

Remembering Middy;
new Unalakleet office to
be named in his honor

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Success in corporation
leads back to decades-
long partnership with GFC

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NSFR&D and Norton
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NSEDC makes \$95,000
in donations to regional
organizations

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NSEDC

Winter 2020
news

NSEDC Mission Statement

"NSEDC will participate in the Bering Sea fisheries to provide economic development through education, employment, training and financial assistance to our member communities."

NSEDC Board Members & Member Communities

Sara Seetot • *Brevig Mission*
Frances Ozenna • *Diomedede*
Oscar Takak, Sr. • *Elim*
Joel James • *Gambell*
Dean Peterson • *Golovin*
Douglas Swanson • *Koyuk*
Adem Boeckmann • *Nome*
Truman Kava • *Savoonga*
Milton Cheemuk • *St. Michael*
Harvey Sookiayak • *Shaktoolik*
Morris Nashoanak, Sr. • *Stebbins*
Joe Garnie • *Teller*
Frank Katchatag • *Unalakleet*
Frank Oxereok, Jr. • *Wales*
Dan Harrelson • *White Mountain*



Above: Middy Johnson "across the river" at a family celebration

NSEDC mourns passing of colleague and friend William "Middy" Johnson

UNALAKLEET--Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) mourns the passing of Norton Sound Seafood Products Operations Manager William "Middy" Johnson. Middy died unexpectedly in Unalakleet on December 18, 2019. His wife, Aurora, children Sasha, Shyler and Siku, along with numerous family and friends from around the state celebrated his life with a memorial ser-

vice in Unalakleet on December 23, 2019.

Since January of 2013, Middy provided leadership for Norton Sound Seafood Products (NSSP) operations and employees as NSSP's Operations Manager. A savvy businessman who negotiated salmon prices with domestic and foreign buyers, Middy also created a strong team of seasonal and full-time staff that he

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Above: Middy Johnson before the 2012 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race

REMEMBERING MIDDY

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supervised with regional know-how. Prior to serving as the Operations Manager, Middy worked for NSSP in various capacities for a total of 17.5 years, not including the years he served as an NSEDC Board Member from 2004-2006 and again from 2010-2013.

Middy created a solid team of employees, from the processing and vessel crews to the fish buyers in the northern Norton Sound. “He always instilled in our mindset that we are a team,” NSSP Office Manager Sherilee Ivanoff said. “No one was above anyone else. We all contributed and felt able to share our concerns and ideas. He always told us ‘bring your best.’”

“Bring your best.”

Another person who worked closely with Middy was NSEDC’s Chief Operating Officer Tyler Rhodes. “Middy had an amazing gift for leadership, and that

was not limited to his role at NSSP. It was just who he was,” Tyler said. “There is so much that went into making Middy the great leader that he was, it’s something you cannot quantify. But if I had to pick one attribute that stood out to me, it was that he truly cared,” he said. Middy started Sourdough Fridays in the Unalakleet office, making sourdough pancakes for staff and crew on Friday mornings. Tyler has adopted this tradition in the Nome office. “He cared deeply for people, whether they were a seasonal processor who may not work more than two weeks, or a top manager who worked with him for years,” Tyler said. “He cared for the fishermen and bent over backwards to ensure they could fish, because he knew how important a single opener could be for the rest of their year. He cared for the resource because he knew all the opportunities it could provide residents and fishermen, so long as we take care of it. Middy’s care for all these things was readily apparent in his actions and words. People could easily see

that, and they would willingly follow his lead because they knew his motivations were for a greater good.”

During Middy’s tenure, NSSP saw record-breaking salmon and crab seasons, along with the highest amount in wages paid to the seasonal NSSP staff. “He had the understanding that every person and role in the NSSP operations was valuable and he treated people with dignity, often solidifying relationships with ease using jokes and commonalities,” NSSP’s Vessel Manager Karl Erickson said. “He knew NSSP’s success didn’t rely on just one person, but relied on every individual and fisherman working and contributing. He had a strong belief in the people of this region being able to get the job done. It will take a lot of people to fill his shoes.”

Aside from his work at NSEDC, Middy also served the community of Unalak-



New Unalakleet office to be named “The Middy Building”

leet, the Norton Sound region and the State of Alaska in numerous leadership roles. Whatever role he was fulfilling, whether as the Mayor of Unalakleet, the 1996 2A State Basketball Champion Head Coach, or the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race Unalakleet Checkpoint chief cook, Middy’s presence, reassuring demeanor, humor, and we-can-do-it attitude made him the kind of person you wanted leading your team.

An active person, Middy completed the 2010 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, thoroughly enjoying his time in the country with his dogs and meeting people along the trail. A hunter and fisher, Middy enjoyed native food potlucks when celebrating birthdays or holidays at work and home, and loved sharing his food, always expertly prepared by him and his wife, Aurora. Above all, Middy enjoyed going up-river to his cabin at Chirosky with his wife and family.

On January 9, 2020 the NSEDC Board of Directors voted to name the new Unalakleet office “The Middy Building.” “We will always remain grateful for Middy’s leadership and commitment to the people and communities of the Norton Sound region,” NSEDC Vice-Chair Dan Harrelson said. “Middy leaves a rich legacy, and we were so fortunate to have him lead our fishing operations all those years.”

The Middy Building is set to be complete by May 2020 and will house all NSEDC Unalakleet staff offices, a conference room, a board room, a kitchen, and lab facilities for southern NSFR&D operations. The board room is designed to open up to a larger community space for gatherings. The NSEDC Board of Directors will hold the 2020 1st Quarter Board Meetings in the new board room the week of May 4 and will host an open house.



