

# Petersburg

## People and Place

### Location

Petersburg lies along the northwest end of Mitkof Island, where the Wrangell Narrows meet Frederick Sound. It is located about midway between Juneau and Ketchikan. The area encompasses 43.9 square miles of land and 2.2 square miles of water.

### Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U. S. Census, the population of Petersburg was 3,224. Population numbers have risen steadily since the early decades of the 1900s and are now at a maximum. There were slightly more males (52.1%) than females (47.9%) in 2000 according to Census data. The racial composition of the population in 2000 was predominantly White (81.6%), followed by American Indian and Alaska Native (7.2%), Asian (2.8%), Black or African American (0.3%), Pacific Islander (0.2%), and 1.9% classified themselves as belonging to some other race. Overall, 6.0% of the population identified with two or more races. A total of 12% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. A small number (2.9%) of the population identified as Hispanic. The median age was 36.2, similar to the national median of 35.3 for the same year. According to Census data, 31.7% of the population was under 19 years of age while 17.1% of the population was over 55 years of age in 2000.

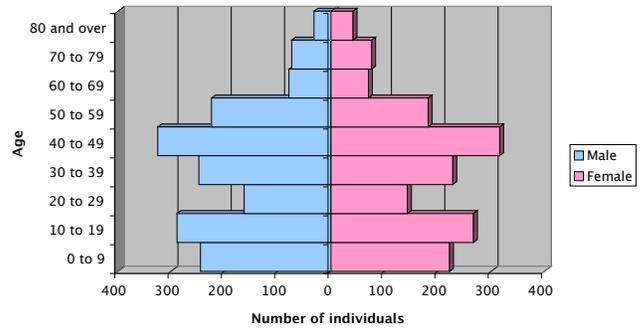
There were 1,367 housing units in Petersburg, 127 of which were designated vacant in 2000 and of these, 25 were vacant due to seasonal use. At the time of the 2000 Census, 1.4% of the population lived in group quarters. A total of 87.8% of the population over 25 years of age had a high school diploma or higher while 17.7% also had a bachelor's degree or higher.

### History

Tlingit Indians from Kake used the north end of Mitkof Island as a summer fish camp, although some reportedly began living year-round at the site. Petersburg was eventually named after Peter Buschmann, a Norwegian immigrant and a pioneer in the cannery business, who arrived in the late 1890s. He built the Icy Strait Packing Company cannery, a sawmill, and a dock by 1900. His family's homesteads grew into this community, populated largely by people

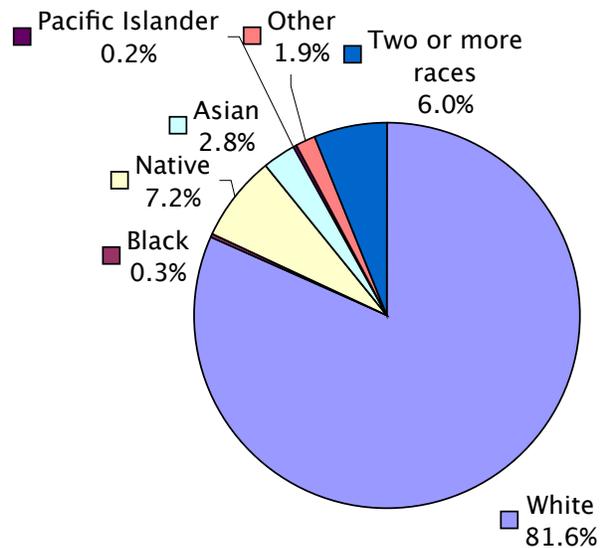
**2000 Population Structure Petersburg**

Data source: US Census



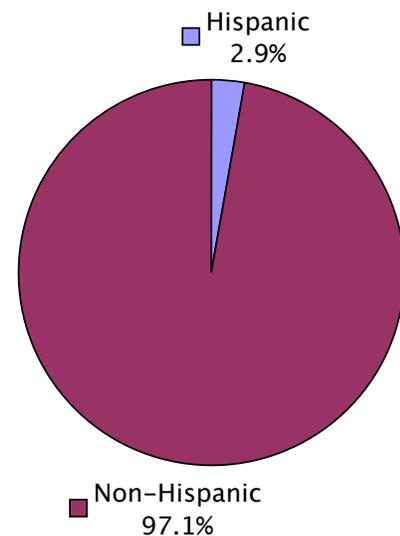
**2000 Racial Structure Petersburg**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Hispanic Ethnicity Petersburg**

Data source: US Census



of Scandinavian origin. The town is still known as ‘Little Norway.’ In 1910, a city was formed, and by 1920, 600 people lived in Petersburg year-round. During this time, fresh salmon and halibut were packed in glacier ice for shipment. Alaska’s first shrimp processor, Alaska Glacier Seafoods, was founded in 1916. A cold storage plant was built in 1926. The cannery has operated continuously, and is now known as Petersburg Fisheries, a subsidiary of Icicle Seafoods, Inc. Across the narrows is the town of Kupreanof, which was once busy with fur farms, a boat repair yard, and a sawmill. Petersburg has developed into one of Alaska’s major fishing communities.

