



Eagles forced to get creative while replacing Kelce

SPORTS, 1B

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NCMC partnership will expand vocational training

Karly Graham
Cheboygan Daily Tribune | USA TODAY NETWORK

CHEBOYGAN — Vocational training opportunities are expanding in the region, with North Central Michigan College announcing a new collaboration with the Industrial Arts Institute and Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Education Service District.

As part of the partnership, NCMC has transported its Computer Numerical Control (CNC) programming equipment to the Industrial Arts Institute in Onaway. The equipment was moved as a part of the second phase of the college’s Career and Technical Education Enhancement (CATEE) project, which will require raz-

ing the current technology building on the Petoskey campus and constructing a new, state-of-the-art 11,750 square-foot building. College officials expect the building to be open by fall 2026.

Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle ESD Superintendent Jamie Huber said the district has been working to try to find more vocational education opportunities. After plans were formed to start different summer camp and academy programs, the equipment made its way to the arts institute (IAI).

“It puts a smile on my face, because anytime we can connect our students with good employers across our

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North Central Michigan College’s CNC equipment is relocated from its Technology Building to the Industrial Arts Institute in Onaway as part of a partnership to expand training opportunities.
PROVIDED BY NORTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN COLLEGE



Dozens of racing teams competed against each other during the 55th running of the annual I-500 snowmobile race on Feb. 3, 2024. BRENDAN WIESNER/SAULT NEWS

5 fun things to do this weekend

Jillian Fellows
The Petoskey News-Review | USA TODAY NETWORK

NORTHERN MICHIGAN — It’s all about speed this weekend in Northern Michigan, with snowmobile racing in Sault Ste. Marie and fish flying in Cheboygan.

Here’s what we recommend:

56th annual I-500

The 56th running of the International 500 snowmobile race in Sault Ste. Marie is back on Saturday, Feb. 1.

The gates open at 8 a.m., with the opening ceremonies starting at 9 a.m. and the flag dropping at 10 a.m. Teams will race to see who can complete 500 miles the fastest in the all-day race, which brings in thousands of spectators and racers each year.

To view the schedule and entry information, visit i-500.com.

Sturgeon season returns

Last year, the lake sturgeon season on Black Lake in Cheboygan County was canceled for the first time in its history due to unsafe ice conditions. This year,



Grandpa Shorter’s is located at 301 E. Lake St. in downtown Petoskey. JILLIAN FELLOWS/NEWS-REVIEW

the season is back on and area anglers are ready to try their luck at catching one of the elusive prizes.

The 2025 lake sturgeon season will begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 1. There is a set limit of six fish that can be caught, and the season will end once six fish are harvested or when five fish are harvested at the end of any fishing day. In some years, the quota of six fish has been reached in less than an hour.

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Study: Polluted waters harm fish-eating shoreline birds

Keith Matheny
Detroit Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

Fish-eating gulls and terns nesting on Michigan shoreline areas known to have longstanding industrial contamination reproduce less, have fewer chicks that survive and develop more deformities than those on nonpolluted shorelines, a decade-long field study by Calvin University researchers found.

Keith Grasman, a biologist who studies environmental health effects at the Grand Rapids-based university, from 2010 to 2019 looked at reproduction, populations, fledgling growth and other health indicators among “colonial waterbirds” at specified contaminated reference sites, as well as at non-contaminated shoreline nesting areas for a comparison. The birds studied were herring gulls, Caspian terns and black-crowned night herons.

The birds were assessed at known water-contaminated locations including the Saginaw Bay and River area of western Lake Huron; the River Raisin on western Lake Erie; and Grand Traverse Bay in northwestern Lake Michigan.

The Saginaw River and Bay and River Raisin areas are contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, a highly persistent industrial compound manufactured from 1929 until its banning in the U.S. in 1979. Grand Traverse Bay’s pollution is chlorinated dioxins and furans, produced during the burning of waste or in the bleaching processes once used in paper mills, Grasman said.

The pollutants are biomagnifying — little fish eat tiny, contaminated invertebrates and the chemicals enter the fish’s tissues. Then a bigger fish eats the smaller fish, and on up the chain, compounding the amount of the health-harming contaminants stored in each animal. It makes fish-eating waterbirds a good ecological marker for study, Grasman said.

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Officials: 67 dead in midair collision near DC

Temperatures, visibility hindering recovery effort

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Officials on Thursday said 67 people died in the collision of an American Airlines regional passenger jet and a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter near Ronald Reagan National Airport, triggering a massive recovery effort as authorities search for people in the Potomac River.

“Sadly there are no survivors,” President Donald Trump told reporters at the White House on Thursday. “This was a dark and excruciating night in our nation’s capital and in our nation’s history.”

The crash occurred just before 9 p.m. Wednesday when American Airlines Flight 5342 from Wichita, Kansas, was attempting to land and collided in mid-air with the Black Hawk helicopter. The passenger plane was carrying 64 people, while three service members were aboard the helicopter.

