

4.2.1 Anchorage/Matsu

Communities

[Anchorage](#)

[Eagle River](#)

[Chugiak](#)

[Girdwood](#)

[Palmer](#)

[Skwentna](#)

[Wasilla](#)

[Willow](#)

Geographic Location

The Anchorage and Matsu area includes the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Anchorage Borough. The profiled communities in this sub-region are for the most part all located within about an hour travel by car of the metropolis of Anchorage, which has made this one of the fastest growing regions in the state. This sub-region is situated at approximately 61 °North Lat. -149 ° West Long. The Matanuska-Susitna area is made up of thriving valley farmlands, whereas the Anchorage Borough encompasses the largest city in Alaska with a total of 260,283 inhabitants in 2000, approximately 42% of the population of entire state of Alaska. Many of the communities are located off Cook Inlet; however, some are located more inland in the lush agricultural countryside.

Weather

The weather in the Anchorage/Matsu sub-region varies quite a bit between those communities located near or on the water and those communities further inland. The inland communities (Palmer, Skwentna, Wasilla, and Willow) have extreme temperatures during the winter months, ranging from -30 to 5° F in January. Willow is very extreme in terms of snowfall, ranging between 48 to 150 inches per year and Skwentna has a higher average with 70 inches of snow per year. The other inland communities average about 50 inches of snow per year, about 16.5 inches of rainfall, and the temperatures in the summer range from about 37 to 85° F. Coastal communities in the sub-region include Anchorage, Eagle River-Chugiak, and Girdwood, and their winter temperatures range from about 8 to 21° F, whereas their temperature in July ranges from about 51 to 65° F. The total average annual rainfall is approximately 15.9 inches in both Anchorage and Eagle River-Chugiak, and Girdwood averages about 80 inches per year. The average snowfall is approximately 69 inches for all of these water-bordering communities.

General Characterization

The area was historically occupied by Tanaina Indians, an Athabascan Native group, however today the Native population is very low in comparison to other areas in Alaska. A total of 10.40% of the population was Alaska Native or American Indian in Anchorage in 2000, and 8.60% of the population in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough overall. In 2000, Matsu was the fastest growing area in the state according to the Alaska State Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and this growth has been mainly attributed to Matsu's proximity to the state's largest city of Anchorage. The metropolis of Anchorage accounts for about 81.4% of the population of the Anchorage/Matsu area and is the center of commerce for the entire state. The population of Anchorage includes the populations for Eagle River-Chugiak and Girdwood as reported by the 2000 U.S. Census. The populations of the other communities in the area range from 111 persons in Skwentna to 5,469 inhabitants in Wasilla at the time of the Census.

The economy of Anchorage is one of an urban area including the headquarters of many agencies, businesses, and industries. The communities of Palmer and Wasilla have strong agricultural histories and also support other industries. The economy of Willow, for instance, is based heavily on tourism from the local ski resort. Employment in Skwentna is for the most part available at the community store or school. All the profiled communities are tied to the commercial fishing sector, although Anchorage provides the lion's share of the commercial fishing fleet and crew members, residents of the state of Alaska.

Institutional Framework

There are two boroughs in this sub-region: the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The communities in this sub-region have varying types of city governments ranging from Anchorage's status of Unified Home Rule Municipality to Willow which is unincorporated.

The communities in this region were not included in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and are not federally recognized as Native villages. However, because Anchorage is the main commercial center of the state, many Native regional corporations, Native village corporations, non-profits, community development quota organizations, economic development organizations, and regional health corporations have their headquarters or an external office located in the city.

Commercial, Sport, and Subsistence Fisheries

The Anchorage/Matsu sub-region is intimately linked to both commercial and sport fishing industries. Many commercial permits are issued to its residents and many sport fishing licenses are sold annually. Information on subsistence, on the other hand, is not readily available for the most part because almost all of these communities are considered to be urban, and thus are not legally entitled to engage in subsistence harvests on federal land.

Anchorage is one of the main centers for commercial fishing in the state, providing a large amount of support services and businesses, many processing plants, the largest fleet in the state, a large number of resident crew members, and a large amount of permit holders in various fisheries. In the sub-region of Anchorage/Matsu, the main fisheries, in terms of number of permit-holders, were salmon. Other participation included halibut, groundfish, herring, a smaller amount of crab permits, and other shellfish permits.

An extremely large number of sport fishing licenses were sold in the sub-region in 2000, with 98,516 sold

in the city of Anchorage alone. Some of these licenses could have been purchased by tourists on their way to their final sport fishing destination, as most flights coming into the state pass through Anchorage, and no distinction is made in the records of permits sold in this regard. In addition there are many sport fishing guide businesses in operation within the communities, especially in Anchorage where there were 124 saltwater guide and 14 freshwater guide businesses in 2000.

Almost all of the communities profiled in the sub-region were considered urban areas and not able to engage in subsistence activities on federal land, as mentioned above. Due to this, little evidence of subsistence was available except for information regarding salmon subsistence permits. The number of subsistence salmon permits is comparatively low for the area, but frequently subsistence activity in urban settings can be disguised as sport fishing.

Regional Challenges

Because of the high number of permits issued to residents for salmon, it is probable that many have been adversely affected by the recent falling salmon prices attributed to the expansion of aquaculture fish industries in other nations. Although no federal salmon disaster funds were allotted to the profiled communities in this region, it is likely that those who hold permits for salmon in the Anchorage/Matsu area have been affected. A city such as Anchorage may not demonstrate the devastating effects of falling salmon prices seen elsewhere because it has a larger budget and a robust tax base. However, the impacts on individuals may be significant.