



# Seldovia Gazette

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Seldovia, AK

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Thursday, July 14, 2005

Just another day in paradise

Vol. 1, No. 6, July 14, 2005

Local News

Calendar

Opinions

Spotlight

School

Classifieds

Archives

Seldovia.com

Gazette Services

[Top Stories](#) | [City Managers Corner](#) | [Police Report](#) | [Repeats & Notices](#) |

## Headlines

- ▶ [Airport forecast to be revisited](#)
- ▶ [Kasitsna Bay Lab progress report presented at public meeting in Seldovia](#)
- ▶ [120 Drums of Thunder](#)
- ▶ [City reduces employee hours to compensate for 90-10 healthcare coverage](#)
- ▶ [Studies of Alaskan Native culture at Outside Beach](#)
- ▶ [Tidbits . . .](#)
- ▶ [City Manager's Corner](#)
- ▶ [Police Report](#)

## Opinions



2 Cents Worth

- ▶ [Letters to the Editor](#)
- Jonathan Hoard
- Vivian Rojas

## Spotlight

- ▶ [The newest little Seldovians](#)

## News Flash



Major forest fire at Fox Creek (Tustumena Lake) blankets Seldovia area with smoke. As of 5:00 pm Thursday: 10,000 acres and growing fast. Pilots are requested to avoid the area as planes and helicopters will be extensively working the fire.  
[Photos and additional info, click here](#)

## Top Stories

### Airport "forecast" to be revisited by Damara Burnett *Public testimony spurs questions about DOT project*

As the saying goes, "When it rains, it pours." Representatives from the DOT, FAA and Hattenburg, Dille & Linnell witnessed this first hand Wednesday night when nearly forty citizens swamped the multi-purpose room to voice their concerns over the Seldovia Airport Project and its Draft Environmental Assessment.

At issue was whether or not an extended runway safety area at the airport would adversely affect the Seldovia Slough and the fish, wildlife, and plant life that inhabit the area. Residents also publicly questioned whether a longer runway would in fact make the airstrip safer, the purported goal of the project.



## Marketplace

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 Help keep sports and academic travel programs alive for our school!



Seldovia Boat Slips for Rent  
 The Seldovia harbor has 32 foot and 42 foot slips for rent. Call for details:  
 Harbor Master (907) 234-7886  
 City Office (907) 234-7643



Team presenting the Airport Draft EA to Seldovia, left to right: Terri Mitchell, HDL Environmental Scientist; Scott Hattenburg, HDL Project Manager; Katrina Moss, FAA Airports Division; Mark Mayo, DOT Planning; Todd Vanhove, DOT Planning

## School

▶ [Former graduate accepts SBE teaching position](#)

## Notices

▶ [Cook Inlet Keeper celebrates anniversary](#)

▶ [Amended FY05 Seldovia City Budget 7-8-2005 \(pdf\)](#)

▶ [Boys and Girls Club Newsletter April-May](#)

▶ [Harbor Survey Priority Results \(pdf\)](#)



PDF files require a special "Reader" in order to view pdf files. Click the Adobe button above to get a FREE pdf reader!

At the start of the meeting, Scott Hattenberg, Principal Civil Engineer with Hattenberg, Dilley, & Linnel, outlined the "near-term" goals of the project, including: lengthening the runway safety area to 300 feet, improving the primary airport access road, paving the apron and the runway, and providing utilities to support airport infrastructure. But for many in attendance at the meeting, the perks of such improvements were not worth the impacts they demanded.

Hattenberg noted several environmental impacts that may take place if the project moves forward. He said wetlands destroyed would have to be created elsewhere; the Fish Creek culvert would be changed to support a widened road and embankment; tree trimming would be done to clear the aircraft approach slope; paved surfaces might negatively affect run-off into the lagoon; and an eagle that nests in the area may be disturbed by the expansion.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) did not note affects of "compressible soil" on the lagoon, which was of particular concern to many members of the audience. During an airport expansion project in the 1980's, some residents noticed a "mud surge" at the north end of the airstrip after gravel fill was placed in the lagoon; they watched as eel grass and other species were impacted.

