



Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today

Fairbanks City Council advances AFL-CIO contract to second reading. » INTERIOR, A4

GOOD MORNING



The weather.

Mostly cloudy with a few flurries and single-digit temperatures.

High today 7
Low tonight -4

WEATHER » A9

Aurora forecast.

Auroral activity will be low. Weather permitting, low displays will be visible overhead from Barrow to Fairbanks.

This information is provided by aurora forecasters at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For more information about the aurora, visit <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast>

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WORLD OF WONDER

The wonders of Wyoming.

YOUTH
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CROCS FOR KIDS

Fairbanksans help send footwear to orphans in Liberia.

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HALL OF FAME

Iron Dog inducted into Alaska Sports Hall of Fame.

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SOURDOUGH JACK:
"I was hopin' fer a bag limit of 50 or so, but 25 will hafta do."



Chitina salmon limit raised to 25

By Sam Friedman
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Salmon bag limits are going up in Chitina next year, according to the Chitina Dipnetter's Association.

The Alaska Board of Fisheries voted this weekend to increase the personal-use fishery to 25 salmon for the permit holder plus 10 additional salmon for each member in a permit holder's household. The fishery is open to Alaska residents.

It's the first bag limit increase in memory, said Chitina Dipnetter's Association President Chuck Derrick. He has been dip-netting for salmon at Chitina since the 1970s, when he said the limit was 45 salmon.

The Fairbanks-based Chitina Dipnetter's Association advocates for users of the personal-use fishery. Derrick and two other board members from the

Charter boat operator Sam McCallister, in boat, talks to former News-Miner outdoors editor Tim Mowry, on bank, about where to fish along the Copper River at Chitina in 2012. PHOTO BY BRIAN O'DONOGHUE



CHITINA » A7



Tools are organized in the shop Monday morning at the Folk School's new location off Beverly Lane in the Goldstream Valley. ERIC ENGMAN/NEWS-MINER

Worth the trouble Folk School settles in at new location

By Jeff Richardson
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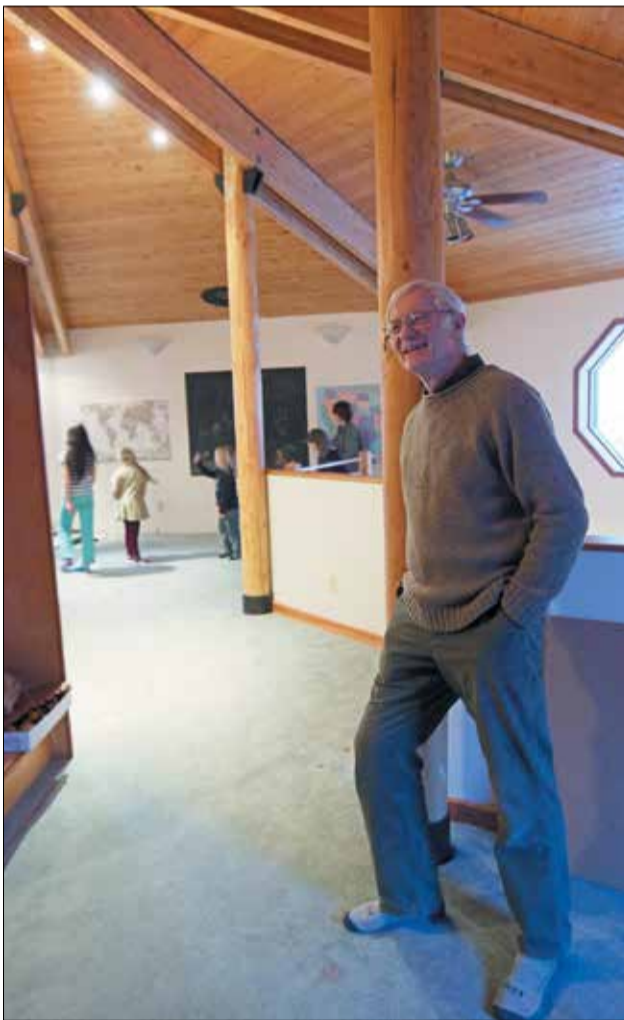
During a frantic week, volunteers with Folk School Fairbanks packed up the well-stocked building off Miller Hill Road and moved the contents to a new location in the Goldstream Valley.

