



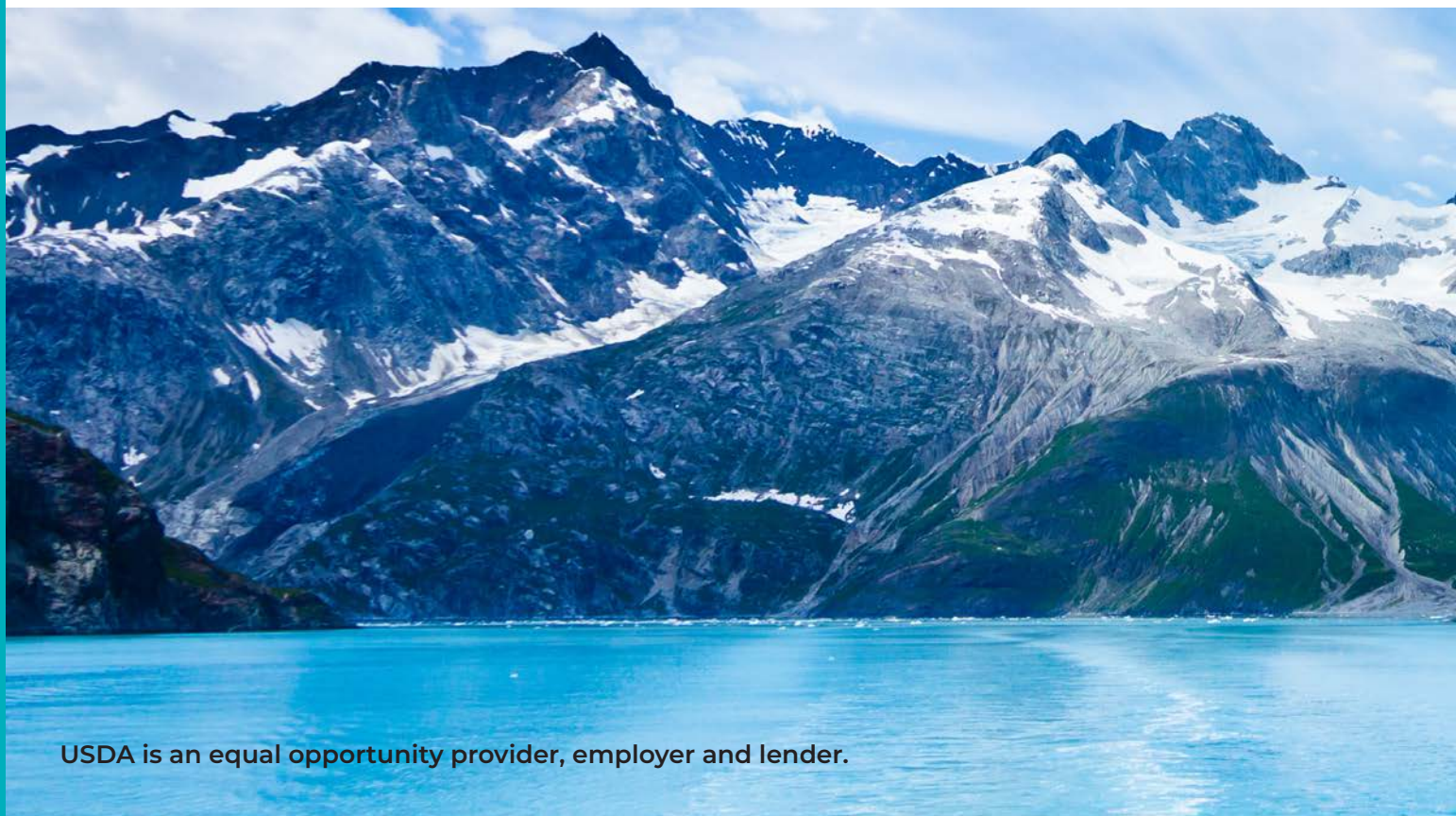
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WELCOME *to Alaska*

INFORMATION FOR NEW AND PROSPECTIVE NRCS EMPLOYEES

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WELCOME TO ALASKA!