Dan and Ava Wilson, Seldovia Lagoon homeowners since 1975, addressed the issue during the Q & A portion of the meeting and noted a multitude of inaccuracies – and omissions – in the EA.

"How can anyone base rational actions on a document that is so full of exaggerated information, false information, incomplete data, outdated data, and even missing data?" Dan asked. He mentioned a missing "Eel Grass Field Report" in the appendix of the report and lost core drilling samples of the lagoon bottom.

Some residents who live near the lagoon were also frustrated that no "hard survey" had been completed to determine which homes, structures, and trees might be in the way of an expanded airstrip.

The FAA states that a runway safety area must be at least 300 feet in order to be classified as an A-2 airstrip and safely accommodate planes, such as Islanders, for landings and take-offs. According to Scott Hattenburg, Islanders were the type of aircraft local air agencies – including Homer Air, Smokey Bay Air, and Great Northern Air – said, in 2001, that they would use at least 500 times per year over a 20-year forecast. But residents attested that Islanders have received less use in the past four years and that the project should not be designed around a craft used so infrequently.

"This is suppose to be current information, not old information," Paulie Carluccio stated. "There is so much bad, erroneous information, [the EA] is really useless," she said.

“We’ll revisit the forecast first started in 2001 and see if things have changed since then,” Hattenburg replied.

The Seldovia Airport currently complies with FAA standards for an A-1 airport; the runway safety area would have to be increased by 53 feet in order to receive the A-2 designation. The tone of the meeting seemed to shift when it became clear that if Islanders were taken out of the mix as the primary craft used in Seldovia, there would be no need for an extended runway safety area, and thus no need for gravel fill to be placed in the slough.

The estimated cost of the project is 4.4 million. FAA Representative, Katrina Moss, said that federal dollars would only be allocated for the project if the airport was upgraded to the A-2 designation. That means no paved apron or improved access road if the runway safety area isn’t extended.

“Our airport is safe and adequate as it sits,” said Ava Wilson. “It seems ridiculous to spend millions of dollars on a grandiose airport in little Seldovia, when the need just isn’t justified. And expanding this airstrip any distance into the lagoon makes no sense when construction jeopardizes the very integrity of one of Seldovia’s most beautiful assets.”

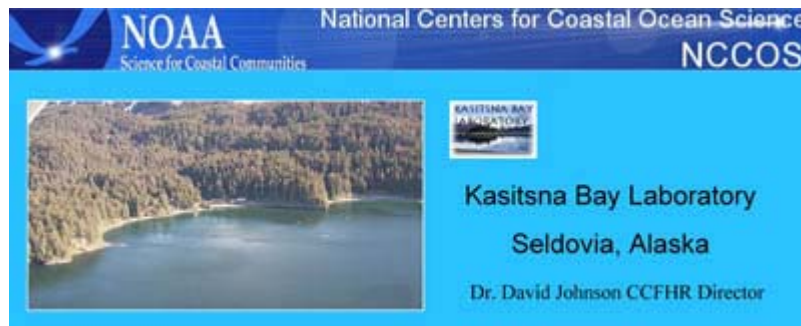
The meeting Wednesday night was the last planned public hearing for citizens to comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment. The DOT will continue to take written comments until August 15th, 2006. At that time, the Final Airport Assessment – which will include public testimony – will be forwarded to the FAA for further consideration.

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## **Kasitsna Bay Lab progress report presented at public meeting in Seldovia**

*by Tom Glover*

*"Communications is an essential part of the Kasitsna Bay Lab and thanks to that communication, we feel like we are part of the Seldovia community." Dr. Gordon Thayer, NOAA*



On Wednesday evening a group of officials associated with Kasitsna Bay Lab (listed below) gave a public presentation and slide show on the development program progress at the Lab, future science directions at the Lab, and increasing communications with the communities of Seldovia and Homer.