John Donnelly, the chief of Washington’s fire department, said at a news conference early Thursday morning that 27 bodies had been recovered from the plane and one from the helicopter. He said the search-and-rescue mission, complicated by the river’s near freezing temperatures and low visibility, was now a recovery operation.

“Tragedies like this remind us that we are one community; whether a Wichitan, a Kansan or an American – we are one community and in times of struggle, we do come together in grief and sadness to lift one another,” Wichita Mayor Lily Wu said at an emotional news conference Thursday morning.

Officials did not say what caused the collision but described both crews as “experienced” and noted that the heli-



Emergency response units search the crash site of an American Airlines jet on the Potomac River on Thursday, the morning after the plane crashed on approach to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Va.
WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

copter and the plane were following standard flight patterns.

“Everything was standard in the lead up to the crash,” Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said. “Now, obviously something happened here, but you’ll get more information and more details as this investigation moves forward. We’ll learn what happened.”

Trump speculates on cause

Trump speculated Thursday on possible causes of the collision and leveled criticisms at previous Democratic administrations as well as policies of diversity, equity and inclusion while speaking about Wednesday’s crash.

Trump told reporters “a confluence of bad decisions that were made,” but at different times suggested the FAA and air traffic controller could be blamed without providing evidence. He said the helicopter “did somewhat the opposite of what it was told,” but then added “we don’t know” exactly what caused the crash.

He later admonished the administrations of presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden and then took aim at FAA hiring practices.

“The FAA is actively recruiting workers who suffer severe intellectual disabilities, psychiatric problems, and other mental and physical conditions under a diversity and inclusion hiring initiative spelled out on the agency’s website,” he said.

Jet’s pilots were experienced

Robert Isom, the CEO of American Airlines, said the pilots aboard the passenger jet from Kansas were “experienced.”

The captain, he said, had flown for at least six years with PSA, a regional airline owned by the American Airlines Group. The first officer had “almost two years” with the airline, Isom said. They were among four crew members onboard the plane.

Isom told reporters the passenger jet was on an “otherwise normal approach” when it collided with the Black Hawk helicopter.

“We don’t know why the military aircraft came into the path of the PSA aircraft,” he said.

Helicopter was doing training

The U.S. Army confirmed the aircraft involved in the crash was an UH-60 helicopter out of Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The Army and the Defense Department “immediately” opened an investigation into the crash, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said in a statement Thursday.

The helicopter that crashed was on an “annual proficiency training flight” when it crashed, Hegseth said in a video statement posted to X. The crew was “fairly experienced” and was conducting a night evaluation, he said. Night goggles were onboard.

A senior level aviation team deployed on Wednesday night will look into whether the helicopter was in the corridor and at the right altitude when the crash occurred, Hegseth said.

The Pentagon has not yet released the names of the service members on the flight and is currently notifying their families.

Figure skaters among passengers

Among those believed dead are Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov, who won world championships in pairs figure skating in 1994 before moving to the U.S. and becoming coaches. In addition, four other members of the Skating Club of Boston, including two teenagers and their parents, were onboard the flight from Wichita.

“This will have long, reaching impacts for our skating community,” Doug Zeghibe, the club’s CEO, said at a news conference.

Zeghibe said the six were onboard the flight after attending a national development camp for junior and novice skaters in Wichita earlier this week.

Contributing: Cybele Mayes-Osterman, Thao Nguyen, Joey Garrison, Alice Mannette, Kathleen Wong, Davis Winkie, N’dea Yancey-Bragg, Zach Wichter and Josh Meyer, USA TODAY; Reuters

Birds

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“It doesn’t look like an oil-floating-on-the-water kind of visible pollution problem, yet small amounts of these persistent chemicals can magnify as they go up the food web,” he said.

The contaminated shoreline areas were compared to relatively uncontaminated waterbird nesting areas on the St. Marys River and Lake Superior. The contrasts were stark:

- Nonviable embryos were two to nearly three times as prevalent in herring gull eggs from contaminated areas compared with the noncontaminated reference sites. A failure for eggs to fertilize and embryonic death were found at similar frequencies.
- Bird embryos and chicks with deformities such as crossed bills and gastroschisis — being born with organs outside of the body — were found 12 times at contaminated sites and only once at a non-contaminated reference site.
- Herring gulls at River Raisin and Caspian terns in Saginaw Bay “experienced complete or nearly complete colony-level reproductive failure in multiple years.” Chick productivity “was poor in seven of 10 years” in the contaminated locations.
- The population of herring gulls de-

clined by about 90% from the late 1990s to 2019 at River Raisin. The number of nests and nesting area size in upland areas continued to decline even as rising Lake Erie waters over the last five years washed out beaches and applied pressure to nesting birds to relocate upland.

- Similarly, the mean number of nests for the Caspian tern, a state-threatened species, at three islands in Saginaw Bay declined by about 49% over the last three years of the study compared with mean nest numbers from 1994 to 2003.
- Gull chicks had poor growth metrics at the contaminated sites most of the years of the study — despite being in highly productive ecosystems with abundant fish prey. “Hence, the poor growth is not likely to be caused by food supply shortages in these locations but instead by other stressors such as environmental contaminants,” the study found.
- A test of immune functions in young birds found more than 50% lower response in contaminated zones than in non-contaminated comparison sites.

