

# HAINES *Alaska* NEWS

FREE—TAKE ONE

All the news the other paper forgot to print

FREE—TAKE ONE

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- Free Computer Awarded to Haines Classroom
- Iditarod Update
- Judge Reinstates Tongass Roadless Rule
- Lt. Karl Kurz Retires from U.S. Army
- Lights Are On But Nobody's Home
- The Pipeline's Flow Problem

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## Opinion:

### Juneau Cable Failure Underscores Haines Risk

Why Haines teeters on the brink of economic disaster.

By Roger Maynard

Monday's joint meeting between the Haines and Skagway borough assemblies underscored a number of issues of mutual concern. Among the most important is just how tenuous is our source of reasonably-priced electrical power.

Presently, Haines receives nearly 100% of its power from hydro projects in or near Skagway. The day the Haines-Skagway undersea cable fails, all of this power will have to be generated by the diesel-fired power plant in Haines.

The failure of Juneau's undersea cable Tuesday evening underscores the risk to the Haines community. According to a KINY News story:

*"Gail Wood from AEL&P says power was restored across the city and borough around 11 [Tuesday] night. Wood says the outage location has been identified as the East Terminal where the lines transmit into the submarine cable that crosses Taku Inlet. Wood says the outage lasted about an hour and a half for those who had*

*power restored last. AEL&P is running off backup diesel generators, and will head to the source of the outage at first light to determine a cause. The outage occurred around 9:45 p.m."*

The danger to Haines is real. We all remember two years ago when fuel prices spiked—suddenly folks on fixed incomes who had been paying \$400 to heat their homes in winter months saw their heating bills spike to over \$900, prompting a few to sell their homes and leave town.

Based on the present fuel price trend, the next local energy crisis promises to be even more severe. And a failed undersea cable that requires Haines to live on diesel-fired electricity would create a perfect storm of untenable energy prices.

According to Danny Gonce, AP&T power manager for Haines,

*"The existing submarine cable that interties [Skagway and Haines] was installed in 1997. Submarine cables have a finite life. If the cable was to*

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## Joint Haines and Skagway Borough Assembly Work Group Meeting

By Roger Maynard

At a joint Haines and Skagway Borough Assembly work group meeting Monday evening, members of both bodies discussed subjects of mutual interest, including upper Lynn Canal port development, tourism, the shuttle ferry service, hydropower and the Skagway-Haines energy intertie.

Though the meeting only lasted a little over an hour, there was general agreement that it was a good start toward the two boroughs working together for mutual benefit.

The last time a similar meeting occurred, it was between the City of Haines and the City of Skagway in 1999. This year's meeting was the result of a discussion between Haines Borough mayor Jan Hill and Skagway mayor Tom Cochran.

The two communities have more than a little in common: Road connections to the outside states and provinces, deepwater ports, the Alaska Marine Highway System, tourism, and potential mine development that could utilize the port facilities.

Some specific ideas were discussed that warrant further investigation include:

- Emergency planning: Skagway presently has a local emergency planning committee (LEPC) organized under the Alaska Department of Emergency Services. Haines used to have one, but it is not presently active. A joint LEPC could be useful for both communities since they are in close proximity and have similar concerns.

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## Sally and the Moose

*"It was an encounter with two moose and neither of us won."*

By Gary Lidholm

Someone commented that there are two kinds of people who live in the Chilkat Valley: those who have hit a moose and those who are going to. Chilkat Valley resident Sally Reno took on two of them at one time this week and, in her words, "None of us won."

Returning to her home at dusk this week with a load of firewood, Sally said she was driving slowly because there had been an unusual number of moose seen along the highway in recent days. "Normally heavy snow brings

them down this time of year, but there hasn't been much snow lately, so I am not sure why we have been seeing so many of them," she said. But at 22 Mile there they were — a cow and two-year old calf that popped out onto the highway, leaving little time to react. "I needed to keep the truck on the highway so the only alternative was to hit the moose," she said. But what she hadn't counted on was one of the moose hitting her.

Sally said she hit the mother moose with the front of the truck, resulting in

only minor damage but, before she had time to react there was an impact on her side door. The glass on the driver's side exploded where the calf literally ran into the side of the truck. "There was glass everywhere and all over me," she said.