Left to right: Dr. David Johnson, Director of the NCCOS Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research in Beaufort, North Carolina; Seldovia Mayor Dick Wyland; Dr. Jean Snider, Deputy of the NOAA, National Ocean Service's (NOS) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) in Silver Spring, Maryland; Seldovia City Manager Kurt Reynertson; Admiral Bill Prahl, from NCCOS; Dr. Gordon Thayer, a contractor with NOAA residing in Homer.

NCCOS is responsible for the Kasitsna Bay Laboratory and has been overseeing the redevelopment of the Laboratory that has been going on the past several years. Local contractors Tim Dillon and Jim Hopkins were used extensively on the project over the past 2 years. The following information was presented in the slide show:

#### **History of Kasitsna Bay Laboratory**

1959 started by U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries  
 1972 became part of NOAA  
 1988 partnership with UAF  
 2001 transferred to NOS/NCCOS

#### **NOAA Commitments**

- Over the past 4 years, NOAA has provided over \$700K in research funding from a variety of offices: NURP, OR&R, and NCCOS
- Over \$12.3M in renovations and new construction

#### **Construction Completed**

##### ***Phase 1***

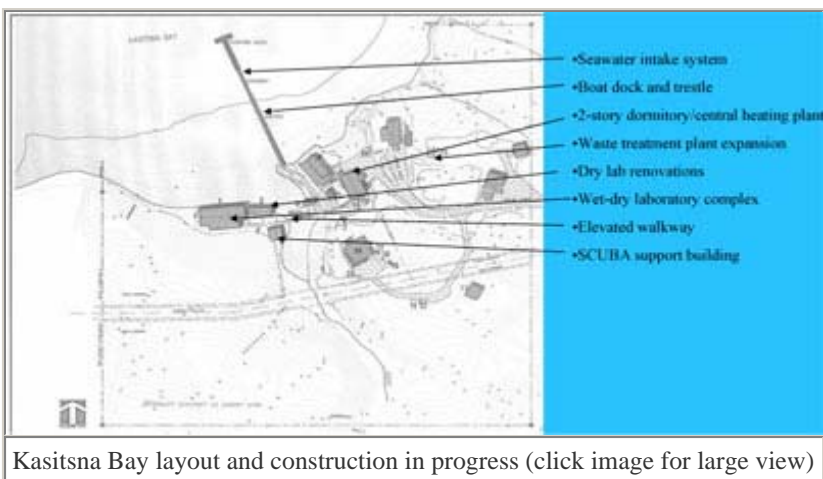
Completion date – April 4, 2004

- Access road to bunk house site completed 2003
- Bunkhouse completed 2004
- Utility upgrades (generator, water treatment, septic system, electrical) completed 2004

##### ***Phase 2***

Completion date -- July 2005

- Seawater system
- Dormitory
- Pier
- Communications



### Construction in Progress

Scheduled Completion October 2005

- Seawater intake system
- Boat dock and trestle
- 2-story dormitory/central heating plant
- Waste treatment plant expansion
- Dry lab renovations
- Wet-dry laboratory complex
- Elevated walkway
- SCUBA support building

### “Uniqueness” of Kasitsna Bay Laboratory

- Biogeography Unique for NOAA
- Cold Water Diving Opportunities
- Location on NOAA’s Largest NERR
- Nexus of UAF & Native Alaskans
- Congressional Support
- Pristine Environment

### Why should NOAA invest in Kasitsna Bay Lab?

#### *Ecosystem Based Management*

- Cook Inlet is undergoing rapid change from human development, over fishing, logging, transportation, mining, and climate.
- NOAA is obligated to understand and manage the ecosystem effects of these changes.
- Integrated research resulting in ecological forecasts is the foundation for responding to these changes.
- NOAA currently lacks the ability to conduct such integrating research in this region.
- KBL, located on NOAA’s largest NERR, is the mechanism to remedy the current situation.