If you're reading this, chances are you're considering moving to Alaska, or perhaps you have already accepted a job here. Congratulations! Your journey to The Last Frontier state is sure to be an adventure of a lifetime!

Living in Alaska offers quality-of-life benefits unlike anywhere else in the United States. You can experience an intimate connection to the outdoors; abundant recreation opportunities; frequent wildlife encounters; diverse tribal cultures; and of course, all kinds of weather. Alaska has it all!

Our team at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) created this guide as a resource for new or prospective employees. I hope it gives you a sense of what it's like to live here and encourages you and the people in your life to consider Alaska as a place to live, work, and play!

Sincerely,

Alan D. McBee
State Conservationist



ALASKA FACTS

- Alaska is the **largest state** in the nation with 365 million acres. It's larger than Texas, Montana and California combined.
- If you drive from one side of Alaska to the other, it would be like driving from Jacksonville, Florida to San Francisco, California.
- The state **population** is 732,673 and 55 percent of the state population lives in the Anchorage and Mat-Su Valley region (from the 2020 Census).
- Alaska is 86 percent **public land** and 14 percent private land.
- Working with Alaska Native tribes and tribal entities is a significant part of our work at NRCS Alaska. On average, over 90 percent of NRCS financial assistance each year goes to **Alaska Native producers**.
- Alaska has **229 federally-recognized Tribes**, which is 40 percent of all federally-recognized tribes in the United States.
- Tribal lands are managed differently in Alaska compared to the lower 48; lands are managed by 12 Regional for-profit **Alaska Native corporations** and more than 200 village corporations. There is only one reservation.
- In Alaska, **subsistence agriculture** is a way of life for many rural communities who live off the road system and who do not have access to traditional grocery stores. Subsistence activities include hunting wild game such as moose and caribou; fishing; and harvesting berries, mushrooms, firewood and other resources.
- Alaska is home to all 5 species of **Pacific Salmon**: Chinook, Pink, Sockeye, Coho and Chum.



- Only 20 percent of Alaska communities are **accessible** by the road system. The remaining 80 percent can only be accessed by air or water.
- **Travel is a big part of the job** in Alaska. Our staff often take multiple modes of travel to access a project site. We use any and all modes of travel, including planes, float planes, helicopters, ferries, boats, ATVs, snow machines, and on foot.
- In Alaska, we humans are not at the top of the food chain. We work among large populations of **brown and black bear**. NRCS staff receive annual firearms training and carry a firearm during field work for protection from aggressive bear or moose.
- Alaska is known as the **land of the Midnight Sun**. In the summer, there are nearly 24 hours of daylight in our northernmost office in Fairbanks. Summer temperatures in Fairbanks can reach the 80s & 90s but the highs are generally lower, in the 60s and 70s, in South Central and Southeast Alaska.
- Just as the summer days are long, winter days are drastically opposite. The shortest day in Fairbanks is 3 hours and 42 minutes of daylight, and in Anchorage the shortest day is 5 hours and 28 minutes. Fairbanks winter temperatures can dip to -40 or below, while Anchorage lows are usually warmer with lows in the single digits, sometimes below zero.



NRCS ALASKA TEAMS AND FIELD OFFICES

NRCS Alaska is structured as 4 regional teams with 7 customer-facing field offices:

- **NORTH TEAM:** Fairbanks and Delta Junction Field Offices
- **CENTRAL TEAM:** Wasilla Field Office
- **WEST TEAM:** Kenai, Kodiak and Homer Field Offices
- **SOUTHEAST TEAM:** Juneau Field Office

The geographic area of each Team is larger than most states or counties in the Lower 48.

The NRCS State Office is located in Palmer.



