



HAPPY NEW YEAR — Nome celebrated the arrival of 2007 with a gigantic firework display compliments of a group of dedicated Nome residents.

Photo by Peggy Fagerstrom

# The Nome Nugget

Alaska's Oldest Newspaper

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## DEC issues air permit to Rock Creek Mine

By Diana Haecker

On December 22, the Department of Environmental Conservation issued an Air Quality Control Minor permit to Alaska Gold Company to operate rock crushers and other emission-producing equipment at the Rock Creek mine and mill complex.

The DEC received 21 public comments from Nome residents, the Northern Alaska Environmental Center and AGC.

Nome residents' main concerns were over dust kicked up from increased truck traffic, as AGC proposes to haul ore from Big Hurrah to the Rock Creek mill facility 24/7 and year-round at 90-minute inter-

vals. The DEC responded that it has no regulatory authority to through the air quality permit to include permit conditions to control dust on the road between Rock Creek and Big Hurrah because the road is open to the public. "The Department has been told by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities that they have funding in the short term to provide dust control on the state maintained roads," says the DEC document to respond to comments.

"The Department also suggests to members of the public concerned about dust from the state maintained roads that they work with DOT employees and their state legislators

to ensure DOTPF has adequate funding to provide dust control or to request paving or other measures that may be necessary," says the response to the dust comment.

DEC did not answer the public's question as to how dust will be monitored.

Pat Kelliher with Nome's DOT told *The Nome Nugget* that the DEC had called him up to verify the dust issue brought up by 20 members of the public commenting on the permit. Kelliher said that he confirmed the statement that the dust situation is bad in Nome and that his department has secured special funding for calcium chloride for the 2007

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## Nome's economy not affected by Corps' suspension of Rock Creek permit

By Diana Haecker

A letter by the Nome Chamber of Commerce to District Court Judge Ralph Beistline predicted a gory outlook for Nome businesses all geared up to supply Alaska Gold Company with services and goods to build the Rock Creek mine and mill complex, if the judge decides to grant an injunction in the civil lawsuit brought against the Corps of Engineers.

Three private citizens, Jana Varrati, Sue Steinacher and Austin Ahmasuk, and a group called

Bering Strait Citizens for Responsible Resource Development filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in November, alleging that the Army Corps of Engineers did not follow National Environmental Policy procedures, the Clean Water Act and the National Historic Preservation Act in issuing a 404 wetland permit to Alaska Gold Company's Rock Creek mine project.

Without a court order, the Corps suspended the permit on December 6 to conduct its own internal review,

reconsideration and reassessment of the permit procedure, during which time it prohibited AGC to further destroy delineated wetlands.

Since then, AGC continued to work at Rock Creek in areas that were previously disturbed while the permit was still good. AGC General Manager Doug Nicholson told *The Nome Nugget* last week that work continues as Alaska Mechanical Industries workers poured concrete for the shop and warehouse building foundations.

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Photo by Diana Haecker

**SAFETY PATROL —** Walking Nome streets at 1 a.m. on New Year's Day were volunteers keeping Nome residents and visitors safe during the New Year's celebration. Bertha Koweluk and Berda Willson braved the chilly -11°F temperatures during their safety patrol walk down Front Street.

## Goodbye to yellow utility bills

By Sandra L. Medearis

Good and bad news came out of a Nome Joint Utility work session last week. The bad first: NJU's manager, John Handeland, has been spinning the tea leaves and predicts oil for the utility's generators could come across Nome's port the at the same or higher price than last summer when the price did not take the usual summer drop. Of course, western Alaska must take delivery in the summer when barges can come into ice-free waters.

But now the sort of good news: In face of prices going aloft for fuel oil, NJU's board has decided to hold the fuel surcharge for next year at this year's level.

This year, the fuel surcharge adds about 14 cents per kilowatt for most

customers plus a base energy cost of 17.5 cents per kilowatt. The total price per kilowatt is reduced by about 15 cents from state power cost equalization funds. "Over the course of the summer last year, there was a price dip at the end of August, but now it has shot up again," Handeland said Saturday. "We are hoping for a summer dip this year as historically has been the case, except for last summer."