#### *Education/Training*

- Environmental education requested by Native Alaskans
- Research and monitoring partnerships with Native Alaskans
- Port Graham and Seldovia Village Tribes
- Academic partnerships (U. Alaska Fairbanks)

### Planned NOAA Research

*NCCOS/CCFHR:*

- Food resource ecology for benthic bivalves joint with OR&R and KBNERR (FY'05: \$50K, FY'06 \$70K).
- Seagrass distribution with data input to KBNERR habitat inventory (FY'05 \$26K, FY'06 \$26K)
- Seagrass recovery modeling and model application to other habitats, joint with OR&R (e.g., rocky intertidal algal habitat recovery following oil spill) (FY'05 \$17K, FY'06 \$12K).
- Harmful algal bloom studies, joint with UAF (Proposal in discussion)
- Remote sensing of macroalgal habitats (Proposal in discussion)
- **OR&R:** Stress biomarker identification in clams (\$30K)
- **NURP:** Polar diving program (FY'05 \$165K)
- **NERR:** Physical sampling from KBL pier

#### **Planned Educational Uses of the Redeveloped Kasitsna Bay Laboratory**

- Environmental and natural resource education for Chugach tribal members
  - Areas of Emphasis include coastal management, fisheries, ecology, taxonomy, and environmental monitoring (FY'05 \$157K, FY'06 \$174)
  - Goal is to support community education and outreach to increase tribal ability to manage their coastal resources
- Development of a virtual classroom via the Internet using the University of Alaska Fairbanks faculty and federal scientist as teachers.
- Coordination and integration of research activities with Kachemak Bay NERR
- University of Alaska Fairbanks education and training of K-12, undergraduate, and graduate students of marine and coastal studies

#### **Traditional Education Initiative**

##### ***Leads***

- Tatitlek Village IRA Council
- Chugach Regional Resource Commission

##### ***Partners***

- NOAA
- UAF College of Rural Alaska, Interior-Aleutians Campus
- UAF School of Fisheries and Ocean Science

#### **The Way Ahead**

Expanded Kasitsna Bay Laboratory Role

- Multi-use facility, accommodating more people
- Expanded partnerships including UAF
- Increased research support for ecosystem-based management
- Increased education and training activities, especially native Alaskans

Thanks to the KBay team for a nice presentation!

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## **120 Drums of Thunder in Seldovia** *by Mary Glover*

The 120 Drums of Thunder came to Seldovia on Monday, July 12th, and Tuesday, July 13th. On both days in the afternoons they gave workshops on playing the drums and making regales (outfits for dance) at the Boys & Girls Club. Both adults and children attended the workshops. Then at



7:00 at the SBE School they danced all dressed in their regalia. The community of Seldovia has received this group with open arms. The 120 Drums of Thunder honored the elders in the community with the presentment of blankets and then dancing with the blankets.

A little history about the 120 Drums of Thunder: This is a Christian Native group and was founded by Lynda Prince. It is stated about Linda on <http://www.etpv.org/2001/1-prince.html> that "During fasting and prayer Lynda received a vision of the '120 Drums of Thunder' dismantling powers of darkness over the North American Continent as they played in worship to the Creator of the universe, Yahweh. They are instruments of warfare! The number 120 was designated because the launching of the drums was on the 120th Jubilee of the Jews. Anointing for reconciliation is evident wherever the '120 Drums' have played. The key is in worship of the drums causing unity amongst the believers no matter what the color or culture. 'The 120 Drums' is a mechanism that allows First Nation people to worship the King of Glory in the manner that we were created to worship Him, in their languages, with their songs, and their dances. It produces results in the First Nation people as they respond to the Gospel." Lynda Prince is a member of the Carrier Sekani Nations of British Columbia, Canada. She is serving her fourth term as the Tribal Grand Chief. In this capacity, Chief Lynda Prince has had an audience with the Pope in Rome and other dignitaries in England and Israel . We are very fortunate to have this group visit us and spread their message of peace and hope in Seldovia.

