King Salmon

People and Place

Location

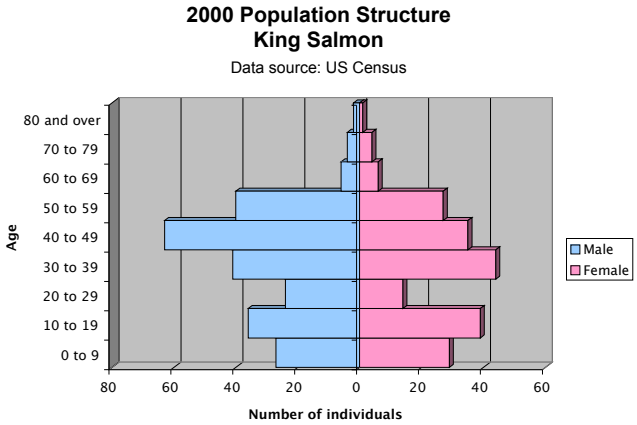
King Salmon is an unincorporated city of 442 residents in the Bristol Bay Borough. It is located 284 miles southwest of Anchorage, about 15 miles upriver from Naknek. The area encompasses 169.6 square miles of land and 1.4 square miles of water. King Salmon is the hub for the largest red salmon fishery in the world, at Bristol Bay, and the port of entry for many visitors to Katmai National Park.

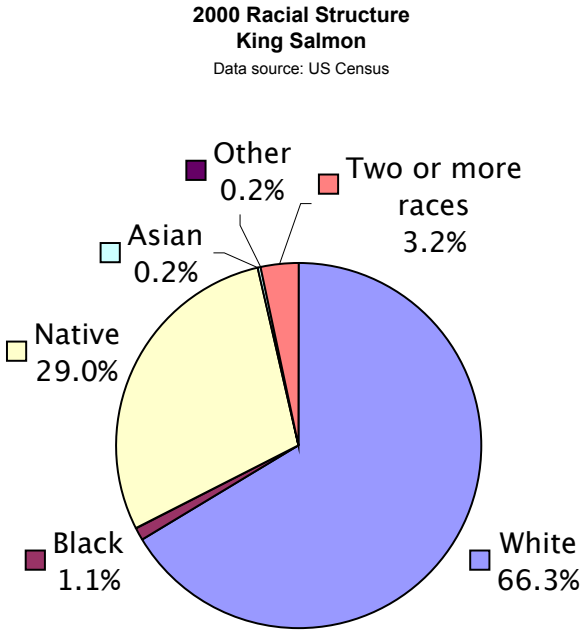
Demographic Profile

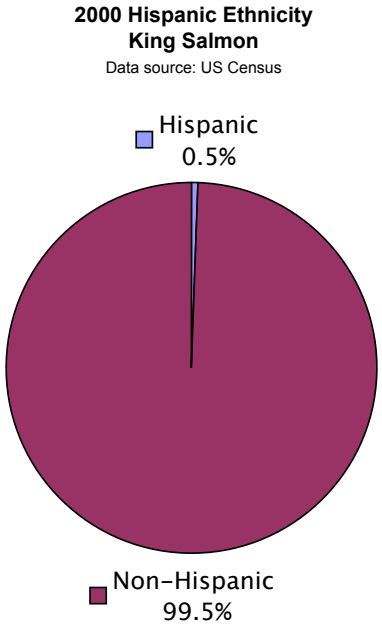
King Salmon has 442 residents in 196 households. All community members live in households rather than group quarters. The gender composition of the community is significantly skewed because of employment opportunities in fishing-related industries, at 54.9% male and 45.1% female. The racial makeup of the community is as follows: White (66.3%), Alaska Native or American Indian (29.0%), Black (1.1%), Asian (0.2%), other (0.2%), and two or more races (3.2%). A total of 30.1% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. Residents of Hispanic origin comprise 0.5% of the population. The age structure of King Salmon is somewhat skewed; 57.2% of residents are between the ages of 25 and 54, and only 29.6% of residents are aged 19 and under. The median age in the community was 37.8 years, slightly older than the U.S. national median of 35.3 years. King Salmon attracts working-age people with its many and varied employment opportunities in the salmon fishery and in recreation. The growing economy in King Salmon has led to a doubling in the local population since 1960.

