

Anchorage Municipality

(including Eagle River-Chugiak and Girdwood)

[\(return to communities\)](#)

People and Place

Location

The 1975 constitution of the Anchorage municipality subsumed a myriad of small towns and neighborhoods under a single governmental entity. This profile of the Anchorage municipality includes the city of Anchorage as well as the towns of Eagle River and Girdwood. This structure is appropriated to the current administrative structure of the area and the availability of data. Although these three communities are distinct, important socio-economic indicators are consolidated for the entire municipality without recognition of its internal heterogeneity.

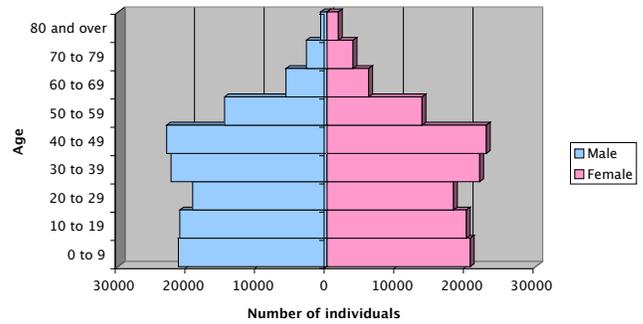
The city of Anchorage, the main urban center of the state of Alaska, encompasses 1.25 million acres, lying between the two northern arms of Cook Inlet. Girdwood, located on the Turnagain Arm, in the southern branch of Cook Inlet, is located 35 miles southwest of downtown Anchorage, on the way to Seward on the Kenai Peninsula. Eagle River and its administratively associated neighboring communities, Chugiak, Birchwood, Peters Creek and Thunderbird Falls, lie either farther north or near the southern shore of the Knik Arm.

There are several challenges presented by the task of summarizing the Anchorage municipality with an eye to the fishing engagement of the city. The group of communities consolidated under this administrative category is far from homogeneous. This profile attempts to characterize this specific administrative area while, at the same time, to offer a good description of the distinctive socio-economic elements of these three communities.

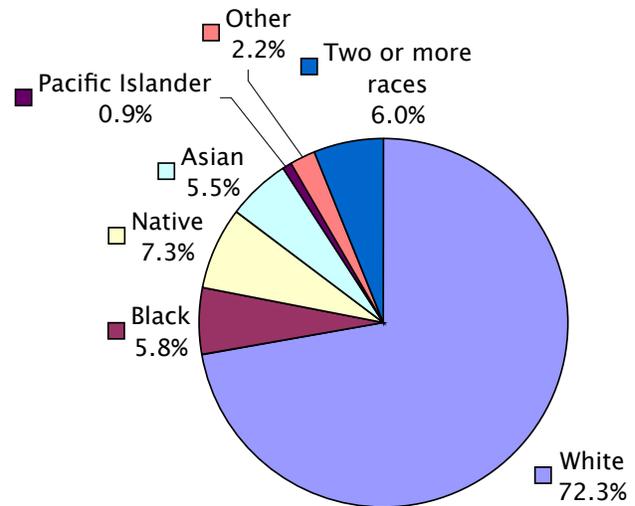
Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Anchorage municipality held the majority of the population of Alaska: 269,070 inhabitants, 29,896 of which lived in the Eagle River-Chugiak area and 1,817 in Girdwood. Across this area, 97.3% of the population lived in households, while 2.7% lived in group quarters. This 2.7% was composed of military personnel, institutionalized individuals, and people employed seasonally by the fishing industry. According to Census

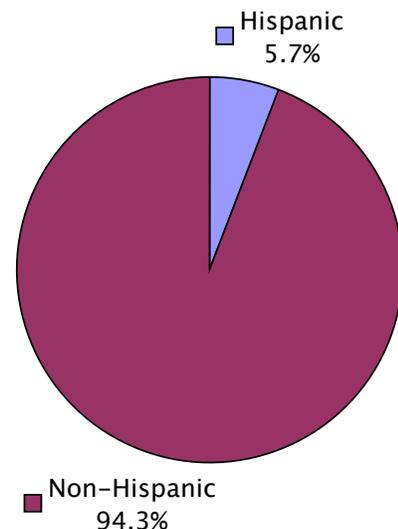
**2000 Population Structure
Anchorage Municipality**
Data source: US Census



