

# Halibut Cove

## People and Place

### Location

Halibut Cove lies on the south shore of the Kachemak Bay within the Kachemak Bay State Park on the Kenai Peninsula. It is located 12 miles across the inlet from the Homer Spit. The area encompasses 8.1 square miles of land and 3.2 square miles of water.

### Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Halibut Cove was 35. Total population numbers have remained relatively stable over the latter half of the 20th century. The number of residents may rise into the thousands in the summer when visitors swell the population. This trend is substantiated by the relatively high number of seasonally vacant housing units.

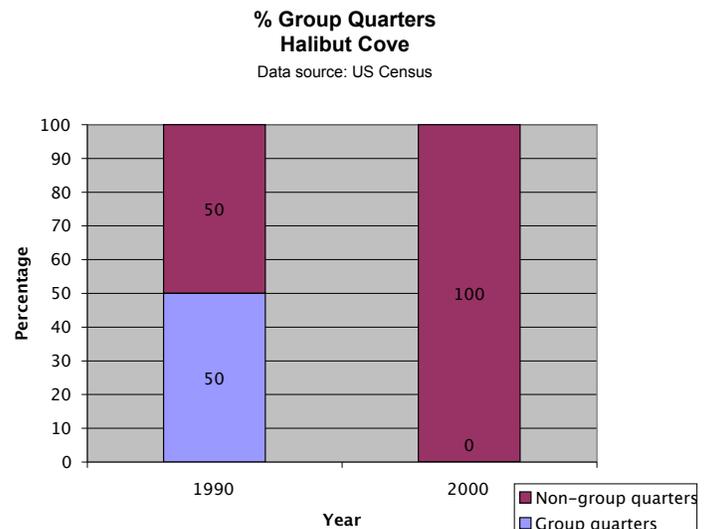
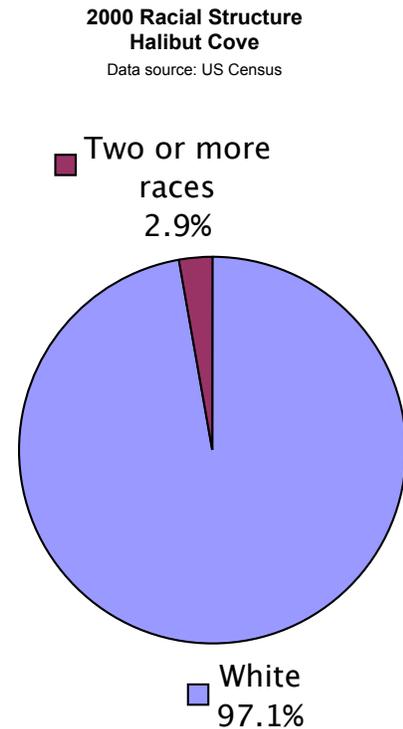
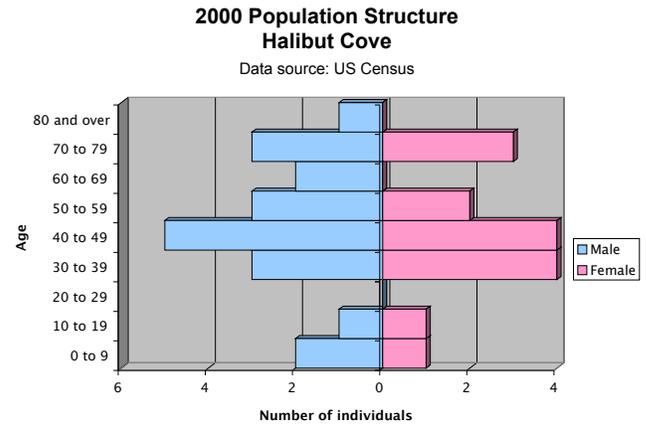
There were substantially more males (57.1%) than females (42.9%) in Halibut Cove in 2000. The racial composition of the population included 97.1% White, and 2.9% of the population recognized themselves as two or more races (all or part Alaska Native or American Indian). None of the population identified as Hispanic. The median age was 47.3 years which is above the national median of 35.3 years. According to 2000 census data only 14.3% of the population was under 19 years of age while 34.4% of the population was over 55 years of age.

There were 123 housing units in Halibut Cove in 2000 and of these, 104 were vacant due to seasonal use. None of the population lived in group quarters. About 100% of the population had a high school diploma or higher, while 33.3% 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 diverse Native Alaskans. 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).

Halibut Cove itself was named by W.H. Dall of the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey in 1880. Russian, and subsequently American, attempts to exploit



Kachemak Bay coal in the area in late 1800's proved to be unsuccessful (Alaska Historical Commission). Between 1911 and 1928, Halibut Cove had a high number of herring salteries and a population of over 1,000, according to one resident. Later, fox farming and homesteading became important endeavors in the area. From 1928 to 1975 the population stayed around 40 - mostly fishermen.

