

Cordova

People and Place

Location

Cordova is located on the western edge of the Copper River Delta in the Chugach National Forest in the Gulf of Alaska and at the southeastern end of Prince William Sound. The community was built on Orca Inlet, at the base of Eyak Mountain. The area encompasses 61.4 square miles of land and 14.3 square miles of water.

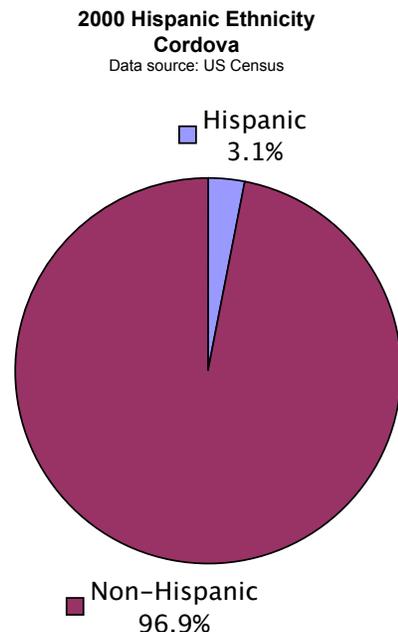
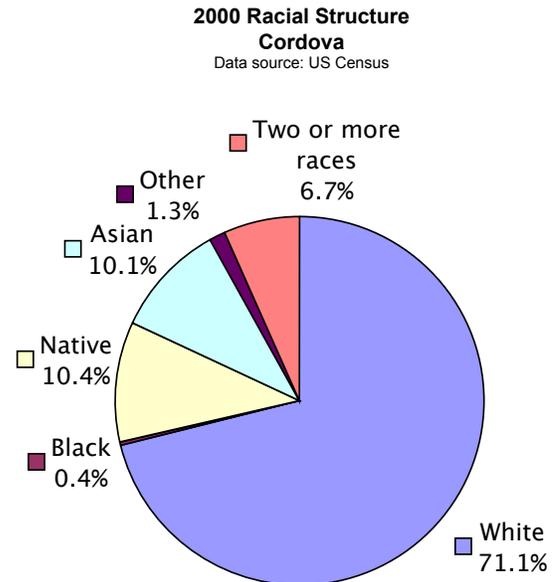
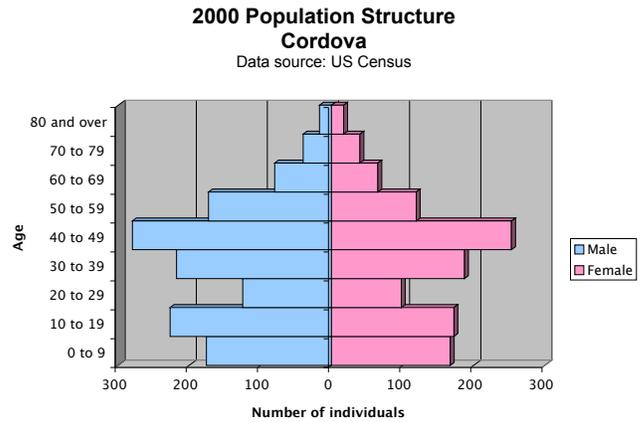
Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Cordova was 2,434. Total population numbers were reasonably stable between the early 1900s and late 1970s. Since the 1980s there has been a steady increase in the population corresponding with the growth of the commercial fishing industry. The genders in Cordova were slanted towards males (54.5%), and 45.5% females. The racial composition of the population in 2000 included 71.7% White, 10.4% American Indian and Alaska Native, 10.1% Asian, 0.4% Black, and 1.3% classified themselves as 'Other'. Overall, 6.7% of the population identified with two or more races. A total of 15% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. Only 3.1% of the population identified as Hispanic. The median age was 36.9 years which is similar the national median of 35.3 years. According to census data, 30.2% of the population was under 19 years of age and 15.2% of the population was over 55 years of age.

