

# Deer pose landing problem in Petersburg

Associated Press

PETERSBURG While the air traffic controller strike plagues the nation's airports, pilots

landing in Petersburg are running into a different problem — deer on the runway.

Pilot Bill Overbay of Wrangell

recently struck a doe while landing his small airplane at Petersburg's airport. Although Overbay was not hurt, and his plane

sustained only minor damage, Overbay said he was "just plain lucky. I could have creamed my plane and also myself."

As a result of the July 27 incident, and another one about a month ago when an Alaska Airlines jet pilot diverted a landing attempt after spotting a deer on the runway, the state is considering steps to keep the deer away, the Wrangell Sentinel reported this week.

Petersburg Alaska Airlines manager Jerry Curtis said an Alaska Airlines jet pilot "had to divert (headback up in the air) as he was just about ready to touch down" about a month ago when the pilot saw a deer on the runway.

Because of the two incidents — the only ones reported to officials in the past few years — the state is studying the possibility of fencing the runway, killing the vegetation in the nearby area or transporting deer to another location.

However, Curtis said he does not think the deer problem is severe enough to justify a fence or defoliation, and several people who frequently use the airport say such serious steps are not needed yet.

The state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities which maintains the runway, has contacted the Department of Fish and Game requesting that something be done about the deer situation.

However, Butch Young, fish and game management biologist from Petersburg, said he talked to pilots and supervisory personnel and discovered most people think the problem has not reached a serious stage yet.

"Most people don't view it as a big problem right now," Young said. But he said several people expressed concern that deer on the runway could become a serious problem in the future.

Young said DOT workers currently check the runway for deer before each jet flight and fire "scare cartridges" to keep deer and birds away. The workers seem to have the situation under control, he said. He estimated 15 deer live in the airport area.

Because the DOT has asked that something be done, Young said he will make a report recommending ways to deal with the problem. He said he would propose fencing as the best solution.