

Summary of Key events & UPDATES

December 10, 2023

For Sunday, December 10th

Permit holders can pass through the landslide area during the regularly scheduled times stated below. If DOT needs to modify this schedule, a new notice will be provided.

7:30 – 8:00 AM

12:00 - 12:30 PM

4:00 – 4:30 PM

December 7, 2023

FROM DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES - "11-MILE LANDSLIDE ZIMOVIA HWY CLOSED - SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2023 - While significant progress has been made by our contractor in repairing Zimovia Highway, there is ongoing work to enhance the drainage system, including the installation of new, larger culverts.

During a heavy rain event this week, we observed the mobilization of fine debris material at the slide location (dirt, rock, and debris moving down the hill and filling newly created uphill sediment basins). In anticipation of the forecasted heavy rainfall and high winds on Saturday, December 9, the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has decided to close the road at the slide area as a precautionary measure for workers and the traveling public. The closure is scheduled for the entire day on Saturday, with plans to return to scheduled openings as conditions allow on Sunday.

This announcement gives Zimovia Highway residents time to prepare for the road closure. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we prioritize safety and work to complete the necessary repairs and improvements."

December 7, 2023

On Saturday, December 9, 2023, at 10:00 am, there will be a Multi-agency informational meeting to discuss the 11-Mile Landslide and other landslide information.

Those who will be participating will be Borough Manager Villarma, Borough Mayor Gilbert. Also attending will be representatives from the Alaska Disaster Assistance and/or Public Information Office, Alaska DHS&EM (Dept. of Homeland Security & Emergency Management), AK DOT (Department of Transportation), and DGGs (Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys).

This event will be broadcast on KSTK and also on the Borough's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/wrangellak>

If you have questions throughout the meeting, please post them in the comment section and staff will forward them to the Borough Manager or Mayor.

December 6, 2023

WRANGELL, December 6, 2023 — The City and Borough of Wrangell is announcing a suspension of the search for the last missing person in the aftermath of the tragic 11-mile landslide incident that occurred on November 20th. The decision to end the active search comes after 15 days of tireless and exhaustive efforts by the Wrangell Volunteer Fire Department Search and Rescue teams.

Since the incident unfolded, the Wrangell Volunteer Fire Department, alongside numerous dedicated support volunteers, K9 scent dogs and local equipment operators, worked resolutely to comb through the vast and complex debris area below the Zimovia Highway. Personnel from Alaska State Troopers, Department of Transportation, United States Forest Service, United States Coast Guard, State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Wrangell Police Department and Department of Transportation and Public Facilities provided invaluable support. The untiring efforts to locate 12-year-old Derek Heller extended to all accessible areas above and into the intertidal zone.

Over the course of the 15-day search, the collective efforts of the search and rescue teams and volunteers were monumental. Their commitment, courage, and unwavering dedication were evident as they navigated challenging terrain, adverse weather conditions, and other obstacles. In addition, the support of the Wrangell community, surrounding communities and partner agencies has been unwavering and appreciated.

After careful consideration and evaluation of all available information, it has been determined that all accessible search areas have been thoroughly examined. Search and Rescue volunteers and a scent detection K9 team will be available to respond with active searching if any new information or evidence leads to a specific search area in the future.

The City and Borough of Wrangell extends its deepest gratitude to all the volunteers, K9 teams, support personnel and emergency responders who selflessly contributed their time, expertise, and resources in this search and rescue mission. Their resilience and commitment to the community during this challenging time have not gone unnoticed.

We understand that this is a trying time for the community, and our hearts go out to the relatives and loved ones of the missing individual. The City and Borough of Wrangell expresses its sincere condolences during this period of grief.

For further information, please contact State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Public Information Officer Jeremy Zidek [\(907\) 428-7077](tel:9074287077).

December 5, 2023

ART WALK Performance – Additional Passage through Landslide

For those who live on the south end of the landslide area and are planning on attending the Elementary Art Walk event on Tuesday, December 12, 2023, the police will be allowing additional passage through the landslide as follows:

Tuesday, December 12, 2023 from 7:30 pm to 8:00 pm

The regularly scheduled times stated below will remain in effect.

7:30 – 8:00 AM

12:00 - 12:30 PM

4:00 – 4:30 PM

December 5, 2023

CINDERELLA Performance – Additional Passage through Landslide REVISED!

For those who live on the south end of the landslide area and are planning on attending the Cinderella performance on Saturday, December 9th and Sunday, December 10th, the police will be allowing additional passage through the landslide as follows:

THE ROAD WILL BE CLOSED ON SATURDAY AND THEREFORE, NO PASSAGE TIMES ARE AVAILABLE.

Sunday, December 10th from 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm

The regularly schedule times stated below will remain in effect.