## Infrastructure

### Current Economy

The economy of Petersburg is based on commercial fishing and timber harvests and is therefore highly seasonal. A total of 1,226 commercial fishing permits were held by 648 permit holders in 2000 according to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC). Several processors operate cold storage, canneries, and custom packing services. The state runs the Crystal Lake Hatchery which contributes to the local salmon resource. Petersburg is the supply and service center for many area logging camps. Independent sportsmen and tourists utilize the local charter boats and lodges, but there is no deep water dock suitable for cruise ships.

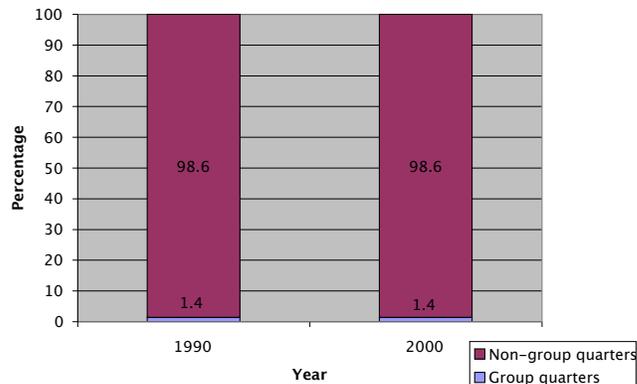
At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 63.6% of the potential labor force was employed with a 7.3% unemployment rate. A seemingly high 29.2% of the population over 16 years of age was not in the labor force (though this may be explained by the intensely seasonal nature of the fishing and tourism industries), and 5% of the population lived below the poverty level. The median household income in the same year was \$40,028 and the per capita income was \$25,827.

### Governance

The City of Petersburg was incorporated in 1910 with a Home Rule charter. The city is governed by a manager form of government. The mayor and six council members are elected officials. Petersburg is not located within an organized borough; therefore, the city is responsible for many services. The City of Petersburg implements a 6% sales tax and a 4% accommodations tax. There is a 10.17 mills (1.017%)

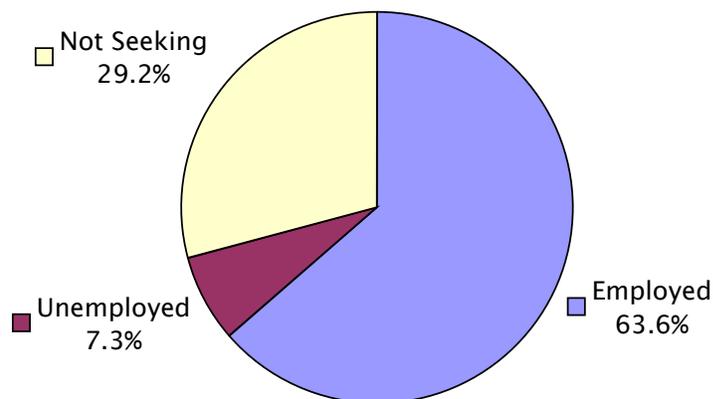
**% Group Quarters  
Petersburg**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Employment Structure  
Petersburg**

Data source: US Census



property tax. The city belongs to the for-profit regional Native corporation, Sealaska Corporation, as well as to the regional Native non-profit, Central Council Tlingit and Haida tribes of Alaska

The Petersburg Indian Association is the federally recognized tribe located in the community. Although the community of Petersburg is recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as an ‘Alaska Native Village’ entity, it was not included in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and, consequently, has not received ANCSA land allocations.

There is a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regional office located in Kupreanof and an ADF&G office located in Petersburg. The nearest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office is located in Haines.

## Facilities

The community of Petersburg is accessible only by air or sea. It is on the mainline Alaska State ferry route. The state-owned James A. Johnson Airport, with a 6,000 foot paved runway, and Lloyd R. Roundtree Seaplane Base allow for scheduled jet and floatplane services. In most cases, it is least expensive to fly to Anchorage via Juneau. Roundtrip flights to Juneau cost around \$120 and a roundtrip flight between Juneau and Anchorage costs approximately \$200. Harbor facilities include three docks, two petroleum wharves, two barge terminals, three boat harbors with moorage for 700 boats, a boat launch, and boat haul-out. Freight arrives by barge, ferry, or cargo plane. There is no deep water dock for cruise ships.