NORTH TEAM



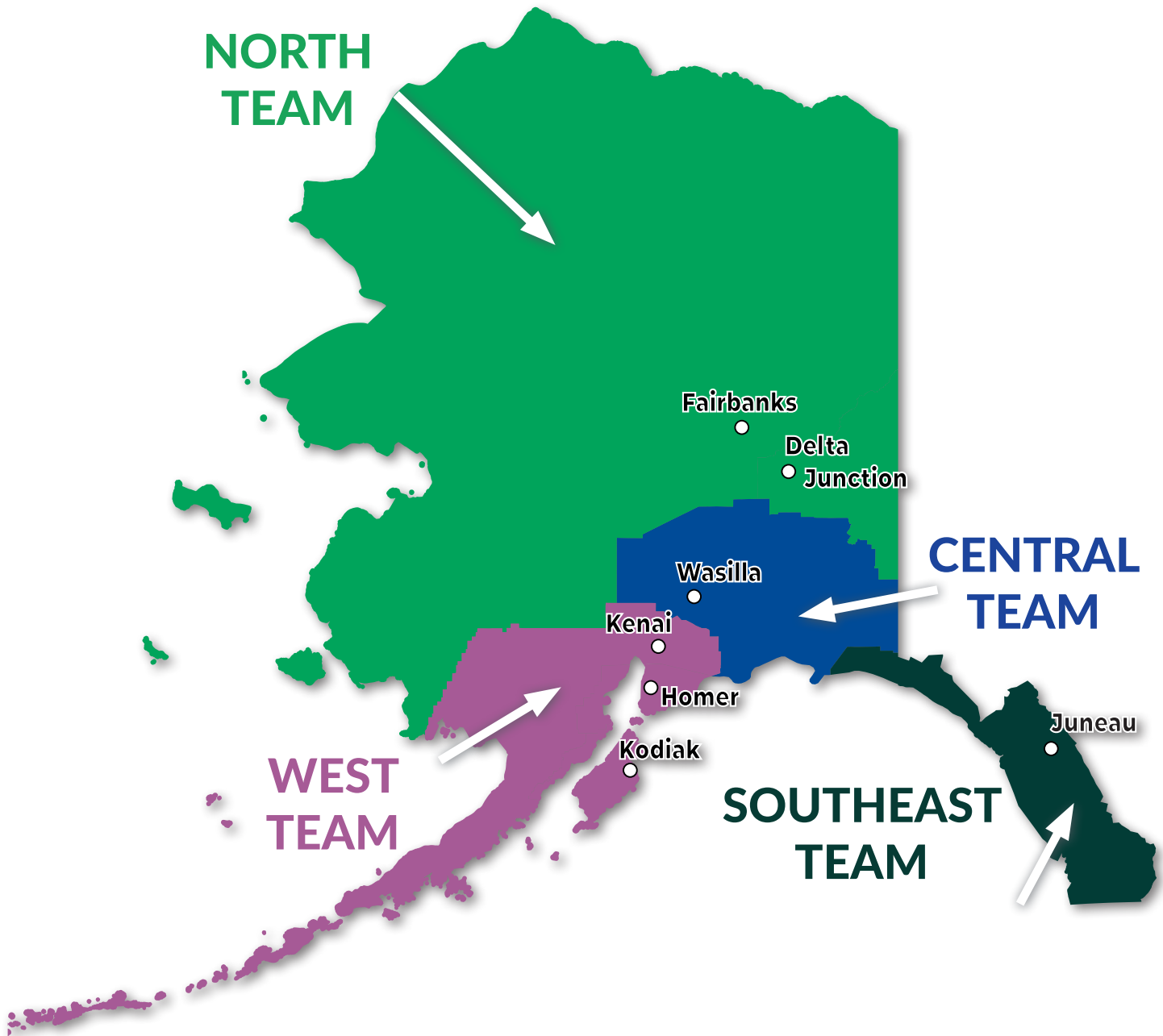
CENTRAL TEAM



WEST TEAM



SOUTHEAST TEAM



TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM ALASKA

Air travel is one way to move to Alaska and is the most convenient form of travel to all off-road locations. Ferry transportation is available in some cases.

The Alaska Highway (Alcan) from the U.S. through Canada to Alaska is well documented in a popular printed guide called The Mile Post. Driving is generally safe all year but can be bitter cold from November through March. This means you would need to “winterize” your vehicle with studded tires and plug in heaters as well as antifreeze to -60 degrees F before traveling during the winter. Check Canadian travel regulations and passport needs.