NSEDC's success linked with decades-long partnership with Glacier Fish Company; a look at our history



The *F/T Northern Glacier* visits Nome.

Before the Community Development Quota (CDQ) program was developed and Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) organized as the regional entity in 1992, a fishing company in Seattle was growing. Glacier Fish Company (GFC) was established in 1982 as a limited partnership. Erik Breivik, a Norwegian fisherman, was recruited to run the business. He managed fishing and business operations, including sales, personnel, insurance, and banking. Outside attorney John Bundy drafted the limited partnership agreement as well as a shipyard contract with Martinac Ship Building Company in Tacoma, Washington, to build GFC's first vessel, the *F/T Northern Glacier*, which is still owned and operated by GFC today. The vessel was designed as a catcher processor, meaning that it doesn't just harvest fish, but also processes and freezes the fish on-board.

With Breivik at the helm, GFC estab-

lished itself as a pioneer in development of the U.S. Bering Sea pollock fishery. At first, *F/T Northern Glacier* concentrated on cod, but shifted to pollock, taking advantage of the 1976 Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) which provided for U.S. companies to displace foreign harvesters from the U.S. 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. As more fishing interests realized these opportunities, more capital poured in, and the race for fish intensified. Many competitors failed along the way. GFC, under Breivik's leadership, maintained financial success through expert fishing practices, development of new products, prioritizing high-quality fish product production, maintenance of professional and loyal crews, and responsible business practices.

Eight years after the company was established, GFC was profitable enough to take on a second catcher processor, the *F/T Pacific Glacier*. Once again, Bundy was contracted to help negotiate and draft the shipyard contract with Mjel-

lem & Karlsen in Bergen, Norway. The *F/T Pacific Glacier* was a re-build from the hull of a supply boat built in 1976 at Todd Shipyard in Seattle.

At that time, talk of a CDQ program at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) meetings was taking place. The general debate was whether the Bering Sea coastal communities should have an opportunity to participate in the fisheries being developed off their shores by U.S. vessels, primarily from Washington and Oregon. At the time, regulations called for a 15% in-season pollock reserve to provide managers a buffer to prevent overharvest in the event of domestic fleet expansion or unexpected stock conditions during the fishing year. As the fishery developed the uncertainty was reduced, and that reserve became less important. When the NPFMC finally created the CDQ Program, half (7.5%) of this reserve was essentially converted to an allocation to the CDQ communities to give western Alaska

communities a meaningful stake in the now “Americanized” fisheries taking place in the Bering Sea. NSEDC, at the time, was already an organized legal entity and quickly converted to a CDQ organization to participate in the program and represent the fifteen communities in the Norton Sound region.

As NSEDC worked to secure its share of the pollock fishery, as decided by the State of Alaska, Breivik at GFC was figuring out how to react to this new program. The initial CDQ program was controversial among the pollock businesses. Pollock fishermen, mostly in Seattle, expressed the view that they took all the risks and made the investments to develop the fishery, and now a significant slice was being taken away and given to the coastal Alaska communities. Having seen and experienced similar trends in Norwegian fisheries, Breivik advised his GFC team to accept the reality and capitalize on the opportunity.

As the CDQ groups were formed, they needed to figure out how to monetize their quotas by forming harvest partnerships with the pollock companies. Breivik had conducted an experimental shrimp fishery in the Bering Strait and felt an affinity with the Norton Sound region. When NSEDC distributed its request for proposals, Breivik was determined to compete to harvest NSEDC’s quota and asked Bundy to help write GFC’s proposal to NSEDC. “Someone gave me the name of Tim Towarak as a person with insight into what was going on with fisheries in Norton Sound,” Bundy said. “I called Tim and reached him at his place of employment. Tim gave me the basic information that commercial fisheries in their area, par-

ticularly salmon and herring, had been struggling in recent years.”

“Erik and Sam (another owner) were competing with other companies as they went to Nome to present their proposal to the NSEDC board,” Bundy said. GFC had been profitable almost since creation in 1982, but it was the fact that Erik and Sam were real fishermen—and honest and good operators—that GFC was selected. While awaiting the board’s decision back in Seattle, Breivik got the phone call from then-Executive Director John Jemewouk that GFC was selected. Members of the NSEDC Board of Directors in 1992 who are on the board today include Oscar Takak, Dean Peterson, Harvey Sookiyak and Truman Kava.

“On top of being an admired and well-respected leading fishing company, Erik and Sam had a solid plan for developing our local fisheries,” NSEDC Board Member Dean Peterson said. “They also had a plan in place for Norton Sound residents to be hired as processors on their vessels.”

Choosing GFC as a harvesting partner turned out to be a very rewarding decision by the NSEDC Board. Breivik activated the *F/T Northern Glacier* and *F/T Pacific Glacier*, and went to catch NSEDC’s CDQ, almost all in the month of December, thus starting GFC’s first of many royalty payments to NSEDC at a rate that had been negotiated and put into a harvest agreement.

In the early years, GFC and NSEDC worked very closely to carry out plans to create employment in the region and implement the ideas in GFC’s CDQ proposals to reinvigorate Nor-

ton Sound commercial fisheries. GFC also worked closely to maintain and improve NSEDC’s position with the State of Alaska by participating in the various hearings and bureaucratic processes the state set up to review the CDQ groups’ programs, decisions, performance and applications for quota. “I would attend all Board meetings of NSEDC,” Bundy said. “In 1995, we worked with Eugene (Asicksik) and the Executive Committee (Henry Ivanoff, Oscar Takak, Harvey Sookiyak and Pete Larsen) to plan for the next summer fishing operations and plans to open a plant in Unalakleet.” Today, the result of those early efforts is Norton Sound Seafood Products, NSEDC’s own processing company that buys salmon, halibut, cod and crab from resident fishers.

