluting heavy fuel oil, our ships will literally be powered by nature," spokesman Daniel Skjeldam said in a statement.

"Biogas is the greenest fuel in shipping and will be a huge advantage for the environment. We're other cruise compa nies to follow," he added.

Concerns over the atmospheric impacts of high-sulfur fuel favored by the shipping industry led the International Maritime Organization to vote last year to impose a 0.5 percent sulfur limit on marine fuel by 2020.

A 2017 report by the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union in Germany claimed that a midsize cruise ship can use over 100 tons of fuel a day, producing as much particulate as a million cars.

The Norwegian cruise ship company is taking other steps to boost its green cred en tial. It has ordered three new hybrid-power ed cruise liners, has banned single-use plastics from all its ships and plans on becoming carbon neutral.

Lincoln pre-briefs bill defining the sexual assault

In one of his first moves as representative this session, House District 40 Rep. John Lincoln pre-filed a bill to broaden the defini tion of sexual assault. As it's currently worded, the bill would close certain loopholes that came to light last year after a series of assaults against Alaska Native women across the state.

The bill makes it a third degree assault to masturbate in the presence of another person and ejaculate on them without their consent. It also makes strangulation to the point of unconsciousness an aggravating factor to be considered when sentencing a person.

It's called House Bill 14, or "An Act relating to assault in the first degree; relating to sex offenses, relating to the definition of dangerous instrument", and provides for an aggravating factor at sentencing for strangle ment that results in unconsciousness."

The Souder was unable to immediately reach Lincoln by deadline Tuesday, but will follow up with this story after speaking with him.

Pre-filed bills are filed by legislators ahead of the start of the legislative session. By handing them in early, the bills can be submitted for first reading as soon as the legislature gavel it.
Oil and gas industry may see job gains this year

Economists predict small rise following severe losses

BY SHADY GROVE OLIVER
Bristol Bay Times - Dutch Harbor Fisherman

This year may see a bit more recovery on the jobs front. Economists predict 2019 could bring growth in some industries hit hard by the recession in past years, according to numbers from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

“After three years of job losses, Alaska is set to regain a small amount of lost ground in 2019,” wrote Karinne Wiebold in the most recent edition of Alaska Economic Trends. “Sectors devastated early in the recession are beginning to add jobs again.”

She noted the oil and gas industry saw employment numbers stabilize last year and recent interest in resources on the North Slope could be signs of “recovery.”

Wiebold identified three major economic drivers across the state in 2019, including preparations for Eielson Air Force Base’s expansion, an uptick in industry work and tourism.

“Oil and gas activity is … expected to pick up despite lackluster oil prices, with a number of projects on the near horizon,” she noted.

The Department of Interior last year began the push to hold its first lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as early as this year. That, coupled with other ongo- ing projects and project planning for expan- sion of oil and gas facilities, Wiebold said, will mean more jobs and wages coming to North Slope workers this year and next.

However, jobs on the North Slope do not always go to local hires, so jobs and wages tied to industry do not always have an immediate and direct effect on the local workforce.

The oil and gas industry may see a 3.2 percent increase in jobs (equivalent to about 300 jobs) this year from last, according to projections from the Labor Department. That’s a marked improvement over the 2017-2018 change, which was a drop of 4.1 percent (or about 400 jobs lost).

That’s still a mild gain compared to the dive industry employment took after it reached its peak in 2014. Wiebold noted. Oil and gas job numbers dropped a full 37 percent between 2014 and last year, with a loss of about 5,500 jobs.

A new factor that could have a significant effect on Alaska jobs this year is the recent magnitude 7.1 earthquake that hit south- central.

“(It) will boost construction as commer- cial buildings, homes and roads need repair or reconstruction,” Wiebold wrote. “While

Real ID program has begun. Here’s what you need to know.

JUNEAU — More than a decade of opposition from state lawmakers, the feder- al Real ID program has arrived in Alaska.

Last Wednesday, the Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles began issuing licenses that follow federal guidelines approved by Congress under the Real ID Act of 2005. Alaskans will have until Oct. 1, 2020, to get a new driver’s license, accord- ing to the DMV and the Department of Homeland Security, which administers the program. After that date, anyone with a traditional license will not be able to use it to enter a federal building, military base or board a commercial airliner. (A passport or global entry card, however, may be used instead.)