More information can be found on <http://www.northernconnections.net>





Click image for large view  
Photos courtesy of Darlene Crawford

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## City reduces employee hours to compensate for 90-10 healthcare coverage *by Damara Burnett*

### *Union – City negotiations to continue*

For the past several months the City of Seldovia has been negotiating with union-member employees of the city over work contracts. Employees saw a turn of events last Thursday when City Manager Kurt Reynertson, under the authority of the City Council, notified all regular city employees that they would be facing a reduction in work hours. The cuts, the city stated, were necessary in order for the city "to live within its means" after the union decided to reject seven different offers to reduce employee costs by reducing employee healthcare benefits.

All employees of the city who work over twenty hours per week currently have 90% of their medical costs - including dental and vision expenses - paid for by the city's health insurance company, Aetna. Employees have a \$100 annual deductible and an out-of-pocket maximum expense of \$195; that means once employees have spent \$195 towards their medical costs (excluding the deductible) they then receive 100% medical coverage. Three healthcare plans, which have a range of 80% coverage to 90% coverage and an out-of-pocket maximum expense of \$195 to \$2,000, are plausible under Aetna's "Political

Subdivision Health & Life Premiums.” The city offered the union seven different combinations of plan reductions, premium sharing and wage increase modifications to fit within the city’s FY06 budget.

The union - represented by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers - voted to turn down those options, thus re-enacting the current 90-10 healthcare benefits. According to city officials, Aetna had to be notified of any plan changes before July 1st in order for a new policy to be effective this year.

All city employees were affected by the labor cuts; full-time employees saw a reduction of five hours per week and part-time employees - those who work under twenty hours per week - saw a reduction of two hours. One employee, Administrative Assistant Laney Buchman, was laid-off from her position.

According to City Manager Kurt Reynertson, the city will continue to negotiate "in good faith" with representatives from the union. Andy Anderson, the union’s Shop Steward, is out of town and could not be reached for comment.

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## Studies of Alaskan Native culture at Outside Beach

*by Mary Glover*

This week the Seldovia Village Tribe has sponsored a class for young people to teach them about living off the land and studying the early Alaska Native customs in Seldovia.



[Click image to view full size](#)

In one of the pictures above, Sandee Elvsaa is teaching the two ladies how to make baskets out of the beach grass. The beach grass, not only does it hold the beach sand in place, but at one time it provided valuable building supplies to the indigenous natives who built their homes near the shoreline. The Alaska Natives used the beach grass for their thatched roofs, made beach grass floor mats, wove baskets for the home use, and even made socks out of it.

One can see Mike Opheim (second picture on the right) teaching the young people how to lay a set net in order to catch fish for the dinner table. They had a large net, a skiff and floats and a large buoy to accomplish the task.

The lower group of young people (pictured above) were learning how to prepare food from the flora found near the shoreline. Algae and kelp and other flora were being prepared. This training was being conducted by Bree Murphy, Program coordinator for the Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies, Inc. Samples of sea chips and cupcakes made with kelp were amazingly very delicious! The sea chips were slices of kelp fried in peanut oil. The kelp was salty and no additional salt was needed. The kelp in the cupcakes was grated like one would grate cheese, and this grated kelp was added to a spice cake recipe. The intent of these hands-on experiences is to teach the children how to live off the land and survive with what is naturally provided in this area of Alaska.

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### Tidbits . . .

#### Walter won the Crabpot's crab!



### City Manager's Corner

*by Kurt Reynertson*

I hope that everyone had a great time on the 4th of July. The Chamber of Commerce deserves once again a big round of applause. Thanks to all Chamber members and other folks who participated in the preparation, set-up, running, and clean-up of all the different activities held during the day. While attendance was possibly down a bit from prior years, I know those who came had a great time. Seldovia should be rightly proud that we still have the best party around on the 4th!

The construction of the fish cleaning stations has been started. The bid was awarded to Delta Industrial located in Delta Junction, Alaska. This is the same outfit that built a number of like fish cleaning tables for the Port of Valdez. Valdez has nothing but good words to say about the tables and their operation

to date. Valdez received its first table back in 2001. Subsequent to this, they purchased several more of the same design from the same manufacturer. In fact, in conversation with the Harbor Master of Valdez, he said that if he were to try to pull the tables or get rid of them and replace them with something else, he would be “starting World War III” with the fishing community. We are looking forward to receiving our table, which should be completed in about eight weeks.