What some saw as a “take-away” GFC regarded as an opportunity for the benefit of both parties. Although GFC had to pay a royalty for NSEDC’s pollock quota, they now had access to more resource than it had when the entire fishery was open access. In addition, because it was a quota, the CDQ had added value to GFC. “We could fish it when it was most efficient to do so without fear of preemption by a competitor,” Bundy said. The CDQ could also be fished at times and in areas that open-access fish could not. The price paid for the CDQ was at a level that provided some profit to GFC. Thus, it was beneficial to both parties.

“Erik’s attitude was that, with quotas, ‘these guys can be the major owner of Bering Sea fisheries, and we should work with them,’” Bundy said. Breivik’s

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NSEDC History



The NSEDC Board of Directors in 2000. (Clockwise from top left: Harvey Sookiayak, Henry Ivanoff, Danny Adams, Dean Peterson, Luther Komonaseak, Victor Joe, Norman Menadalook, Oscar Takak, Sr., Mary Menadalook, Gilbert Ungott, Wilfred Katcheak, Dan Harrelson, Don Stiles, Walter Seetot, Truman Kava)

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remarks in this regard were prophetic, because in just five years after the CDQ program started, NSEDC became a 50% owner in GFC in 1997. Breivik and Bundy, through their respective companies, together owned the other 50%. The other partners who started GFC with Erik were all bought out. "GFC, with this smaller ownership group, was a much more cohesive and effective team," Bundy said. "In addition to its capital contribution, NSEDC brought political advantages that would improve GFC's relationships with the State of Alaska and Alaska's congressional delegation."

Since that first year as partners in ownership of GFC, the enterprise has grown steadily to the benefit of both companies. NSEDC's ownership in GFC evolved in 2009 so that the investment was held in NSEDC's wholly-owned subsidiary, Siu Alaska Corporation. The size of GFC operations has expanded over the years and along with that growth, the company has benefited from the addition of new partners.

GFC purchased the *F/T Alaska Ocean* (the largest catcher processor in the Bering Sea pollock fleet), along with all of its harvesting rights, in a deal which brought in new investors, Nippon Susan USA. JCJ Pacific Fisheries has also made a minority investment into GFC. The net result is that Siu Alaska Corporation is now the largest shareholder of GFC at 36.375%.

GFC has continued to diversify its fishing operations by acquiring a large ownership in, and management of, North Star Fishing Company which owns and operates four flatfish trawlers. The CDQ Program also expanded in the late 1990s, to include 10% or more of the catch limit of essentially all significant Bering Sea fisheries, including crab, Pacific cod, halibut, flatfish, and others. However, the partnership with GFC, and economic benefits derived from it, remain the anchor of NSEDC's growth in revenues and benefits to member communities.

Following a heroic battle with cancer, Erik Breivik passed in 2018. The next

generation of GFC's leadership remains steadfast and committed to Erik's core operating principles which served GFC well for more than 35 years. GFC will continue to strive to operate a well-maintained fleet, provide a healthy source of protein to the world, provide stable employment for its employees, and support NSEDC in delivering benefits and opportunity to 15 communities in western Alaska.

NSEDC has grown in tandem with GFC. Since 1993, NSEDC has grown from nearly \$5.9 million in revenue and nine employees to \$58 million in revenue and 602 full-time and part-time employees. Through the CDQ program, we are tasked with investing in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands fisheries and, in turn, providing opportunities and economic development in our member communities. As the largest principal owner of GFC, NSEDC (through Siu Alaska Corporation) remains committed to success of the fishing company.

NSEDC Board decision to suspend 2020 red king crab buying operations comes down to preservation of stock

The Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) Board of Directors made a difficult decision at the 2019 4th Quarter Board Meetings in February to suspend Norton Sound Seafood Products' (NSSP) Norton Sound red king crab buying operations for the 2020 winter and summer seasons. In the unprecedented decision, the board also voted to have NSEDC advocate to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Alaska Board of Fisheries to close the fishery for the 2020 fishing season for the preservation of the Norton Sound red king crab stock.

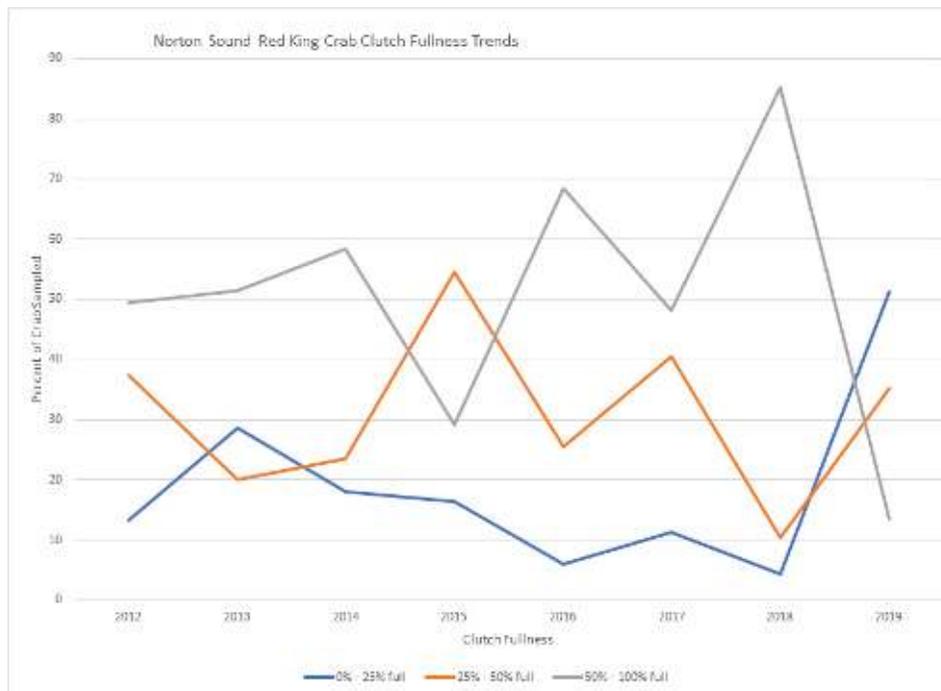
“We are going to see a decline in reproduction,” Northern Norton Sound ADF&G Advisory Committee Chair Charlie Lean told the board. “Trawl surveys can’t find male crab. Commercial and subsistence crabbers can’t find male crab. Female crab can’t find