“The DMV is excited to announce that Real IDs are available across the state of Alaska starting today, Jan. 2. The best thing about that is that people can do to be prepared when they come into the DMV is to have the prop- er documentation, which they can research by visiting our website and going through our Real ID checklist,” said Jenna Wamsganz, deputy director of the Alaska DMV.

To get one of the new licenses, you’ll have to visit a DMV office. A Real ID costs twice as much as a traditional driver’s license — $40 instead of $20 — and you’ll have to bring some extra documentation.

According to the DMV’s checklist, a pass- port, naturalization certificate or birth cer- tificate is needed to confirm your identity. You’ll also need to bring a Social Security card (or another document that has your Social Security number, such as a pay stub) and two non-handwritten documents that

list your primary address, such as rental agreements, mortgage bills, bank records, home utility bills or other documents approved by the DMV.

The new IDs have a distinctive look: a green-and-blue holographic silhouette of Denali with fireweed adorning the left side and a moose on the right side. A transpar- ent star in a black roundel signifies that the license meets federal standards.

It is not yet clear how the Real ID pro- gram will be administered in communities without a DMV office.

“We don’t have a solution in place yet, but it is high on our priority list,” Wamsganz said, noting that the state has almost two years before traditional licenses are no lon- ger good for boarding aircraft.

“We’re actively looking at ways we can access these communities and help these folks,” she said.

Traditional driver’s licenses are still available from DMV offices for Alaskans who don’t need to board a commercial air- liner or enter a federal facility, or are willing to use a passport instead. All commercial driver’s licenses will be compliant with Real ID, and the cost of a new commercial ID will rise from $100 to $120.

The changes are due to the federal govern- ment’s push to increase the security of driver’s licenses and other forms of ID.

The Real ID guidelines, written in the years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, are intended to provide uniform secu- rity standards for driver’s licenses across the United States. Privacy advocates have opposed the legislation because of clauses that allow driver’s license applicants’ infor- mation to be shared with other states. The law also allows the government to store pic- tures of faces and copies of identity docu-

Economists predict 2019 could bring growth in some industries hit hard by the recession in past years, according to numbers from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Though Alaska and a few other states repeatedly received waivers from the Department of Homeland Security to delay Real ID implementation, the federal govern- ment in 2017 warned Alaska that it would not be granted additional time. After that, lawmakers lifted the ban on state compli- ance with the law.

This story first appeared in the Anchorage Daily News and is reprinted here with permission.

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Clarence was the old days. From a bigger land, and I think for me he’ll remain out there with the cowerlere.

BY SETH KANTNER
For the Arctic Sounder

I heard about Clarence Wood passing on today. I was sharpening my machete, on my parent’s porch in Honokaa, Hawaii, of all places to be when receiving such news. Leaves were green overhead, birds singing and bugs buzzing, and chickens scratching under the steps, and it was tough to get my bearings in the sudden storm of memories swirling in my head. A lifetime of memories of my friend, a world away in the Arctic — but also a place that feels even further away; the past.

Nothing about the news was the way I wanted it to be. Clarence was in his 80s and has been in a lot of pain the last years, suffering, and this fall his house caught fire and burned to the ground, leaving him with nothing, and finally on Christmas day, in an opioid stupor, he passed away.

But also, a place that feels even further away; the past.

My family lived in the dimness of my tiny sod house, buried in the ground and crumbling under snow, with mice and shrews for company, Kerosene lamps for light, carpibou moss for meat, and the only surge of excitement in our day was if a human visitor appeared.

On those rare times that my brother and I spotted a dot moving on the ice — a dot that wasn’t an animal — we’d shout, “Travelers! Travelers! coming!” That’s what folks called people who came off the country. When you were alone for weeks or months almost nothing is a bigger deal than seeing another human out there on the land.

The traveler who showed up most often at our place there at the lower end of Pugnantaquagruk was an Inupiaq hunter from Ambler, a man in his mid 30s, looking for his pockets for cigarettes. I can still hear the click of his metal lighter. And out he’d head, disappearing again into the land.

