

4.3.1 Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Islands

Communities

[Adak](#)

[Akutan](#)

[Atka](#)

[Chignik \(Bay\)](#)

[Chignik Lagoon](#)

[Chignik Lake](#)

[Dutch Harbor/Unalaska](#)

[Egegik](#)

[False Pass](#)

[Igiugig](#)

[Iliamna](#)

[Ivanof Bay](#)

[King Cove](#)

[King Salmon](#)

[Kokhanok](#)

[Levelock](#)

[Naknek](#)

[Nelson Lagoon](#)

[Newhalen](#)

[Pedro Bay](#)

[Perryville](#)

[Pilot Point](#)

[Port Alsworth](#)

[Port Heiden](#)

[Port Moller](#)

[Saint George](#)

[Saint Paul](#)

[Sand Point](#)

[South Naknek](#)

[Ugashik](#)

Geographic Location

The Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands cover a vast geographical distance. Roughly 1,300 air miles separate the community of Iliamna, in the Lake and Peninsula Borough, from the town of Attu, at the extreme western edge of the Aleutian Islands. This is a distance comparable to the entire length of the West Coast of the U.S., from Seattle to Los Angeles. The Aleutian Island Chain dips to the south; its southernmost point, at approximately 52.9 °N Lat., lies at a latitude similar to London, England. This region contains four boroughs: the Bristol Bay Borough, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, the Aleutians East Borough, and the Aleutians West Borough.

Weather

The Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Islands region is in Alaska's maritime climate zone. Communities located along the coastline have mild winters with temperatures ranging from 10 °F to 35 °F and cool summers with temperatures from 45 °F to 65 °F. Precipitation averages 20-25 inches annually. Communities located inland on the Alaska Peninsula lie within the transitional climate zone but still exhibit a strong maritime influence. Two weather features are predictable features of life on the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Island chain: wind, and fog. In particular, communities which face the Bering Sea experience average winds of 15 knots year-round, with severe winter storms bringing winds in excess of 100 miles per hour. The warm Japanese Current keeps Bering Sea ports ice-free during all seasons, contributing to one of the richest marine ecosystems on earth.

General Characterization

The Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands have a long history of interaction between Europeans and Alaska Natives. The area is currently characterized by a high degree of interconnection between local, national, and transnational economies. Since at least the 18th century, when Russian traders first came to the Aleutians for valuable fur seals, the region and its natural resources have been part of a broad web of economic activity.

Today, the most important part of that web is the commercial fishing industry. The Bering Sea is the most productive groundfish fishery on Earth, and nearly all communities in this region are involved in the fishery, at-sea or on-shore in fish processing facilities.

There is a strong Native Alaskan presence--primarily Aleut and Alutiiq peoples--in the region; individual communities vary, ranging from 8% to 95% Native. The other demographic features of the region are highly influenced by the commercial fishing industry. Because most employment opportunities relate to fishing, nearly all communities have a strong male bias (often more than 60% male).

Institutional Framework

The Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands region is comprised of three boroughs and one census area: the Bristol Bay Borough, the Lake and Peninsula Borough, the Aleutians East Borough, and the Aleutians West Census Area. Some communities profiled in this section are unincorporated and rely on their respective boroughs for government services.

There are two Community Development Quota (CDQ) groups that operate in the region: the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, and the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Community Development Association. These groups distribute a portion of commercial fishing proceeds to their various communities and sponsor economic and infrastructural development. In addition, there are a number of regional Native corporations and Native village corporations with recognized status under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA).

Commercial, Sport, and Subsistence Fisheries

Fishing is the backbone of the regional economy in the Alaska Peninsula / Aleutian Islands region. Commercial fleets operate out of most of the communities profiled in this section. In addition, commercial fish processing is a source of value-added revenue for many communities. Much of the seafood processing labor force comes from outside the region, although individual communities vary as to what portion of labor comes from local sources.

The epicenter of commercial fishing in the region is unquestionably Unalaska/Dutch Harbor, with its large commercial fleet and processors, as well as offshore floating processors. The most revenue is generated by groundfish. Landings for a given year typically are measured in the hundreds of thousands of tons. Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab is also an important part of the commercial fishery. In Bristol Bay Borough, the salmon fishery is a major part of the area's economic activity, and is one of the largest salmon fisheries in the world.

Sport fishing is not as extensive in this region as it

is in south-central and southeastern Alaska. The sport fishing that does take place is primarily centered in the community of King Salmon, where sockeye salmon runs draw sport fishermen from all over Alaska and the globe. Major sport species include all five species of Pacific salmon, as well as trout, halibut, and northern pike. Sport-caught halibut in the area can be some of the largest in the world (over 400 lbs).

Subsistence fishing and hunting form a major part of residents' livelihoods on the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands. In nearly all communities, a substantial majority of residents use subsistence resources. The most common subsistence fish species include salmon (all five Pacific species), cod, char, and trout.

Regional Challenges

The region's high dependence on commercial fishing is both an asset and a liability. In recent years, foreign competition has driven down the market price of salmon in the U.S., causing financial trouble for many Alaska communities. In 2003, the Aleutians East Borough received a total of \$1,101,638 in federal disaster funds to compensate for falling salmon prices. A handful of individual communities in the region have received lesser amounts.

New federal regulations governing fishing activities in areas with populations of Steller sea lion have also placed an economic burden on many communities. These regulations prohibit fishing near known sea lion rookeries, and may have resulted in financial loss in some cases. A handful of communities in the region have received federal Steller sea lion compensation funds.