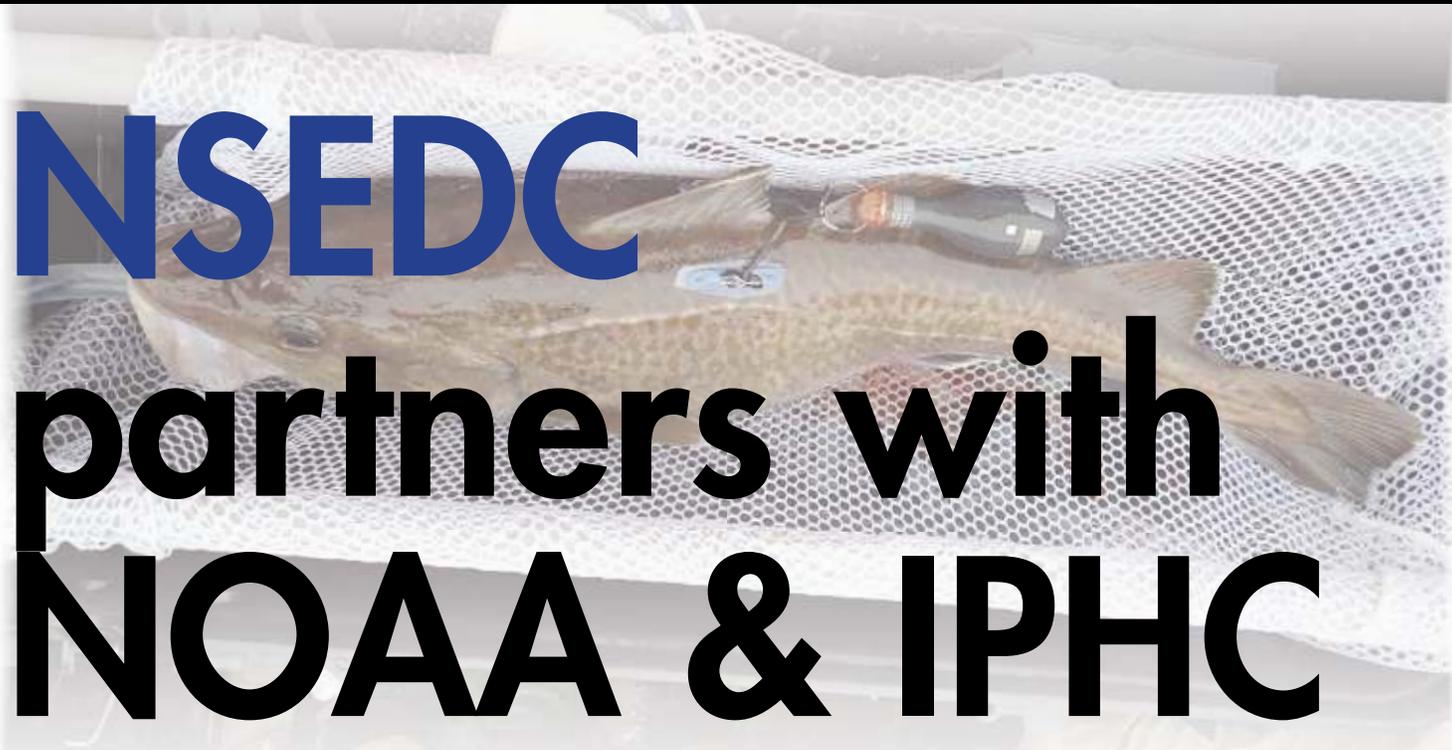
male crab. I am concerned.” In 2019, for the first time since 2012, ADF&G observer data showed there were more female crab with no or few eggs than there were with large clutches of eggs. Many females with no eggs indicate there aren’t enough male crab to fertilize females. Lean worked as ADF&G Nome Area Management Biologist for 15 years and assisted in management of the Norton Sound red king crab fishery in its early years. “The same situation happened in 1982 with the Norton Sound red king crab stock. Crab were overfished and the fishery crashed. It took 15 years for the population to recover. If we continue to make it worse, we could suffer for a long time,” he said. ADF&G plans to open the 2020 Norton Sound Red King Crab fishery with an anticipated Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) of 170,000 pounds, an increase from last year’s quota.

Lean and biologists from NSEDC’s Norton Sound Fisheries Research & Development (NSFR&D) department fear another year of commercial fishing could put the fishery unacceptably at risk and have it face a similar fate to those crab fisheries that were wiped out in Kodiak, the Gulf of Alaska, and most recently for the St. Matthews Island blue king crab stock. These crashes were due to lack of conservative management action. “There are numerous examples from across the state that prove that crab stocks, once overfished, may never recover,” NSFR&D Director Wes Jones said.

