

Ekuk (EE-kuk)



People and Place

*Location*¹

Ekuk is located on the east coast of Nushagak Bay, 17 mi south of Dillingham. It is spread out for about 2 mi along a narrow gravel spit that extends from the Ekuk Bluffs in the shape of a hook. The area encompasses 4.7 sq mi of land. Ekuk is not incorporated into a municipality or under the jurisdiction of a borough. The community is located within the Dillingham Census Area.

Demographic Profile

Historically a Yup'ik Eskimo village, Ekuk is now used only as a summer commercial cannery and subsistence-use site.² Although not a Census Designated Place (CDP), the Census Bureau recognizes Ekuk as an Alaska Native Village Statistical Area (ANVSA). There were two permanent residents, a man and woman, living in Ekuk in both 2010 and 2000. It is likely that those residents were employed as caretakers for the local cannery, and had held that position at least since the 2000 Census was completed. The median age in 2010 was 82 years, compared to 75 years in 2000. There were a total of 53 housing units that year, compared to 73 in 2000. Of those, only one was owner-occupied.³

*History, Traditional Knowledge, and Culture*⁴

The word Ekuk means “the last village down,” reflecting that Ekuk is the farthest village south on Nushagak Bay. The Village is mentioned in Russian accounts of 1824 and 1828 as Village Ekouk and Seleniye Ikuk. It is thought that Ekuk was a major Eskimo village at one time. Russians employed Natives as guides for their boats as they navigated up Nushagak Bay to the trading post at Aleksandrovsk after 1818. Before the North Alaska Salmon Company opened a cannery at Ekuk in 1903, many residents had moved to the Moravian Mission at Carmel. In addition, numerous canneries sprang up during 1888 and 1889 on the east and west sides of the bay, which drew many residents away from the village. Ekuk had a school from 1958 to 1974. Today, the cannery watchman's family are the only year-round residents. In the summer, the village comes alive with cannery crews, commercial fishing, and subsistence activities.

¹ Alaska Dept. of Comm. and Rural Affairs. (n.d.). *Community Database Online*. Retrieved October 17, 2011 from http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_BLOCK.htm.

² Ibid.

³ U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.). Profile of selected social, economic and housing characteristics of all places within Alaska. Datasets utilized include the 2000 (SF1 100% and SF3 sample data) and 2010 (Demographic Profile SF) Decennial Census. Retrieved November 1, 2011 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.

⁴ See footnote 1.

Natural Resources and Environment

Ekuk is in a climatic transition zone. The primary influence is maritime, although the arctic climate also affects the region. Average summer temperatures range from 37 to 66 °F (3 to 19 °C); winter temperatures range from 4 to 30 °F (-16 to -1 °C). Annual precipitation averages 20 to 26 inches. Fog and high winds are common during winter months. The Bay is ice-free from June through mid-November.⁵

The topography surrounding Ekuk was shaped by continental glaciers and consists of wet lowlands, rolling hills, and moraine deposits. Soils in the area are dominated by silty glacial deposits. Lowlands are characterized by streams, small lakes, and ponds associated with wetlands. Upland hills are covered with a thick layer of silty loess.⁶ Vegetation consists of a mix of moist tundra and spruce stands. Tundra is covered with mosses, lichens, and grasses. Spruce forests are populated with white spruce and paper birch which typically cover moraine hills. Other tree species in the greater area include quaking aspen, black spruce, and cottonwood.⁷

While the community lacks a hazard mitigation plan, coastal flooding events and erosion have historically impacted the community, as well as the region as a whole. Exposed bluffs in the area are susceptible to erosion from tides and storm surges, often leading to coastal lowland flooding.⁸ According to Dillingham's 2008 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan,⁹ there is approximately a 0.05% chance of a 5.0 magnitude or above earthquake occurring in the area before 2017.

