

Fritz Creek

People and Place

Location

Fritz Creek is situated on the Kenai Peninsula, seven miles northeast of Homer off the Sterling Highway. It is located on the north shore of Kachemak Bay and lies at the foot of Bald Mountain. The area encompasses 54.4 square miles of land but does not include any water area.

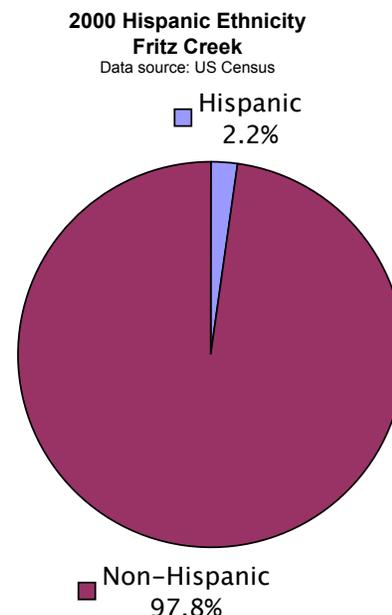
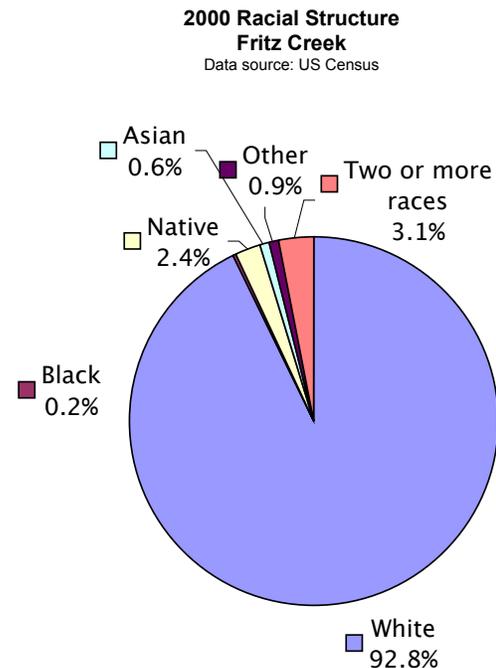
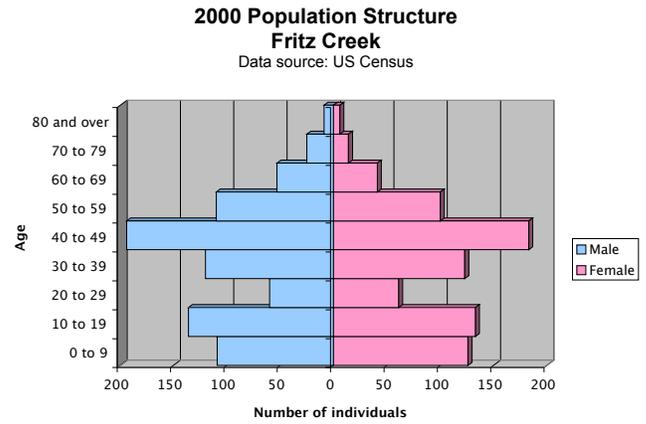
Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Fritz Creek was 1,603. Total population numbers have increased substantially since the 1970's when the community was established. By 1980, the community had 404 members and by 1990 the population had reached 1,426. The genders were in almost equal balance. The racial composition of the population included 93.0% White, 2.4% Alaska Native or American Indian, 0.2% Black, and 0.6% Asian, and 0.9% classified themselves as 'Other'. Overall, 3.1% of the population identified with two or more races. A total of 5.1% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. Only 2.2% of the population identified as Hispanic. The median age was 38.1 years which is slightly above the national median of 35.3 years. According to the census data 31.5% of the population was under 19 years of age while only 14.8% of the population was over 55 years of age.

There were 854 housing units in Fritz Creek; 152 were vacant due to seasonal use. At the time of 2000 Census, none of the population lived in group quarters. About 93.4% of the population had a high school diploma or higher, while 34.5% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

History

Due to its maritime climate and easy access, south-central Alaska has long been a gathering place for Native Alaskans from diverse places. Human occupation and migration across the Kenai Peninsula is known to date from some several thousand years ago at places such as Beluga Point along the Seward Highway. The area around Kachemak Bay is historically considered to be Dena'ina Athabascan Indian territory, although archaeological sites suggest the presence of Pacific Eskimo or Alutiiq people as early as 4,500 years ago



(Halliday 1998: 183).