The 2019 Norton Sound commercial red king crab fishery was devastating for regional fishermen, with 82,335 pounds harvested in the combined winter and summer commercial fisheries compared with an average harvest of more than 460,000 pounds the five previous years. With the 2019 GHL of 150,600 pounds, crab fishers fell far short of the expected harvest—and not for a lack of effort. Fishermen reported fishing in a 100-mile area, from the middle of the Norton Sound to west of Sledge Island and not finding crab or financially breaking even for the season.

With NSSP Norton Sound red king crab operations suspended for the 2020 winter and summer commercial crabbing seasons, the NSEDC Board of Directors also voted to institute a moratorium until further notice on all new loans for Norton Sound red king crab fishermen, including fishermen’s receivables, revolving loans, and large vessel loans.





NSEDC **partners with** **NOAA & IPHC**

Fishermen & biologists help tag halibut & cod in Northern Bering Sea

By Myra Scholze

Norton Sound Fisheries Research & Development (NSFR&D) biologists and Norton Sound fishermen partnered with the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and National Oceanic Atmospheric Association (NOAA) last summer to deploy satellite tags on Pacific halibut and Pacific cod in the Northern Bering Sea. Anyone who lives in the Bering Strait region knows that things are changing – sea ice is forming later in the year and breaking up quickly, unprotected shorelines are ravaged by winter storms, and summer temperatures are hotter than normal. The changing climate is also altering the habits and habitats of fish and marine mammals.

The IPHC and NOAA have both conducted numerous halibut and cod satellite tagging projects in other areas of Alaska, but last summer was the first time the organizations studied

the northern Bering Sea so extensively. The data collected are important because warmer ocean temperatures are affecting the marine animals in the Northern Bering Sea. As recently as 2010, Pacific cod were much less common in this region. Tagging and tracking fish helps biologists, residents and the general public understand how the oceans are changing.

Satellite tags are small electronic devices that are attached to individual fish. Fish are caught, brought on board, quickly tagged, and then released back to the water. As the fish swim around, the tag records information, including temperature, depth, motion, and light intensity. This information is recorded every minute, resulting in a detailed picture of fish behavior and movement. After a predetermined amount of time, either 180 or 365 days for NSEDC's projects, the tags automatically pop off

the fish and float to the surface.

Once at the surface, satellite tags transmit their data to satellites, and they can be downloaded by scientists. Gone are the days of tracking down tags from remote beaches and waterways, when tags needed to be recovered to share their coveted research secrets. Now, this information can be obtained from the comfort of a desk and reviewed over morning coffee. "That being said, if you see one of these tags washed up on a beach or catch a halibut or a cod that is tagged, please contact NSFR&D," NSEDC Biologist Myra Scholze said. "There is a reward for their return and you're assisting in important research."

NSEDC worked with fishermen on St. Lawrence Island and in Nome to deploy 25 satellite tags. The fishermen and biologists were looking for cod and halibut

within a specific size range. Fish that are too small can be disrupted by the tag, and therefore medium to large fish were targeted. When suitable fish were caught, biologists took quick measurements, collected genetic clippings, and attached a tag to their backs before releasing them into the water - all of this is accomplished in less than three minutes.

“We were able to get all 25 of our tags allocated for the Nome section out in just two trips,” NSEDC Biologist Dawn Wehde said. Dawn also traveled to Savoonga with NOAA fisheries researchers, where they deployed tags on both halibut and Pacific cod. “It lined up perfectly that we were able to do the halibut and cod tagging at the same time, and I was able to accompany

fisheries biologists Susanne McDermott and David Bryon from NOAA out to the island,” she said. The biologists spent time with the community and meeting with the fishermen and plant workers during the first few days of their visit. The crew also gave presentations to Middle School and High School classes. “The best part of the trip was being out in the skiffs with fishermen,” Dawn said. “They were all very invested in helping us succeed. They also want to know where the fish go.”

To further understand changes in the Northern Bering Sea, NSEDC assisted with NOAA’s 2019 Northern Bering Sea Trawl Survey. NSEDC Fisheries Biologist Myra Scholze helped deploy tags on cod while participating in the

three-week survey. “Getting to help deploy satellite tags on the survey added another element of interest to an already fascinating experience,” Myra said. “I really enjoyed working with NOAA and IPHC, and it allowed me to learn about new technologies in fisheries and familiarize myself with research that benefits our region. I am excited to bring that knowledge back to our communities.”

The Northern Bering Sea Trawl Survey collects vast arrays of data about the the Bering Strait and keeps a close eye on the changing climate and ocean conditions, as well as abundance and health of marine inhabitants.

In the past NSEDC has focused primarily on salmon research but the changing ocean conditions are promoting further research, in the region. With the recent influx of cod in northern waters, the number of larger commercial fishing vessels has increased, following the fish as they move north. Fishermen in Savoonga have witnessed large longlining boats, which used to stay in the Southern Bering Sea. NSFR&D, in recent years, increased emphasis on monitoring the commercial activities along with environmental changes. Along with increased vessels near St. Lawrence Island there is a significant increase on the Russian side of the border.

NSFR&D is proud to be on the forefront of this research, which is essential in protecting local fisheries for subsistence and commercial users, as well as preserving the Bering Strait resources for future generations.

If you find a satellite tag or catch a tagged fish, please contact NSEDC Fisheries Biologist Dawn Wehde at (907) 443-7624 or dawnw@nsedc.com.

Below: NSEDC Biologist Dawn Wehde placing a tag on a halibut.