According to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, there were no significant environmental remediation sites active in Ekuk as of 2010.¹⁰

Current Economy¹¹

The Wards Cove Packing Company closed its Ekuk location in 2002. During the cannery's peak, it employed 200 workers each summer and provided a market for about 80 commercial fishing boats and over 160 beach set net sites.¹² As of 2010, Ekuk's economy remained dependant on commercial and subsistence fisheries. Ekuk Fisheries is a main source of seasonal employment. In 2000, per capita income was \$25,000 and the median household income was \$51,250. Median household and per capita income for 2010 is unavailable.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ City of Dillingham. (2006). *City of Dillingham Comprehensive Plan*. Retrieved February 9, 2012 from: <http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/plans/Dillingham-CP-2006.pdf>.

⁷ Palcsak, B.B. and Dorava, J. M. (1994). *Overview of Environmental and Hydrogeologic Conditions at Dillingham, Alaska*. Retrieved February 9, 2012 from: <http://www.dggs.alaska.gov/webpubs/usgs/of/text/of94-0482.PDF>.

⁸ See footnote 6.

⁹ City of Dillingham. (2008). *City of Dillingham Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan*. Retrieved February 10, 2012 from: http://www.dced.state.ak.us/dca/planning/nfip/Hazard_Mitigation_Plans/Dillingham_HMP.pdf.

¹⁰ Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. (n.d.). *Contaminated Sites Program*

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, all monetary data are reported in nominal values.

¹² Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation. (n.d.). *Our Communities: Ekuk*. Retrieved October 24, 2013 from <http://www.bbedc.com/web/communities/ekuk.html>.

Governance

Ekuik is unincorporated and not under the jurisdiction of a borough. However, there is a U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs recognized Tribal government and Choggiung, Ltd. is the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) chartered village corporation. The regional ANCSA chartered corporation is the Bristol Bay Native Corporation. The regional ANCSA non-profit corporation is the Bristol Bay Native Association. The closest Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) office is located in Dillingham, 17 mi to the north. The closest National Marine Fisheries Service field office is located in Bethel, 170 mi to the northwest. The closest U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services office is located in Kodiak, 235 mi to the southeast.

Infrastructure

*Connectivity and Transportation*¹³

Air transport is the most frequent means of getting to Ekuik. The Ekuik Village Council owns a 1,200-ft long by 40-ft wide dirt/gravel airstrip. Scheduled and charter flights are available from Dillingham during the summer months. The village has a small dock on the south side. Other private docks are in use. The cannery has two docks and a boat haul-out. Clark's Point, 2 mi to the north, can be reached by snowmachine during winter. The price of round-trip airfare between Anchorage and Dillingham in June 2012 was \$452.¹⁴ Chartered flights are available by appointment from Dillingham.

*Facilities*¹⁵

As a seasonally-used area, there are no central facilities in Ekuik. One resident has a well. A central electric system is not available. Ward's Cannery operates its own water and sewer system and electrical generator. Their water is drawn from a lake east of the village. Public safety services are provided by state troopers based in Dillingham. Communications services include local and long-distance telephone, local television, and local radio.

*Medical Services*¹⁶

Basic medical services are provided in Clark's Point. Additional acute, long-term and specialized services are provided in Dillingham.

¹³ Alaska Department of Community and Rural Affairs. (n.d.). *Community Database Online*. Retrieved October 17, 2011 from http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/commdb/CF_BLOCK.htm.

¹⁴ Airfare was calculated using lowest fare from www.travelocity.com. (Retrieved November 22, 2011).

¹⁵ See footnote 13.

¹⁶ Ibid.