I’m hesitant to say this in these modern overly-touchy times, but there was another reason. He was, too, somewhat of a predator.

I think for me he’ll remain out there with the cowerlere. I remember my parents and their friends forever repeating his expressions — even today — and the comical way he put words together. My dad would marvel at how Clarence had made it through a storm; Clarence would shrug. “Ha! Comon now! Good traveling.” Or his description of a weather front: “Don’t you know what a storm? Can’t see the meat.” Or him describing a winter stuck at home: “Agh. Jus like jail.”

When my parents moved away, and I started living at the old place with my girlfriend, we were in awe of this one traveler we saw the most. They were moving faster, stopping in less, trapping and hunting less, but Clarence never seemed to catch a breath. He referred to us as “Tat kid, and Daisy,” and continued spending time on the couch, using my old slingshot to hunt mice on the floor, glancing out to check the sky. He liked to test me; he’d stop in the middle of a conversation, watch the sky, and then ask for something — usually gas.

“Sure need gassss.”

I tell, or what season, what year, Clarence died; I tell, or what season, what year, Clarence was usually there, or passing by, or had just left. In January 1970, when three men were murdered below our place, Clarence was the first one to see them OK before the crime.

When Keith Jones’ sod igloo next to ours caught fire and burned — there was Clarence on the ice, the first to spot the flames. When that mail plane went down, mid-winter, up at Plane Crash, Clarence somehow again was passing by and the first on the scene.

Even with the Hunt River, the area where I grew up, was his favorite place, if you talked to villagers hundreds of miles away in Huslia, or in Aniak, or Kivalina, or homesteaders up the Ambler River, or whalers up the coast in Point Hope, they’d say: Clarence traveled there, too.

In the 1970s, caribou over-wintered across from Pungnantaquagruk, and that brought hunters, and a few times Grace and Paul Outwater from Kiana spent the night. I remember Grace chiding Paul, telling him not to step on the caribou hides my dad had made me.

Later, folks told us Grace was Clarence’s mom. We were surprised, and marveled at the idea. Clarence was already larger than life to me, the guy with me in the brush, coming up the hill. I held his arm; I ran my hand over his stomach, gripping his lower back. “Agh. Jus like jail.”

When Paul Outwater from Kiana spent the night. I remember Grace chiding Paul, telling him not to step on the caribou hides my dad had made me.

After eating too much caribou fat. It seemed plausible. We heard Clarence’s siblings had died when he was little, and only he had survived. It seemed plausible. He was so tough. It made sense.

I lost track of how many times I almost shot Clarence. The first time was when I was 11. I never told anyone. It was May; the first time I swam north and I ran my dog team down to Willow Island across from the mouth of the Hunt, tied them in the willows and laced on my snowshoes, and streaked toward where I heard Canada goose honking. Through brush I saw two dark things moving, disappearing, moving again. The honking was loud, and coming from them. I aimed with my 22. Suddenly I realized it was Clarence’s black shaved head in the crosshairs, crouched down behind grass. Beside him was his brother, with a smoking gun. It was the oldest good friend of ours, blowing on a goose call.

Another time Clarence wounded a grizzly bear at dusk below our log cache. He’d been drinking, and left 10 minutes later, in the dark. Bears have pushed on the door and it was tough watching him get old. I remember Grace chiding Paul, telling him not to step on the caribou hides my dad had made me.

“Jus like jail.”

I recall Grace, the old days.

I think for me he’ll remain out there with the cowerlere.
After a year of back-and-forth, state officials plan to charge ride-sharing companies like Uber and Lyft a $2.50 fee to drop off and pick up passengers at the Anchorage and Fairbanks airports.

Similar fees exist widely at other airports, including Juneau, though Uber and Lyft have protested the proposed fee as exorbitant. The companies typically pass the fees directly to passengers as a surcharge.

With the fee, set to take effect Feb. 1, state officials expect to plan for growth and make up for lost parking and rental car revenue, said Keith Day, controller for the Alaska International Airport System. He said officials see the fee as a fair access charge for commercial activity at the airport.

