

Here's what
you gotta do

A list of things
to do this summer

OUTDOORS, C1

SPORTS, D1

THEY'RE BACK

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appearance since 2006

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Thursday, May 23, 2013



Relief for Fort Yukon



Photos by Sam Harrel/News-Miner

Yukon River ice that broke free Tuesday evening is jammed just below Fort Yukon on Wednesday afternoon. A large volume of water still is impounded behind a large ice sheet 12 miles upriver of Fort Yukon.

Large ice jam on Yukon River appears to be breaking up

By MATT BUXTON
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FORT YUKON — “We dodged a bullet here.”

Those were the words of Fort Yukon resident Walter Solomon as he and dozens of others watched slabs of river ice suspected to be from a once-menacing ice jam 12 miles up the Yukon River pass safely below the town’s levee late Wednesday night.

The 600-person Yukon River community collectively breathed a sigh of relief after many days of being on high alert for what was expected to be a serious flood.

City flood coordinator Velma Carroll had been paying close attention to the shape of the ice jam 12 miles upriver. The jam had accumulated a lake of water estimated to be 7 miles wide and 30 miles long and could have created a serious flash flood if it broke at once.

Instead, the National Weather Service spotted a roughly 200 foot-wide hole in the jam early Wednesday morning. At about 8 p.m. Wednesday, it is suspected that hole began to grow, sending more ice downriver.

Shortly after the deluge of ice appeared Wednesday night, Carroll



Fort Yukon resident Keith James walks to the back of his boat at his house on the Yukon River on Wednesday afternoon. The river bank at his house on First Avenue typically is about 5 feet tall.

got on the radio to tell the community that she believes the worst has been avoided.

“It’s been breaking more and more and more off from upriver,” Carroll said. “There’s no other place we have all this ice.”

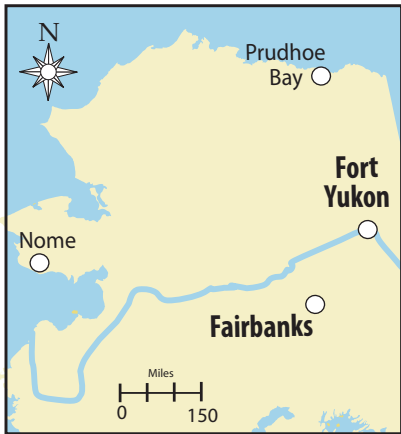
Confirmation of the speculation will have to wait until this morning, when the National Weather Service conducts a flyover.

Water levels rose slightly when ice began to run, but fell considerably during the next two hours.

“We dodged a bullet,” Solomon said. “But we really still don’t know what’s coming next.”

There also was the danger of a second ice jam forming downriver from the town. Although much of the ice is believed to have started to decay with the warm weather, a jam could build up and flooding could back up into Fort Yukon. The National Weather Service, as of Wednesday evening, had a flood warning in place through early today.

Carroll said the chances of that scenario were quickly dwindling on the news that the river outside Beaver had gone out. Carroll said she



Please see YUKON, Page A6

DeeDee Hammond/News-Miner

Schools

Board members adopt district budget

By MARY BETH SMETZER
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A quorum of four Fairbanks North Star Borough school board members on Wednesday adopted the 2013-2014 school district budget, which had been approved at a final budget meeting Friday.

The budget totals \$261,854,680 for all funds for the next school year.

Unlike the many lengthy budget work sessions that preceded its adoption, Wednesday’s meeting was done in less than 10 minutes, with no amendments added.

School Board President Kristina Brophy, Heidi Haas, John Thies and Sue Hull approved the resolution unanimously but with some reservation.

“It’s been a little more challenging process than it has been in the past,” said Brophy, referring to the numerous budget meetings that preceded the decision.

“It wasn’t the ideal budget with some of the cuts we had to make,” Brophy said, “but we have to move on to sustainability and move on to the business at hand.”

Some of the frustration throughout the budget process, which started in mid-March, was the fifth year of flat funding by the state legislature.

“We have cut and cut and cut, and we can’t do that anymore,” Hull said. “The world is changing, and we need to be able to give them (students) things that they need to be able to compete.”

Both Hull and Haas in their comments, thanked borough Mayor Luke Hopkins and assembly members Diane Hutchison, Karl Kassel, Van Lawrence, John Davies, Kathryn Dodge and Guy Sattley for increasing the local school contribution.

Haas said she is supporting the budget in the interest of moving the school district forward.

“I believe the board was thoughtful as we went

Please see BUDGET, Page A6

Inside

Classified	C4
Comics	C3
Dear Abby	B4
Interior/Alaska	B1
Obituaries	B2
Opinion	A4
Our Town	A3
Outdoors	C1
Sports	D1
Stock Markets	A5
Weather	D4
World	B3

Vol. CIX, No. 142
20 pages



The damage



Estimates say tornado damaged 13,000 homes, cost area \$2 billion or more. Page A6



Sourdough Jack sez:

“My summer self just wants to float the river. My next winter self doesn’t like this idea.”

UAF finalizing veterinary degree partnership

By JEFF RICHARDSON
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The University of Alaska Fairbanks is working out the final details of a partnership to establish a new veterinary medicine program, with the first classes expected to begin in 2015.

The agreement, which still hasn’t been finalized, would allow UAF and Colorado State University to jointly offer a veterinary degree. Under terms of the deal, UAF would provide the first two years of graduate-level study, while CSU would provide the final two.

The arrangement would be a boon to UAF, which would be able to funnel a limited number of students to

a top-tier veterinary school without the expense of maintaining a full program.

UAF Chancellor Brian Rogers said the costs of building a four-year vet program in Alaska are daunting — about \$100 million in capital costs, along with a \$20 million annual operating budget.

The UAF-CSU partnership will be available for a fraction of those costs. UA requested \$400,000 from the Legislature — it received half of that amount this year — and said the rest of the program will be funded through student tuition.

“Financially, this is a high-cost program,” Rogers said. “But the ability to do it without all those costs is a benefit to us.”

Alaska is the only state that doesn’t have a veterinary school or a partnership with a state that does, said Paul Layer, UAF’s dean of the College of Natural Science and Mathematics. UAF is close to helping Alaska join that club, he said.

“In my mind, it’s a done deal,” Layer said. “The devil’s in the details, but we’re working through those details.”

Layer said UAF is in the process of hiring a faculty position in anatomy and plans to later add another position that will be divided between veterinary classes and the cooperative extension program. The rest will be taught by existing UAF faculty

Please see VET, Page A6