Travel to see family in the Lower 48 can be costly. Consider how you will plan for family visits when you move to Alaska. Some residents set aside funds received through their annual Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) to pay for flights to visit family in the Lower 48.

Alaska Airlines offers a free Club 49 membership for residents with discounts on airfare, baggage fees, and lower freight charges for checked cargo. Since Alaska is the closest state to Hawaii, airline deals are often available from Alaska to Hawaii and many Alaskans choose to vacation in Hawaii during the winter months.



Vehicle:

- A vehicle with 4x4 or all-wheel drive is recommended.
- Having studded tires or ‘blizzard’ tires for Interior winter is important.
- Bringing a vehicle is expensive. Gas to drive through Canada is a big monetary consideration, but shipping a vehicle is also expensive.
- Buying a vehicle here is typically more expensive than buying one in the Lower 48, but deals can be found. Generally, if you buy used from the area you move to, they will already be winterized.

Winterization of Vehicle

For all areas except Southeast Alaska and possibly Homer, it’s recommended to winterize your vehicle before October. For Interior Alaska (Fairbanks and Delta Junction), that would include studded tires which are legal September 15 through May 1.

Winterizing your vehicle may include

- Antifreeze to -60 degree F
- Studded tires for winter
- Special cold weather power steering fluid and hoses
- Engine block heater
- Oil and transmission heaters
- Trickle charger on your battery

All plug-ins are wired together in one cord, and most homes and businesses accommodate outside plug-ins.





Residency

You must live 1 full year in Alaska to become a resident. With that you can:

- Apply for the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD); application due by Dec 31. You must live here for one full calendar year before applying for the PFD.
- Get a residence hunting and fishing license.
- Get a subsistence fishing license to dip net salmon from the Kenai and Kasilof Rivers (both in the West Team area); Fish Creek near Wasilla in the Central Team area, and the Copper River near Chitna, which is located between Glennallen and Valdez in the Central Team area. This river and the town Valdez (on the ocean) are a 7 to 9 hour drive from Fairbanks and where most Interior residents fish.
- With subsistence dipnet fishing, a family would qualify generally for 25 red salmon for the family and an additional 10 fish per household member.
- Subsistence licenses are dependent on where you fish/hunt and may not be available to all staff. Consult Alaska Department of Fish and Game for specifics.
- Some people may also qualify for subsistence hunting licenses.



Alaska REAL ID

- You need to get a driver's license within 30 days of arriving in Alaska (this helps establish your residency date). Alaska REAL ID requires you to have several additional forms of verification besides your residency address or P.O. Box, such as utility bills mailed with your address on them, a lease agreement, etc.

Winter Considerations

Winter days in Alaska are very short. Everyone responds differently to the lack of daylight. Some people may experience Seasonal Affective Disorder during the winter months. Research this condition and be prepared to adjust your lifestyle as appropriate.

Plan to spend time outside in the winter and keep an active routine. Getting involved in winter sports such as skiing, snowshoeing, or fat tire biking are excellent ways to stay active, generate feel-good endorphins, and get outside. Spend time with people and find community groups where you can socialize and gather, such as churches, book clubs, art groups, or sports teams. Some people use a "happy light" or light therapy box in the winter. It's recommended to take Vitamin D supplements. Many Alaskans choose to vacation somewhere tropical in the winter such as Hawaii.



NORTH TEAM:

Location

The North Team stretches from Canada on the east to the Bering Sea on west; from Denali National Park on the south to the North Slope and town of Utqiagvik (Barrow) on the north.

It includes the following borough or census areas: Kusilvak, Nome, Bethel, Northwest Arctic, North Slope, Yukon-Koyukuk, Fairbanks North Star and South East Fairbanks. Clients range from small gardeners with high tunnels to Native Corporations building hardened trails to access traditional hunting and gathering areas.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is slightly smaller than the state of New Jersey. It includes the City of Fairbanks, which is the second largest city in Alaska; the City of North Pole; and two military bases; Fort Wainwright Army base and Eielson Air Force base, all of which support a lively economy.