Niaomi Brunette spearheads new programs



NSEDC's Education, Employment & Training (EET) Department has seen substantial program growth in recent years. Along with scholarships and training opportunities for Norton Sound residents, EET now provides an internship program, the Growing Our Own Teachers Loan Repayment and Discretionary Grant programs, and the

NSEDC Commercial Pilot Scholarship and Loan Repayment program.

The Growing Our Own Teachers initiatives along with the Commercial Pilot initiatives provide support for residents seeking educational opportunities in rewarding fields of education and aviation in the Norton Sound region. "Every one of our member communities depends on committed educators and pilots," EET Director Niaomi Brunette said. "The NSEDC Board recognizes that these fields provide excellent careers for any individual. All of our communities and our region as a whole would benefit to see these positions filled by qualified residents of the region."

Along with these initiatives, EET now offers a summer internship program. The program is an avenue for residents to gain valuable work experience and professional development by engaging

in productive and meaningful work within NSEDC departments.

The application deadline for the NSEDC Internship program is April 1, 2020. This year the length of the internship is from May 11 to August 21, 2020. NSEDC Internship program guidelines and the application are available at nse.dc.com, at an NSEDC office or from your community liaison. If you have any questions on any EET program, contact Niaomi Brunette at (907) 274-2248 or by email at niaomi@nse.dc.com.



Above: 2019 NSEDC Interns Tony Takak (Elim) and Aidan Osborne (Nome).

Join a great team, NSEDC is now hiring!

NSEDC is a great place to work while doing good things for our region! NSEDC offers competitive wages and an excellent benefits package. To find out more, contact Stanley Pearson or Hazel Brunette at **907-274-2248 (in Anchorage)** or **800-650-2248 (toll-free)** or by e-mail at hr@nse.dc.com. Job postings and applications are also available online at www.nse.dc.com/employment

Community Liaisons (Little Diomedea, Brevig Mission, Koyuk & Shaktolik):

NSEDC Community Liaisons give NSEDC a presence in member communities that do not have an NSEDC office. Liaisons are responsible for the distribution of announcements, information and applications related to

NSEDC programs and opportunities. Liaisons are expected to be available at regularly set times and locations to answer general questions and provide applications and information as needed.

Community Benefits Specialist (Anchorage):

The Community Benefits Specialist assists with coordination and facilitation of all Community Benefits Departments programs through record keeping, advertising program information, assisting with developing annual activity plans, assisting with check requests and remittance letters, processing donation requests, and preparing activity reports.

“Hi, this is Sheri.”

As NSSP Office Manager, Sherilee Ivanoff fulfills multiple roles and duties



Sherilee Ivanoff loves the commercial fishing season. A Norton Sound commercial salmon permit holder herself, Sherilee intrinsically understands the needs of the fishers who make deliveries to Norton Sound Seafood Products (NSSP). As the Southern NSSP Office Manager, Sherilee does everything from sending reports to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to assisting fishermen with permit renewals and hiring seasonal crew members. And she loves helping people.

“Sheri is a dedicated team player who listens intently to concerns and

requests from staff and fishermen,” NSSP Unalakleet Plant Manager Frank Doty said. “She’s a people person and a strong asset, not only for our operations, but for our fishermen as well.”

Sherilee has been a part of the NSSP team since January 2015. She oversaw the implementation of eLandings, the electronic fish ticketing system. The streamlined system provides efficiency and more accuracy for payments to fishermen and data for the reports she sends to ADF&G. And with more than 125 seasonal employees at the Southern NSSP Processing Plant, the summer season is a busy one. Sheri processes applications and new-hire paperwork. She also assists fishermen with loan paperwork, takes payments for NSEDC Revolving Loans, and sends fishery opening announcements, among countless other tasks that come up in her role as part of the NSSP team. Simply put, Sherilee connects people to employment and the direct mission of NSEDC. “If they ask for help and I can help them, I will do it,” she said. “I don’t like turning people away.”

It’s evident when talking with Sherilee that what she loves about her job is the community that comes with commercial fishing. Fishermen visit the plant at all hours of the day for information and a cup of coffee. “They’re so brave, strong and fun, and their stories never get old,” she said.

Some seasonal NSSP employees, including processors and vessel crew members come from communities outside of Unalakleet. Sherilee ensures they are comfortable and secure during their time of employment. “I love my job and the people that I serve,” she said.

Along with keeping the southern NSSP office organized and functioning smoothly, Sherilee also serves as the Vice President of the Native Village of Unalakleet. She is often seen out with her family commercial fishing, gathering berries, putting away fish, hunting moose and bear, and winter trapping. “Everything we do, we do as a family,” Sherilee said. She and her husband, Alex Ivanoff, have five children; Deion, Savannah, Alex, Victoria, and Keane.



Student Spotlight

Meet Wilson Hoogendorn



Wilson Hoogendorn from Nome was the first recipient of the NSEDC Commercial Pilot Scholarship. In the fall of 2019 he took his first solo cross country flight from the Merrill Field in Anchorage.

“It’s kind of cool to drive planes through the sky,” Wilson said of flying. “Everywhere on earth needs pilots. You can have a job anywhere.” Although he will be able to land a job anywhere in the world as a pilot, Wilson plans to return to the Norton Sound region and work for the regionally owned airline, Bering Air. To get there, Wilson is enrolled in the University of Alaska’s (UAA) Aviation Technology program with an emphasis in aeronautical studies and is taking flight lessons from Angel Aviation. It’s apparent Wilson has found what he loves, and what he loves studying.

