



Photo by Nancy McGuire

COOLING OFF— What better way to spend a hot August afternoon? These muskoxen had the right idea as they went for a swim in the Nome River near Dexter.

The Nome Nugget

Alaska's Oldest Newspaper

• USPS 598-100 • Single Copy Price - 50 Cents in Nome •

VOLUME CVII NO. 34 AUGUST 23, 2007



Photo by Nancy McGuire

SAMPLING THE CROP— Tamara Spivey, 9, checks the sweet peas at her back yard garden, which was part of last Sunday's Nome Garden Tour. See story page 8.

City evicts beach dwellers

By Diana Haecker

Unsanitary practices of a West Beach dweller led to the end of a silently tolerated practice of letting beach miners and other dwellers squat on West Beach for the summer.

The Nome police on order of the city manager, posted 13 Notice to Quit forms on beach shanties, tent sites and makeshift driftwood dwellings, telling the inhabitants to vacate the structure, pack up and move off of City property within seven days. Or else.

The eviction notices came after a police officer noticed a strong stench of human waste coming from a camper shell parked on West Beach. Nome police officer Bryan Weyauvanna had his window rolled down while driving along the beach to serve papers to a beach miner. "That's when I noticed a real strong smell of honeybucket," Weyauvanna said. Honeybuckets must be disposed of at the proper facility at the wastewater treatment plant on River Street. Weyauvanna said that one beach miner flew back to New York

and another went back to New Hampshire. "Both were leaving their waste behind," Weyauvanna said.

After checking which parcels of land belong to whom — the City of Nome, Sitnasuak Native Corporation and Alaska Gold Company all have land holdings in the area — City Hall consulted with the city's attorney Brooks Chandler. Chandler drafted an eviction notice and City Manager Randy Romenesko sent out Weyauvanna — with GPS coordinates of City land holdings — to post eviction notices on the beach hootches on city property.

Not so fast, say beach dwellers, who were caught by surprise by the city's action.

A beach miner going by the nickname Abalone Bob said that he believes this is wrong and that the city can't just kick him off. "I've come here for seven years now, work hard, keep a clean place here and contribute by buying all my supplies in Nome's stores and paying sales tax," Abalone Bob said. He said he intends to contest the Notice to Quit,

continued on page 4

Feds investigate walrus deaths

By Diana Haecker

The mystery of an unusually high number of walrus carcasses washed up on Norton Sound beaches is in the process of being investigated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Steve Oberholtzer, assistant special agent in charge at USFWS office of law enforcement, told *The Nome Nugget* that USFWS Nome area agent Mike Wade counted 79 dead walrus on beaches between Elim and Unalakleet in an aerial survey, most of them headless. Headless is a term used to signal that their tusks and or a part of their noseplate are missing.

"This could mean two things," explained Oberholtzer. "The walrus could have had their ivory salvaged after they washed on shore — that would be legal."

Non-natives must go to the USFWS to have the ivory tagged within 30 days. Natives can go to designated ivory taggers in their vil-

lage.

But the headless walrus also can mean another thing. "Another scenario could be that the walrus were harvested on ice, the ivory removed at the time of harvest and the rest of the animal not taken. That would be illegal and that is why we have an investigation," said Oberholtzer. Oberholtzer said that most reports also said that the walrus had bullet holes in their bodies.

"We have different investigations every year on various aspects regarding marine mammals, but this one is quite different from investigations in recent years," said Oberholtzer. The USFWS has jurisdiction over polar bear, walrus and sea otter issues.

Oberholtzer said that his agency started getting reports of walrus carcasses on beaches in late June. On July 3, agent Wade flew a survey mission and counted 79 walrus bodies.

"We are in no way inferring or implying that illegal harvest has occurred," said Oberholtzer. "We are on a fact finding mission to see what caused the death of the animals and whether the ivory was harvested right after the killing or after they washed ashore."

Oberholtzer said that agent Wade flies through that area every year and that in the past ten years, the most he's seen is half that amount.

Only Alaska Natives that dwell on the coast have the right to take walrus. When a walrus is harvested, at a minimum the ivory, heart, liver, flippers, cok, and some red meat must be salvaged. Hunters may substitute other parts of the animal of equal or greater amount and take the skin instead of the liver, for example.

"Our sole investigation is the cause of death and whether it was legal or not," said Oberholtzer.

Clarice Hardy from Shaktoolik

continued on page 6

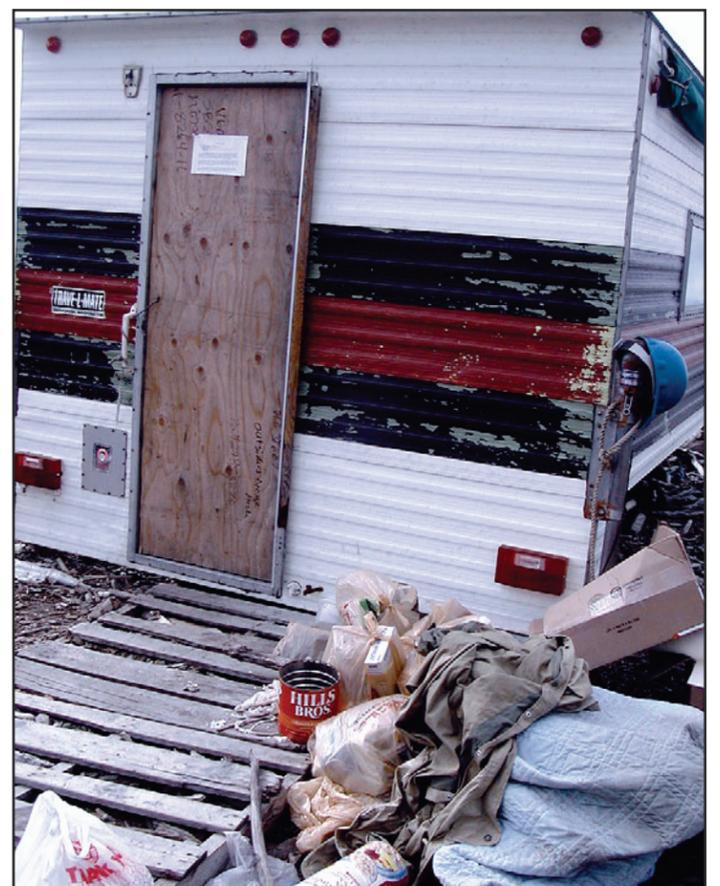


Photo by Diana Haecker

TROUBLE CAMPER— Trash and honeybucket waste litters the area around this camper shell at West Beach. The camper started a city investigation on occupancy issues, resulting in 13 eviction notices served.

Man injured at Rock Creek construction site

By Diana Haecker

The Nome Volunteer Ambulance Department responded to a call for service from the construction site of Alaska Gold Company's Rock Creek gold mine. According to ambulance chief Charlie Lean, an ambulance was dispatched and assisted a worker, who had fallen off a ladder. Injuries appeared to be not life-threatening.

As of press time on Monday night, Alaska Gold Company officials did not respond to the request for more information. Lean could only comment that the fall was classified as a construction accident and that the patient was treated for his injuries.