The truck is still drivable but she waited at the scene for the state trooper who had to put the calf down. The good news is that Sally was not injured and the moose meat went to the Head Start program.

Drivers of the Haines Highway are advised to beware of the large number of moose that appear to be visiting the highway this time of year.

## AAA Awards Free Computer to Haines Classroom

AAA press release

The AAA has announced the award of three computers to Southeast Alaska Educators as part of their Driving Success Computer Grant Program. The recipients are Leigh Horner at Haines Borough School, Mark Woodward at Revilla Alternative School in Ketchikan, and Howard Wayne at Sitka High School.

This is the first year Driving Success Computer Grants were awarded and were made possible through a partnership with Dell. Teachers across the state submitted applications last fall for a chance to receive one of the computers valued at over \$700.

"Computers are a powerful tool in the classroom and today's business world,"

said Denice Harris, AAA Spokeswoman. "Many students don't have access

to a computer or the internet at home. AAA's Driving Success computer grants provide the technology students and educators need for success."

## HAINES-SKAGWAY MEETING—PT 1

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- Tourism, especially promoting the Golden Circle route through both communities, could have some positive impact, and advertising dollars could be pooled. Both groups agreed to have their respective tourism directors meet to discuss ideas.

- The impending legislative redistricting is of mutual concern.

- Both communities would like to see additional sailings of the Haines/Skagway Fast Ferry service. Presently the service provides transportation for tour groups, but local residents have not been able to reliably make the trip between the two towns due to space limits. The company has requested infrastructure upgrades to the Haines PC dock that could be an encouraging sign that they intend to continue operations for the long term. If there were more cruise ship dockings in Haines, it would add to the two-way traffic on the fast ferries, making each run more profitable.

- The Alaska Marine Highway System has had more frequent sailings this year, though weather has been a factor in preventing service at times. The larger Alaska-class vessels should be able to provide more reliable service through the winter. Some folks would like to see the docks in Haines and Skagway improved, and a ferry home-ported in Haines—spending nights and departing early in the morning. AP&T is working on a plan to supply electricity to the AMHS ferries when they are docked.

- Haines is beginning work on an upgrade of their comprehensive plan. The consultant, Barbara Sheinberg, is the same one Skagway used for their plan, and she received positive recommendations from Skagway.

- Hydropower was the most pressing issue discussed. AP&T manager Darren Belisle and recently retired manager, now consultant Stan Selmer were very clear about the capacity of the present system and the vulnerability of Haines to failure of the submarine cable that cur-

(Continued on page 4)



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**HAINES AT RISK**

*(Continued from page 1)*

fail today, with fuel prices what they are, electricity prices would reflect the approximate 100% diesel fuel generation required in Haines and prices would increase in excess of 400%. Current generation expenses are around 8.666 cents per kilowatt hour; that could increase to over 35 cents per kilowatt hour. That would be crippling to businesses; that has nothing to say of what it would do to borough budgets.”

Some of our assembly members have the picture. Scott Rossman said it best at the meeting in Skagway: “If hydro is what we need, then it’s a shame that we burn even one single gallon of diesel. What one thing can Haines and Skagway do collectively to make something happen?”

But other assembly members, for whatever reason, tend to waffle on this critical issue. One of our assembly members—the one most consistently opposed to Connelly Lake Hydro, owns NO property, NO house, and if energy rates make our town unlivable he only needs to turn in his resignation, pack his suitcase and leave. He can afford to represent the independently wealthy environmentalist anti-development contingent in town.

That’s not true for the rest of us. When the undersea cable fails (and it will), many folks will have to just turn down the heat and leave town. Some will put their houses up for sale—but what happens to house values when too many become available in a market where there are no buyers? The economic crash in Haines could come suddenly and dramatically.

Lately, the assembly has voiced unequivocal support for a hydro project at Excursion Inlet. How can they be less enthusiastic about hydro for Haines?

**Factors Favorable to Connelly Lake Hydro**

The clear majority of Haines residents view the potential hydro project at Connelly Lake favorably. They understand there is little or no risk to the environment considering the experience and regulatory system within which AP&T would be required to work. There are no fish in Connelly Lake, nor in the stream

from Connelly Lake, and a penstock and powerhouse will not appreciably change the stream characteristics in a manner that would adversely affect the salmon in waters downstream. Although they won’t say so in public, the environmentalists know this, too.