In other utility news, NJU will phase in a more modern billing system in April. The system will help NJU bookkeepers by better tracking people moving in and out, which has relied in many cases on the sharp eyes and ears of NJU staff. For example, transitions in flat rate

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## Council hands trapping issue to NPC

By Diana Haecker

When an ordinance to ban trapping of animals within city limits came before the Nome Common Council for the second reading last week, the council decided to hand the much-debated issue over to the Nome Planning Commission.

Prior to the public requests and grievances period, Councilman Jerald Brown made the motion to table the ordinance and refer it to the planning commission for further study. Councilman Jon Larson seconded the motion, saying that the issue at hand is that of competing

land uses within the city and that the planning commission is designed to deal with land use topics such as this. Larson added that he hopes that the different trail users could come to an agreement without having the city government legislate the issue.

Councilwoman Mary Knodel did not agree and was the only nay vote to table the ordinance.

During the public requests and grievances period, Nancy McGuire said that in her opinion the council is ducking the issue. She stated that she often takes her dogs out on a leash for walks within the city and

they get into the scent sprayed along the trails to lure critters into the traps. "Anyone trapping in the City is flat out lazy," she said. "They have the whole wilderness outside the City limits to trap."

Dissatisfied with the council's action to pass the issue to the planning commission, McGuire said, "It's time to get an ordinance on this and it's time to take some action and the council are the people to do it."

Trapper Mike Quinn took to the podium later and thanked the council for tabling the ordinance and

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•DEC

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summer before the mining issue ever came up.

Kelliher said that he plans to put dust-deterrent calcium chloride on roads around Nome, Nuk, Safety, Dexter, hopefully Cottonwood and Teller.

Kelliher added, “I am very concerned about dust on the road. It not only is a health issue, but it’s a danger on the road, especially in the cuts on the Nome-Council Highway. We’ve been concerned about that for years.”

Kelliher said that his crew could coat four miles of road a day with the calcium chloride. “First we have to prep it, grade the road, put down the calcium-chloride, water the road and then grade it again before it’s finally compacted,” Kelliher explained the process.

Daily costs are a total of \$30,000 for crew and equipment (\$5,000/day) and 24 tons of calcium

chloride (eight tons at \$1,000 a ton).

Kelliher said that public input in spending requests such as asking for special dust control earmarks to Juneau is always needed.

The concern that dust resulting from blasting in the pit is not addressed in AGC’s fugitive dust plan, DEC answered, “It is not technically feasible for AGC to control dust from blasting.”

A person requested a public hearing, and DEC answered, “The Department allowed 30 days for written comments on the preliminary air permit. The Department does not believe there is any reason that comments received orally in a public meeting would convey any additional information which could not be conveyed in a written comment.”

The response to comments issued by DEC is posted at <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/air/ap/docs/AQ0978MSS01rtc.pdf>

•Economy

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“Right now, the permit suspension has not impacted us,” Nicholson said. Nicholson had previously said that AGC understands that these construction steps are taken at own risk.

“If [the suspension] carries on, it will have some impact on us, but now it doesn’t,” he said.

Nicholson said that AGC currently employs 38 people and that AGC has not layed off anybody due to the permit suspension or the litigation. “We made a commitment to people that we hired them for a long-lasting job. We do everything we can to get through this time,” Nicholson said.

Contrary to Nicholson’s statement, the Nome Chamber of Commerce’s executive director Mitch Erickson said in a letter addressed to District Court Judge Ralph Beistline that there are “a number of lives disrupted due to the layoffs caused by this action.”

Erickson stated in the letter that an injunction would have serious adverse affects on several Nome businesses and that they have invested in excess of \$3 million in products and inventory to provide the mine over the winter months.

Erickson responded to a comment request by *The Nome Nugget* via email to the question if the letter was submitted as a requested affidavit by the parties involved in the lawsuit, saying that the Chamber of Commerce has no intention to intervene and that the letter was not requested by anyone.

Erickson questioned the plaintiffs in the letter to judge Beistline, saying, “Bering Strait Citizens state that they “seek to further the strong public interest. In this statement they infer that they have a strong public support for their position. Until this lawsuit was made, no one had ever heard of the Bering Strait

Citizens for Responsible Resource Development. And since the filing, who BSC is remains a community mystery. For all we know they are a front for The Trustees of Alaska and The Western Mining Action Project.”

An article published in the November 30, 2006 *Nome Nugget* newspaper was about the genesis of the group, its membership, board of directors and goals.