*Educational Opportunities*¹⁷

There are no schools located in Ekuk.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

History and Evolution of Fisheries

The commercial fishing industry has had a large impact on populations living around Nushagak Bay. In 1883, the schooner, Neptune, sailed into Nushagak Bay and conducted a salmon salting operation. In 1884, the first salmon cannery was built by Arctic Packing Company in the community of Kanulik, about 4 mi north of Nushagak Point. In 1888, the Nushagak Packing Company established a cannery on the Clark's Point spit. John W. Clark operated a salting station at the spit prior to the establishment of the cannery. In 1901, the Columbia River Packers Association, the Alaska-Portland Packers Association, and the Alaska Salmon Company built canneries in Nushagak Bay. In 1903, the North Alaska Salmon Company opened a cannery at Ekuk. These canneries operated continuously until the early 1930s.

The commercial salmon fishery peaked between 1908 and 1910. There were approximately 10 canneries operating along the bay at that time, and population in the Nushagak Bay region was likely around 700 to 800 people; a number that was seasonally augmented by imported labor. Communities were built in association with canneries, and by 1920, the number of canneries in the areas peaked at 25. However, overfishing and commercial fishing restrictions in the 1930s led to their decline and by 1938 only six were still in operation.

The vast majority of commercial fishermen came seasonally from outside the region and state. However, a labor shortage during World War II resulted in more local and indigenous labor being used. By the 1960s, a substantial portion of the Bristol Bay fleet was operated by Nushagak Eskimo fishermen.

Historical sources and oral histories indicate that Nushagak Bay was the site of extensive subsistence activity during the nineteenth century. People living around the bay participated in seasonal activities including caribou hunting trips up the Mulchatna River, ice fishing for ling cod and blackfish, trout fishing on Lake Aleknagik, trapping, seal hunting, dip netting for smelt, and salmon fishing. Nushagak River people would travel to the coast in the late spring to hunt seal, and fish. Fish traps and weirs were used to catch salmon at the mouth of the Nushagak River, and spearing and dip netting were used on the upper Nuyakuk.

Ekuk is located in Federal Reporting Area 514, International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Regulatory Area 4E, and the Bering Sea Sablefish Regulatory District. Ekuk is eligible for participation in the Community Development Quota (CDQ) program and is represented by the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation. The CDQ program was implemented to help alleviate economic distress in rural communities in western Alaska by allocating a percentage of halibut, crab, and groundfish to six CDQ non-profit organizations representing 65 communities in the Bering Strait and Aleutian Islands region.¹⁸ Managers of CDQ organizations

¹⁷ Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. (2012). *Statistics and Reports*. Retrieved April 24, 2012 from <http://eed.alaska.gov/stats/>.

¹⁸ Fina, M. (2011). Evolution of Catch Share Management: Lessons from Catch Share Management in the North Pacific. *Fisheries*, Vol. 36(4). Retrieved September 12, 2012 from http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/catch_shares/Fina_CatchShare_411.pdf.

authorize individual fishermen and fishing vessels to harvest a certain portion of the allocated CDQ. The community is located in Federal Reporting Area 508, International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Regulatory Area 4E, and the Bering Sea Sablefish Regulatory District.

Processing Plants

According to the 2010 Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Intent to Operate list, Baltimore-based Friedman Family Fisheries has a small operation in Ekuk. Product is caught, smoked or filleted, processed, and shipped to Maryland for storage. In addition, Ekuk Fisheries processes sockeye, coho, pink, chum, and Chinook salmon.¹⁹

Fisheries-Related Revenue

No fisheries-related revenue was collected in Ekuk.

Commercial Fishing

Between 2000 and 2010, no residents held commercial fishing permits. The only two permanent residents during those years were employed as caretakers of the cannery. In 2010, two vessels made landings in Ekuk, compared to 116 in 2000. Eleven vessels were homeported in Ekuk that year, compared to 22 in 2000. Landings made in the community between 2000 and 2010 are considered confidential. Information regarding commercial fishing trends can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

Recreational Fishing

Based on data reported by the ADF&G Division of Sport Fish, there is no evidence of sportfishing taking place in Ekuk. No visitor accommodations or sport fish guide business were recorded as present in the community. No sportfishing licenses were sold in the community or to residents of the community between 2000 and 2010.