We have an electrical company that is willing and able to complete such a project, considering their experience at similar projects and their record of environmental stewardship.

Haines wouldn’t see power from it in less than 10 years even if we started today.

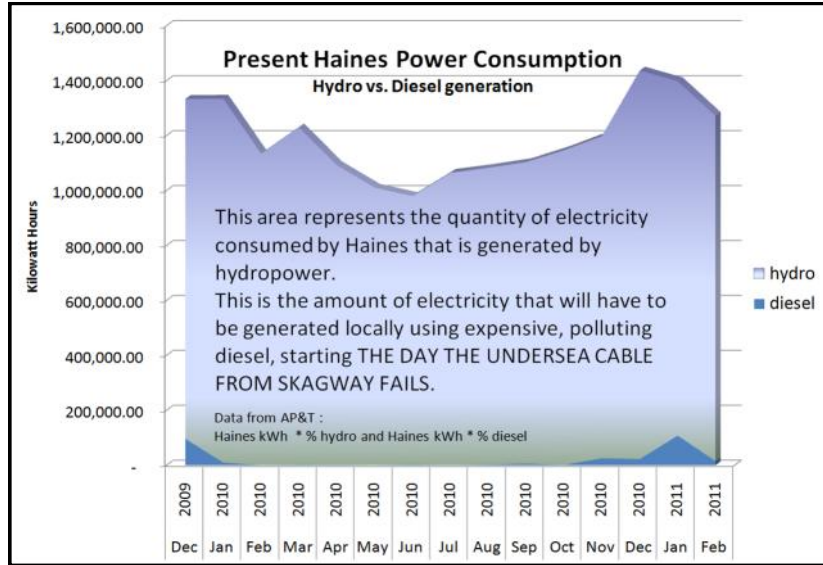
If the assembly wants to do what is best of Haines, then they need to get the ball rolling instead of listening to an environmentalist minority. The environmentalists will have plenty of opportunity to have their say during the permitting process – that’s why the permit regulations exist. It’s not the job of the assembly to slow that process.

**What Needs to Happen**

The resolution of support that was passed by the Haines Borough Assembly two years ago is a watered-down version of what it should have been. If the assembly is to do what is best for our town, then they need to start beating the drum to develop Connelly Lake hydro NOW. Even if funded today, it will take five years to come on line. They should be hounding our legislators, our governor, our federal delegation and others incessantly, to make Connelly Lake hydro happen.

And they should look at ways to work with AP&T to make Connelly Lake a mutually beneficial partnership.

For the assembly to do any less is a dereliction of their fiduciary duty to the people of Haines. In that case, when the local energy crisis happens, the blame needs to be placed squarely on the shoulders of the borough assembly.



We have a state government that favors hydro projects, and a history of assisting with funding for hydro projects to keep future consumer prices low.

We have a proposal (Connelly Lake) that has been studied, partially planned, and is 5 years closer to completion than any other proposal.

The Alaska Conservation Alliance, a coalition of environmental groups in Alaska, has voiced its support for hydro-power during last year’s legislative session.

**The Opposition**

We know there will be some folks who will make Connelly Lake hydro as difficult as possible – Lynn Canal Conservation will oppose it, as they continually oppose everything in their war against the Haines economy. Takshanuk Watershed Council will oppose it even though they are using our tax money for their existence. The Chilkoot Bear Coalition will oppose it, and there are others.

Some will expound on the virtues of Schube Lake, but Schube is not an alternative to Connelly Lake. It’s at the other end of the undersea cable, it holds an unknown quantity of water, the flow from the lake is unstudied, and no environmental studies have been done –

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**HAINES-SKAGWAY -Pt 2**

(Continued from page 2)

rently supplies power from Skagway. Both Connelly Lake and Schube Lake projects have been submitted to the Alaska Energy Authority for funding, but did not make the first-round cuts. It is too early to tell if they will be funded in the second round.

The meeting was attended by Haines mayor Jan Hill (telephonic,) Skagway

mayor Tom Cochran (presiding,) Haines assembly members Jerry Lapp, Steve Vick, Scott Rossman, Joanne Waterman and Daymond Hoffman, and by Skagway assembly members Collette Hisman and Mike Korsmo (telephonic.)

Although no future meeting date was set, all present agreed that more meetings of this type are needed.

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