Water is supplied by a dam at Cabin Creek and is treated, stored and distributed to 80% of homes. Some residents use individual wells or water delivery. Almost all homes are fully plumbed and piped sewage receives primary treatment. The City currently ships baled refuse to Washington State.

Electricity is supplied by Petersburg Municipal Power and Light which purchases electricity from the Tyee Lake Hydro Facility, and also owns the Crystal Lake Hydro Facility and three diesel-fueled generators. Health services are provided by the Petersburg Medical Center which is owned and operated by the City. Public safety is provided by a city-backed police department. There are three schools in the Petersburg City School District. Mitkof Middle School has 154 students instructed by 10 teachers, 217 students are instructed by 15 teachers at Petersburg High School, and 18 teachers instruct 252 students at Rae C. Stedman Elementary School.

Petersburg has a well developed tourism industry with numerous businesses catering to visitor services, including over a dozen accommodations providers.

## Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

Commercial fishing is important to the economy of Petersburg. According to the ADF&G and reported by the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (ACFEC), 1,226 permits were held by 468 permit holders in 2000 (831 fished). There were 160 vessel owners in the federal fisheries, another 217 vessel owners in the salmon fishery, and 530 crew members claiming residence in Petersburg in 2000.

The commercial vessel fleet delivering landings to Petersburg was involved in herring (44 vessels), halibut (180 vessels), sablefish (64 vessels), other groundfish (158 vessels), and salmon (414 vessels) fisheries in 2000. Landings in Petersburg included 930.97 tons of federally managed fish species, including 766.47 tons of halibut, and 164.5 tons of other groundfish, and 21,660.18 tons of salmon (in accordance with confidentiality regulations, landings data for other species in the community are unavailable).

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

*Halibut:* There were a total of 221 permits issued for halibut in Petersburg in 2000, 203 of which were actually fished. Permits for halibut pertained to 145 longline vessels under 60 feet (130 fished), one mechanical jig (not fished), and 75 longline vessels over 60 feet (73 fished). All permits designated for halibut were for statewide waters.

*Herring:* There were a total of 115 permits issued for the herring fishery in Petersburg in 2000 making it one of the major fisheries for the community (58 fished). Permits for herring pertained to 11 purse seine limited to southeast waters (10 permits fished), 6 purse seines limited to Prince William Sound (5 fished), 2 permits for harvesting herring roe with a beach seine in Norton Sound (none fished), 30 food/bait with gillnet in southeast waters (21 fished), 3 gillnets in Security Cove (one fished), 4 gillnets in Bristol Bay (3 fished), 2 gillnets off Nunivak Island (none fished), 2 gillnets in Norton Sound (none fished), 6 permits for harvesting herring food/bait with purse seine in southeast waters (2 fished), 2 permits for harvesting herring food/bait by the pound in southeast waters (none fished), 21 permits for harvesting herring spawn on kelp by the pound in northern southeast (16 fished), 17 permits for harvesting herring spawn on kelp by the pound in southern southeast (none fished), and 2 permits for harvesting herring spawn on kelp by the pound in Prince William Sound (none fished).

*Other Finfish:* Two permits were issued in Petersburg in 2000 for freshwater fish beach seine in statewide waters (none fished).

*Sablefish:* A total of 80 sablefish permits were issued (75 fished). Permits pertained to 36 longline vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (33 fished),

18 longline vessels under 60 feet in northern southeast waters (17 fished), 22 longline vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters (21 fished), and 4 longline vessels over 60 feet in southern southeast waters.

*Other groundfish:* A total of 158 permits were issued in 2000 for other groundfish (54 fished). Permits pertained to one lingcod longline vessel under 60 feet in statewide waters (not fished), one lingcod dinglebar troll in statewide waters, 83 miscellaneous saltwater finfish longline vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (34 fished), one miscellaneous saltwater finfish otter trawl in statewide waters, 6 miscellaneous saltwater finfish pot gear vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters (3 fished), one miscellaneous saltwater finfish dinglebar troll in statewide waters (not fished), 6 miscellaneous saltwater finfish mechanical jigs in statewide waters (2 fished), 22 miscellaneous saltwater finfish longline vessels over 60 feet in statewide waters (11 fished), one miscellaneous saltwater finfish pot gear vessel over 60 feet in statewide waters (not fished), 20 demersal shelf rockfish longline vessels under 60 feet in southeast waters (2 fished), two demersal shelf rockfish dinglebar trolls in southeast waters (none fished), two demersal shelf rockfish mechanical jigs in southeast waters (none fished), and 12 demersal shelf rockfish longline vessels over 60 feet in southeast waters (none fished).

