



Photo by Peggy Fagerstrom

CIRCLING UP—A group of muskoxen gather on the side of Skookum Mountain east of Nome, forming a circle to protect two young calves.

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Photo by Denise Olin

WALKING FOR THE CURE—Sherry Nayokpuk (left) packs Sherilyn Anderson, 8 months, as she's joined by Athena Hall (center), Sierra Anderson and Jerry Asila in the Arctic ICANS Relay for Life event Saturday at the East-end Park. For more photos of the event, see page 8.

## Snake River Bridge to move

By Sandra L. Medearis

Nome Joint Utility System staff and board have a plan to replace the decrepit Snake River Bridge with a new crossing closer to town.

That's the bridge that has Band-Aids all over it to keep roadbed material from sifting into the water. New money came down the hopper for the bridge replacement from the state's voters approving a road package last November.

Proposed plans call for laying the bridge across the river at the beginning of the broad curve of Seppala Drive east of

the Center Creek Road intersection. Placement under study calls for the port area end of the bridge to come out near the south end of the new power plant. Such an alternative would require road realignment on Seppala between Center Creek and Cemetery roads to provide an intersection for the bridge approach.

The state Department of Transportation, declaring support for the project, has agreed to lease land adjacent to the north end of the new power plant to NJUS and

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## Skinny crabs close fish plant

By Laurie McNicholas

The Norton Sound Seafood Products plant in Nome reportedly stopped issuing bait and ice to commercial red king crab fishermen June 22 after receiving complaints from customers about insufficient meat fill in the legs of crab purchased from the plant. Crab fishermen told *The Nome Nugget* the plant would suspend operations for two weeks.

Meanwhile, the Norton Sound commercial red king crab fishery remains open because Lamar Ballard of AquaTech, an

Anchorage firm that buys crab from Unalakleet fisherman Clarence Towarak, sampled crab in Towarak's first delivery and found the legs filled with crab meat. Ballard attached photos of the samples showing cross-sections of meat-filled crab legs to a July 24 e-mail to Joyce Soong, fisheries biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Nome.

Rich Ferry, NSSP's northern region operations manager, provided the following

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## Council calls for internationally binding Arctic Sea laws

By Diana Haecker

A busy future lies in store for the Arctic Ocean as thinning sea ice potentially opens the window for commercial marine traffic to traverse the ocean on top of the world in the summer, concludes a multi-national shipping report commissioned by the Arctic Council.

To keep the environment protected while developing the Arctic sustainably, the 200-page Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment report recommends creating uniform shipping regulations across the Arctic for safety and

environmental protection, to take measures protecting Arctic people and the environment, and to build marine infrastructure, communication systems, ports, ice information services and to provide ice navigation training.

Scientists predict that multi-year sea ice is seriously declining and may be gone by the summer of 2015. "It is highly plausible there will be greater marine access and longer seasons of navigation, except perhaps during winter, but not necessarily less difficult ice conditions for marine operations,"

says the report.

Although the International Maritime Organization has developed guidelines for ships operating in Arctic ice-covered waters, those recommendations are voluntary and not binding. "There are no uniform, international standards for ice navigators and for Arctic safety and survival for seafarers in polar conditions," the report states. Also, there are no mandatory environmental standards developed by the IMO for ships in Arctic waters.

With more traffic and resource development,

the report identifies the No. 1 threat as an oil spill. But a response to such a disaster would be nearly impossible. "The lack of marine infrastructure in all but a limited number of areas, coupled with the vastness and harshness of the environment, makes conduct of emergency response significantly more difficult in the Arctic," the report concludes.

The lack of an international marine regulatory framework combined with natural re-

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## Push for detox center still has strong backing

By Tyler Rhodes

Leaders of a wide cross-section of Nome's agencies and organizations gathered June 18 to continue working on a roadmap toward providing services and treatment for those suffering from substance abuse and chronic homelessness in the region.

The roundtable-style meeting served as a follow-up to an April 9 community meeting centered on de-

veloping some sort of residential treatment facility in Nome. Like that April meeting, the most recent gathering was organized by Norton Sound Health Corp. and was open to the public.

The June 18 meeting drew more than two dozen people to Old St. Joe's Hall to hear of the progress made by various groups and agencies seeking to address the problem in

both the long and short term.

Norton Sound Health Corp. is working with a \$50,000 grant from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to evaluate the need and feasibility of providing a detoxification and treatment facility. The hospital was awarded another \$100,000 from the authority for further planning and feasibility studies in fiscal year 2010.

The large group meetings pulling to-

gether the people and organizations that fit into the larger picture of serving those in need are part of that evaluation.

Much of the early discussion at the meeting centered on the work of the Nome Emergency Shelter Team, an ad-hoc group that has worked to tackle the issues of homelessness and substance abuse treatment since

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# French sailors work to cross the NW Passage

Story and photo by Anna Hahn

Approximately 16 months ago Thierry Fabing of France began planning a polar expedition through the Northwest Passage, traveling from the east to the west. In the summer of 2009 he began the next step of his journey, which entailed the same basic route, only backward.

The trip from the west to the east side of the Northwest Passage began on June 5 in Sand Point along the Aleutian Chain and will eventually end in Greenland around the beginning of September.

"The purpose of our polar expedition is to reach Greenland from Alaska. We started on the fifth of June in Sand Point, and now we are in Nome. We want to reach Greenland by the beginning of September," said Patrick Reader, a crewmember from France and the United Kingdom.

The crew is composed of four people, Fabing and Reader, as well as Arielle Corre and Aline Penitot, both from France. In Barrow another member will join their team, Gilles Durand of France. Additionally, Fabing's daughter

may connect with them later in the journey.