The fee comes as Alaska's state and local governments wrangle with the new business model posed by ride-sharing companies, where passengers hail and pay for rides with a smartphone app.

Alaska passed legislation to allow Uber and Lyft rides with a smartphone app. Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) continues to propose such high fees for both pick-ups and drop-offs -- costs that will ultimately impact customers and airport employees, Richards wrote.

State officials plan to take public comment on the change until the end of January.

At Juneau International Airport, Lyft already pays a $1.50 fee for drop-offs and pickups, said airport manager Patty Wahto. That fee has been in place several months. Uber recently signed a similar agreement, Wahto said.

The fees also stemmed from issues with revenue and fairness, Wahto said. The airport collects access fees for commercial activity. Taxi, limos and shuttles already pay fees, Wahto added.

"It is the platform for saying, 'OK, Uber and Lyft are no different,' " Wahto said.

At the Anchorage airport, taxis pay $75 for an annual permit to access airport property. If the proposed $2.50 fee holds, an Uber driver who picks up and drops off passengers at the airport each day would watch catch up within a month.

Day acknowledged a Lyft or Uber driver may end up with far more than $75 in fees each year. But he said the companies are not technically taxicabs, and the airport isn't required to charge equal rates.

"If they want to be taxicabs, they can get a taxi permit," Day said.

Once the fee takes effect, the airport will be able to track rides using a location-based service, Day said. He said the data would help officials understand how the ride-sharing companies affect the airport. Because of congestion concerns, Uber and Lyft drivers are already restricted to the upper level of the terminal, he said.

Officials plan to collect data for a year and adjust the fee as needed, Day said.

He couldn't offer estimates for how much money might be raised. Fee revenue would stay at the airport and help manage future growth and congestion, Day said.

So far, the fees haven't led to a big windfall at the Juneau airport. The airport has netted between $113 and $133 each month from Lyft since the fee took effect, said Wahto, the manager.

But the fee took effect during Juneau's slow season, between the bustle of summer and the legislative session, Wahto said. She said officials expect the pace to pick up once the session starts later this month.

This story first appeared in the Anchorage Daily News and is reprinted here with permission.
A scientist from Ohio once pondered why moose have such long noses. Why, one might ask, does a scientist from Ohio once pondered why moose have such long noses? Witmer couldn’t rule out that moose use their unique nostrils for directional smelling, but all the complicated tissues that make up a moose's nostrils suggested a way forward. Witmer and his co-workers speculated on why the moose might have evolved such a long nose while other members of the deer family have relatively short noses.

One argument was that a long nose could help a moose shed heat from its huge body after running long distances to avoid predators. Witmer and his co-workers found this adaptation unlikely because few blood vessels exist near the outside surface of a moose's nose.

Another reason a moose might have a big nose is to better sniff out predators or potential mates. Witmer found that idea had merit, and his attention soon turned to a moose's nostrils.

“Animals like horses, dogs and cats can't close their nostrils,” Witmer said. “Closing your nostrils is a common aquatic adaptation, but you don't see it in other members of the deer family.”

When a moose dips its head underwater, the difference between the water pressure and the air pressure causes the nostrils to close, Witmer said. This adaptation, perhaps the main reason a moose's nose is so long, allows a moose to feed underwater without flooding its nose, an unpleasant sensation even for two-legged, short-nosed mammals like us.

Since the late 1970s, the University of Alaska Fairbanks’ Geophysical Institute has provided this column free in cooperation with the UAF research community. Ned Rozell ned.rozell@alaska.edu is a science writer for the Geophysical Institute. This column first appeared in 2013.
EMPLOYMENT

The Native Village of Eyak in Cordova, AK is accepting applications for several Technician II (Fisheries) positions. The positions are 3-4 months beginning in late April. Submit completed application, cover letter and resume to HR@eyak-nsn.gov. Application forms and more information can be found at www.eyak-nsn.gov