There were 958 housing units in Cordova, 141 of which were vacant in 2000. Of these, 68 were vacant due to seasonal use. At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, about 3.1% of the population lived in group quarters. About 88.6% of the population had a high school diploma or higher, and 21.4% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

History

The first inhabitants living in the area that is now Cordova, along the edges of Prince William Sound, were the Alutiiq people who subsisted for centuries on the natural resources at hand. At some point, they were joined by migrating Athabaskans and Tlingit who called themselves Eyaks. Eyak Mountain and a large lake east of the current town take their names from these people. Alaska Natives of other descents have



also joined the settlements in the area. Reportedly, there is only one full-blooded Eyak alive today, a woman in her 80s, who speaks the Eyak language.

Orca Inlet was known to the non-Native world as ‘Puerto Cordova,’ named by Don Salvador Fidalgo in 1790. By the late 1880s the first copper miners began arriving. A century later, one of the first producing oil fields in Alaska was discovered at Katalla, 47 miles southeast of Cordova. Subsequently, the town of Cordova was named in 1906 by Michael Heney, builder of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad, and the City was formed in 1909. The Katalla oil field was in operation until 1933 when it was destroyed by a disastrous fire. Cordova became the railroad terminus and ocean shipping port for copper ore from the Kennecott Mine up the Copper River. The Bonanza-Kennecott Mines which operated from the early 1900s yielded over \$200 million in copper, silver, and gold, but closed in 1938. The railway was consequently shut down. The Good Friday earthquake in 1964 halted the state’s attempt to build a highway along the old railroad grade. Twenty-five years later, in 1989, the Exxon Valdez oil spill devastated the local ecology and had far-reaching environmental, political, economic, and cultural ramifications. Commercial fishing has somewhat recovered, and scenic Cordova has remained an unspoiled location for a variety of outdoor activities.

Infrastructure

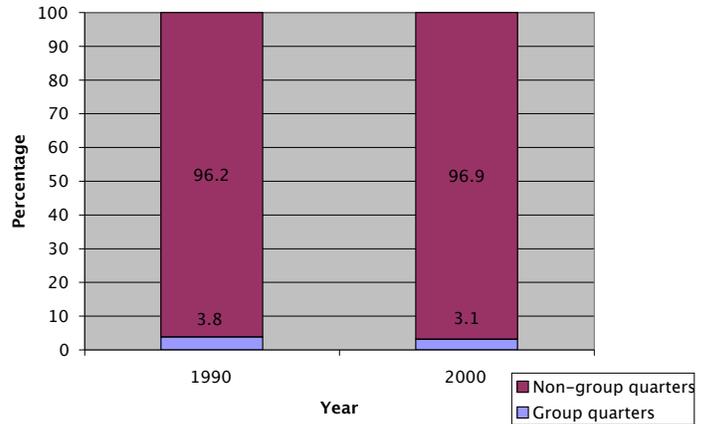
Current Economy

The economic base of Cordova has been the fishing industry since the 1940s and roughly half of all households have at least one member directly involved in commercial harvesting or processing. There are several fish processing plants in Cordova which serve a large fleet relative for Prince William Sound. Salmon is major component of the harvest and the current reduction in salmon prices has adversely affected the economy of Cordova. The largest employers are Bear and Wolf Processing, Cordova School District, Cordova Hospital, the City, and the Department of Transportation. Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Coast Guard maintain personnel in Cordova.

A total of 621 commercial fishing permits were held by 343 permit holders in 2000 according to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC).

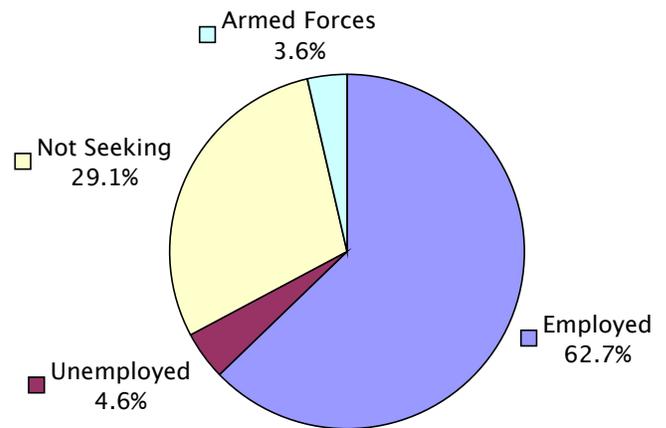
**% Group Quarters
Cordova**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Employment Structure
Cordova**

Data source: US Census



At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 62.2% of the potential labor force was employed, there was a 4.6% unemployment rate, and 3.6% of the population was in the armed forces. A total of 29.1% of the population over 16 years of age was not in the labor force and 7.5% of the population was below the poverty level. The median household income in the same year was \$50, 114 and the per capita income was \$25,256.

