

# The Bristol Bay Region

- Located in southwest Alaska.
- Its regional boundaries under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) extend about 350 miles north to south, and about 230 miles east to west, and cover about 40,000 square miles.
- According to the 1990 U. S. Census there are 6,972 residents in the area.
- The Alaska Native population makes up about 4,639 residents, or 66% of the total population  
The region has three major mountain ranges: Kilbuck, Taylor, and the Aleutian Range.
- There are eight major river systems the Wood River, Nushagak River, Kvichak River, Naknek River, Egegik River, Ugashik River, Meshik River, and Chignik River.
- Most of the region's landmass is moist tundra, with stunted cottonwood, willows, and spruce trees scattered throughout.
- The climate is maritime, and usually cool, humid, and windy.
- Average summer temperatures range from 37 to 66 F.
- Average winter temperatures range from 4 to 34 F.
- Annual rainfall averages 19.62 inches; and snowfall an average of 44.7 inches.

## Demographics of the Area Land Ownership

- The largest land owners in the Bristol Bay region are the state and federal governments.
- There are four wildlife refuges: Becharof, Alaska Peninsula, Togiak, and the Alaska Maritime.
- The National Park Service manages Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, Katmai National Park and Preserve, and Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve.
- The Bureau of Land Management manages federal lands outside of these conservation units.
- State land is primarily located in the Wood Tikchik Lakes area, the Nushagak and Iliamna drainages, and on the Bristol Bay side of the Alaska Peninsula.
- All tide and submerged lands offshore to three miles and the beds of all inland navigable water bodies are owned by the state.
- The state maintains two conservation units, the Walrus Islands Game Sanctuary and the Wood Tikchik State Park.
- The largest private landowners in the Bristol Bay region are the Native corporations formed as a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971.
- The Bristol Bay Native Corporation controls the subsurface rights of most land owned by the village corporations, while the village retains surface rights.
- The vast majority of the Bristol Bay region's land remains undeveloped, with subsistence being the primary land use.

## **Natural Resources**

- The Bristol Bay region has the world's largest runs of sockeye salmon.
- All five major species of salmon - the chinook, sockeye, chum, coho, and pink salmon spawn in the region.
- It has one of the state's largest herring fisheries, and a small population of halibut.
- The offshore area is a nursing ground for North Pacific halibut stocks.
- The region has many large mammals, including caribou, moose, brown and black bears.
- During the summer months, migratory birds-ducks, geese, cranes, and swans frequent the region.

## **Communications**

- Telephone communications via satellite is available to the entire region through four telephone cooperatives.
- All communities receive the Alaska Rural Communications Network (ARCS - state subsidized) and two communities have cable television ventures.
- Two Dillingham radio stations (one AM and one FM repeater station) and a Naknek FM station provide broadcasts throughout the region.
- Mail is flown to Dillingham, Iliamna, and King Salmon six days a week and transferred to the outlying communities.

## **Transportation**

- Roads connect Dillingham and Aleknagik, King Salmon and Naknek, and Iliamna and Newhalen.
- There is daily, year-round air transportation provided by three commercial and cargo airlines through Dillingham, King Salmon and Iliamna which serve as the region's transportation hubs.
- Several small airlines provide local charter and cargo flights.
- Most freight is hauled via by-pass mail from Anchorage or barge from Seattle.
- Individuals travel by personal vehicles, snow machines, ATVs, skiffs, and small planes.

## **Government & Service Organizations**

- Most Bristol Bay villages have tribal councils.
- The Department of Interior formally recognized and listed most of the villages of Bristol Bay as tribes. These tribes have a special relationship with the US government, which assures funding for social and human service programs through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other federal agencies.

## **Bristol Bay Tourism**

- The Bristol Bay sport fishing industry generates \$50-\$60 million in total revenues.
- The U. S. Park Service has determined that the Katmai National Park had 40,000 to 46,000 visitors from 1989 to 1992.
- The Lake Clark National Park had 21,000 visitors from 1989-1992.

## **Employment Opportunities**

- Commercial fishing and subsistence are the primary economic activities.
- During the off fishing season, unemployment levels increase to more than 55% in many villages.
- Full time employment is generally limited to the schools and community/government service.
- Salaries earned in the Bristol Bay region are earned in the following areas:
  - Government 35%
  - Seafood processing 31%
  - Services 17%
  - Transportation, communications, utilities 9%
  - Retail trade 3%
  - Other 5%

## **Economy**

- There are two types of regional economies - year-round and seasonal.
- The two transportation hubs, of Dillingham and King Salmon, have fairly stable year-round economies. Commercial fishing and salmon processing, government jobs, transportation employment, and service industries are their economic mainstays.
- For the other 28 communities, their economies of commercial fishing and subsistence activities are seasonal and offer little employment alternatives.
- The seasonal fluctuations of the salmon stocks play a major part in the economic conditions of these communities.
- Relatively new, are the for profit Native Village Corporations, nonprofit Village Councils/IRA's, and other Native organizations.
- After the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), 24 Village Corporations or Consortiums were formed to invest and manage the land and fund conveyances within the region.
- There are, also, 30 nonprofit Village Councils/IRA's that provide for the social and economic well-being of its local membership. This includes providing community services, health, and public works and community economic development projects.
- Limited economic opportunities make subsistence hunting and fishing a very significant contributor to the regional economy.
- During the salmon season residents catch and process salmon for their own subsistence use.
- Freshwater fish, porcupine, and rabbit are taken year-round.

- Moose, caribou, ptarmigan, ducks, and geese are hunted in season.
- Also harvested in the summer are salmon berries, blueberries, blackberries, huckleberries, wild raspberries, and low and high bush cranberries.
- The average Cost of Living in Bristol Bay region, in March of 1990, was the second highest rate in the state.

## **Culture**

- Three major ethnic Native groups - Yup'ik Eskimos, Athabascans, and Aleuts live in the region.
- 48% of the people in the region are Alaskan Native.

### **Aleuts**

- Lived on the ocean side of the Alaska Peninsula.
- Subsisted mainly on Fish and sea mammals.
- Utilized sea creatures such as whales and seals for clothing, boats, and oil for lamps.
- Caribou were the main land animal used for food.
- Birds such as cormorants, ducks, and sea parrots were used for making parkas.

### **Dena'ina Athabascans**

- The Dena'ina Athabascans occupied lands around Iliamna Lake and Lake Clark.
- Red salmon, moose and caribou were an essential food supply for the Athabascans.
- The Athabascans hunted for bear, beaver porcupine, waterfowl.
- Canoes were made of birch bark, moose hide, and cottonwood.
- The raven was considered the creator of their ancient world and is known as a mischief-loving deity.
- Their oral history is filled with raven stories meant to teach and entertain.

### **Yupiks**

- Lived on the Bristol Bay side of the Alaskan Peninsula
- They were mainly hunters and fishermen.
- Caribou, moose, bear, waterfowl, ptarmigan and salmon were the main sources of food.
- Salmon were harvested with the use of gill nets made from spruce roots.
- Caribou were harvested for food and for their hides which were used for clothing and trading purposes.
- Brown bear and moose were also harvested for food and their skins.
- Brown bear skins were used for bedding and to hang at entrances to doors.