PUBLIC NOTICE

Turquoise Broadcasting Co. LLC has submitted an application, 20181228AAJ with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to relocate FM Translator Station K276FF from Seward, AK to Unalaska, AK to rebroadcast KXBA, Nikiski, AK. Information can be found at TBCRADIO.COM “Station Records” Please contact the FCC with your comments.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Chignik Lagoon Long Range Transportation Plan draft has been completed and is available for review. A copy can be obtained at the Village Office in Chignik Lagoon. Comments may be submitted through email to clvcoffice@gmail.com or at 907-840-2281. The deadline for comments is 30 days.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A vehicle has been left abandoned on Ocean Beauty property in Naknek, AK for multiple years. It is a gray 1986 Nissan Pickup. VIN: JN6ND11S3GW033689. License plate number: 4692DJ. Please contact Troy Wills (206) 573-8326 to reclaim vehicle. If vehicle is not claimed in 30 days, the process to obtain ownership and title will be continued.

The Native Village of Eyak in Cordova, AK is accepting applications for several Technician II (Fisheries) positions. The positions are 3-4 months beginning in late April. Submit completed application, cover letter and resume to HR@eyak-nsn.gov. Application forms and more information can be found at www.eyak-nsn.gov

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ACROSS
1. Fraternity K
6. ___lees.com
9. Civil rights icon
13. Think tank output
14. Like a dim star
15. What pigeon did
16. "Up on compass"
17. Shakespearean fuss
18. Did like goo
19. "On a novelty button"
21. Decline
23. Gallery tool
24. "Workers of the world, ____!"
25. _____Air in L.A.
28. Way off freeway
30. "Pain scale faces, e.g." 34. "-zoic" periods
36. "____ good example"
38. Xe
39. Hokkaido native
40. "Face in a text"
43. "Like Jason’s or Freddy’s face"
45. October birthstone
46. Genealogical plant
47. Capital of Taiwan
49. "Tosca" tune
51. Blunder
52. Chopper blade
54. One of Indiana’s quests
56. "On a prankster’s face?"
58. "Like one at a haunted house"
61. Selected
62. Water snake
66. Macho men
67. Pastrami holder
68. South American cameld
69. "Like one in front of Taj Mahal?"
71. Create with cloth
72. Doesn’t mix with water
21. Decline
23. Gallery tool
24. "Workers of the world, ____!"
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67. Pastrami holder
68. South American cameld
69. "Like one in front of Taj Mahal?"
71. Create with cloth
72. Doesn’t mix with water

DOWN
1. Reunion bunch
2. #17 Across, pl.
3. Make waves
4. BBQ spot
5. Masonry unit
6. Not home
7. "Like one at a funeral"
8. Familiar
9. "Face on Mount Rushmore"
10. Do like goo
11. "As ____ on TV"
12. Put two and two together
15. Cerebral part
20. Clear the board
22. Doesn’t mix with water
24. To the required standards, 3 words
25. "In Beauty’s magic mirror"
26. "The Goldbergs" sibling
27. Hawaiian veranda
29. Memorandum, for short
31. Accustom
32. Not a gregarious one
33. "On a snob’s face"
35. "One receiving something unexpected"
37. A bit cracked
41. Hipbone-related
44. Monarch bodyguard
48. I in T.G.I.F.
50. Fit for farming
53. Deed hearings
55. Whale’s lunch
56. Sound of relief
57. Opening page
58. A whole bunch
59. "Goodness gracious!"
60. Top of the Capitol
61. Repeated Cuban dance step
62. Needle hole
65. Makes feathers stick

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.
SUICIDE
From Page 1

(50.5 per 100,000 people) and the Northern region (50.1 per 100,000), according to the Department of Health and Social Services. The Northern region typically includes the North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Nome and the Bering Strait.

One of the most striking sets of figures involves what was known about the people before they died. Of the total, 97 percent had “known precipitating circumstances.” Those include mental health issues, substance use problems, physical health problems, criminal or legal troubles or issues with or at work.

Nearly the same number of people had a documented mental health issue or had what the report describes as “intimate partner problems.” Of the total number of people who died by suicide in the state, 41 percent of those tested for alcohol were positive. An additional 36 percent had a documented mental health issue or had what the report describes as “intimate partner problems.”