Governance

The City of Cordova was incorporated in July of 1909 and in October of 1960 residents voted to adopt a Home Rule Charter. The City of Cordova has a Council-Manager form of government. The mayor and seven council members are elected officials, each elected to three-year terms. The city manager, city clerk, and the city attorney are appointed by the council. Cordova does not belong to an organized borough; therefore

the city is responsible for many services. The city of Cordova implements a 6% sales tax, 14.0 mills (1.4%) property tax, 6% accommodations tax, and 6% car rental tax. Cordova is a member of the for-profit Native regional corporation Chugach Corporation under the Alaska Natives Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). The Chugach Alaska Corporation Region includes the four communities of Cordova, Seward, Valdez, and Whittier, and the five Native villages of Port Graham, Chenega Bay, Eyak, Nanwalek (English Bay) and Tatitlek. Approximately 550,000 acres of the lands are subsurface estate from the region's Native village surface entitlements. It includes more than 5,000 miles of coastline, at the heart of which lies Prince William Sound. The Native village corporation is the Chenega Corporation, which also has shareholders in Chenega Bay, Anchorage, Valdez, Tatitlek, Talkeetna, other Alaskan cities, Washington, Oregon, Arizona, and several other Lower 48 states. As mentioned above, Cordova has a significant Eyak Athabascan population with an active Village Council. The Native Village of Eyak is federally recognized and eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) by virtue of their status as an Indian tribe.

The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regional office is in Anchorage, as is the nearest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office. There is an Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) field office in Cordova.

Facilities

Cordova is accessible only by air and sea. The cost of a roundtrip flight from Cordova to Anchorage is approximately \$250 (based on the closest available date to 1 September, 2003). The community is linked directly to the North Pacific Ocean shipping lanes through the Gulf of Alaska and receives year-round barge services and State Ferry service. There is a state-owned and city-operated airport with a 1,840 foot gravel runway. Daily scheduled jet flights and air taxis are available. It is also possible for floatplanes to land at the Lake Eyak seaplane base or the boat harbor. Harbor facilities include a breakwater, dock, small boat harbor with 850 berths, boat launch, boat haul-out, ferry terminal, and marine repair services. Cordova's small boat harbor is one of the state's largest single basin harbors. The port at Cordova consists of three larger docks and the municipal dock is the main commercial port facility in the area. A 48-mile gravel road provides access to the Copper River Delta to the

east. However, plans for a highway up the Copper River to connect with the statewide road system have been controversial

Cordova draws water from various lakes and reservoirs in the vicinity and total water storage capacity is 2.1 million gallons. The City operates a piped water and sewer system which is treated before discharge. Over 90% of homes are fully plumbed; others use individual wells and septic systems. A landfill and a sludge disposal are available outside of town. The community participates in recycling and has a household hazardous waste program.

Cordova Electric Cooperative operates a diesel-powered electricity plant, and two hydroelectric plants, one at Humpback Creek and one at Power Creek. Health services are provided by the Cordova Community Medical Center and the Ilanka Health Center operated by the City. Public safety is provided by a city-backed police department. Cordova is within the Cordova City School District and there are two schools in Cordova itself. At Cordova High School 18 teachers instruct 232 students and 17 teachers instruct 225 students at Mount Eccles Elementary. Cordova is developing a tourism industry and there are several businesses that cater to visitors, including at least eight accommodations providers.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Like many towns in the region, the fishing industry is the major component of Cordova's economy. According to the ADF&G, and reported by ACFEC, 621 permits were held by 343 permit holders, and 425 of these were fished in Cordova in 2000. There were 42 vessel owners in the federal fisheries, 328 vessel owners in the salmon fishery and 411 crew members claiming residence. The commercial vessel fleet delivering landings to Cordova was involved in groundfish (74 vessels), sablefish (32 vessels) halibut (81 vessels), and salmon (660 vessels) fisheries. In 2000, there were 4,269.11 tons of federally managed fish, including 530.02 tons of sablefish, 3250.51 tons of other groundfish, 508.58 tons of halibut, and 21,975.02 tons of salmon landed at the docks in Cordova.