Delta Junction is also in the North Team area, it is outside of any established borough so there are no property taxes. Fort Greely Army base is within 15 miles of Delta Junction.

Minimal facilities are available in Delta Junction: a post office, several gas stations, fire department, and restaurants. NRCS shares a field office with the Farm Service Agency in Delta Junction as it's one of the largest farming areas in the state.



Housing

Housing options are limited. Rentals range from dry cabins without running water to larger apartments and homes that rent for \$1,000 - \$2,500 a month. Most rentals include some if not all utilities but may not allow pets. Buying a home can be expensive; \$250,000 to \$500,000 is typical. Competition is stiff, and homes are generally only on the market for a week or two and sell above asking price.

Special Consideration in Choosing a Home

- Permafrost is widespread and can cause failing foundations even in homes that were built 20 years ago. It is always wise to get an engineer's report covering permafrost before buying a home.

Utilities are expensive compared to the lower 48. For a typical 3-bedroom home, utilities can easily cost as much as \$1,000-\$1,500 per month including heat, electricity, water/sewer, garbage and internet; which is available but the coverage can be spotty.

Other Job Opportunities:

Other employment options in the region include state and federal offices, city police / Alaska State Troopers, fire departments, the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, University of Alaska Fairbanks, a large gold mine, 8 large grocery stores, and many other retail stores and restaurants.

Schools

The University of Alaska Fairbanks is located in Fairbanks. UAF is home to the University's Agriculture Extension Service. Other schools include two large 1A high schools, two smaller high schools with corresponding middle schools, and many elementary schools. Home school is also popular.



Culture

Fairbanks' northern Alaska region has a rich tapestry of indigenous cultures—Athabascan Indians in the interior; Inuit, Yup'ik, and Unangan Eskimo's in Western Alaska; and Inupiaq Eskimos in the Arctic. Cultural opportunities include large and small concerts, plays, Shakespeare theater group, dance groups, several museums including an antique auto museum, UAF Museum of the North, Ice sculpture museum, and Morris Thompson Cultural Center.

Activities

Outdoor and indoor activities include: biking, dog sledding, hockey, baseball and basketball (with minor league and college teams competing), hunting, trapping, fishing, snow machining, hiking, swimming, berry picking and folk art classes. Other popular activities include visiting local breweries and distilleries; soaking at Chena Hot Springs, viewing the northern lights, and floating the Chena River in summer which flows through Fairbanks.

Many local Facebook pages keep residents up to date on what is happening around town as well as the local newspaper, The Daily News Miner.

Climate

The climate is influenced by the Interior effect. It's warm in the summer (60 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit) with low rainfall and very cold in the winter (10 to -60 degrees Fahrenheit) without wind. It's in USDA zone 1-2 with some 3 in the mountains around Fairbanks. The first snow is generally by October 1. Temperatures start dropping quickly in October. November typically ranges from 0 to -50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Taxes

- No state income tax.
- Fairbanks North Star Borough charges property tax.
- Tok and Delta Junction do not have property tax or sales tax.
- Fairbanks city does not charge sales tax.
- North Pole charges a 5.5% sales tax.

CENTRAL TEAM:

Location

The Central Team area includes Anchorage (the largest city in Alaska); Wasilla (the third largest city) and Palmer. Palmer was established in the 1930's with the colonization of a farming community.

The Glenn Highway heads northeast out of Palmer and winds through some of the most scenic mountains in the state to Glennallen. This road joins the Richardson Highway which continues down the coast to the City of Valdez.

The massive Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough covers an area roughly the size of West Virginia. The NRCS State Office is in Palmer, while the Central Field Office is in Wasilla. Both are about 45 minutes north of Anchorage (43 miles). Nearby towns include Butte, Sutton, Willow, and Talkeetna.



Housing

The Mat-Su Valley is one of the fastest growing population centers in the state. There are multiple new housing developments being constructed and opportunities for new builds. Inventory tends to sell quickly. The average Alaska home value is \$350,244, up 1.4% over the past year and goes to pending in around six days.