Sue Steinacher was stunned by the Chamber’s letter dated December 14 and entered into public record, and responded, “There is no mystery. We are a totally Nome-grown, grassroots citizens group formed to help local people to be more informed about resource development projects and to advocate for decisions that adequately protect local people’s uses of the land.”

Steinacher went on to explain that she does not pose as a front for any outside interest and that the Bering Strait Citizens for Responsible Resource Development is “nothing other than neighbors, friends and family here in Nome and the Bering Strait region who feel the public has not been adequately informed about or protected from the potential long-term negative impacts of a hard rock mine in our backyard.”

The plaintiffs went on the record and commented during the public hearing held in Nome and handed in written comments to the Army Corps of Engineers, DEC and DNR.

Erickson also listed five Nome businesses — Bonanza Fuel, Sackett Inc., Quality Auto Parts, Nome Outfitters, Boynton’s and Q Trucking — “that are now being asked to pay for the lack of attention the Plaintiffs gave to the permitting process.”

Erickson declined to comment on

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•Council

*continued from page 1*

moving it to the planning commission. Quinn mentioned that he had prepared a handout, but he will save it to support his testimony at the planning commission.

The next Planning Commission’s meeting is scheduled for January 9 at 7 p.m. at the City Hall.

Other citizens’ requests and grievances included Scott Henderson from Bonanza Fuel informing the council of the Citizens Energy discounted heating oil program. Starting December 22, Bonanza fuel began to participate in the program and offers low income residents of Nome to buy up to 200 gallons of heating oil 40 percent below retail price.

Mitch Erickson took to the podium with the news that Skagway recently became a borough. Erickson said that in the light of the recent NSEDC election controversy, the Nome community may contemplate the idea of becoming a borough to allow residents outside the city limits, yet part of the community, to vote legally and also give fishermen the opportunity to participate legally in NSEDC votes.

Lucille Evans approached the council to appeal the non-renewal of her husband’s chauffeur license. The council scheduled a work session to hear the particulars on the matter for January 2 at noon.

In other business, the council passed ordinances to:

- Lease space at the Gold Hill Tutit Ininat Child Care Building to Kawerak’s Uivilat Play and Learn Center.
- Eliminate the personal property

tax on business inventories held for resale.

- Vacate portions of the right of way platted within blocks 135 and 138 in Nome.

The council also passed a resolution to support the Alaska-Siberia Lend-Lease memorial. The Alaska Siberia Research Center has funds for memorials in Fairbanks and Nome. The Fairbanks memorial has been built and dedicated. Mayor Denise Michels said that the Nome memorial is the next site to be developed, and the organization is looking for a suitable location. She suggested the creation of a committee to help the process along.

The council passed a motion to approve the new snow storage and disposal site license agreement and annual use fee of \$500 for licensees. Councilman Larson asked about the lights at the new snow removal pad north of the Nome Bypass Road, as he has seen them burning the whole time. City Manager Randy Romenesko said that the city contracted with NJUS to install the poles and the lights, and with Q Trucking, whose electrician did not yet get to install a meter base and the switch for those lights.

Romenesko gave his manager’s report thanking Carl Emmons, Steve Pomrenke, Shawn Pomrenke, Jerry Krier, Greg Kruschek, the SPARC club, Marty Rudd and Colby Carter for fixing and installing the lighted cross at the steeple of Old St. Joe’s Hall. Romenesko said that the lights failed in December 2004, six years after they were initially installed.

Romenesko also congratulated the Nome Volunteer Ambulance Department for its recertification as an emergency medical service by the State of Alaska. Romenesko thanked Charlie Lean and the volunteers who provide this valuable service to the community.

Romenesko reported that NorthWind Architects of Juneau were selected as the designer for the new NACTEC house to provide living quarters for 26 students and house parents. He hopes to recruit a project superintendent early next year.

Romenesko wished all a Happy New Year. “I hope 2007 is as successful as 2006,” Romenesko said. 2006 saw the completion of the Army Corps of Engineers Nome Harbor improvements, another school renovation project and a low turnover in key city staff.

During council members comments, councilman Randy Pomeranz requested a work session to discuss the sales tax on construction and the personal property tax for residential housing.

Councilman Brown wished all a Happy New Year.

Councilman Larson reminded elders to file their property tax exemption forms. He also thanked The Nome Arts Council, Peter Bente and all involved in the Community Chorus for the wonderful Holiday concert.