Commercial fishing permits are issued according to specifications of species, vessel size, gear type, and fishing area. Permits issued in Cordova for 2000

related to crab, halibut, herring roe, other finfish, other shellfish, sablefish, and salmon.

Crab: One permit was issued for a Dungeness crab pot gear vessel over 60 feet restricted to Yakutat (not fished).

Halibut: There were a total of 64 permits issued for halibut in 2000, 51 of which were fished. Permits for halibut pertained to 36 longline vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (30 fished), 3 mechanical jigs in statewide waters (none fished), and 25 longline vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters (21 fished).

Herring: A total of 124 permits were issued for herring roe in Cordova in 2000 (14 fished). Permits issued for herring pertained to 21 purse seine restricted to Prince William Sound (none fished), one purse seine restricted to the Cook Inlet (not fished), 2 purse seine restricted to Kodiak (one fished), one purse seine restricted to the Alaska Peninsula (not fished), 9 purse seine restricted to Bristol Bay (six fished), 2 gillnets restricted to Southeast Alaska (one fished), 20 gillnets limited to Prince William Sound (none fished), one gillnet restricted to Kodiak (not fished), 5 gillnets restricted to security cove (one fished), 9 gillnets in Bristol Bay (5 fished), one gillnet restricted to Norton Sound (not fished), 2 herring food/bait purse seine restricted to Prince William Sound (none fished), and 50 permits to harvest herring spawn on kelp in northern southeast Alaska (none fished).

Other finfish: One experimental/special permit was issued for freshwater finfish with unspecified gear in statewide waters (not fished).

Other Groundfish: There were 54 permits issued for groundfish excluding sablefish in Cordova in 2000, 19 of which were actually fished. Permits issued for groundfish pertained to 2 lingcod longline under 60 feet in statewide waters (none fished), one lingcod dinglebar troll in statewide waters, 4 lingcod mechanical jigs in statewide waters (2 fished), one lingcod pot gear vessel over 60 feet long in statewide waters, 21 miscellaneous saltwater finfish longline vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (7 fished), one miscellaneous saltwater finfish otter trawl in statewide waters (not fished), 3 miscellaneous saltwater finfish pot gear vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (one fished), 13 miscellaneous saltwater finfish mechanical jigs statewide waters (2 fished), 5 miscellaneous saltwater finfish longline vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters (3 fished), and 3 miscellaneous saltwater finfish pot gear vessels over

60 feet in statewide waters.

Other Shellfish: One permit was issued for an octopi/squid longline vessel under 60 feet in statewide waters (not fished), and one for a shrimp pot gear vessel under 60 feet limited to Prince William Sound (not fished).

Sablefish: There were 11 permits issued for sablefish in Cordova in 2000, 10 of which were fished. Permits issued for sablefish pertained to one fixed gear vessel of maximum 90 feet in Prince William Sound, 5 fixed gear vessels of maximum 50 feet in Prince William Sound, one fixed gear vessel of maximum 35 feet in Prince William Sound (not fished), and 4 longline vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters.

Salmon: There were 364 permits issued in Cordova for Salmon in 2000, 331 of which were fished. Permits issued for salmon pertained to three purse seine in southeast waters, 95 purse seine in Prince William Sound (65 fished), one purse seine in Chignik, 3 drift nets in Bristol bay (12 fished), one set gillnet in Yakutat (not fished), 9 set gillnets in Prince William Sound, 3 set gillnets in Bristol Bay, one set gillnet in Kotzebue (not fished), one set gillnet in Norton Sound (not fished), and one hand troll in statewide waters (not fished).

In 2000 there were eight fish processing plants operating in Cordova with the capacities to process halibut, sablefish, other groundfish, and salmon. Some of the larger companies operating processing facilities, such as North Pacific Processors and Ocean Beauty Seafoods, also contributed to the port facilities available at the docks.

