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Anchorage, Alaska

## Governor's sanitation council launches drive

### *Burden, Naneng head effort to end health crisis, October looms deadline for first report to Knowles*

by Jeff Richardson  
Tundra Times staff

With a pep talk from the governor, the Council on Rural Sanitation met July 20-21 to formulate plans to defeat Alaska's most formidable health crisis.

Co-chaired by Myron Naneng, president of the Association of Village Council Presidents and Gene Burden, commissioner of environmental conservation, the council was joined via teleconference by Gov. Tony Knowles.

"What we need to have is a solid plan with measurable objectives and concrete actions," said Knowles. "We need to have the will to see the job through."

Reiterating his determination to banish hand-hauled honey buckets from scores of villages that currently lack even minimal water and sewage disposal systems, Knowles

also said he expected the council to draft a plan and then "help gather public support."

Knowles suggested two avenues of persuasion to achieve that support: First, to convince urban residents that investment in resolving the rural sanitation crisis would benefit even them, and second, to press the case that putting an end to disease and death caused by poor water and sanitation facilities was the only conscionable course of action.

"Alaskans do act as a family. It's the morally right thing to do," said Knowles. He directed the council to use a 10-year timeframe in their deliberations.

"This is a bold plan that I'm asking to be put together. The population of rural Alaska is expected to double over the next 20 years. That makes the urgency of the situation even more apparent. We're all going to be held accountable," said

Knowles. He added that he's seeking the best solution for the least price and noted there's no room remaining for mistakes.

After hearing a brief history and technical overview of the rural sanitation issue, council members got down to the sometimes tedious chore of deciding how to approach it. A number of working groups were formed to deal with different aspects of the problem: financing, technology, public perception. The group, which consists of state commissioners, legislators, and representatives of such groups as the Alaska Native Health Board and Rural Alaska Community Action Program, decided to meet only quarterly. Its next meeting is currently slated for November. However, its first report to Knowles is due in October, to help inform the process of preparing bills and budgets for the next legislative session.

## Kenai subsistence decision issued

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) will open an August 10 to September 20 subsistence moose season on federal public lands on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Units 15(B) and 15(C). Residents of Nanwalek, Port Graham, Seldovia and Ninilchik may harvest one moose with spike-fork or fifty-inch antlers with three or more brow tines on one side, during this open fed-

eral subsistence season.

A federal registration permit and State of Alaska hunting license are required to participate in this open season. Federal registration permits are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 2139, Soldotna, AK 99669-2139, telephone: (907)262-7021, and the Alaska Maritime National Wild-

life Refuge Visitor Center, 509 Sterling Highway, Homer, AK 99603, telephone: (907)235-6961. Existing access regulations prohibiting the use of off-road-vehicles on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge remain in place. As a reminder, if you intend to hunt on non-federal public lands in the area, you must abide by all State of Alaska regulations, including

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## Homeless woman gets real house in Bethel

by Megan McAtee  
Tundra Times staff

BETHEL, AK- Roberta Gump, a developmentally disabled mother of one, spent last winter living in an uninsulated, 20-square foot fish container in this large village in southwest Alaska. It was so cold she had to constantly carry her baby on her back to keep it from freezing.

Now, thanks to the efforts of Bethel Community Services (BCS), Gump will soon be moving into a new, one bedroom, energy efficient, fully-insulated home near the community's Pre-Maternal Hall in Bethel. It will cost approximately \$10-\$15 a month to heat.

"The other day she came to the site and all she said was, 'So big!'" said BCS organizer Jerry Haines.

Haines, who's own home is only a few yards from the construction site, has been overseeing the entire project.

"People said it couldn't be done. I talked to Imperial (Manufacturing) and they said yes, there is a need

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New home under construction in Bethel

Photo by Megan McAtee



Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta students gathered near Bethel for a science camp to learn about the natural world and their environment. See page 3. Pictured: Flora Ayulua (Chevak), Crystal Changsan (Russian Mission), Gwen Lincoln (Tununak), Marie Chiklak (Mt. Village)

Photo by Doug Hunt

## New study supports Pt. Hope cancer claim

Results of a two-year medical study of cancer in Pt. Hope indicate that contrary to earlier medical reports, the high rate of cancer in the northwest village is likely not linked to lifestyle changes.

The North Slope Borough initiated the study after revelations about the 1962 Project Chariot radioactive field experiments and the use of Native subjects for Iodine 131 radiation experiments heightened existing concerns about unusually high cancer rates in Point Hope. The study was conducted by Dr. Ron Bowerman, the borough's epidemiologist and medical director. Bowerman attempted to establish likely causes for Pt. Hope's cancer rate by examining cases over a 26-year period and comparing risk factors affecting cancer patients with those of a control group. The results challenge conventional explanations for a local cancer rate that has been higher than the national average in recent years.

Bowerman says he was surprised by the results. He expected to find a clear link between the elevated incidence of cancer and increased smoking or other lifestyle risks. Instead, he found no significant difference in the cancer rate among those who smoked and those who didn't. Nor did dietary choices, alcohol use, family history or past occupation affect the comparative cancer incidence. Residence in Pt. Hope seemed to be the only common factor, Bowerman said.

"The usual explanations for high cancer rates don't seem to fit the situation in Pt. Hope. The results of this study point away from lifestyle or family history and raise the question of environmental causes," said Bowerman. He added that the study raises more questions than it answers.

"You have to interpret the results of this study with caution because of the small number of subjects in-

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