Of the 597 total, about 94 percent of the people who died were toxicologically tested. Of those, 70 percent tested positive for alcohol or drugs, the project report shows. The substances that were most likely to show up were alcohol, opiates, marijuana and amphetamines, the authors noted. While alcohol use declined 19 percent from 2015 to 2017, opiate use increased 64 percent over the same period. Alcohol was still more prevalent than opiates, but the numbers show there has been change over time.

Women were more likely than men to have signs of substance use, as were Alaska Native people to all other groups.

The majority of people (73 percent) who died by suicide in the Arctic during those three years were found to have been using substances shortly before their death. “The demographic variations presented here can be used to identify priorities for targeted public health, health care system and medical interventions and to advance advocacy efforts to address health and wellness disparities,” the authors noted. You can read the full toxicology summary online at http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/r2019_01.pdf. The five-year update can be found at http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2019_01.pdf.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, or if you’ve lost a loved one to suicide and need someone to talk to, there are people out there who can help: The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours a day at 1-800-273-TALK or www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline also has helplines in Spanish and those specifically for military veterans through their main number.

The Veteran’s Crisis Line can be reached at 1-888-237-7233, pressing option 1. You can also text 838255 for help, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Alaska CARELINE is available 24 hours a day at 1-877-266-HELP or 907-452-HELP. You can also text 4help to 839863 from 3 p.m.-11 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. More information can be found at carelinealaska.com.

A 24-hour helpline for members of the LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ youth community is 1-866-4-U-TREVOR or www.thetrevorproject.org or @TrevorProject. More information and state-by-state resources can be found at www.suicide.org. You can also find help by calling your local community health center or dialing 9-1-1, or by starting a conversation with a friend, family member, or someone you trust.

Shady Grove Oliver can be reached at sgolivei@gmail.com.
ing a star to find the infant Jesus.

Father Michael Nicolai has been leading slavii in Dillingham for the past six years. He said that starring was a personal experience. “For me, I was brought up into the starring to proclaim to everyone in their households that Christ is born. And for me, it was a great thing growing up because they expressed it as something very important in my life,” he explained.

This year, St. Seraphim of Sarov is housing stars from three communities: Dillingham, Aleknagik and Portage Creek. Another star will remain in the church throughout the celebrations, which end Jan. 13.

As the Christmas mass concluded, boys and men gathered at the front of the church. Each took up a large, glittering star made of tinsel and cardboard and began to spin them as the congregation sang hymns in English, Yup’ik and Slavonic. The carolers then brought the stars to the parish house, where they sang, shared a meal and rested. Then they split up: one slavii group visited homes around town, while another drove to Aleknagik. The Portage Creek star travels to Manokotak on Jan. 8.

Marilyn Casteel’s house was the first stop for Dillingham’s slavii group. “Back in them days, we would all get ready, and if the slavii didn’t come, we would put everything away, keep our lights on, keep our door open, and we’d go to bed,” Casteel said. “And when the slavii came, we would hear them, we’d all get up, we’d get everything ready. You know, my grandpa always said, ‘Do not ever turn away the slavii.’”

Leona Carr is from Portage Creek. She spent Christmas caroling in different houses around Dillingham and has been starring since she was a little girl. “Every year we slavii. Before we used to go all the way upriver and to all the villages. We used to go by dog sled a long time ago, and by snow machine. The Elders and kids usually fly, but now we’ve been mainly flying. And in Dillingham here, we go with vehicles. But we still always have a star, you know, following the star.”

When Carr was little, slavii groups would travel all day to get to neighboring communities. “The families used to have their own dog teams,” she said. “And then, I remember as a little kid when we went to snow machines and they were going down to Portage, we used to see a whole line – probably hundreds and hundreds of snow machines. When all the stars were coming down from upriver to Portage, when I was a little girl, we used to watch outside the house, you know, watching all the snow-gos. And we’d have to go up to the church and go meet the star at the church.”

This year, the Portage Creek star will make a final journey to its home parish on Jan. 13 — New Year’s Eve. Until then, the stars travel between communities around the region for a week; Dillingham is expecting stars from Koliganek, Levelok and New Stuyahok.