An adventurous and outdoors person, Wilson is no stranger to unconventional travel. In 2019 he and his brother, Oliver, were the first climbers that season to summit Denali, making statewide and national headlines. In 2017 Wilson biked from Anchorage to Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado where he started his college career. To Wilson, flying is another way of seeing the world. “You can go places with a plane you can’t with a boat or a car. I love seeing the land,” Wilson said.

This semester Wilson plans to take his check ride for his private pilot’s license. He receives flight training at Angel Aviation at Merrill Field. He plans to graduate from the Aviation Technology program in 2021. Wilson is the son of Willy Hoogendorn and Brenna Outwater from Nome.

Scholarship Deadline

NSEDC provides \$3,500 scholarships to Norton Sound residents enrolled at an accredited college, university, or vocational school. An additional \$1,500 is available for individuals pursuing professional flight training with the intent of becoming a commercial pilot in the Norton Sound region. Completed scholarship applications for the fall semester must be received or postmarked by June 30th. Applications can be mailed or emailed to NSEDC’s Education, Employment & Training Director Niaomi Brunette at niaomi@nsedc.com.

More information and a scholarship application can be found on our website at www.nsedc.com. If you have any questions, call Niaomi Brunette at (907) 274-2248.

NSEDC to begin acoustic tagging project this summer

NSEDC and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) are conducting salmon tagging research this coming summer to track the movement of chum and Coho salmon targeted in the eastern Norton Sound commercial fisheries. In 2020 and 2021, 400 Coho and 400 chum will be tagged out of Shaktoolik and Unalakleet for a total of 800 tags per species per year.

“We’re trying to find out where those fish ultimately go,” NSEDC Fisheries Biologist Myra Scholze said. “We’re going to try to mimic the commercial

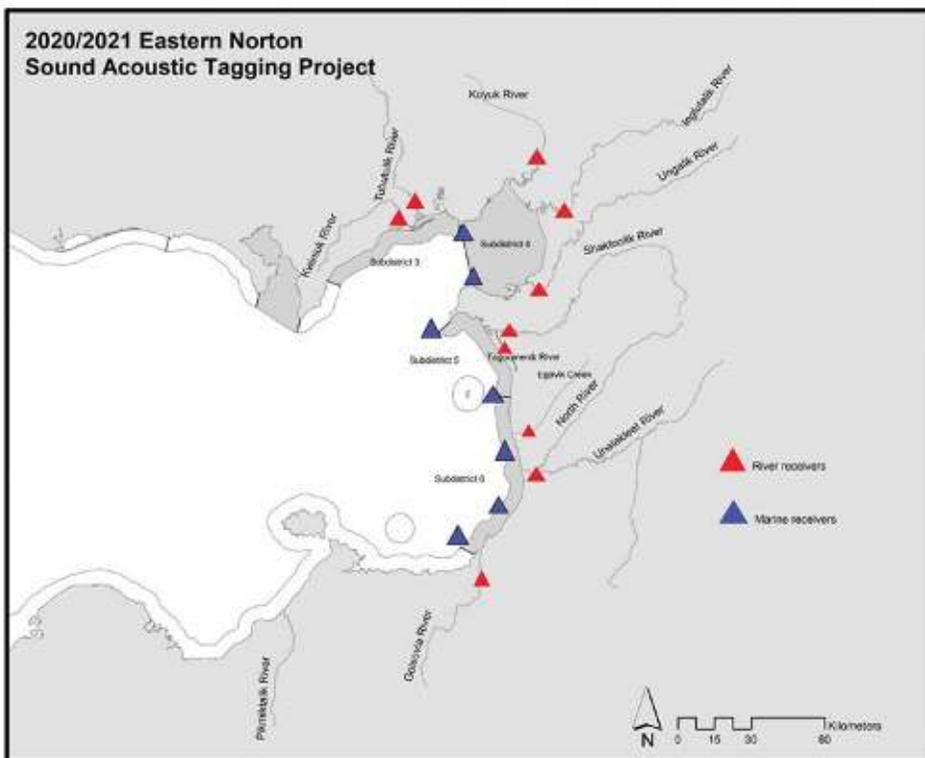
fishery, so we’ll catch fish the same way commercial fishermen do,” Myra said. Once salmon are carefully pulled from nets, they will be kept in live tanks. Technicians will remove scales for sampling and record length and sex. The acoustic tags will then be applied below the dorsal fin (photo below). Each fish will be noted with a tag number for tracking and data collection.

To gather data and information, receivers will be placed along the coast of eastern Norton Sound and in 10 rivers in the eastern Norton Sound: Kwiniuk,

Tubutulik, Koyuk, Inglutalik, Ungalik, Shaktoolik, Tagoomenik, Egavik, Unalakleet, and Golsovia. “The tags send out acoustic pings,” Myra said. “When the fish swim within the radius of a receiver that receiver records the data. If a tagged fish swims up a river and pings the receiver, we know that salmon is going up to spawn.” Along with setting up receivers, flyers and announcements will be posted in the Northwest Arctic Borough region and in communities along the Yukon River. Individuals who find a tag are encouraged to call ADF&G at (907) 443-5167 with the tag number and where and when the tagged salmon was found.

NSEDC’s Norton Sound Fisheries Research & Development (NSFR&D) typically hires 43 Fisheries Technicians every year for enumeration projects throughout the region. This year, six additional technicians will be hired for the acoustic tagging project; three in Shaktoolik and three in Unalakleet. Fish tagging will take place during commercial closures, and commercial fishermen are encouraged to apply. Interested residents can find the employment application on our website at nsecdc.com.