Palmer's housing expenses are 9% lower than the national average and the utility prices are 18% higher than the national average. Transportation expenses like bus fares and gas prices are 14% higher than the national average. Palmer has grocery prices that are 25% higher than the national average.

Other Job Opportunities

Other employment opportunities in the region include government (federal, state and local); multiple retail stores and restaurants; medical businesses; Mat-Su Regional Hospital, tourism and construction.

Schools

The University of Alaska – Anchorage has a satellite campus in Palmer, the UAA Mat-Su community college. Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District is based Palmer and serves 40 schools across Mat-Su Borough, which each enroll from 15 to 1,300 students. The estimated total number of students attending schools in this District is 15,969; and 1,200 teachers.

Culture

Alaska Native culture in the region is rich and diverse. The region includes the traditional homelands of the Dena'ina Athabascan people in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley; and Athabascan, Alutiqu and Eyak people in the Copper River Basin and Cordova areas. The Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage offers a museum and live dance performances representing Alaska Native cultures throughout the state. There is also a rich Gold Rush and mining history in the area including mine ruins to visit at Hatcher Pass. Palmer is home to the annual Alaska State Fair since 1936, which celebrates the region's agricultural history and displays world-record-setting giant vegetables plus celebrations of Alaska Native culture.



Activities

In the summer months, there's plenty of opportunities for hiking, canoeing, kayaking, hunting, fishing, cycling, camping and exploring the outdoors. Hatcher Pass is a popular recreation area north of Palmer with picturesque opportunities for hiking, biking, camping and berry picking. There are multiple lakes and rivers in the region offering state parks and public boat launches and campgrounds.

During the winter, the area is a great place to see the northern lights. There are also other winter activities available including cross-country and downhill skiing, winter hiking, visiting glaciers, dog sledding, ice fishing, fat tire biking, and snow machining.

Exciting winter events include the annual Fur Rendezvous winter festival (known locally as Fur Rondy) and the famous Iditarod dogsled race which has its ceremonial start in Anchorage and formal start in Willow.

Climate

The Mat-Su Valley is generally temperate, with summer temperatures in the 50's to 70's and higher rainfall and snowfall than in the Interior. It's in USDA zone 3-4 and is well adapted to farming. This area also includes the Point MacKenzie Agriculture project.

Taxes

- No state income tax.
- Matanuska-Susitna Borough charges property tax.
- Wasilla charges a 2.5% sales tax.
- Palmer charges a 3% sales tax.

WEST TEAM:

Location

The West Team includes southwest Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, the Kodiak Archipelago, the Alaska Peninsula, and the Kenai Peninsula. This team leads the state in contracts for high tunnels, serving a growing small scale agricultural community, and also does irrigation, forestry, grazing/range, and fish passage work.

NRCS staffed field offices are located in Kenai and Homer. The Kenai Peninsula borough is the size of West Virginia and has a predominance of federal land including the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Chugach National Forest, and Kenai Fjords National Park. There are many outdoor recreation and fishing opportunities.



Housing

In 2023, Kenai Peninsula Borough home prices were selling for a median \$366,000. In 2022, fair market rentals were more expensive than 89% of other areas at \$1,100 per month.

Kenai Peninsula Borough energy costs are 1.1 times the statewide average and 2.4 times the national average.

Other Job Opportunities

Other employment options can be found at city and borough governments, the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, Kenai Peninsula College, oil field service, and Central Peninsula Hospital, as well as many local small business and large chain retail.

Schools

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District serves the whole borough. There are high schools in Kenai, Soldotna, and Homer.

Culture

The Kenai Peninsula is Dena'ina land in the north and Alutiiq lands along the south edge of the Peninsula. There are concerts, community theater, and other cultural opportunities locally. North American Hockey League and Alaska League hockey and baseball teams are in the Kenai area. There is a vibrant local brewing and brewery culture. The peninsula has a strong fishing culture – from Fisher Poets to much fish related art as public art and consumable art.