History

Archaeological evidence suggests that people have resided in or around King Salmon for at least 6,000 years. The area was historically Sugpiaq Aleut territory. At the time of the Mt. Katmai eruption in 1912, however, there was no permanent settlement in King Salmon. King Salmon was founded when residents from areas to the south were evacuated and relocated there. The community has been an important site of military operations since the 1930s, when an air navigation silo was built. An Air Force base was established in King Salmon during WWII. The base







now supports only limited military activities and is maintained under the stewardship of the Chugach Development Corporation. The community is now the most important transportation hub for Bristol Bay and is heavily involved in the salmon fishery and recreation industry.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The economy of King Salmon centers around two industries: the commercial sockeye salmon fishery in Bristol Bay, and recreation in surrounding areas. Other industries such as transportation, accommodations, and other services have grown up to support these primary industries. King Salmon is the transportation hub for the Bristol Bay fishery, and distributes salmon throughout the world.

The median annual per capita income is $26,755, and the median household income is $54,375. The unemployment rate is 6.9%, and 21.7% of residents are not in the labor force (not employed and not seeking work). Approximately 12.4% of residents live below the poverty level.

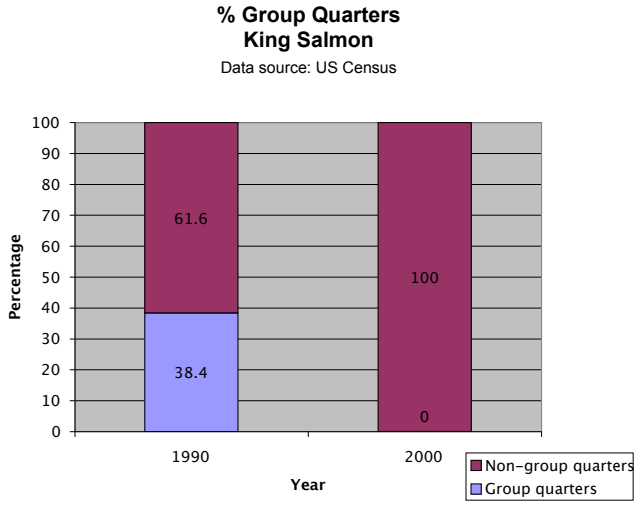
Governance

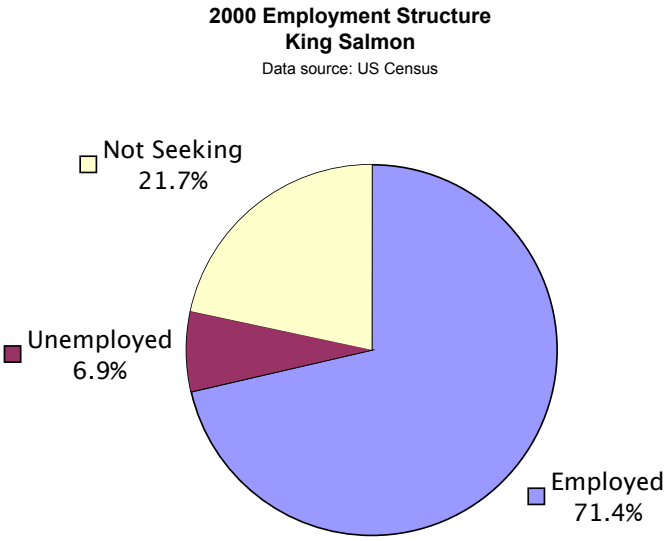
King Salmon is an unincorporated village governed by a village council, which is recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). It is located in the Bristol Bay Borough. The village council is a member of the Bristol Bay Native Corporation, a for-profit organization, and the Bristol Bay Native Association, a regional non-profit organization. All taxes, including property tax, a 3% raw fish tax, and a 10% accommodation tax (May-October) are collected by the Borough. King Salmon receives a community development quota (CDQ) through the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation. The nearest NMFS Enforcement Office is located in Homer. The nearest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) office is in Anchorage. The nearest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office is located right in King Salmon.

