



Photo by Tyler Rhodes

THE PLUNGE—Craig Perkins from the NSHC, center, joins new teachers and returning staff from the Nome Public Schools District on August 22 for a plunge in the Bering Sea.

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Alaska Gold plans exploration at Dry Creek

By Diana Haecker

Three Nome residents showed up for a public meeting at Old St. Joe's Hall Monday, August 27 to hear about Alaska Gold Company's plans to conduct exploration drilling in Dry Creek.

The meeting was called by two divisions within the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, namely

the Alaska Coastal Management Program in the offices of project management and permitting, and the Division of Mining, Land and Water.

According to Jack Kerin of the Division of Mining, Land and Water, the meeting was a result of Nome citizens' complaints that the Rock Creek permitting process did not involve enough public participation.

"The division director of the DML&W assured that there will be a public process, and here we are," said Kerin. "We learned from Rock Creek and are here to hear from what the public has to say," added Army Corps of Engineers specialist Julie Woodke.

The party hosts were there, *continued on page 7*

Safety building in the hopper

By Sandra L. Medearis

The Nome Common Council is plotting on the placement and the agencies to occupy a new public safety building to house emergency and safety services that could cost up to \$13 million.

Emergency response chiefs and safety heads say they need updated facilities and more room to provide services.

To get the ball rolling at this month's work session on this and public service topics, City Manager

Randy Romenesko laid out three scenarios for a public safety building to go across from the existing fire station or near Nome Bypass Road to the north. These funding packages run from \$13 million down to a mere \$7.7 million.

Option 1 provides a full program including all departments—fire department, police department, volunteer ambulance, state troopers, emergency operations center and training areas. Option 2 includes all these agencies but the fire department, but does include one truck space and office space to stem the addition of the fire department later. Option 3 excludes the Dept. of Motor Vehicles and the Alaska State Troopers, and includes one classroom and a small residential type kitchen.

The work session, during which no decisions can be taken officially, was well attended by representatives of the agencies.

It became clear that all present wanted to be included in the new facility plans on the table. NPD Chief Paul Burke said the police have to deal with basic space deficiencies daily.

"We can't do public service the way we want to do it in the building we're in. We can't interview. We can't store evidence. The computer operating system is covered with dust," Burke said.

Charlie Lean, head of Nome Volunteer Ambulance crew, said of the ambulance building, "It is a piece of junk." He could walk upstairs and stick his hand in the space between the wall and the floor, he said. "The building is falling apart."

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Photo by Diana Haecker

FINISHING TOUCHES— Pacific Asphalt employee Gary Bidwell sweeps drying material off the painted yellow line as his crew put the finishing touches on the newly paved Front Street.

Long summer helps with construction projects

By Diana Haecker

A spectacular summer so far has been conducive to infrastructure improvement projects in the region.

After two years of having to contend with a bumpy East Front Street after NJUS completed water and sewer service upgrades, the Department of Transportation with contractor Quality Asphalt paved and improved Nome's main drag from

Steadman to K Street. "Pretty fast, pretty painless and folks were pretty understanding with all the inconveniences regarding traffic diversions," summed up DOT project engineer Blaine Galleher. Galleher said that the project finished on deadline, August 15. Last weekend, a subcontractor to Quality Asphalt, Pacific Asphalt, put the finishing touches on

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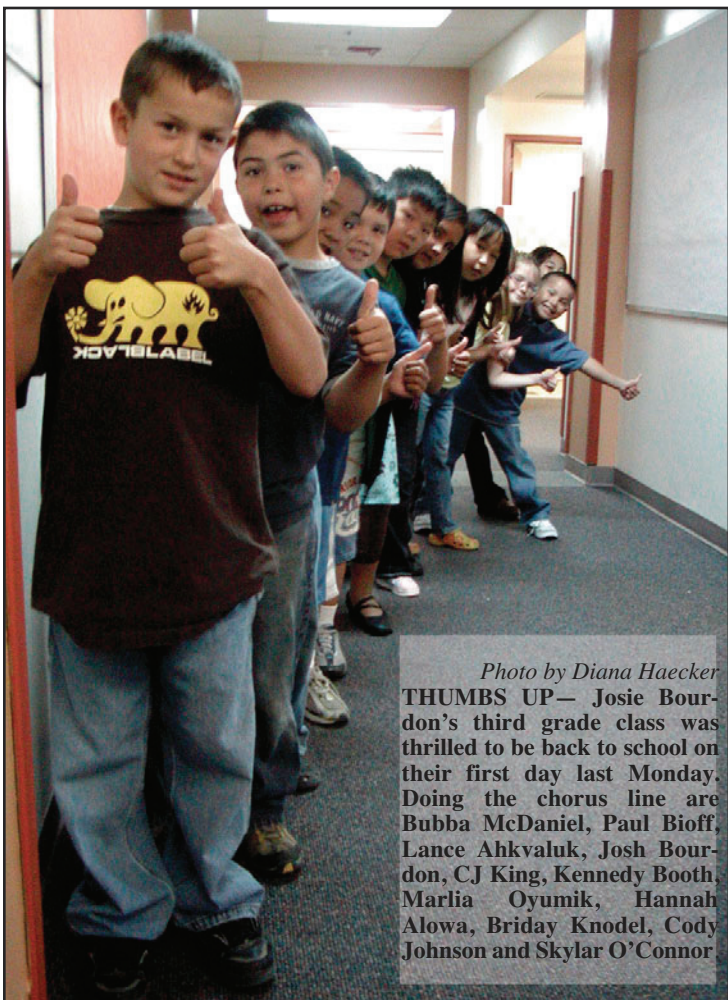