Fritz Creek itself was named by R.W. Stone of the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey in 1904. Russian, and subsequently American, attempts to exploit Kachemak Bay coal in the area in late 1800's proved to be unsuccessful (Alaska Historical Commission). Fritz Creek is the "End of The Road," and is also known as the "Cosmic Hamlet by the Sea." It was popularized by Tom Bodett in his series of books about life at the "End of the Road." Fritz Creek, like Halibut Cove, is now a mecca for famous and aspiring artists, as well as those who enjoy the wilderness experience.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The economy of Fritz Creek is intimately linked with that of nearby Homer which is relatively diverse, though predominantly based on fishing and fish processing.

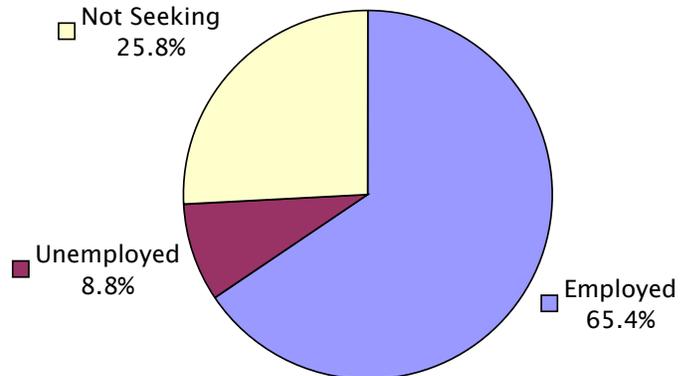
A total of 26 commercial fishing permits were held by 13 permit holders in 2000 according to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC). In 2000, 71.7% of the potential labor force was employed and 9.6% were unemployed. A high percentage, 28.3%, of the population over 16 years of age was not in the labor force but may be largely seasonally involved with the commercial fishing industry, and 9.6% of the population lived below the poverty level. The median household income in the same year was \$41, 400 and the per capita income was \$18, 937.

Governance

Fritz Creek is an unincorporated city within the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Because of the city's status as unincorporated, there are neither city officials nor borough officials located in the city, nor are there municipal or borough finances dispersed to the city. Fritz Creek is not a member of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), therefore no land was allotted under the Act, and is not a federally recognized Native village nor does it have a Native village corporation or belong to a regional Native corporation.

The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regional office is in Homer, as is the nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office.

**2000 Employment Structure
Fritz Creek**
Data source: US Census



The nearest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office is located in Anchorage.

Facilities

Fritz Creek is readily accessible by road along the Sterling Highway which connects the community to Anchorage. Airport, harbor, and docking facilities are available at nearby Homer. The community is linked indirectly to the network of communities visited by ferries on the Alaska Marine Highway and receives year-round barge services and State Ferry service. The city-owned airport in Homer has a 6,700foot paved runway, as well as a seaplane base. Round trip flights between Homer and Anchorage cost approximately \$200-250. Homer also has a deep-water dock capable of accommodating 340 foot-long vessels and a boat harbor with moorage for 920 vessels.

The vast majority of people living in Fritz Creek hauls water or has water delivered. Some residences and buildings have individual wells. Most residences have septic systems for sewage disposal and the remainder use out houses. Over half of all residences are fully plumbed. The Borough does provide a refuse transfer station in Anchor Point, or sanitation facilities in Homer are used. Electricity is provided by the Homer Electric Association. There are no local health care facilities or public safety providers. Fritz Creek is within the Kenai Peninsula School District and there are two schools in Fritz Creek itself. At Kachemak Selo School, 79 students in grades K-12 are instructed by 6 teachers, At Voznesenka Elementary School 137 students are instructed by 10 teachers.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

According to the ADF&G, and reported by ACFEC, 26 permits were held by 13 permit holders in Fritz Creek in 2000, but only 18 permits were fished. There were 2 vessel owners in the federal fisheries, 6 vessel owners in the salmon fishery and 23 crew members claiming residence in Fritz Creek. There are no fish processing plants, and no fish landing in the community.