Mayor Denise Michels said that she finalized her Department of Military and Veteran’s Affairs transition report and submitted it to Governor Sarah Palin’s transition team.

•Blodgett

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probate procedures regarding his father’s properties. Rick Blodgett named his son in his will, which left “all properties, bank accounts, stocks and insurance policies” to his children. These assets included Teller Power Co and other commercial enterprises.

The other will beneficiaries, including sister, Luann Blodgett, said OK to this hearing, but argued against R.D. Blodgett’s right to receive any benefits of Rick Blodgett’s will.

Esch agreed. While the younger Blodgett argued that being cut out of his dad’s will was unjust because he (R.D.) was physically disabled, faced unforeseeable medical expenses, had a diminished capacity for earning and had ongoing psy-

chological needs. According to court documents, R.D. Blodgett’s own witness said Blodgett was adept at operating heavy equipment and had skills as a mechanic. The lower court found these skills could lead to jobs worth a range of \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year. Additionally, R. D. Blodgett owned property. Future medical expenses would likely be met by Alaska Native Health Services. Esch concluded that the surviving Blodgett would not be “beggared” without inheritance from his father.

R.D. Blodgett appealed Esch’s ruling.

The Supreme Court on Nov. 17 said Esch had properly used his discretion in saying R. D. Blodgett could not benefit from killing his father, and that application of the

“slayer statute” did not violate R. D. Blodgett’s constitutional rights.

Some states have “slayer statutes” that say the killer cannot benefit if the killing was intentional; Alaska’s law simply requires the killing to be unlawful. Under Alaska’s criminal laws, all unjustified killings equal felonies.

Blodgett served prison time after his conviction on criminally negligent homicide in the death of Richard “Rick” Blodgett on Sept. 14, 2003. Indicted on murder in the second degree, the younger Blodgett entered a plea of no contest to the lesser charge. In summary, Alaska Supreme Court found R.D. Blodgett not entitled to obtain benefits under his father’s will and that no injustice resulted from the forfeiture.

Totally New for 2007

The Nome Nugget Newspaper

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Photo by: Jamie Saghafi

**TAKE OATH** — Donald Handeland and Joel Jorgensen are sworn into Nome Youth Court.

•Economy

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the losses, saying, “I don’t have the ability to speak for the individual businesses — regarding any losses or potential losses.”

According to Mark Sackett, owner of Sackett Inc., which is contracting with AMI to provide the mine construction workers with breakfast, lunch and dinner at what used to be Que Onda’s, he had to layoff five employees when AMI didn’t need his food services over the Christmas holidays. He said that the contract with AMI keeps his restaurant business afloat during the winter time. “I would be closed for sure if it weren’t for them,” Sackett said. He added that the Corps’ pulling the permit created “a bigger mess than you’d think” and added, “I’m glad that people are getting hired back and that we can re-open on January 2.”

Sackett said that he is taking it one step at a time, hoping that the mine will be on-line as scheduled to provide steady year-round work for people.

Bonanza Fuel’s manager Scott Henderson declined comments if his business suffered losses due to the Corps’ permit suspension.

Nome Outfitters manager Logan Hebel said he didn’t notice any negative effects at his store. “The only change we saw was that a lot of the workers from outside of Nome bought a lot of cell phones,” Hebel said.

Quality Auto Parts owner Jeff Darling told *The Nome Nugget* that he and his business support the mine project wholeheartedly. “We are 100 percent behind the project,” Darling said. “The majority of the businesses in Nome speak with one voice through the Chamber of Commerce, and we support this mine.”

Q Trucking did not return *The Nome Nugget’s* requests for comment.

The Nome Chamber of Commerce letter also suggests that the plaintiffs post a bond that would be similar to the amount of money the local businesses invested to provide goods and services to the mine.



Photo submitted by Breanne MacFarland

**NOME YOUTH COURT** — Youth Court members take a break from conferences in Kodiak to watch the sea lions sunbathe and play in the water. Pictured in photo: (back , l to r) Jenna Schmidt, Tara Schmidt; (middle, l to r) Breanne MacFarland, Anna Hahn, Iris Wieler, Adem Boeckmann, Nina Wideman, Jamie Saghafi ; (kneeling) Sterling Sam.