Photo by Diana Haecker
THUMBS UP— Josie Bourdon's third grade class was thrilled to be back to school on their first day last Monday. Doing the chorus line are Bubba McDaniell, Paul Bioff, Lance Ahkvaluk, Josh Bourdon, CJ King, Kennedy Booth, Marlia Oyumik, Hannah Alowa, Briday Knodel, Cody Johnson and Skylar O'Connor.

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• Dry Creek

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munching on cookies, but the public was a no show.

Present were Tom Atkinson, project review supervisor at the DNR AMCP office, Sadie Wright, ACMP project specialist, Jack Kerin with DNR/ML&W, Julie Woodke, Army Corps of Engineers regulatory specialist and ACMP Nome liaison Jim Dory. The Gold company was represented by Charlotte MacCay, AGC's environmental services manager with Bristol Environmental Engineering Services, Brent Murphy, environmental engineer, Warren Woods, AGC general manager, among others.

The meeting was to inform the public about AGC plans with Dry Creek. At this point, AGC's environmental managers said, the company only submitted applications for proposed placer mining exploration and a pilot project. Emphasis was put on the word exploration.

"Beyond exploration and the pilot program, we don't have a plan in place," said Charlotte MacCay. "We don't know what's in there and there is no mine planned as of yet. It doesn't make any sense to sit here and speculate whether or not it is going to production."

Exploration plan

The plan calls for drilling up to 200 holes on 16 to 18 lines. After the drilling and examination of the samples, up to 15 pits will be dug for bulk sampling. If AGC still likes what it sees, then a pilot program kicks in, consisting of building a stream diversion, formation of a 200-250-foot wide and 250 foot long test pit and a wash plant. "The combined disturbance due to exploration and the pilot program is estimated to be 6.24 acres and 65,795 cubic yards," says the project description.

The exploration plan is subject to a Fish Habitat permit, a mining reclamation plan approval by DML&W and before these permits can be issued, the DNR office of project management and permitting needs to check if the exploration project complies with the Alaska Coastal Management program. For exploration, no Army Corps of Engineers additional permit is needed, as the exploration project falls under a general permit. An AGC flyer handed out to the public last Monday stood corrected as it said that the Dry Creek project, "... has been determined to be compliant with the Nome and State Coastal Zone Management Plans." Tom Atkinson, however, made a point saying that

this determination was made by Alaska Gold, not his office. "Whether or not the application is compliant with ACMP is up to my office. We will make that determination after we're done with the consistency review," Atkinson said.

If AGC decides that it is economical to extract the gold, a new round of permits, including Army Corps of Engineers 404 wetlands permits, need to be issued.

As for now, the exploration project is slated to work during the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., seven days a week. Brent Murphy said that AGC is willing to work with the community on this, but that the operation will also be at work on Sunday. "We're making the hay when the sun shines," said Murphy. "This is such a small scale, involving one, maybe, two drill rigs. I don't think the noise will be overly excessive. It's a small scale exploration," Murphy said. However Murphy signaled Alaska Gold Company's open door policy and invited the public to call AGC's offices with any comments or questions.

Environmental concerns

Any kind of environmental concerns addressed by the three members of the public were deemed

premature since AGC has no definitive mining plan. However, MacCay said there would not be any chemicals involved in this sort of potential placer mining operation. MacCay also said that the exploration has no connection to the proposed 21st century Subdivision west of Dry Creek proposed by AGC's land management division a few weeks ago to the Nome Planning Commission. During the planning commission meeting, land managers pointed to the possibility to use mine tailings from Dry Creek mining to build roads and pads for the envisioned 21st Century Subdivision.

"No connection," said MacCay. "A mining company explores a lot more sites than are developed," she said. "At the time you don't know what the economy is; you never know what the gold prices are and if a project is feasible. Exploration is just data gathering."

The company suggested dust mitigation by watering or using dust suppressant. Murphy again pointed out that the exploration would only involve less than a dozen workers and not more than two drill rigs, making noise or dust is not really an issue.

Bureaucracy

The public was encouraged to attend the meeting, but didn't. Now there is a window of time until September 9 to submit comments in writing to the ACMP office. Yet, how do people know what comments

would be relevant to the Alaska Coastal Management consistency review?