Commercial fishing permits are issued according to specifications of species, vessel size, gear type, and fishing area. Permits issued in Fritz Creek for 2000 related to halibut, herring, sablefish, other groundfish, crab, and salmon.

Halibut: There were a total of six permits issued for halibut in Fritz Creek, three of which were fished. Permits for halibut pertained to one hand troll (not fished), 3 longline vessels under 60 feet (2 fished), and two longline vessels over 60 feet (one fished). All permits designated for halibut were for statewide waters.

Herring: There were two permits issued for the herring fishery pertaining to herring spawn on kelp in Prince William Sound (none fished).

Sablefish: There were two permits issued for the sablefish fishery pertaining to longline vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters

Other groundfish: A total of nine permits were issued for other groundfish, only seven of which were fished. Permits pertained to two lingcod mechanical jigs in statewide waters, one miscellaneous saltwater finfish longline vessel under 60 feet in statewide waters, three miscellaneous saltwater finfish pot gear vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (two fished), and three miscellaneous saltwater finfish mechanical jigs in statewide waters (two fished).

Crab: Three permits were issued in for crab, none of which were fished. All permits pertained to Dungeness pot gear vessels over 60 feet restricted to the Cook Inlet (none fished)

Other shellfish: Only one permit for other shellfish was fished. Permits issued in Seward pertained to one shrimp pot gear vessel under 60 feet in westward waters (not fished), one shrimp pot gear in south-east waters (not fished), one shrimp pot gear vessel over 60 feet in westward waters (not fished), one sea cucumber diving gear permit for statewide waters

but excluding southeast waters, and one sea urchin diving gear permit for statewide waters, excluding southeast waters (not fished).

Salmon: A total of four permits were issued for the salmon fishery. Six permits were fished, which may reflect the ability of fishing permit holders to hold emergency transfer permits. Salmon permits pertained to drift gillnets restricted to Prince William Sound (one fished), two drift gillnets in Cook Inlet (three fished), one drift gillnet in Bristol Bay, and one power gurdy troll in statewide waters.

It was announced in July 2003 that the Kenai Peninsula Borough, in which Fritz Creek is located, has been allocated \$623,295 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 these 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 Kenai Peninsula received \$810 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

There are a few charter sport fishing companies operating in Fritz Creek. Easy access to Anchorage makes Fritz Creek a frequently chosen tourist destination. Nearby Homer is a major sport fishing destination and may inspire people to visit surrounding communities such as Fritz Creek for a less crowded scene. Kachemak Bay is considered to be one of Alaska's most popular destinations for halibut fishing, with frequent catches purportedly weighing 100 to 200 lbs. In fact, halibut, weighing up to 350 lbs are fished between June and September.

Subsistence Fishing

According to 2003-2004 Federal subsistence fishery regulations, Fritz Creek is designated as a Federal non-rural area. Correspondingly, residents of Fritz Creek are not eligible for subsistence fishing permits and are not permitted to harvest fish or shellfish under Federal subsistence regulations.

Data from 1998 compiled on behalf of the ADF&G's Division of Subsistence provides useful information about subsistence practices in Fritz Creek. Records describe the subsistence patterns for all 100% of households that participated in the use of subsistence resources, including harvesting, sharing, and consuming resources, illustrating the importance of subsistence to life in the community. Of the total population, 93.8% used salmon, 90.8% used non-salmon fish (herring, herring roe, smelt, cod, flounder, greenling, halibut, rockfish, sablefish, shark, sole, char, grayling, trout, and whitefish), many fewer households, only 3.1%, used marine mammals, and a high percentage, 76.9%, used marine invertebrates.

The average per capita harvest for the year 1998 was 105.35 pounds. The composition of the total subsistence harvest can be shown by the percentages of the resources that were used which demonstrate the amount of each resource category used by the community relative to other resources categories. The total subsistence harvest was composed of 29.7% salmon, non-salmon fish made up 28.34%, land mammals 27.93%, no significant amount of marine mammals was used, birds and eggs accounted for only 1.64% of the total subsistence harvest, marine invertebrates for 7.15%, and vegetation made up 5.24%.