**2000 Racial Structure
Anchorage Municipality**
Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity
Anchorage Municipality**
Data source: US Census



data, 7.3% of the population identified as Native Alaskan or American Indian, 72.2% White, 5.8% Black, 5.5% Asian, 0.9% Pacific Islander, 2.2% other, and 6% identified with two or more races. A total of 10.4% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. Finally, 5.7% of the population identified themselves Hispanic.

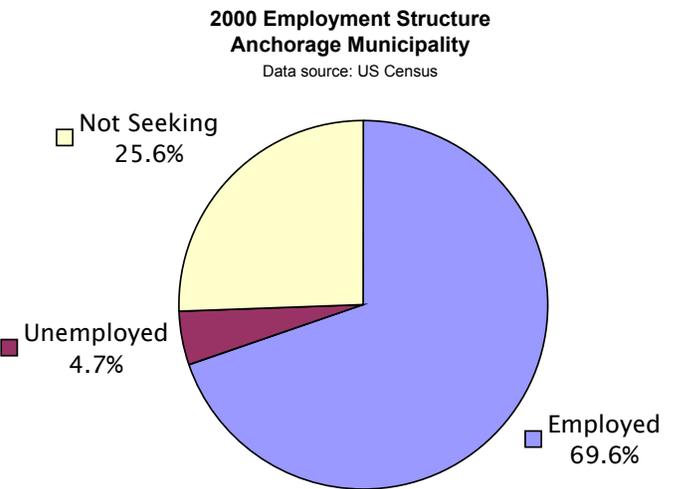
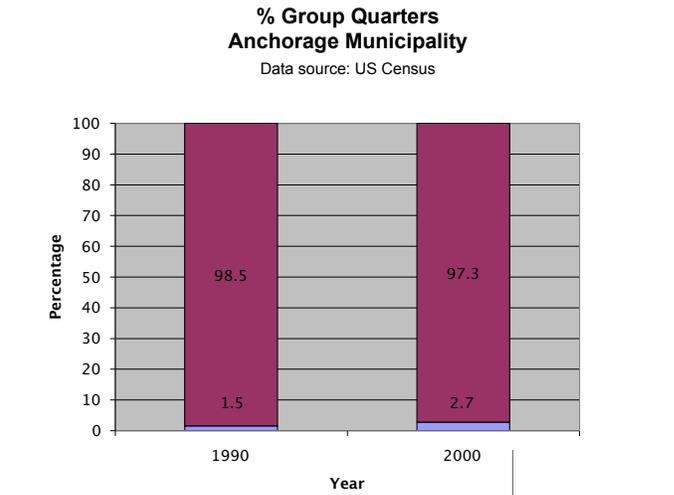
The gender composition of the Anchorage municipality was fairly balanced: 49.4% female versus 50.6% of male. These percentages presented an important difference from most Alaskan communities characterized by an overwhelmingly male presence. This differential element may be attributed to the area’s urban character. Girdwood, the smallest of these nuclei, significantly differs from the urban pattern, with 57.1% male versus 42.9% female, probably due to a rural demographic model with high levels of seasonal productivity (tourism and fishing). The median age in Anchorage is 32.4 years, slightly young in relation to the national median of 35.3 years in 2000, but not as young as many rural communities. The age structure in Anchorage did not substantially differ from the national average age structure.

Finally, 90.3% of the population of the Anchorage municipality had graduated from high school or gone on to higher schooling, 28.9% held a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 9.7% of the population age 25 years and over never graduated from high school.

History

The municipality of Anchorage stands on the Athabascan lands. The Tanaina Indians, the only coastal Athabascan group, used to live around the shoreline of Cook Inlet. Coastal Athabascans, due to the marine environment that they were occupying, shared more similarities with their Eskimo and Aleut neighbors than any of the other Athabascan groups.