Nome Youth Court participants keep busy

**By Breanne MacFarland, Nome Youth Court Coordinator**

Nome Youth Court serves as an alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system that empowers youth and communities to take an active role in addressing the early stages of youth delinquency. First-time offenders are tried and sentenced through a peer-operated program. This encourages peers to be involved in the decision-making process for dealing with juvenile delinquency and allows youth who have committed crimes to be sentenced by judges their own age. It also helps youth gain hands-on knowledge of the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

The members of Youth Court have been busy over the last couple of months attending conferences to broaden their understanding of Youth Courts and adjudicating sentences to Nome youth offenders.

Youth Court members are dedicated to improving the program by developing life skills classes which defendants can be sentenced to take. In October, Anna Hahn, Tara Schmidt, Nome Youth Court Coordinator Breanne MacFarland, and Kawerak’s Wellness Coordinator Kirbi Fullwood traveled to the Mat-Su Valley to observe their youth-run alcohol education class and returned to Nome with the intent to implement a similar program.

On January 12, 2007, Nome Youth Court and Kawerak will hold their first youth run alcohol education class, which will be offered to first time minor consuming alcohol offenders.

In addition, Jenna Schmidt, Sterling Sam, Nina Wideman, Iris Wieler, Tara Schmidt, Adem Boeckmann and Anna Hahn attended the statewide Youth Court Conference held in Kodiak, Alaska.


At this conference, Nome’s Youth Court members were able to interact, brainstorm, motivate and be motivated by other youth from Anchorage, Delta Junction, Sitka, Wrangell and many other Youth Courts around the state. Youth attended conferences on public speaking, courtroom etiquette, leadership, legal education, careers in law, creative sentencing and many others. Jenna Schmidt, Nome Youth Court President, comments on the conference, “We learn from our peers and are revitalized to help other youth who’ve gotten in trouble. It’s fun to meet people around the state who are passionate about helping others.”

Recently, United Youth Courts of Alaska sponsored a leadership conference which two Nome youth attended. Anna Hahn and Donald

Handeland attended this conference where they participated in exercises on values, how to be an effective board member, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (a youth version and an adult version), and recruitment methods. Hahn shares, “I liked how they showed us how adults and youth interact with each other. They showed us how adults view us, and reminded us how we view adults. I really appreciated seeing both sides. One thing adults forget is that kids have responsibilities too, it’s true.”

December 12, Honorable Judge Brad Gator swore into Nome Youth Court two new members: Donald Handeland and Joel Jorgensen. Both new members took an oath to serve as outstanding community members who will respect the courts of justice and judicial officers with truth and honor, and maintain the dignity of Nome Youth Court to improve the administration of juvenile justice.

Even among all these beneficial learning experiences and conferences, Nome Youth Court has seen 14 cases in the last four months and has sentenced nearly 200 hours of community work service. These youth have been working hard to be the best possible judges and attorneys that they can be, growing to continue to benefit this community and the court system.



**Bering Strait School District Calendar of Events**

**Tenth Annual Spelling Bee**  
Grades 4 - 8  
Wales  
January 11

**Upcoming BSSD Academic Decathlon**  
White Mountain  
January 22



*What a way to start the new year!*

Surprise your friends, family or that special someone with a *HAPPY 2007* greeting.

*The Nome Nugget Newspaper*  
443-5235 or jayp@nomenugget.com


**The Piledrivers, Bridge, Dock Builders and Divers Local 2520 are accepting applications for the 2007 apprenticeship program. Applications will be accepted until 3/1/07, with classes beginning 4/2/07.**

The apprenticeship is a four year, 5200 hour program. Apprentices must go to school in Anchorage for a minimum of 144 hours each year and receive pay raises every 1300 hours of apprenticeship. The Piledrivers and Divers Union will pay for schooling. Apprentices may have to pay for books, travel and tools. Financial assistance is available for those that qualify. Students must be able to pass drug and alcohol screening, be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or GED, possess a valid driver’s license and be an Alaska resident.

Further information may be found on our web site, <http://www.local2520.org/>

For an application, call, e-mail or write to:  
Piledrivers and Divers Local 2520  
Attn: Apprenticeship Program  
825 E. 8th Ave., Suite 6  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
(907) 272-7577  
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**Nome Youth Court meets once a week** upstairs at the Nome Boys and Girls Club. If you or someone you know is interested in joining, call **Breanne MacFarland, NYC Coordinator, at 443-5888** for more information