Subsistence Fishing

Ekuk is a popular site for subsistence salmon harvesting; however, no data are available regarding subsistence activities. Since the community ceased to be recognized as a Census Designated Place, ADF&G subsistence data for Ekuk are now combined with Clark's Point.²⁰

¹⁹ Ekuk Fisheries. (n.d.). Retrieved May 31, 2012 from <http://www.ekukfisheries.com/>.

²⁰ Fall, J. A.; Krieg, T. M.; and Holen, D. (2009). *An Overview of the Subsistence Fisheries of the Bristol Bay Management Area*. Retrieved July 5, 2012 from: http://www.subsistence.adfg.state.ak.us/specialpubs/SP2_SP2009-007.pdf.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Commercial Fishing Sector in Ekok: 2000-2010.

Year	Crew License Holders ¹	Count Of All Fish Buyers ²	Count Of Shore-Side Processing Facilities ³	Vessels Primarily Owned By Residents ⁴	Vessels Homeported ⁴	Vessels Landing Catch In Ekok ²	Total Net Lb Landed In Ekok ^{2,5}	Total Ex-Vessel Value Of Landings In Ekok ^{2,5}
2000	0	2	2	0	22	116	--	--
2001	0	1	2	0	21	134	--	--
2002	0	0	2	0	18	0	--	--
2003	0	0	1	0	18	0	--	--
2004	0	0	2	0	14	0	--	--
2005	0	1	2	0	14	0	--	--
2006	0	0	2	0	14	0	--	--
2007	0	1	3	0	13	0	--	--
2008	0	3	3	0	12	0	--	--
2009	0	0	3	0	11	0	--	--
2010	0	1	2	0	11	2	--	--

Note: Cells showing “--” indicate that the data are considered confidential.

¹ Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 2011. Alaska sport fish and crew license holders, 2000 – 2010. ADF&G Division of Administrative Services. Data compiled by Alaska Fisheries Information Network for Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle. [URL not publicly available as some information is confidential.]

² Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. 2011. Alaska fish ticket data. Data compiled by Alaska Fisheries Information Network for Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle. [URL not publicly available as some information is confidential.]

³ Alaska Department of Fish and Game. (2011). Data on Alaska fish processors. ADF&G Division of Commercial Fisheries. Data compiled by Alaska Fisheries Information Network for Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle. [URL not publicly available as some information is confidential.]

⁴ Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. 2011. Alaska commercial fishing permits, permit holders, and vessel licenses, 2000 – 2010. Data compiled by Alaska Fisheries Information Network for Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle. [URL not publicly available as some information is confidential.]

⁵ Totals only represent non-confidential data.

Table 2. Landed Pounds and Ex-vessel Revenue, by Species, in Ekuk: 2000-2010.

	<i>Total Net Pounds¹</i>										
	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Crab	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finfish	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Halibut	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Herring	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Other Groundfish	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Other Shellfish	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Pacific Cod	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Pollock	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Sablefish	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
Salmon	--	--	0	0	0	--	0	--	--	0	--
<i>Total²</i>	--	--	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	--	<i>0</i>	--	--	<i>0</i>	--
	<i>Ex-vessel Value (nominal U.S. dollars)</i>										
	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Crab	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Finfish	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Halibut	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Herring	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Other Groundfish	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Other Shellfish	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Pacific Cod	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Pollock	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Sablefish	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
Salmon	--	--	\$0	\$0	\$0	--	\$0	--	--	\$0	--
<i>Total²</i>	--	--	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	--	<i>\$0</i>	--	--	<i>\$0</i>	--

Note: Cells showing "--" indicate that the data are considered confidential.

Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. 2011. Alaska fish ticket data. Data compiled by Alaska Fisheries Information Network for Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle. [URL not publicly available as some information is confidential.]

¹ Net lb refers to the landed weight recorded in fish tickets.

² Totals only represent non-confidential data.