The history of Anchorage and its surrounding areas is exemplary of the way in which most of Alaska developed: through cyclical booms. First, the discovery of gold in 1887 and in the interior in 1922 sparked development in the area. Initially, Anchorage was the midpoint headquarters of the federal railroad that connected Seward, 126 miles to the south, with Fairbanks, and the coal and gold fields of the interior, 358 miles north. The work started in 1914 and by 1915 Anchorage was a “tent city” on the banks of Ship Creek near the edge of present downtown. Soon the urban space was reorganized through territorial



reorganization and the city was incorporated in 1920.

The next wave of development in the mid-1900s was military driven. The threat of Japanese invasion during WWII, and pressure from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, fostered investments in the city’s infrastructure, contributing to the growth of Anchorage.

The next period of growth began in 1964 after the partial destruction of the city due to a massive earthquake. The reconstruction and subsequent blossoming as a modern city was fueled by the enormous amount of wealth generated by the discovery and development of the oil fields in Prudhoe Bay as well as the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The population, office space, and housing tripled within a ten year period. The Greater Anchorage Area Borough, the seed of the current municipality, was formed in 1964. During this period the city became

a regional metropolis absorbing or connecting with neighboring towns.

In 1975, the City and Borough governments of Anchorage were unified, along with the cities of Girdwood and Glen Alps. Some of the areas subsumed into this municipality had their own character and history. Eagle River, for instance, when it was formed in 1939, was initially agricultural land populated by homesteaders. Its proximity to the big city though, has served to convert it into a suburb of Anchorage with a large percentage of its population commuting daily. Its incorporation into the municipality occurred despite important local opposition.

Girdwood, formed in 1960s, still maintains a particular character related to its special montane location. Most of its economic activities are related to snow tourism. Its history goes back to the turn of the century. The community was named for James E. Girdwood, who staked a claim at Crow Creek in 1896. The Girdwood post office was established in 1907. Girdwood became conveniently linked to two of the major economic centers of the state with the completion of the Seward Highway in 1951, linking Anchorage to the Kenai Peninsula,

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Although most economic indicators for the municipality of Anchorage are aggregated, the different communities inside its boundaries have very striking specificities. Anchorage is the center of commerce for the state. Oil and gas industries, finance and real estate, transportation, communications, and government agencies are headquartered in Anchorage. Moreover, important contingents of the populations of Girdwood and Eagle River commute daily to the city. Despite this organic connection between the micro-regional networks of communities, each of them has a specific character.

Across the area, visitor and tourist facilities and services are available answering many different needs. Girdwood has a ski resort for winter sports, and the remaining areas offer important services for summer tourism (camping, fishing, and hunting, etc.).

Seasonal factors contribute to a fluctuating, though low, unemployment rate. There is a 69.6% employment rate with 4.7% unemployment. In

addition, 25.6% of the population are not working and not seeking employment. A total of 7.4% of the population lives below the poverty line. The per capita income is \$25,287, while the median household income is \$55,546.

Governance

The municipality of Anchorage, incorporated in 1975, is a Unified Home Rule Municipality governed through a “strong mayor” form of government with a nine-member council. Anchorage’s local administration holds rights to an 8% special tax on accommodations, tobacco, and rental cars.

The city of Anchorage, as the main commercial center of the state, is also the headquarters for offices from all sorts of regional institutions related to rural development, Native Alaska issues (Community Development Quotas, corporations, rights, health and so on), commerce, communication, environment, infrastructure, fishing, education and housing. For the same reason, the closest offices of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) are located in the city.

The Chugiak-Eagle River ensemble has two representatives that sit at the nine-member council of Anchorage’s municipal government. The community has jurisdiction over local parks, roads service, health, fire, police, and recreation.

Eagle River-Chugiak and Girdwood play a peripheral role in the regional institutional distribution. The proximity of the big city concentrates most of these regional governance institutions in Anchorage. Both communities, in spite of belonging to the larger municipality, have local organs of representation: the Eagle River Community Council and the Girdwood Community Council.