The contemporary community of Halibut Cove is primarily an artist colony, pioneered by Diana and former state legislature Clem Tillion. Several artists live and work in Halibut Cove, attracting visitors and apprentices to their galleries and studios.

## Infrastructure

### Current Economy

Halibut Cove is largely an artist colony. Seasonal construction jobs are also prevalent. A total of 11 commercial fishing permits were held by eight permit holders in 2000 according to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC). At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 61.7% of the potential labor force was employed and there was no unemployment rate. A high percentage, 38.3% of the population over 16 years of age, was not in the labor force but may be seasonally involved with the commercial fishing industry, and 10.6% of the population was below the poverty level. The median household income in the same year was \$127,010 and the per capita income was \$89,895.

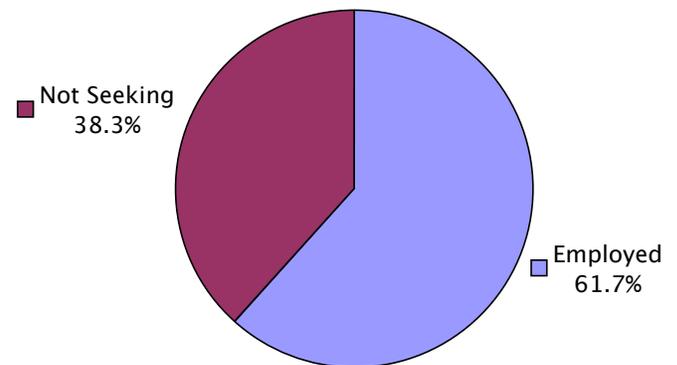
### Governance

Halibut Cove is an unincorporated city within the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Because of the city's status as unincorporated, there are no city or borough officials, nor are there municipal or borough finances dispersed to the city. Halibut Cove is not a member of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), therefore there was no land allotted under the Act. Halibut Cove 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) office is in Homer, as is the nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). The nearest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BSIC) office is located in Anchorage.

2000 Employment Structure  
Halibut Cove

Data source: US Census



### Facilities

Halibut Cove is accessible only by air and sea as the Sterling Highway ends in Homer on the north shore of Kachemak Bay. Boat and floatplanes are the primary means of transportation. Several air service companies charter flights to and from Halibut Cove, however, there are no regular scheduled flights. Kachemak Bay Ferry Service provides transportation to Homer. The community is therefore 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. In Homer, the city-owned airport has a 6,700 foot paved runway, as well as a seaplane base. There is also a deep-water dock capable of accommodating 340 foot-long vessels and a boat harbor with moorage for 920 vessels.

Halibut Cove residents derive water from a central water source or have water delivered. Only a few homes have individual wells. Half of all residences have individual septic systems or are fully plumbed. Sewage is dealt with on an individual basis. Refuse collection is operated by private operators. Electricity is provided by the Homer Electric Association. There are no local health care facilities or public safety providers. Halibut Cove is within the Kenai Peninsula School District, but there are no schools located directly in Halibut Cove. There are eight schools located in nearby Homer, including three elementary schools, one middle school, two high schools, and two multi-grade academies. There are a total of 101 teachers and 1,452 students in the local schools.

## Involvement with North Pacific fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

According to the ADF&G, and reported by ACFEC, 11 permits were held by 8 permit holders, but only 7 permits were fished in Halibut Cove in 2000. There was one vessel owner in the federal fisheries, three vessel owners in the salmon fishery and only one crew member claiming residence in Halibut Cove. There are no fish processing plants in Halibut Cove and therefore no landings delivered to the community.

Commercial fishing permits are issued according to specifications of species, vessel size, gear type, and fishing area. Permits issued in Halibut Cove for 2000 related to halibut, sablefish, and salmon.

*Halibut:* There were a total of three permits issued for halibut in Halibut Cove in 2000, two of which were fished. Permits for halibut pertained to one longline vessel under 60 feet and two longline vessels over 60 feet. All permits designated for halibut were for statewide waters.

*Sablefish:* A total of two sablefish permits were issued, one of which was fished. Permits pertained to one longline vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (not fished) and one longline vessel over 60 feet in statewide waters.

*Salmon:* A total of six permits were issued for the salmon fishery, four of which were fished. Salmon permits pertained to two purse seine restricted to Cook Inlet (one fished), one purse seine restricted to Kodiak (not fished), three drift gillnets limited to Cook Inlet.

It was announced in July 2003 that the Kenai Peninsula Borough, in which Halibut Cove 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 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 fishing charter companies operating in Halibut Cove. Nearby Homer is major sport fishing destination and may inspire people to visit surrounding communities such as Halibut Cove 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

There is no archival evidence of, or information on, contemporary subsistence practices in Halibut Cove. Though many residents in Halibut Cove may engage in subsistence practices to some extent, in recent years the Kenai Peninsula has been classified as "non-rural," so residents have not been permitted to harvest subsistence resources from federally managed lands and waters.