Facilities

Because of its former role as a military base, King Salmon's transportation infrastructure is well developed. The former air base is now the site of an 8,500 ft-long paved runway, a 4,000 ft-long asphalt/gravel crosswind runway, and an FAA air traffic control tower. There is also a 4,000 foot stretch of the Naknek River that has been designated as a float plane landing strip. Roundtrip airfare from King Salmon to Anchorage is approximately $357 (Travelocity 2003). Because of these important air links, much of the commercial sockeye salmon catch in Bristol Bay is trucked or shipped 15 miles upriver to King Salmon, where it is then distributed all over the world. A wide variety of accommodations and amenities is available.

In terms of utilities, the Bristol Bay Borough operates a landfill, incinerator, and balefill, between King Salmon and Naknek and these are shared by both communities. Sewage services are generally provided by the borough; some residents use individual septic tanks. Electricity is provided by Naknek Electric Association. The King Salmon Health Clinic, owned by the local village council, provides health care to the community.





There are no schools in King Salmon. Students are bussed to Naknek, 15 miles away, to attend classes with students there. For the two communities combined, there are three schools, with a total of 22 teachers and 236 students.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Commercial fishing for sockeye salmon and other species is an integral part of King Salmon's economy. In 2000, 36 residents held a total of 58 commercial fishing permits for the following fisheries: salmon, halibut, herring, and other groundfish. There were two vessel owners for federal fisheries and 70 registered crew members residing in the community. The following is a detailed description of commercial permits in 2000 for King Salmon.

Halibut: There were eight total permits for the halibut fishery, and three permits were fished. A detailed breakdown of these permits is as follows: seven longline halibut permits for vessels under 60 feet in length (three fished), and one longline halibut permit for vessels under 60 feet (none fished).

Herring: There were a total of 17 permits for the herring fishery, and 11 were fished. A detailed breakdown of these permits is as follows: 7 herring gillnet permits for Security Cove (2 fished), and 10 herring gillnet permits for Security Cove (9 fished).

Salmon: There were a total of 31 permits for the salmon fishery, and 36 were fished. A detailed breakdown of these permits is as follows: 14 salmon drift gillnet permits for Bristol Bay (16 fished), and 17 salmon set gillnet permits for Bristol Bay (20 fished).

Groundfish: There were a total of two permits for the groundfish fishery, including one miscellaneous finfish longline permit for vessels under 60 feet in statewide waters and one miscellaneous finfish mechanical jig permit, but no permits were fished.

In 2000 there were no processing plants and therefore no registered landings. However, in addition to direct involvement in commercial fish harvesting and processing, King Salmon is a key part of the transportation network of the Bristol Bay fishery. Fish landed throughout Bristol Bay and surrounding areas are transported by truck or boat up the Naknek River to King Salmon and distributed around the world.

In 2002 the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, the regional community development quota (CDQ) group, was granted $75,026 in federal funding to compensate for fisheries losses due to the protection of Steller sea lion habitat under the Endangered Species Act. In 2003 the Bristol Bay Borough was granted $1,739,411 in federal disaster funds to compensate for falling salmon prices. This was the largest sum granted to any governing body in Alaska. A portion of these sums will likely be used for programs that affect King Salmon.

Sport Fishing

Sport fishing is an important part of the economy in King Salmon. King Salmon is located on the Naknek River (itself a major hub for sport fishing) and 15 miles inland from Bristol Bay, considered the largest sockeye fishery in the world. As of 2002, there were 24 registered guides for freshwater fishing and 2 guides that offer both saltwater and freshwater services. In 2000, sport fishing license sales totaled 3,065, including 511 sold to Alaska residents and 2,554 sold to non-residents. Local companies specializing in sport fishing and recreational transportation (including overland, boat and plane) are plentiful. In addition to sockeye, sport fishermen land the other four species of Pacific salmon, pike, trout, and other species.

Subsistence Fishing

Subsistence activities are an important part of the local economy of King Salmon. The ADF&G's Division of Subsistence reports that, in 1983, 88.4% of King Salmon households used subsistence fish, including salmon and non-salmon fish species. A small portion of households (2.3%) used marine mammals for subsistence, and 27.9% used marine invertebrates.

The annual per capita harvest of subsistence foods for King Salmon in 1983 was 220.3 lbs, and was comprised of the following resources: salmon (46.6%), non-salmon fish (7.2%), and land mammals (46.2%). Salmon subsistence catches are primarily sockeye from the Bristol Bay fishery. Other subsistence resources, including marine mammals, birds and bird eggs, marine invertebrates, and vegetation, were either not harvested or taken only in insignificant amounts.