Additionally, the renovation of the Harbor Master building has been started. Hugh Smith will be doing the renovation work along with some local folks that he has or will hire. The plans call for the following:

- New roof shingles
- New heater/boiler system
- New ADA compliant restroom
- New doors on the men’s and ladies restrooms
- Painting the restroom floors
- New floor tile for the building
- New coat of paint inside and outside
- New windows

This is a much needed renovation for a very poor looking building. This is one of the first buildings people see when they come to Seldovia and with these renovations it will leave a favorable impression. Infrastructure in the city is in much need of attention. For too long repairs and maintenance have had lower priorities than required. The Harbor Master building is only the first step we will be taking. Other facilities or resources needing attention include the multi-purpose building, the city dock, the roads, the water system, the dam, the sewer system, the city offices, and city heavy equipment. The reason we started with the harbor is that the harbor is the focal point of the community. Unless we invest in ourselves, no one else will be prone to invest in us.

We have been awarded a Village Safe Water (VSW) grant for doing engineering design work on our water and sewer system. There is approximately \$385,000 that will be available for doing a complete engineering design for our water and sewer system that was previously identified to be in desperate need of attention by the engineering study. Design work should start in the late Fall of this year. The next hurdle will be to receive grant money to do the actual construction once the design is complete.

Many of you have heard of the proposed “fast ferry” or daily ferry between Homer, Halibut Cove (Peterson Point), Seldovia and Port Graham. Rumors have been flying back and forth as to whether or not it will happen. We still do not know if it will happen, but according to excellent sources the money for the feasibility study has now not only been allocated but also obligated. What this means is that the city, in conjunction with the Seldovia Village Tribe, will be participating in this feasibility study in a very large way. The latest I have been told (again by an excellent source) is that the study should be starting within the next two weeks. There are any number of issues the feasibility study will address. I will keep you informed as much as I can as the study progresses. There will be some things by their very nature that will have to be kept confidential, but those items which are cleared for public release I will tell you about via this column and other methods.

Sadly, as most of you already know, I had a very unpleasant chore to

accomplish last week. That chore was informing certain individuals that I had to lay them off and others that I had to reduce their working hours. All city employees were affected whether or not they belonged to the Union . This action stems directly from the projected lack of labor and benefit funds the city will be experiencing due to the constant and drastic increases in insurance premiums for health insurance that the city must pay for its employees. We were unable to resolve the issues surrounding the health insurance premiums with the Union prior to July 1st; this means that for the next year, the city is forced into maintaining the extremely generous coverage provided. The city did offer seven different health care options to the Union , but the bargaining unit of the Union rejected all seven options. Raising taxes to cover the increase cost is not an option at this time for a couple of reasons. First, Seldovia already experiences the highest mill rate on property taxes on the Kenai Peninsula . The City Council was not very keen on compounding that "distinction." Second, Seldovia has the highest sales tax in the Kenai Borough. Even if the council wanted to raise that (which they do not necessarily) it would have to be put to a vote in the October election season and then could not be implemented until January 1 st of next year. Because of these facts the City Council instructed me to develop a plan to "live within the labor budget adopted for Fiscal Year 2006." As a result, I had to take the unfortunate actions I took.

### **Police Report**

*compiled by Damara Burnett*

Seldovia has seen a reduction in bear incidences lately, according to Deputy Keith Baker. He received one report on Monday, July 11th, of a bear spotted in the woods behind the school, but noted it was the only "bear call" this week.

Baker also mentioned that Chief of Police Andy Anderson will be back at his regular post as of Monday, July 18th, following his one-month vacation.

No other police news was reported.

### **Notices**

*[Cook Inlet Keeper celebrates anniversary](#)*

*[Amended FY05 Seldovia City Budget 7-8-2005 \(pdf\)](#)*

*[Boys and Girls Club Newsletter April-May](#)*

*[Harbor Survey Priority Results \(pdf\)](#)*