*Crab:* A total of 203 permits were issued in Petersburg for crab in 2000 (171 fished). Permits pertained to one set of Dungeness crab ring nets in southeast waters (not fished), one Dungeness pot gear vessel over 60 feet long in Yakutat (not fished), 27 permits for 300 pots or 100% of maximum for Dungeness crab in southeast waters (29 permits fished), 17 permits for 225 pots or 75% of maximum for Dungeness crab in southeast waters (18 permits fished), 31 permits pertained to 150 pots or 50% of maximum for Dungeness crab in southeast waters (25 permits fished), 31 for 75 pots or 25% of maximum for Dungeness crab in southeast waters (21 permits fished), one king crab pot gear vessel under 60 feet in Yakutat, one king crab pot gear vessel under 60 feet in Norton Sound (not fished), one permit for red and blue king crab pot gear in southeast waters (not fished), two permits for red, blue or brown king crab and Tanner crab pot gear in southeast waters (one permit fished), three brown king crab pot gear vessels in southeast waters, 10 red and blue king crab and Tanner crab pot gear vessels in southeast waters, one brown king crab

and Tanner crab pot gear in southeast waters, 30 red, blue and brown king crab and Tanner crab pot gear in southeast waters (31 permits fished), 45 Tanner crab ring nets in southeast waters (34 permits fished), and one Tanner crab pot gear vessel in southeast waters (not fished).

*Other shellfish:* A total of 73 permits were issued for other shellfish (34 fished). Permits pertained to 8 sets of geoduck clam diving gear in southeast waters (3 fished), one octopi/squid longline vessel under 60 feet in statewide waters (not fished), 4 shrimp pot gear vessels under 60 feet in southeast waters (one fished), 8 shrimp beam trawls in southeast waters (4 fished), 29 shrimp pot gear in southeast waters (13 fished), 17 sets of sea cucumber diving gear in southeast waters (13 fished), and 6 sets of sea urchin diving gear in southeast waters (none fished).

*Salmon:* A total of 374 permits were issued in Petersburg in 2000 for the salmon fishery (236 fished). Salmon permits pertained to 59 purse seine restricted to southeast waters (50 permits fished), one purse seine restricted to Prince William Sound (not fished), one purse seine restricted to Kodiak (not fished), 84 drift gillnets in southeast waters (74 permits fished), one drift gillnet limited to the Alaska Peninsula, 25 drift gillnets in Bristol Bay (24 permits fished), one set gillnet on the Alaska Peninsula, 140 hand trolls in statewide waters (41 permits fished), and 62 power gurdy trolls in statewide waters (50 permits fished).

A total of 12 seafood processors filed 'Intent to Operate' for 2003, indicating an increase over the seven processors operating in the community in 2000. These seven processors had the capacity to process salmon, high-seas salmon, sablefish, groundfish, halibut, and herring.

It was announced in July 2003 that Petersburg would receive \$277,043 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 depleted salmon resources. 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.

## Sport Fishing

There were 35 saltwater sport fishing businesses registered in Petersburg in 2002 and 20 businesses licensed to provide freshwater recreational fishing according to the ADF&G. There was a total of 3,985 sport fishing licenses sold in Petersburg in 2000, 1,432 of which were sold to Alaska residents.

## Subsistence Fishing

Numerous social, economic, and technological changes have influenced life in Alaskan fishing communities where subsistence harvests and practices continue to provide fishing communities with important nutritional, economic, social, and cultural requirements. Data from 1987 compiled on behalf of the ADF&G's Division of Subsistence provides useful information about subsistence practices in Petersburg. Records describe the subsistence patterns for 96.9% of households in the community which 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, 96.9% used salmon, 87.6% used non-salmon fish (herring, herring roe, smelt, cod, flounder, halibut, rockfish, and char), and no households used marine mammals, although a fairly high percentage (80.3%) used marine invertebrates.

The average per capita subsistence harvest for 1987 was 197.67 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 22.92% salmon, 22.49% non-salmon fish, 28.95% land mammals, marine mammals did not factor as a significant percentage of the composition of subsistence foods, birds and eggs accounted for only 1.80% of the total subsistence harvest, marine invertebrates for 19.49%, and vegetation made up 4.36%. The wild food harvest in Petersburg made up 128% of the recommended dietary allowance of protein in 1987 (corresponding to a daily allowance of 49 g of protein per day or 0.424 lbs of wild food per day) (Wolfe, Division of Subsistence, ADF&G).

A total of 77 permits were held by households in Petersburg for subsistence fishing of salmon according to the ADF&G's Division of Subsistence records from 1999. Sockeye made up the largest proportions of the salmon harvest. Residents of Petersburg and members of Petersburg Indian Association 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.