“If you go to the doctor and they do a bunch of diagnostic tests, and you have one abnormal test but everything else is normal, you are not going to be so worried about that,” Grasman said. “But when we see multiple indicators of problems, that adds to the weight of the evidence for a significant issue.”

Impact of long-banned chemicals persists

The research was published this month in the peer-reviewed scientific journal Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry.

The Calvin University waterbird research is funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, federal funding approved by Congress to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Since its enactment in 2010, the initiative has funded more than 7,500 individual projects at a cost of more than \$3.7 billion.

The Saginaw and River Raisin locations are known as “Areas of Concern,” designated in the 1980s by federal governments in the U.S. and Canada, with local, state and provincial input, as known areas of extensive environmental degradation on or near the Great Lakes, diminishing the ecology and beneficial uses of the areas. The designation has helped focus binational cleanup efforts.

Grasman’s work adds to a mosaic of Great Lakes-related scientific research findings across the region, with agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy’s Office of the Great Lakes then incorporating the data into their management decisions and priorities.

“Bird or animal deformities or reproductive problems” are listed impairments at the two Areas of Concern that EGLE is working with other partners to address, said Melanie Foose, Great Lakes Management Unit supervisor for the agency.

“Dr. Grasman’s research is extremely informative and valuable in Michigan’s Areas of Concern program,” she said. “In the Raisin and Saginaw AOCs, colonial nesting bird colonies are a valuable line of research that we benefit from having, and we are pleased to be partners with the USFWS and Dr. Grasman on this work.”

Grasman started studying environmental contamination’s impact on waterbirds as a graduate student in 1991, and it became his life’s work. More than four decades after many of the industrial contaminants plaguing areas of the Great Lakes were banned from use, and decades since the pollution levels of those contaminants then steeply dropped, the ecological impacts persist.

“It may be in some ways surprising that these older chemicals are still creating long-term effects,” he said. “But now, as I think on it, with this much experience, it makes sense when I consider the long timeframes for ecological processes as well as for persistent chemicals.”

Contact Keith Matheny: kmatheny@freepress.com.

Fun things

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Off the ice, the annual Black Lake Sturgeon Shivaree festival will have live music, a poker run, raffles, bonfire, kids activities, winter yard games and more.

Go bananas

Grandpa Shorter's Gifts will be hosting the first ever "Go Bananas! Petoskey's Banana Bread Showdown" on Saturday, Feb. 1.

The baking contest welcomes members of the public to drop off their homemade banana bread from 9-11 a.m. on Saturday. People can enter in one of four categories: amateur baker, professional baker, child baker (ages 14 and younger) and gluten-free banana bread.

Each participant will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Grandpa Shorter's stores and a pair of banana bread socks. The winner of each category will receive \$250 in gift cards to local businesses.

Take a hike

Join the Harbor Springs Chapter of the North Country Scenic Trail for a group hike at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 1. The group will meet at the Division and Dzedzie Road intersection in Pellston and hike section 5A south towards Beckon Road for a total of 4 miles out and back. Snowshoes are recommended.

According to organizers, the section crosses the BlissFest Music Organization property and follows some of their trails. The trail is marked with blazed carsonite posts with both North Country Trail and BlissFest stickers.

Having fun isn't hard when you've got a library card

If you’re not the type of person who enjoys skiing, skating or snowshoeing in all the new, fresh snow, then stay inside and get cozy at your local library.

Libraries are a wealth of entertainment options, from books to movies to games to arts and crafts stations. Many libraries also offer unique items to check out, like stargazing equipment or musical instruments.

— *Contact Jillian Fellows at jfellows@petoskeynews.com.*

Partnership

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region, and manufacturing being one of those key areas, that’s what it’s all about,” Huber said. “Education is at its finest when it’s preparing students for the futures that lie ahead of them, and good careers that are right here and in the communities they were raised and

are part of.”

Had the machinery not been moved to IAI, it was likely going to sit unused in storage, Huber added.

Starting Feb. 11, the institute will be hosting a 12-week CNC, CAD and CAM training course through the NCMC Corporate and Community Education division. The classes will meet from 9 a.m.-noon on Tuesdays. The program costs \$1,200.

By fall, Huber said, they’re hoping to

see the machinery used in dual enrollment and CTE courses.

With the relocation of the CNC equipment, the partnership between NCMC and IAI will be expanding to include enhanced middle school training camps and multi-week sessions for specialized training for high schoolers. It will also allow CNC training to be added to welding and construction academies and a year-round program for COPESD students.

The CNC training will continue at both the NCMC Petoskey campus through the Mobile Fab Lab and at IAI into summer 2026.

For more information on the CATEE project, visit ncmich.edu/about-us/our-campus/CATEE.

— *Contact reporter Karly Graham at kgraham@petoskeynews.com. Follow her on X, formerly known as Twitter, at @KarlyGrahamJrn.*