Facilities

Anchorage is accessible by air, road, and sea. The state-owned Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport and Lake Hood Floatplane Base, the Municipality’s Merrill Field, and U.S. Army and Air Force facilities all provide plane service. Many international, national, and local companies connect the city with locations all over the state, country, and globe.

The Port of Anchorage is an impressive facility.

There are five terminal berths with 3,488 linear feet available and it handles 85% of the general cargo for the Alaska Railbelt area. The Alaska Railroad connects Anchorage to Seward, Whittier, and Fairbanks. Barge and road transport companies have their offices and facilities in the city.

The city is fully supplied with water by the Anchorage Water & Wastewater Utility, sourced at Lake Eklutna, Ship Creek Reservoir, and deep wells. The John M. Asplund Wastewater Treatment Facility provides primary treatment to liquid waste, with the remains discharged into Cook Inlet. Eagle River and Girdwood are served by tertiary treatment facilities.

Power is served in a variety of ways: it is provided to central Anchorage by Anchorage Municipal Light & Power and the privately-owned Chugach Electric Association, while Eagle River and Chugiak area of Anchorage, as well as the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, are serviced by the Matanuska Electric Association. Natural gas is an important resource as a home heating method and is provided by ENSTAR Natural Gas Company.

The municipality of Anchorage has many opportunities for education that encompasses the entire spectrum from preschool and elementary school through college and universities. Together there are 92 schools with 2,900 teachers and 49,645 students.

The municipality also has a large number of hospitals and health facilities. People from rural communities all over the state come to Anchorage to deal with serious health problems that rural facilities cannot readily handle. Special mention needs to be made of the Alaska Native Medical Center that covers health issues of Alaska Natives statewide.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Although these three communities are part of the same administrative unit and most social indicators are aggregated, there is data available related to each communities' specific involvement in commercial fisheries. This speaks loudly to the importance of this activity for the region.

a) Anchorage*

* Commercial fishing permit data given here is from the CFEC. It includes the communities of Anchorage, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Fire Island, Fort Richardson, Potter, and Spenard

The city of Anchorage plays a complex role in the Alaskan fishing industry. This large, modern city is deeply connected to the oil industry and information technologies, but also remains fundamentally connected to the fishing industry.

Four main elements explain the characteristics of the fisheries sector in Anchorage. First, it has its own coastal character and fishing grounds (Cook Inlet), with its own harbor and numerous fishing communities. Second, it is the main regional commercial port of the entire state. Third, the concentration of resources, facilities, population, and transportation has converted Anchorage into an important nexus for the fish processing industry. The commercial fleet associated with this port has a statewide range. Finally, the Anchorage offers a wide variety of support services to the industry. The administrative centers of many businesses are located in Anchorage, and important numbers of participants on the fishing industry live here part of the year.

According to official records from 2000, Anchorage had 773 commercial permit holders, holding 1,042 all-fisheries combined permits. According to the ADF&G, 1,388 of its residents were registered as crewmen (includes Girdwood and Eagle River). There were 57 federal fisheries vessel owners as well as 224 owners of salmon vessels. Anchorage's fleet was involved in most Alaskan fisheries: crab, halibut, herring, other types of groundfish, sablefish, other shellfish, and salmon. Most of the permit holders residing in Anchorage actually fish in Bristol Bay, Kodiak or Cordova. This fact is important to understand population mobility and fishing industry territorial and productive structure.

Permits are issued with specifications to species, size of the vessel, type of gear, and fishing area.

Crab: In 2000 the municipality had 35 permits to fish all types of crab (26 fished), with king crab being the most fished species. There were 20 permits for ships over 60 feet carrying pot gear (16 fished): 2 permits to fish in Dutch Harbor (one fished), 3 in the Bering Sea (2 fished), and 12 in Bristol Bay (10 fished). The remaining two permits, also for Bristol Bay waters, were held, respectively, by the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Community Development Association (APICDA) and the Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA) Community Development Quotas (CDQ). There was also one permit issued and fished for a vessel under 60 feet fishing with pot gear in Norton Sound. The second species, in terms of

numbers fished, was Tanner crab with 11 permits: 9 were issued for boats over 60 feet fishing with pot gear in the Bering Sea (8 fished). The other two permits, again, were held by the APICDA and YDFDA CDQs. The remaining species of crab that was fished by the anchorage fleet was Dungeness crab. There were four permits issued in 2000 (none fished): three permits limited to Cook Inlet for vessels over 60 feet carrying pot gear and one permit to fish in southeast waters for a vessel with 150 pots.

