

Adak's Monthly Newsletter featuring Local News and Events

MERRY CHRISTMAS



TDX Adak Generating Requests Tariff Increase

Late in November, TDX Adak Generating submitted a request to the Regulatory Commission of Alaska requesting a permanent increase in rates of 60.51% with an interim (temporary) increase of 24.21% in its filing (see below). As you may recall in November 2010, TDX requested a permanent increase of almost 137% and an interim increase of almost 96%. As a matter of perspective, over the last two years the prices for diesel fuel have risen 6%, a round trip ticket on Alaska Air has increased 7%, telephone rates have risen 6%, and water/sewer/garbage rates have held steady.

The stated reason for the increase is a loss of revenue when Icicle Seafoods closed the plant and the estimated impact of this loss of revenue over the next several years these rates are to be in effect for. As evidenced around town many businesses have elected to self-generate, in order to save money or not raise prices to customers instead of staying on the grid. The full proposed filing is available on the RCA website and in hard copy for inspection at the City office. You are encouraged to submit written comments to the RCA. If you would like to know what the increase means for you bring any of your recent electric bills to the office and we can calculate what that bill would look like under the proposed increases. An informed community is an empowered community.

NOTICE OF UTILITY TARIFF FILING

The REGULATORY COMMISSION OF ALASKA (Commission) gives notice that TDX Adak Generating, Inc. (TAG) has filed tariff revision TA27-684, a revenue requirement study in compliance with Order U-09-095(8)/U-09-096(8). In TA27-684, TAG requests a 24.21% interim and refundable, across-the-board rate increase to take effect for billings issued on or after January 1, 2014. TAG also proposes a 60.51% permanent rate increase to all monthly recurring tariff rates in order to recover its operating deficiency. TAG further requests the interim and refundable rate increase remain in effect until the revenue requirement study is fully adjudicated. The table below lists some of the current, proposed interim and permanent rates for Residential and Commercial Service.

	Current Rates	Proposed Interim Rates	Proposed Permanent Rates
Residential Service			
Monthly Customer Charge	\$18.50	\$22.98	\$29.70
Usage Charge per kWh	\$0.504	\$0.626	\$0.809
Commercial Service			
Monthly Customer Charge	\$36.99	\$45.94	\$59.37
Usage Charge per kWh	\$0.172	\$0.214	\$0.276
Demand Charge per kWh	\$83.23	\$103.38	\$133.60

This notice does not contain every revision proposed to TA27-684, including proposed interim and permanent rates for Schedule SG-1 – Self Generation. The Commission may approve a rate or classification, which varies from that proposed. You may obtain more information about this filing from TAG, 4300 B Street, Suite 402, Anchorage, AK 99503. You may inspect the filing at the Commission's offices at 701 West Eighth Avenue, Suite 300, Anchorage, AK 99501, or online via our website at <http://rca.alaska.gov/>.

To comment on this filing, please file your comments by 5:00 p.m., December 11, 2013, at either the Commission address given above or via our website at: <https://rca.alaska.gov/RCAWeb/WhatsNew/PublicNoticesComments.aspx>. Please reference TA27-684 in the subject line of your comments and include a statement that you have filed a copy of the comments with TAG at its address given above or swilbur@tdxpower.com. Individuals or groups of people with disabilities, who require special accommodations, auxiliary aids or service, or alternative communication formats, please contact Joyce McGowan at 276-6222, toll-free at 1-800-390-2782, or TTY (907) 276-4533 by December 4, 2013. DATED at Anchorage, Alaska, this 21st day of November 2013.

REGULATORY COMMISSION OF ALASKA

Robert K. Lindquist Chief, Tariff Section

Adak Cod Cooperative Seeks Locals to Work at Plant

Adak Cod Cooperative (ACC) will be open for operations on February 1, 2014, with a peak season crew of about 250 and a small fleet of boats who have already committed to offloading in Adak. The plant will be "value added" processing; fileting and vacuum packing fish for the United States retail market. Along with processing pacific cod, ACC will buy black cod, halibut and golden king crab during the slower seasons, using a skeleton crew of 20-30. ACC encourages local residents who have their own housing to submit an application for employment, paying \$10/hour.

The Plane is Coming! The Plane is Coming!