"We suggest that you cite the state-wide standards in your comments," said Sadie Wright. "We want to know if this project breaks any state standards and laws," Wright added. So, folks wanting to comment can look up State Code 11.AAC112.250 or 11 AAC 112. Questions on how to comment can be also directed to the local ACMP liaison Jim Dory at City Hall or by going to:

www.Alaskacoast.state.ak.us

Tom Atkinson encouraged public participation in the matter and said, "We don't get a lot of public comments, so we're thrilled if we do."

By October, there will be a final determination made, said Wright. Then, AGC can work at their leisure anytime between 2007 and 2011 on the exploration project. "The company then goes forward depending on equipment and manpower availability," MacCay said.

Questions and comments can be directed to Sadie Wright, ACMP project specialist, Alaska Coastal Management Program, OPMP, PO Box 111030, Juneau, AK 99811-1030; Phone: 907-465-8791, fax: 907-465-3075,

email:sadie.wright@alaska.gov

Or contact Jack Kerin, DNR, Division of Mining, Land and Water, 3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709-4699, phone: 907-451-2736, email: leo.kerin@alaska.gov

MSHA reports 20 mining-related deaths this year

According to the Mining Safety and Health Administration, there were 20 fatalities this year to date in the field of metal and nonmetal mining in the US. Recently posted on the MSHA website, a Stop The Fatalities initiative lists the 20 deadly accidents and includes the appeal to employers to talk to their employees about the causes of the accidents.

Reads the Stop the Fatalities document, "We need to take action now to STOP the Fatalities. Sharing information and discussing these recent accidents with the employees can help them to avoid these types of accidents in the future," says the MSHA initiative.

"A significant contributing cause in most accidents is insufficient attention to the task at hand or multi-tasking. Employees must pay careful attention to what is going on around them and to the tasks they are performing.

Fatalities since January 2007 to date

Fatality #1 - January 2, 2007 - Other - Texas - Alumina - Alcoa World Alumina Atlantic - Bayer Alumina Plant
Fatality #2 - January 25, 2007 - Fall of Roof or Back - Washington - Lead/Zinc Ore - Tech Cominco American Inc - Pend Oreille Mine
Fatality #3 - February 19, 2007 - Non-Powered Haulage - North Carolina - Limestone (C&B) - Martin Marietta Materials, Inc. - Bakers Quarry
Fatality #4 - March 23, 2007 - Machinery - Ohio - Sandstone (C&B) Oglebay Norton Industrial Sands, Inc. - Glass Rock Plant
Fatality #5 - March 30, 2007 - Other (Drowning) - Louisiana - Construction

Sand & Gravel Martin Marietta Materials, Inc. - Martin Marietta Materials Inc. Plant #5

Fatality #6 - April 3, 2007. Powered Haulage. Missouri - Lead-Zinc Ore-Doe Run Company - Brushy Creek Mine/Mill

Fatality #7 - April 5, 2007 - Falling Material - Texas - Dimension Sandstone 1845 Texas Stone Products, Inc. - Texas Stone Products, Inc.

Fatality #8 - April 18, 2007 - Machinery - Minnesota - Iron Ore United Taconite LLC - United Mine

Fatality #9 - April 18, 2007 - Slip/Fall of Person - Arkansas - Alumina Almatris Inc. - Arkansas Operations Mine

Fatality #10 - April 25, 2007 - Powered Haulage - West Virginia - Limestone (C&B) Riverton Investment Corp. - Essroc Cement Corp.

Fatality #11 - June 8, 2007 - Machinery - Minnesota - Iron Ore Mittal Steel USA-Minorca Mine Inc. - Minorca Mine

Fatality #12 - June 12, 2007 - Falling Material - California - Granite(C&B) Granite Construction Co. - Felton Quarry

Fatality #13 - June 13, 2007 - Machinery - Missouri - Limestone (C&B) Mississippi Lime Company - Ste. Genevieve

Fatality #14 - June 19, 2007 - Powered Haulage - Nevada - Gold Ore Newmont Midas Operations - Midas Mine

Fatality #15 - July 18, 2007 - Powered Haulage - Nebraska - Sand & Gravel Lyman-Richey Sand & Gravel Company - Pit #40 Waterloo

Fatality #16/#17 - July 19, 2007 - Machinery - Alaska - Gold Ore Alaska Gold Company - Nome Operations

On July 19, 2007, two contractor iron workers (28 year-old with 3 years experience and 19 year-old with 44 weeks experience) were fatally injured at a gold operation. They were working from the basket of a mobile man lift installing material on a building being erected at the site of a future surface mine. The boom was fully extended about 90 feet above ground when the unit became unstable and toppled over.

Fatality #18 - July 24, 2007 - Powered Haulage - Oregon - Sand & Gravel - Delta Sand & Gravel Company - Delta Pit and Plant

Fatality #19 - July 29, 2007 - Fall of Person - Tennessee - Lead/Zinc Ore - East Tennessee Zinc Company, LLC - Immel Mine

Fatality #20 - July 30, 2007 - Fall of Ground - Montana - Copper Ore - Genesis Inc. - Genesis Inc., Troy Mine



Photo by Diana Haecker

EMPTY CHAIRS— Three public attendees were at last Monday's public meeting to become educated about AGC's Dry Creek exploration plans.

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