Halibut: One of the most important fisheries to Anchorage's fleet was halibut with 109 permits issued with statewide range (59 fished). There were 74 permits issued for longline vessels under 60 feet (40 fished), 30 permits for longline vessels over 60 feet (19 fished), 4 for hand troll (none fished), and one mechanical jig that was not fished.

Groundfish: Groundfish fisheries accumulated a large number of permits. There were 109 permits issued (37 fished). The statistics for groundfish fisheries include three species categories lingcod, rockfish and miscellaneous salt water finfish. There were nine permits for lingcod: three permits for longliners under 60 feet (one fished), three for mechanical jig (one fished), one non-fished permit for handtroll, one non-fished permit for dinglebar troll, and one non-fished permit for a longline vessel over 60 feet. The bulk of the groundfish fleet (99 permits) worked on miscellaneous salt water finfish: 33 issued permits for longliners under 60 feet (8 fished), 16 for vessels under 60 feet with pot gear (6 fished), 21 for vessels with mechanical jig (8 fished), 7 for hand troll (none fished), 5 for otter troll (4 fished), 7 for vessels over 60 feet with pot gear (7 fished), 8 for longliners over 60 feet, and one non-fished permit for pair trawl. Finally, there was a non-fished permit for a longliner over 60 feet to catch demersal rockfish in the southeast. All permits were for a statewide range.

Herring: There were 107 permits issued in 2000 (31 fished). There were 26 permits for herring roe fished with purse seine (9 fished): 2 for the southeast (both fished), 4 for Prince William Sound (none fished), 2 for Cook Inlet (none fished), 3 in Kodiak (none fished), one in Chignik (not fished), 3 in the Alaskan Peninsula (none fished), and 11 for the Bristol Bay (7 fished). There were 54 issued permits to catch herring roe with gillnet (23 fished): 18 for the Bristol Bay area (10 were fished), 18 for Norton Sound (6 fished), 3 for Prince William Sound (not fished), 5 for Cook Inlet

(none fished), 3 for Nelson Island (one fished), 8 for Security Cove (one fished), 5 for Nunivak Island (2 fished), 2 for Cape Avinof, and 2 for Goodnews Bay (none fished). There was one issued and fished permit to collect herring roe in Norton Sound with beach seine. There were three permits to gather herring roe for food and bait: one non-fished permit for gillnet in the southeast, one non-fished permit for purse seine in Prince William Sound and one permit for purse seine in the Alaska Peninsula. Finally, there were 14 non-fished permits for herring spawn on kelp: eight for the Bristol Bay, one for the southeast, and five for Prince William Sound.

Salmon: In 2000, Anchorage had a large number of salmon fishing permits. The salmon fishery was of great importance to Anchorage's fishing industry. The city had 641 permits issued, 448 of which were fished. While 224 vessel owners claim official residence in the city and 112 vessels are home ported in their harbor, only 7 vessels actually deliver to its port (for a total of 15.26 tons). This is a reflection of Anchorage's limited port and processing facilities and illustrates that landings are made elsewhere.

There were 54 permits for purse seine: one issued and fished permit for the southeast, 18 permits to fish in Prince William Sound (5 fished), 6 for Cook Inlet (4 fished), 16 for the Kodiak area (7 fished), 10 permits for Chignik waters (10 fished), and 3 for the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands (one fished). There were two non-fished permits to use beach seine in Kodiak.

Inhabitants of the city also hold 196 permits to fish with drift gillnet: 121 in the Bristol Bay area (108 fished), 38 in Cook Inlet (31 fished), 29 in Prince William Sound (26 were fished), and 7 fished permits for Alaskan Peninsula waters for the southeast (one fished).