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation is a non-profit corporation founded in 1974 by a local commercial fishermen's organization with its headquarters in Cordova. Four remote hatcheries in Prince William Sound are operated by the Corporation and benefit commercial, sport fishing, personal and subsistence users.

It was announced in July 2003 that Cordova would receive \$101,644 worth of federal salmon disaster funds to be distributed to several municipalities statewide which have been affected by low salmon prices in order to compensate for consequent losses of salmon taxes or raw fish taxes. The disbursement of these disaster funds illustrates state and federal responses to communities and boroughs affected by recent falling salmon prices. Communities and boroughs are ultimately responsible for the allocation

of the funds. Further disbursements are expected in the future to offset the costs of basic public services for which fish taxes become insufficient. In 2002, the City of Cordova received \$1,592 as part of a federal fund set up in accordance with the Endangered Species Act to offset costs to fisheries and communities due to Steller sea lion protection regulations.

Sport Fishing

Most of the fresh waters of Prince William Sound, particularly those in the Cordova area, are open the entire year to salmon fishing. Chinook salmon, silver salmon, sockeye salmon, halibut, rockfish and lingcod are other popular sportfishing species found in the marine waters of Orca Inlet, Simpson Bay, Sheep Bay and as close as Spike Island, located just outside the harbor. Prince William Sound is closed to all crab fishing, but is open to shrimping by permit between April 15 through September 15 and other marine invertebrate collecting. In total there were 15 businesses involved in saltwater sportfishing in Cordova in 2002 and 15 engaged in freshwater sportfishing. There were 3,215 sport fishing licenses sold in Cordova in 2000, 1,251 of which were sold to Alaska residents.

Subsistence Fishing

Data from 1997 compiled on behalf of the ADF&G's Division of Subsistence provides useful information about subsistence practices in Cordova. About 97.6% of households participated in the use of subsistence resources, including harvesting, sharing, and consuming resources, illustrating the importance of subsistence to life in the community. Approximately 88.5% of the total population used salmon and 84.6% used non-salmon fish (herring, herring roe, smelt, bass, cod, flounder, greenling, halibut, rockfish, sablefish, sculpin, shark, wolfish, sole, char, grayling, and trout), many fewer households, only 11%, used marine mammals and about half the households in the community, 51.7%, used marine invertebrates.

The average per capita harvest for 1997 was 179.43 lbs. The composition of the total subsistence harvest can be shown by the percentages of the resources which demonstrate the amount of each

resource category used by the community relative to other resources categories. The total subsistence harvest was composed of 34.87% salmon, non-salmon fish made up 42.61%, land mammals 54.49%, marine mammals 3.64%, birds and eggs accounted for 2.23%, marine invertebrates for 5.52% and vegetation made up 8.36%. The wild food harvest in Cordova made up 83% of the recommended dietary allowance of protein in 1993 (corresponding to 49 g of protein per day or 0.424 lbs of wild food per day) (Wolfe, Division of Subsistence, ADF&G).

Only one permit was held by a household in Cordova for subsistence fishing of salmon according to the ADF&G's Division of Subsistence records from 1999. The permit was used solely for sockeye salmon. Residents of Cordova and members of the Native Village of Eyak, an Alaska Native Tribe, who hold a valid Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificate (SHARC) issued by NMFS, are eligible to harvest subsistence halibut. These allocations are based on recognized customary and traditional uses of halibut. Regulations to implement subsistence halibut fishing were published in the Federal Register in April 2003 and became effective May 2003.

Additional Information

Cordova is locally famous for two festivals, the Copper River Salmon Festival and the Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival. The former, held in early June, celebrates the beginning of the Alaska salmon run. The ferries servicing the Alaska Marine Highway and the daily jet service carriers which fly between Cordova and Anchorage, Juneau and Seattle all offer special festival timetables and fares. The Shorebirds Festival occurs a month earlier and attracts avid professional and amateur bird watchers to the spectacle of as many as 5 million shorebirds pausing on their mass migration northwards.

Cordova also hosts the Iceworm Festival in February, the only known celebration of the glacial iceworm in the world. The Iceworm Festival includes a parade, talent shows, arts & crafts exhibits, and the Miss Iceworm Pageant and Coronation.