7:30 – 8:00 AM

12:00 - 12:30 PM

4:00 – 4:30 PM

Also, Department of Transportation (DOT) is working VERY hard to clear the roadway. Once they have completed the necessary repairs, the road will be open. We will post a notice and notify the media when we know this is happening.

Thank you for your understanding.

December 3, 2023

Starting tomorrow Monday Dec 4th, escorts for permit holders through the landslide area will change to 7:30-8:00am, 12:00-12:30pm and 4:00-4:30pm. This change will give both local and DOT crews more time each day to complete the necessary repairs. The goal is to install concrete patches and other safety features so that normal two lane traffic can resume on the Zimovia Highway in the future. #WrangellStrong

About the video: On Saturday Dec 2nd, local and DOT road specialists and heavy equipment operators remove trees and debris as they prepare the Zimovia Highway for repairs and concrete patches. Viewers can see progress the road crews have made clearing the shoulders of both the north and southbound lanes. Footage captured by FAA remote pilot and Wrangell Landslide Public Information Officer Kale Casey (#4889145)

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

December 1, 2023

At 4:25 p.m. on November 30, 2023, the body of Otto Florschutz was located and recovered from the landslide debris with the assistance of Wrangell Search and Rescue k-9, Wrangell Search and Rescue volunteers, and an excavator. Next of kin and the State Medical Examiner's Office have been notified. 12-year-old Derek Heller is still missing. Search and Rescue volunteers and a scent detection K9 team continue with reactive searching as any new information or evidence leads to a specific search area.

For updates on road-clearing efforts, please follow the [Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities social media pages](#). Please follow the [Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management's social media channels](#) for information about the state-declared disaster declaration and ongoing recovery efforts.

November 30, 2023

Midnight Madness will be Saturday, December 2, 2023, at 6:00PM.

For those residents who hold a permit pass for passage through the 11-mile landslide area, the police will be allowing passage through the landslide area between 8:00 pm and 9:00 pm. Again, this one-hour evening window will ONLY be for Saturday, December 2, 2023.

The regularly scheduled times stated below remain in effect.

8:00 to 8:30 AM

12:00 to 12:30 PM

3:30 to 4:00 PM

November 29, 2023

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, ALASKA – The State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) continues to support the City and Borough of Wrangell’s landslide response. A SEOC Division Supervisor and a Public Information Officer are deployed to Wrangell supporting the community’s ongoing response.

The State’s Individual Assistance Hotline and online website is open for residents of Wrangell and Coffman Cove who have experienced damage to their home or have eligible personal expenses that are a direct result of the landslide. To register go to ready.alaska.gov/ia or call [844-445-7131](tel:844-445-7131).

Department of Public Safety – The search for the two remaining missing people is in a reactive status. If new evidence or information suggests that any missing people may be in a specific area in the slide zone, the Alaska State Troopers may restart the active search focused on that new area. Scent detecting K-9s are available.

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities – Yesterday, the Zimovia Hwy was reopened for limited periods to residents who live on the south side of the slide. The Wrangell Police Department is issuing permits to residents who are authorized to pass through the slide area. Openings are scheduled for 8:00 to 8:30 AM, 12:00 to 12:30 PM, and 3:30 to 4:00 PM.

Debris removal and slide stabilization efforts continue. Power has been restored south of the landslide.

November 26, 2023

At 9:45 am, the Department of Public safety issued a press release stating that the body the missing 11-year-old was recovered from the landslide debris. A Scent Detection K-9 indicated an area of the area of the debris and with the assistance of an excavator, the remains were recovered. K-9 teams remained on standby. Two residents remain missing.

At 10:00 am, the Department of Transportation via Facebook stated that road clearing crews were able to remove a significant amount of material from the roadbed. About 200 feet of clearing remains as of 8:00 am on 11/26.

Active aerial reconnaissance with unmanned aircraft using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is ongoing. The LiDAR data is used to assess slide stability and safety.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Following community concern about the Wrangell dam integrity after the landslide, DNR’s Dam Safety Engineer reported the dam is not at imminent risk of failure. DNR’s Dam Safety and Construction Unit within the Division of Mining, Land and Water, continues to support the City and Borough of Wrangell with information about the dam.

DNR’s Division of Geological and Geospatial Survey began helicopter LiDAR surveys of the landslide areas in Wrangell yesterday to provide the community information on the ongoing risk and data for future mitigation.

Red Cross of Alaska – Deployed an Incident Care Condolence Team to Wrangell

Other Landslides – The SEOC is responding to other Southeast Alaska landslides and flooding damages from the November 20, 2023, storm system that impacted Wrangell. Landslide and/or

flooding damages are reported in Coffman Cove and on Prince of Wales Island in Craig and

Klawock. There are no reported injuries. SEOC is deploying a Division Supervisor to Prince of

Wales Island to assess the damage and coordinate state-level support to the community’s response.