There was a total of 351 permits issued to fish salmon with set gillnet, although only 239 were actually fished: 121 permits issued for Cook Inlet (88 fished), 126 for Bristol Bay (108 fished), 27 for the Lower Yukon (13 fished), 16 for Kuskokwim (one fished), 15 for the North Sound (2 fished), 15 for Kotzebue (none fished), 15 for the Alaskan peninsula (11 fished), 11 for Kodiak waters (8 fished), 6 for Prince William Sound (5 fished), 5 for the upper Yukon (none fished), and 4 for Yakutat (3 fished).

Finally, 16 permits were issued for hand troll statewide (one fished), 10 for power gurdy troll

statewide (7 fished), and 2 non-fished permits for a fish wheel on the upper Yukon River.

Sablefish: The sablefish fishery issued 30 permits (23 fished): 13 permits issued for longline vessels under 60 feet with statewide range (10 fished), 11 permits with fixed gear (maximum vessel length 50 feet) for Prince William Sound (8 fished), 5 permits issued and fished for longline vessels over 60 feet (statewide range), and one non-fished permit for pot gear for a vessel over 60 feet (statewide range).

Other shellfish: These fisheries issued 12 permits (3 fished). There were eight permits to fish shrimp (2 fished): one with otter trawl and one with pot gear, both to fish in Prince William Sound. The remaining six were not fished. They were issued for vessels under 60 feet with pot gear, 5 for Prince William Sound, and one for the southeast. At the same time there were 2 issued but not fished permits for octopi and squid. Both were to fish in the southwest with pot gear, one for a vessel under 60 feet and one for a vessel over 60 feet. Finally, there were two permits to catch sea cucumbers: both of them were for diving gear, one for the southeast (not fished), and the other statewide except the southeast.

Anchorage, according to 2003 ADF&G records, harbored eleven processing plants: Alaskan Sausage, Alaska Sea Pack, 10th & M Seafoods, Sockeye Alaska, Alaskan Smoked Salmon, Favco Inc., Great Pacific Seafood, Sagaya Wholesale, Samer-I Seafoods, Teddys Tasty Meats, and Yamaya Seafoods. This concentration of the processing industry has an impact on employment by providing thousands of jobs. All types of commercial fisheries, federal or state regulated, were processed in the area.

Although the economic profile of Anchorage shows a large concentration of processors, the data on landings shows paradoxically low quantities of fish delivered in port. The composition of the fleet, according to species, delivering in Anchorage in 2000 was: salmon (7 vessels), halibut (10 vessels), other groundfish (20 vessels) and BSAI crab (5 vessels). The explanation for this contradiction is that most of the fish was delivered to other ports and later transported by different means to the processing plants surrounding the city, or that fish were delivered to plants closer to the fishing grounds.

Although the salmon industry is very important in Anchorage, this municipality did not benefit from 2003 federal salmon disaster funds to compensate for

loses to the municipal tax base due to salmon prices plummeting.

b) Eagle River (including Chugiak, Birchwood, Eklutna, Fire Lake and Peters Creek)*

The data on commercial fishing for Eagle River (including Chugiak, Birchwood, Eklutna, Fire Lake, and Peters Creek) is managed in an aggregate way by the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC). The economy and the structure of commercial fishing sectors for these communities are affected by their proximity to the large city of Anchorage. Most of these communities have no port and the cargo and harbor businesses in the area are managed by Anchorage's port. Notwithstanding this dependence on Anchorage's facilities, the communities held, in 2000, 139 permits for 106 individuals. In Eagle River and Chugiak there were 133 registered crewmen residents (included in Anchorage's crew total). Only 92 of the permits held by the community were fished. The permits held by Eagle River inhabitants encompassed most of the Alaska fisheries: halibut, herring, sablefish, other shellfish, other groundfish, and salmon.