The last time salmon were tagged in the eastern Norton Sound was in 1979 when 304 chum were tagged in the Unalakleet subdistrict and 237 chum tagged in the Shaktoolik subdistrict. Advances in technology allow researchers to more accurately track fish movement in a way that does not require fish to be recovered for data collection. Acoustic tags will paint a more complete picture of salmon migration in the Norton Sound, as well as provide definitive data about movement between commercial fishing subdistricts.



After a cold winter NSEDC distributes \$575 per household as an energy subsidy

The distributions are expected to infuse nearly \$1.6 million to NSEDC member communities

NSEDC's Community Benefits staff completed the 2020 NSEDC Energy Subsidy sign up events in all 15 member communities. With roughly 2,700 households in the region, NSEDC is expected to infuse nearly \$1.6 million toward household utility expenses in the coming months. Those living off the electrical grid were given the opportunity for a \$575 heating fuel credit to the fuel vendor in their community.

The Community Benefits Department staff issued the electric utility subsidy as they have in previous years with households signing up directly with NSEDC to see the savings in their monthly utility bills. All pay-

ments to utility companies should be complete by the beginning of April.

"Every year we receive thank-you's from residents regarding the energy subsidy," NSEDC Board Chairman Frank Katchatag said. "We're grateful to continue to provide assistance to the residents in our region, especially after a very cold winter and high heating costs. We understand it is a big help."

Energy subsidies were issued at the \$500 level by the NSEDC Board of Directors in 2008, 2012 and 2014. In 2015-2020, the NSEDC Board issued the energy subsidy at \$575 per house-

hold, paying approximately \$1.5 million to local electric utilities on behalf of residents each of those six years. As in the past, the 2020 initiative is an isolated contribution and the energy subsidy is not necessarily a continuing program. After 2020 subsidy payments have been completed, NSEDC will have distributed more than \$13 million, in total, in energy subsidy payments since 2008.

Real ID deadline coming soon

Beginning October 1, 2020, anyone with a traditional ID or driver's license will not be able to use it to enter a federal building, military base or to board a commercial airliner. A Real ID is a new form of identification that complies with security standards put in place after the Real ID Act passed after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The 2005 law aims to increase the security of driver's licenses.

While the Alaska DMV does not yet have a plan in place as to how the Real ID program will be administered in rural Alaska, or communities without a DMV office, the DMV does provide a checklist so you are prepared with all the documents necessary should you visit a DMV office in Nome or An-

chorage. This checklist is available on our website at nsecd.com.

The biggest challenge for residents in Norton Sound communities is the requirement to provide two documents proving principal residence. The documents must show your physical address (not your P.O. box) and must be issued within the past 90 days of applying for your Real ID.

Along with proving principal residence, applicants must also show proof of your legal name, date of birth, citizenship status and a document showing your social security number. Applicants typically bring a social security card, an original or certified copy of a birth certificate or a U.S.

Passport. If you do not have a certified copy of your birth certificate, you can contact the Alaska Vital Records Office at (907) 465-3391 or visit their website at www.vitalrecords.alaska.gov to order a copy. If your name has changed since birth you will also need certified name change documents (amended birth certificate, marriage or divorce certificate, etc.).

After October 1, 2020 travelers without a Real ID can use a current U.S. Passport, military ID, or their tribal ID card.

For more information on Real ID requirements, visit www.doa.alaska.gov/dmv.

NSEDC makes annual first-of-the-year donations to regional organizations totaling \$95,000

The Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) distributed a total of \$95,000 in donations to regional organizations making a direct and valued impact in Norton Sound member communities, including KICY, KNOM and KNSA radio stations, the Nome Emergency Shelter Team (NEST), NSHC's "Make a Patient Smile" program, the Bering Sea Women's Group (BSWG) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post #9569.

The Nome Emergency Shelter Team received \$30,000 for the service they provide as a shelter that operates six months out of the year. NEST began as a grassroots, volunteer-run effort to prevent exposure-related death by providing a warm, safe place to sleep for anyone in need in Nome. In addition to their shelter services, NEST supports homeless prevention efforts

and assists individuals and families in finding permanent solutions to housing. "NEST provides a valuable service to some of our most vulnerable residents in the region," NSEDC Board Chair Frank Katchatag said. "This organization has saved lives and we are very thankful for their important work." NSEDC has made donations to NEST since 2013.

Since 2001 NSEDC has made donations to radio stations in the Norton Sound region. In January NSEDC distributed \$5,000 each to KICY, KNOM and KNSA radio stations for the service they provide informing and entertaining Norton Sound residents. "Radio remains a vital source of information to residents in the region," Community Benefits Director Paul Ivanoff III said. "From fish reports to the broadcast of high

school basketball games, we continue to rely on the radio stations and the service they provide."

"We are primarily funded by outside donations," KICY General Manager Patty Burchell said. "NSEDC's annual contribution helps us to support youth and the residents in our region through our live broadcasts of high school sporting events, and our several-times daily fishing reports during the commercial fishing season, enhancing the sense of community throughout the Norton Sound."

NSEDC also made \$20,000 contributions to NSHC's "Make a Patient Smile" program and the Bering Sea Women's Group, and a \$10,000 donation to the VFW Post #9569.



Above: KICY General Manager Patty Burchell on the air at the KICY Radio Studios in Nome.

MyCache scholarship recipients again receive care packages

At the end of February, organizations that provide the all-in-one MyCache scholarship application sent care packages to spring scholarship recipients. Throughout the country, 316 students in universities, colleges, and vocational centers received a Priority Mail Flat Rate box including snacks, hot chocolate, a wellness kit, a pop socket, and a drawstring bag.

The care packages are a coordinated effort from regional organizations including NSEDC, Kawerak, Norton Sound Health Corporation, Bering Straits Foundation, Sitnasuak Native Corporation, and partners.

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