November 24, 2023

At 11:00 am, the Department of Public Safety issued a press release stating that DPS was continuing to work closely with DOT to clear the roadway. A K9 scent detection team remained on standby to resume searching if new information or evidence came to light. Additionally, the names of the three deceased residents as well as the names of the three missing residents. The bodies of the deceased were sent to the State Medical Examiner’s Office in Anchorage for autopsy.

Around 2:00 pm, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management issued a public notice to Wrangell residents providing information on State Individual Assistance to those impacted by the landslide.

At 5:45 pm, the CBW issued a public notice stating that there will be a Town Hall meeting on Saturday, November 25, 2023, at 6:00 pm to provide an update to public on the 11-Mile Landslide.

Around 6:15 pm, the CBW issued a public notice informing residents of coordinated transportation to residences south of the slide area.

November 23, 2023

At 9:20 am, ground search teams returned to the slide area to search for three missing. K9 teams would be searching along the waterline by small boat and joining ground teams in the slide area at multiple areas of interest.

At 10:30 am, the CBW issued a public notice for residents living south of that slide area that there would be coordinated transportation out Reliance Harbor for residents to return or check on their residence.

At 12:00 pm, the Department of Public Safety issued a press release stating that Alaska State Troopers had changed the search and rescue strategy from an active search to a reactive search. After three separate active search efforts utilizing all resources available, search teams had reached all areas accessible without the use of heavy machinery. In coordination with AK DOT, efforts began to methodically start clearing the roadway. If new evidence of missing persons presents itself, troopers may restart an active search.

Around 5:00 pm, the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management issued a joint press release that provided a multi-agency update. The release stated that Governor Dunleavy's disaster declaration activated the state's individual and Public Assistance Programs. DPS restated that the search and rescue effort had been downgraded from an active search to a reactive search. DMVA/DHS&EM stated that the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) was activated to level 2 with multiple personnel actively supporting the Wrangell response and additional incidents in Coffman Cove. SEOC Division Supervisor was in Wrangell to support state level coordination for community response and engagement with Tlingit and Haida and the Wrangell Cooperative Association. The state's Mass Care group was coordinating with the CBW, tribal organizations and faith-based groups. DOT stated that they were beginning to methodically remove debris from the roadway to improve search and power restoration access to homes south of the slide area. CBW published a list of resources for residents impacted by the landslide.

November 22, 2023

At 10:15 am, search and rescue efforts to locate three missing people in the Wrangell slide area resumed. The AK Department of Transportation continued to use small, unmanned, aerial systems to assist in the search. At that time, DOT stated that areas of the slide were still unstable and active. The CBW issued a statement providing residents information regarding the coordination of fuel, transportation, and food to residents south of the slide area. In a separate statement, the CBW advised residents of the availability of grief counseling at Evergreen Elementary School.

At 3:00 pm, the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management issued a joint press release stating that three individuals have died, and one woman was "located alive and in good condition" and that "Two minors and one adult remain missing." The release also provided brief summaries from DOT, DNR, DHS & ES, and DPS as well as other local organizations.

At 5:15 pm, all search and rescue teams departed for the night. Three individuals remain missing (one adult and two juveniles).

November 21, 2023

In the morning, one female adult was found in the slide area and was extracted from the scene. The adult female was listed in good condition and receiving medical care.

At 9:00 am, the State of Alaska Department of Public Safety issued a press release that provided information regarding the previous nights and transportation resources for local residents to evacuate events the Release also stated that Alaska State troopers had assumed control of the search and rescue efforts. In the afternoon, a press release from the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management stated that Governor Mike Dunleavy issued a state disaster declaration for the landslide. The declaration will support ongoing emergency response, mass care, and disaster recovery efforts. The State Emergency Operations Center raised the activation level to Level 2 and deployed an emergency management specialist to the disaster site.

At 2:30 pm, the Alaska State Troopers held a joint press conference with officials from the AK Department of Natural Resources, AK Department of Transportation, AK Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the United States Coast Guard and the City and Borough of Wrangell (CBW). CBW stated that “mandatory” evacuations had been issued for residents south of the landslide.

At 5:15 pm, the Department of Public Safety issued a press release stating that two deceased adult individuals were located by a DPS drone operator in the slide area. The two bodies were recovered in the evening. Troopers believe that two juveniles and one adult are still unaccounted for in the slide area. Search and rescue K9 teams from SEA dogs in Juneau and Wrangell Search and Rescue continued and active search on the ground.

November 20, 2023,

At 8:51 pm, a large landslide was reported on the Zimovia Highway at mile 11. Emergency responders from the Alaska Wildlife Troopers, Wrangell Police Department, Wrangell Fire Department, US Forest Service, Wrangell Search and Rescue, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, and the US Coast Guard immediately responded to the site. A preliminary survey determined that three single-family residences were directly in the path of the landslide. The first responders started a hasty search to look for survivors. The body of one deceased individual was located during the hasty search. The public was informed of developments at the scene through the use of Nixle.