Salmon: The most important fishery of Eagle River in terms of numbers was salmon with 81 permits (64 fished). There were 54 permits issued to fish with set gillnet: 26 for Bristol Bay (28 fished), 23 for Cook Inlet (17 fished), 2 for Kodiak waters (one fished), 2 for Prince William Sound (one fished), and one that was not fished for Yakutat. The community had also 18 permits for drift gillnet: 6 for Prince William Sound (6 fished), 7 for Cook Inlet (5 fished), 4 for Bristol Bay (4 fished), and one non-fished permit for the southeast. There were five permits to use purse seine: one fished permit for the southeast, two non-fished permits for Prince William Sound and Kodiak respectively, and two for Cook Inlet (one fished). Finally, there was one permit for beach seine in Kodiak, three for hand troll statewide, and one for a fish wheel in the upper Yukon River. None of these were fished in the year 2000.

Herring: Eagle River had 12 permits to catch herring (4 fished). There were ten permits to catch herring roe with gillnet: four in Cook Inlet (one fished), three in Bristol Bay (two fished), two for Secret Cove (one fished), and a non-fished permit for Norton Sound. There was also a non-fished permit to

* Commercial fishing permit data given here is from the CFEC. It includes the communities of Birchwood, Chugiak, Eagle River, Eklutna, Fire Lake, and Peters Creek

catch herring roe with purse seine in Bristol Bay and a non-used permit for herring spawn for kelp in Prince William Sound.

Other groundfish: In Eagle River the permits to catch “other groundfish” affected lingcod and miscellaneous salt water finfish. These fisheries were represented by 21 permits (six fished). There were five permits to catch lingcod (2 fished): three for hand troll statewide (one fished), one fished permit for mechanical jig, and a non-fished permit for a longliner under 60 feet. There were 16 permits for miscellaneous finfish (4 fished): 7 permits to use mechanical jig (2 fished), 4 for longliners under 60 feet (one fished), 3 for hand trollers (one fished), and 2 for pot gear in vessels under 60 feet. All the permits for other groundfish in the year 2000 had statewide range.

Halibut: There were 16 permits pertaining to halibut permits (12 fished): 13 for longliners under 60 feet (10 fished), 2 fished permits for longliners over 60 feet, and one non-fished permit for a mechanical jig. All of them had a statewide range.

Sablefish: The sablefish fishery issued 4 permits (4 fished): 2 for longliners under 60 feet with statewide range, and 2 for fixed gear vessels of a maximum length of 50 feet working in Prince William Sound.

Other Shellfish: There were only five permits issued to catch other shellfish (2 fished). There was one used permit to catch geoduck clam with diving gear in the southeast, one for scallops in the southwest, a non-fished permit for sea urchin with diving gear in the southeast, and two non-used permits to catch shrimp with pot gear with vessels under 60 feet in Prince William Sound and the southeast.

c) Girdwood*

In 2000, Girdwood had 29 commercial permit holders with 57 all-fisheries combined permits. Thirty-eight residents were registered as crewmen with the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC) (included in Anchorage’s crew total). There were 2 federal fisheries vessel owners plus 10 owners of salmon vessels. Girdwood’s fleet fished halibut, herring and other types of groundfish, sablefish, and

salmon.

Salmon: The most important fishery in Girdwood in terms of numbers was salmon with 27 permits (20 fished). There were nine permits to fish with set gillnet: four for Bristol Bay (five fished), six for Cook Inlet (two fished), one fished permit for Prince William Sound, and one fished permit for the Alaskan Peninsula. The community held eight permits for drift gillnet: two permits for Prince William Sound (both fished), one for Cook Inlet (fished by two holders during that year), and five for Bristol Bay (four fished). There were also seven permits to use purse seine: one fished permit for Cook Inlet, three permits for Prince William Sound (two fished), and three non-fished permits for Kodiak waters.

Herring: This fishery encompassed a significant number of Girdwood’s permits, a total of 10, although none were fished in 2000. There were five permits for herring roe fished with purse seine: two for the Prince William Sound, one for Cook Inlet, one in Kodiak, and one for Bristol Bay. There were two issued permits to catch herring roe with gillnet: one for Bristol Bay and one for Security Cove. One permit was issued to catch herring roe for food and bait with purse seine in Prince William Sound. Finally, there were two permits to collect herring spawn on kelp in Prince William Sound.