That's right kids and parents get ready for the annual Alaska Airlines Christmas plane. The plane will be landing in Adak on December 22 with Santa Claus onboard. Come to the Airport Terminal to meet Santa and partake of the goodies he and his elves will be bringing. The plane is scheduled to land at approximately 4pm.



ATTENTION ADAK RESIDENTS – Adak Rec Fund Raiser news:

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DINNER – December 23, 2013

Anchorage Lofts Hotel is offering Adak Residents a 30% discount for their newly renovated hotel in Anchorage.

They are graciously helping us with a nice donation for our Christmas event through Adak Recreation fund raiser and are available for reservations right away! Please call (907) 793-5555 and mention the Adak discount when making a reservation.

Mailbox Groceries has also made their annual donation of Christmas Pies for our community Christmas Dinner. Don't forget their Early Bird discount! Check out their website: www.mailboxgroceriesak.com

Donation letters will be going out the first week of December for businesses to help support our annual Christmas gifting and community dinner. If you wish to help, please give Nicole a call at 572-9810.

Scenes from Thanksgiving



ASBAG Community Thanksgiving



Black Friday - EAT's Table



Mike and Imelda Rainey's Anniversary

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

December 11 – City Council, 5pm Council Chambers
December 22 – Santa Plane, 4pm AK Air Terminal
December 23 – Community Christmas, Community Center
December 25 – Christmas, City Closed
December 31 - New Year's Eve Party and Fireworks ASBAG
January 1 - HAPPY NEW YEAR, CITY CLOSED

Saber-toothed...Whale?!

Some of you may have been fortunate enough to see the Stejneger's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon stejnegeri*), also known as a Bering Sea beaked whale or saber-toothed whale, that washed ashore near the outlet of Airport Creek last month. (It is still there if you haven't seen it yet, but less and less recognizable as time and scavengers devour it.) These whales are relatively mysterious, described in the literature as poorly known, but Adakians over the years have had many opportunities to observe them up close, as every few years one or more strand or wash ashore on beaches near town. Much of what is known about the species has been learned from studying whales found on Adak.



Stejneger's beaked whales: an introduction

(drawing by Al Denbeigh)

Stejneger's are the northernmost species of beaked whale in the Pacific—they are found in the cold northern waters of the North Pacific Basin, from central California, north to the Bering Sea, and south to the Sea of Japan. From the sparse information available, we know they can live to at least 36 years. There are no available estimates of abundance. They are relatively small whales, reaching lengths of only about 17-18 feet as adults. Like other beaked whales, Stejneger's feed primarily on squid in mesopelagic (twilight, 200-1,000 ft) and bathypelagic (completely dark, 1,000-4,000 ft) depths, using echolocation to hunt their prey (beaked whales are some of the world's most extreme divers: they've been documented to stay down for up to 85 min and to have reached depths of 6,230 ft). Beaked whales have a unique feeding mechanism: rather than capture prey with their teeth, they suck it up. Longitudinal grooves along the underside of the throat stretch and expand as the tongue suddenly retracts, creating a pressure drop that sucks prey in with the water.

The most noticeable characteristic of adult male Stejneger's beaked whales is their massive flattened tusks (the saber-like appearance inspired one of the species' common names). The tusks are situated near the middle of the lower jaw, pointing forward and slightly inward. They are located on broad raised arches, so that the crowns extend above the upper surface of the beak. Beaked whales are unique among toothed whales in that these tusks are in most species the sole pair of teeth, visible only in males, who presumably use them when fighting for females—note the characteristic parallel scars in the illustration above, evidence of males ramming each other with the paired tusks. It is also thought that females select mates based on the size and shape of male tusks.

Strandings: why?

Whale strandings can be broken down into two basic types: individual and mass. Most individual strandings involve single animals (or a mother with a dependent calf) that are weakened by old age, disease, difficulty giving birth, rough weather, injuries from predators or fights, hunting too close to land, or myriad other causes. A weakened animal spends most of its time at the surface trying to breathe, and finds itself at the mercy of the currents. Most of these debilitated animals die at sea and never reach the coast; they are scavenged or decomposed enough to sink to the bottom. When a lone whale does come ashore, the stranding is almost always due to illness or injury.

