

Listen Live ▶

f t i y SEARCH 🔍



Listen Live ▶

PROGRAM SCHEDULE NEWS ▾ CONTRIBUTE ▾ COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ABOUT US ▾

### Southeast's year: Taku sold, Chinooks crash, mines petitioned and a Tongass turnaround

Posted by Ed Schoenfeld | Dec 28, 2017



A Petersburg fishing boat passes the ferry Taku near the entrance of Wrangell Narrows in August, 2013. The ship was put on the market in 2017. (Photo by Ed Schoenfeld/CoastAlaska News)

00:00

00:00

Southeast Alaska saw some major trends and events in 2017. They ranged from cruise ship passenger increases to budget decreases to labor battles to murder investigations.

Here are our top picks:

#### State ferry sold

In March, the Alaska Marine Highway System put the ferry Taku up for sale. The 54-year-old ship already had been tied up for about two years.

The Taku went out for bid for a minimum of \$1.5 million. But it took several tries, each with a lower price.

General Manager John Falvey said the final offer was \$171,000, a little more than a tenth of the original price.



DONATE TO KRBD



"The winner was the Jabal Al Lawz Trading Co., from the (United Arab) Emirates," he said.

It will become a ferry in the Philippines – or be sold for scrap.

An earlier offer to turn the ship into [lodging in Portland](#) fell through.

"Their plan is to do some renovation on the Taku and turn it into a destination hotel and waterfront activities center," Falvey said at the time.

Officials hoped to finalize the sale by the end of the year. But the closing date is now Jan. 19.

### Chinook shortage hits Southeast

2017 was a lousy year for king salmon fishing in Southeast waters.

Chinook runs here and in British Columbia saw historically low returns.

That prompted a Southeast-wide closure for kings in both sport and commercial fisheries.

That's unprecedented, at least in recent memory.

In Juneau, the low numbers meant [canceling one sport fishing derby and eliminating kings from another.](#)

State biologist Daniel Teske said the problem is in the ocean, not the rivers where kings spawn and hatch.

"Something's happening out there, whether it be less prey available or more predators and we are seeing it throughout a bunch of different systems here," he said.

Proposals to further restrict the region's catch will go before the state Board of Fisheries at a January meeting in Sitka.

### Tongass plan targeted

At the start of 2017, Tongass National Forest managers [planned to move away from logging old-growth timber.](#) They wanted to transition to a new industry using younger trees.

But timber businesses – and some politicians – worked to reverse that direction.

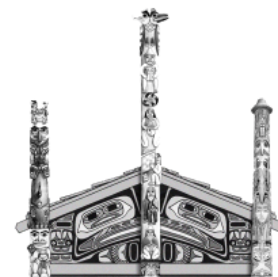
Industry leader Owen Graham said the plan was bad news.

"It's literally going to put our industry completely out of business," he said.

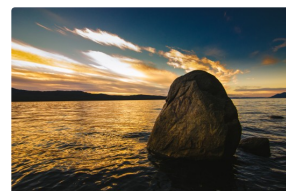
In October, a federal agency ruled the plan was [subject to congressional review.](#) And the next month, Sen. Lisa Murkowski [added a measure overturning the plan](#) to an appropriations bill.

Both discouraged environmentalists, who pushed for the transition, including Southeast Alaska Conservation Council's Meredith Trainor.

She said when she heard that Congress can decide the Tongass' fate her "heart sank a little."



Tlingit  
Haida  
Tsimshian



Haida  
Tsimshian



Today **Tuesday, January**

**Tuesday, January 2**

KGSD Winter Break

UAS Ketchikan Campus Cl

6:45am [First City Toas](#)

Calendar

**KRBD FM Rainbir**  
5,231 likes

Like Page

34 friends like this

**KRBD FM Rainbird Community Radio**

3 hours ago

Congratulations to Jim Baichtal His photo of an ermine that live under a yellow cedar in his yard had the most "likes" on KRBD's Facebook page last week, so h wins a bag of Raven's Brew coffee. His photo also will be ou new cover photo this week. .

Final decisions could be made in the new year.

## Transboundary mines challenged

Fisheries, tribal and environmental activists continued battling mineral development across the border in British Columbia in 2017.

They worried it could poison salmon-rich waterways that flow through Southeast.

In September, tribal activists [petitioned for trade sanctions](#). Leader Frederick Olsen Jr. wanted more done to protect Alaska fisheries.

“The goal is to get federal involvement in our transboundary mining issue,” he said.



The Brucejack Mine pours its first gold bar in June of 2017. The mine is about 25 miles from the Alaska border. (Photo courtesy Pretivm Resources)

It was followed by [a November joint letter](#) from the Walker-Mallott administration and Alaska's Congressional Delegation. It lobbied the State Department to engage with Canadian officials.

It's not yet clear whether the effort will get the results its authors want.

But the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs said the agency is aware of the concerns.

“This is an issue we have raised with our Canadian counterparts at a number of levels with both provincial and federal governments, and we will continue to engage with them on it,” a spokesperson wrote in an email.

SHARE: [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#) [t](#) [p](#) [u](#)

< PREVIOUS

[A look back at Ketchikan's 2017](#)

NEXT >

[First Alaska Native Superior Court Judge passes away](#)