Halibut: A total of ten permits were issued for halibut in 2000 with statewide range (five of which were fished): there were seven issued permits for longline vessels under 60 feet (four fished), two permits for longline vessels over 60 feet (one fished), and one permit for hand troll (not fished).

Other Finfish: A total of five permits were issued in 2000 to fish miscellaneous salt water finfish and sablefish including four non-fished permits for longliners under 60 feet catching finfish, and one fished permit for a mechanical jig.

Sablefish: A total of five sablefish permits were issued (two fished). There were two non-fished permits for longline gear in a vessel under 60 feet (one fished), one for fixed gear in a 60 foot vessel, and two permits for a 50 foot vessel (one fished). The last three permits were for Prince William Sound.

Sport Fishing

The municipality of Anchorage has aggregated data for businesses licenses. There are hundreds of businesses related to sport fishing: charters, fishing

* Commercial fishing permit data given here is from the CFEC. It is for the communities of Bird Creek, Girdwood, Indian, Kern, Portage, and Rainbow.

guides, gear, housing, and catering associated to fishing trips, etc. The city had 14 official licenses for freshwater guide businesses and 124 saltwater guide business licenses. Girdwood had three freshwater and 11 saltwater guide businesses, while Eagle River had two freshwater and 13 saltwater guide businesses. Chugiak had six saltwater guide businesses.

In 2000, 98,516 sport fishing licenses were sold in the municipality of Anchorage: 54,120 of those licenses were sold to residents of Alaska. These numbers give an idea of the importance of this sector in the economy of the city and the state. Eagle River had 8,255 permits, of which 5,577 were sold to residents. Girdwood sold 565 permits, with 119 sold to Alaskan residents.

Subsistence Fishing

The differences mentioned above between the communities of Anchorage, Eagle River-Chugiak, and Girdwood, have a fundamental impact on the specific form that the fisheries industry takes in each one of them. These are, by definition, urban areas. Some of these communities are real urban areas with corresponding sets of infrastructure and services associated with such designations. Some, although legally urban, are, from a practical perspective, more accurately described as rural. From the fisheries perspective, these differences have important impacts: the former are more susceptible to accumulate large industrial complexes such as processing plants or headquarters while the latter, for instance, will probably have more involvement with subsistence practices.

This fact has important consequences on their respective involvement in the North Pacific fisheries. As mentioned early on, the entire area is officially considered urban. A fundamental consequence of this fact is that after 20 years of legal discussions

between the state of Alaska, the federal government, and the courts, the inhabitants of urban areas have no subsistence rights in federal lands and waters. Although these regulations were not strictly enforced for almost 20 years while managed by the state, in the late 1990s, after a long judicial battle, the federal government took over the responsibility of management and enforcement. That does not mean that the inhabitants of Anchorage do not fish or hunt. The basic difference is that these activities tend to be more easily classified as sport related. This is obviously misleading in many aspects due to the enormous heterogeneity of the Anchorage population.

Another important factor is also the heterogeneity of the communities included inside the Anchorage municipality. All of them are considered urban but a city of almost three hundred thousand inhabitants is obviously not the same as a rural town of a few hundred. Here, the records and statistics are not capable of depicting the internal variability of the area. The inhabitants of Girdwood, for instance, living in a relatively non-developed mountainous area have a completely different relation with the landscape than those in Anchorage, surrounded by square miles of infrastructure although they have easy access to all Anchorage facilities, unlike most of rural Alaska.

With all probability, though, Anchorage's inhabitants are engaged at some level, with subsistence harvesting as illustrated by the 369 salmon subsistence harvesting permits issued by the state which, in 1999, accounted for almost 21,000 sockeye salmon caught. Other salmon species, in a minor degree were also fished. Eagle River-Chugiak had 71 salmon fishing subsistence permits (5,500 sockeye) and Girdwood 7.