Mass strandings are more complicated and not fully understood. Every year many hundreds of whales beach themselves; most of them die. The majority of these whales are, like Stejneger's, toothed whales that normally inhabit deep waters and live in tightly knit groups. For any number of reasons whales accustomed to deep water might venture too close to shore and become disoriented by shallow waters and confined habitat. It is likely their tight social nature plays a role as well; if a lead animal becomes sick, debilitated or disoriented it may lead a herd into shallow water, the healthy animals following simply because they are inflexibly tied to the group, or responding to distress signals from the debilitated animal. Storms at sea, strong magnetic anomalies, predator avoidance, and human activities such as sonar operations, seismic testing, and warfare have all been linked to mass strandings. Many other theories have been proposed to explain the phenomenon, but the question remains unresolved.

Adak's whales

Between 1975 and 1999 there were seven mass stranding events, each involving 2-4 Stejneger's beaked whales. During those years there were also five individual strandings. At right is a photo from the 1994 stranding of four pregnant females in Kuluk Bay.

As far as we know, last month's stranding was an individual rather than a mass stranding, but it is hard to say for sure. In the past a single whale might come ashore, and others be found days later, a couple of miles away, separated by currents or winds.



It is possible our November whale was not alone, so if you've noticed unusual concentrations of eagles and ravens on any Adak beaches, please call Lisa (592-2406).

The tusks on November's whale (right) clearly identify it as an adult male Stejneger's beaked whale. The whale was partially decomposed and scavenged when it was discovered, but it looked as if a large chunk had been bitten out of its back, just anterior to the dorsal fin (below right). Potential causes include an orca attack, a boat strike, or a scavenging shark, although large versions of the latter are fairly rare in our waters. Unfortunately the carcass was not fresh enough to discern clear tooth rakes (more linear from an orca, ragged from sharks) or multiple slashes (from a prop).



Citizen scientists!

Because Stejneger's beaked whales are not well studied, any animal coming ashore has the potential to provide marine mammal researchers with extremely valuable data. In this most recent stranding, no Refuge staff were on island to respond, so we enlisted the help of the community to collect information. Adak's vigilant Mayor reported the stranding and acted quickly to document it, tying the carcass off to shore and taking a thorough suite of photos and measurements. Mr. Hodes, teacher at the Adak Public School, volunteered his secondary students to help take more measurements, collect the skull, and obtain a skin sample. The Refuge's Deputy Manager Marc Webber (who also happens to be a marine mammal biologist) gave the class a talk by phone about cetaceans and their habits, and briefed them on how to follow the correct protocols for sample collections.



Prior to setting out, the class partook of some bowhead whale muktuk from Barrow, contributed by school parent Kiara Alexander, to bolster the students for the job ahead and help ensure they had a complete cetacean experience. In spite of a miserably stormy day and incoming tide surging over their boots, the intrepid young scientists accomplished their mission (below). As Mr. Hodes put it, "Since we're studying biology this year, this was a fantastic opportunity to do a real-life hands-on activity, as well as contribute to scientists' understanding of these amazing creatures." In the words of one of his students, "It was SO COOL!!!"



MARINE MAMMAL STRANDING REPORT - LEVEL A DATA

Observer: *Evan Hodes*

Date: *11 Nov 13*

Species: *Stejneger's Beaked Whale*

Sex: *Male*

Age: *Adult*

Weight: *1100*

Measurements (Body):

1. Length to tip of dorsal fin (cm)	180	21. Length to end of caudal peduncle (cm)	110
2. Greatest depth of dorsal fin (cm)	15	22. Length of dorsal fin base (cm)	10
3. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	15	23. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10
4. Greatest depth of dorsal fin (cm)	15	24. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10
5. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	15	25. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10
6. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	15	26. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10
7. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	15	27. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10
8. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	15	28. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10
9. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	15	29. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10
10. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	15	30. Length of dorsal fin (cm)	10

Opportunity to learn more

The Refuge's Deputy Manager Marc Webber teaches a class at UAA's Kachemak Bay Campus: BIOL A430/L – Biology of Marine Mammals. There is a lab, but it might be possible for Adakians to take or audit the class when it is offered again next fall. Please let Lisa know if you are interested (592-2406).