After the team reaches Greenland, Fabing will find a harbor to park the *Baloum Gwen*, his sailboat, for one year. He may do several smaller trips to the different coasts of Greenland.

"This is a sport and a human challenge. I don't think it's easy to cross the Northwest Passage," Reader said. "There is always a team of two people who are navigating the sail boat, and the others are sleeping. Every four hours there is a shift change. After only a few days we are quite tired and exhausted, but at the end of the day we are pleased and proud of achieving the expedition."

**THE BALOUM GWEN**—The trusty sail boat of Skipper Thierry Fabing awaits departure from Nome's harbor last week. Winds and weather recently delayed the French crew's planned travels through the Northwest Passage.



## • Arctic

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source riches in a brutal and yet biologically fragile environment caused enough alarm for agencies to scramble for the assessment and to prepare for the future. In 2004 the Arctic Council, a forum of the eight Arctic-bordering nations, called for a comprehensive Arctic marine shipping assessment. In April 2009, the assessment report was completed and later signed and agreed upon by all Arctic Council member nations. "This is partially a policy document of the Arctic states as well as a science document—it's a multifaceted, international and negotiated report," said Lawson Brigham, the chairman of the group preparing the report.

In a presentation last week at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, professor Brigham, also Alaska office director of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission and chairman of the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment, said that the focus of AMSA was on marine safety and environmental protection.

Brigham showed a satellite photo of the Arctic on Sept. 11, 2007, when both Northwest and the Northeast passages were open for passage. "For the first time in memory, those major straits were completely ice free for 10 days," Lawson said.

Although a warming climate facilitates possible summer sailings in the Arctic, Brigham said climate change is not the main driver for increased marine traffic, but resource development is. Enormous riches lie underneath the ice, productive fish-

eries ring the Arctic basin on all sides and companies are jockeying for position to develop offshore minerals. "The Arctic is the store house of important resources like oil, gas and other minerals, and maybe fresh water in the future, and also it is important to the transport of these resources to market," Lawson said.

Currently, some of the largest ships sailing the world's oceans are headed to and from the world's biggest zinc mine, Red Dog mine, north of Kotzebue and a huge Russian palladium mine, carrying ore to its processing plants. Other mineral development is planned for Greenland and the Baffin Islands, where plans exist to ship ore from there to steel mills in Europe.

With increased shipping comes the need for more marine infrastructure. Critical infrastructure include ice navigation training centers, navigational charts, communications systems, port services, facilities for ship-generated waste, timely ice information, places of refuge and icebreakers to assist in emergencies.

The Coast Guard frequently pays a visit to Nome, but has no permanent presence in the Gold Rush City. Brigham said that there are no specific plans or recommendations made to establish some sort of Coast Guard presence in Nome. "For the lack of any port in the area, clearly Nome is well poised to provide port and other services," Brigham said.

In addition, a growing cruise ship industry with northern destinations become players in the shipping mix. While many ships have safely traversed the Arctic Ocean in

the past, cruise ships worry Lawson because they have no ice-breaking capabilities and there is a lack of search and rescue systems. As an example, Lawson showed slides of a cruise ship that ran into ice in Antarctica in November 2007, due to an operator error and insufficient training of the navigator. The ship sank, but all aboard survived, were scooped up and rescued.

And then there is the issue of governance. Arctic boundaries beyond the 200 nautical miles from the surrounding Arctic mainland are partially disputed by Russia, complicating jurisdictions even more. One of the 17 recommendations that came out of the assessment is that the Arctic states should harmonize Arctic marine shipping regulatory regimes within their own jurisdiction and uniform Arctic safety and environment protection regulations.

The Coast Guard is the main U.S. agency dealing with marine issues, homeland security, environmental protection, science support, border patrol and law enforcement is also preparing for more business in the north. In a report called *The emerging Arctic—A new maritime frontier*, the Coast Guard concluded that Arctic boundaries must be determined and that all federal, state and local agencies must prepare for full seasonal operations in the Arctic.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the Homeland Security Subcommittee's \$44.3 billion budget for 2010 and appropriated \$32.5 million for a polar icebreaker

program. The funding is meant to finish the reactivation of the icebreaker *Polar Star* and directs the Coast Guard to study whether a new heavy polar icebreaker class is needed or if a major service life extension for existing heavy icebreakers is in order. Currently, the Coast Guard's only working heavy icebreaker, the *Polar Sea*, has seven years remaining on its service life.

Another concern in the AMSA report deals with the prospect of resource development clashing with traditional subsistence use areas. This is especially pronounced in the Bering Strait area, where the report says, offshore hydrocarbon developments may lead to increased ship traffic. "The Bering Strait region

ringed with indigenous communities and a highly productive ecosystem with many species of marine mammals, fish and seabirds, may require formally established vessel routing measures," the report says.

In the process of gathering information for the report, Lawson and Inuit Circumpolar Council director Jimmy Stotts visited Nome last year, as well as Barrow and other coastal communities in Norway, Canada and Iceland. "Some of these inputs from those town hall meetings are the base of the information to write the report," Lawson said last week.

"There are lots of wild cards in the game to paint a picture of the future of the Arctic," Lawson concluded his presentation.

Bering Land Bridge National Preserve



## Summer Ranger Programs

**Ranger Guided Hike to 3870 - July 4th at 10:00am**

A walk up a ridge to great tundra landscapes and sweeping views. The hike is considered moderate. Wear sturdy shoes or boots. Bring water, a lunch, hat, and bug net.

**Family Saturday - July 4th at 10:00am**

Before the parade, stop in to make a pictorial family history. Free mini American flag to participants, while they last.



No Junior Ranger this week, but stop by to sign-up for Junior Ranger Field Day on July 24th at Safety. Call (907) 443-2522 or [www.nps.gov/bela](http://www.nps.gov/bela)

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