The trouble very well may have been worth it, according to leaders of the traditional skills school. The distinctive octagonal building is large enough to host several classes at once, a pair of heated garages provide space for woodworking and the wilderness setting offers a peaceful backdrop.

"This has got some real potential," board president John Manthei said with a smile as he offered a tour of the property.

The move is the latest evolution of the Folk School, a nonprofit organization that teaches a variety of subjects such as woodworking, crafts, cooking and more. In the week ahead, there are classes at the new building on making birch-bark ornaments, building a toboggan and string-band performance.

The Folk School had operated for more than 20 years without a permanent location, typically holding its



Folk School board president John Manthei talks Monday morning about the school's new digs — it recently moved to a new location off Beverly Lane in the Goldstream Valley. ERIC ENGMAN/NEWS-MINER

FOLK SCHOOL » A9

Drilling companies agree to pay \$12.2 million

By Casey Grove
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ANCHORAGE — The operators of two mobile oil rigs that saw a tumultuous winter 2012 journey after drilling in Alaska's offshore Arctic waters have agreed to plead guilty to environmental and maritime crimes and pay \$12.2 million in fines and community service.

Noble Drilling was contracted by Shell Oil to operate the drill ship Noble Discoverer and the cone-shaped drilling unit Kulluk, designed and owned by Shell. Noble admitted Monday that it was responsible for its crews fixing up a bilge system on the Discoverer that caused oily water to be discharged near Unalaska, causing a sheen in Broad Bay in July 2012,

and that they falsified entries in oil records books for both the Discoverer and Kulluk. Noble also admitted to unsafe conditions aboard the Discoverer.

The company is set to plead guilty to eight felonies Dec. 19.

Both the Discoverer and Kulluk faced serious problems after leaving their drill sites in the Arctic. The Discoverer lost power and had to be towed from Dutch Harbor to Seward in late December 2012, and the Kulluk became untethered from a tugboat and ran aground near Kodiak Island on New Year's Eve 2012.

The charges made public Monday were not related to the Kulluk's grounding, but problems with the Discoverer had apparently attracted attention.

In Seward, the Coast Guard inspected the ship and started an investigation, federal prosecutors said. That followed reports of poor conditions aboard the Discoverer, which Noble is charged with concealing, that included fuel and oil leaks, multiple engine backfires and high levels of exhaust in the ship's engine room, prosecutors said.

The sheen in Broad Bay also tipped off the Coast Guard, Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Feldis said at a Monday news conference.

"There were a whole number of things that Noble did to draw attention from lots of people," Feldis said.

As part of the plea agreement, which is signed but still needs to be accepted by a judge, Noble agrees

FINE » A9

Skier recounts avalanche that killed his friend

By Sam Friedman
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Michael Hopper lost a friend, a dog and some faith in his ability to gauge avalanche risks Saturday afternoon.

Hopper, 63, has skied the slopes of the eastern Alaska Range for 20 years. He's co-owner of the Black Rapids Lodge, a historic roadhouse nearby.

As of Tuesday, he's recovering from the avalanche that buried him and killed his skiing partner, Erik Peterson, and his dog, Rowdy. Physically, Hopper said he's feeling OK. But he's feeling betrayed by the mountains he loves and thought he knew. In all his years skiing, he'd only been in one other avalanche, a much less serious "slough" avalanche.

"I may have gotten a little too confident, a little too familiar. Maybe things are changing in ways none of us expected," he said.

'Whomp'

Hopper and Peterson were going for the first real ski of the season Sunday morning. They left Peterson's truck on the Richardson Highway about 10:30 a.m. and headed up a valley to the mountains in the Rainbow Ridge area.

Hopper has known Peterson, a former Delta Junction football coach, for three years. They'd previously done trips considerably more ambitious than Saturday's day trip together, including an attempt to climb Mount Hayes.

On Saturday, they planned to do a backcountry downhill ski circuit Hopper has done many times before, usually as one of the first skis of the year.

They discussed avalanche risks as they went, but the main risk on their mind was running out of daylight.

As they skied they heard occasional "whomping," the sound of a layer of snow collapsing. Whomping is traditionally a red flag for avalanche danger, a sign of an unstable layer of snow below the surface that threatens to give way and send a slab of snow down the slope.

But Hopper and Peterson weren't in mountainous terrain at the time. They were approaching the mountains across a gently sloping valley. In Hopper's experience, some

AVALANCHE » A7