Activities

Hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, kayaking, canoe trips, wildlife viewing/photography, berry picking and other foraging, biking, trail running, small local museums, city parks with playgrounds, local sports – participate or spectate, civic organizations, religious organizations, courses at Kenai Peninsula College. Multiple community events are held at the Kenai Peninsula Fairgrounds in Ninilchik, including the Kenai Peninsula Fair and the iconic Salmonfest outdoor music festival.

Climate

The Kenai Peninsula is generally milder in climate compared to Interior Alaska. Winter temperatures typically range from 4 to 22 degrees F; summer temperatures vary from 46 to 65 degrees F. The average annual precipitation is 20 inches.

Taxes

- No state income tax.
- Kenai Borough charges property tax and up to 3% of the price of all retail sales, rents, and services rendered within the borough.
- Kenai and Soldotna have 3% sales tax
- Homer sales tax is 4.5% from October through March and 5.5% from April through September.



SOUTHEAST TEAM

Location

Located in the world's largest coastal temperate rainforest, the Southeast Team covers the traditional homelands of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. There are a little over 71,000 people living in 33 communities scattered across the many islands of the Alexander Archipelago, much of which is managed as the U.S. Forest Service Tongass National Forest.

With a field office located in the State Capital of Juneau, NRCS's work in this area is focused on managing forests, fish and wildlife habitat, and small-scale agricultural lands for the conservation benefits that support the region's natural resource-based communities and economies.

Road access to the region is limited to three communities – Haines, Skagway, and Hyder. Various airlines provide flight access between communities and outside the region; the Alaska Marine Highway System operates ferries for additional access; and freight is transported via air, ferry, or marine transport services.



Housing

Housing costs exceed state and national averages, with a median home value of \$371,147 in 2023. Housing is limited.

Utility costs (including electricity, heat, garbage, water, and sewer service, as well as phone/internet) for a typical 3-bedroom home can be over \$300/month.

Other Job Opportunities

Government (city, state, and federal) agencies make up the largest sector of the job market in Juneau, with the Greens Creek and Kensington mines being the largest non-governmental employers. Seasonal jobs in the tourism industry are plentiful, as Juneau hosts over 1.6 million visitors annually, typically between late April and late October mostly via cruise ships.

Schools

The Juneau School District serves families in Juneau; and there are options for religious private school and home schooling. The University of Alaska Southeast is based in Juneau, providing several degree options for post-secondary education.





Culture

Tlingit culture is woven throughout the Juneau area, with totem poles, traditional placenames, and the occasional “gunalcheesh” uttered in gratitude. There is an award-winning live theater on Douglas Island, and an independent movie theater downtown, and a more conventional movie theater in the Mendenhall Valley. Local breweries and a distillery are busy meeting places throughout the week, and many restaurants are available seasonally and year-round.

Activities

Juneau’s weather can be fickle, with rain, snow, and sun possible – sometimes all in the same day! Proper gear will allow any intrepid outdoors person to enjoy fishing, hiking, trail running, skiing (downhill, cross country, back country), kayaking, ice skating, photography, foraging, hunting...sometimes more than one in the same day! Having a boat allows for accessing nearby islands and ocean-based fishing.

The State Museum and the City Museum are great places to learn more about the arts and history of Alaska; and the city is host to multiple recreational sports options as well as a variety of class through the Community Schools program.

Climate

Southeast Alaska includes a majority of coastal temperate rainforest influenced by the Pacific Ocean. It’s wetter than other regions in Alaska and temperatures typically are not as cold. Highs in January are typically in the 30’s and lows in the 20’s. Highs in peak summer are typically in the 60’s and lows in the 50’s. Juneau averages 222 rainy days per year. Snowfall average is 93.2 inches.

Taxes

- No state income tax.
- Juneau Borough charges property tax.
- Juneau charges a 5% sales tax.

ALASKA NATIVE CULTURES READING LIST

Alaska Native Law

- Alaska Natives and American Laws by David Case and David Voluck
- The Rights of Indians and Tribes by Stephen Pevar
- Alaska Native Cultures and Issues: Responses to frequently asked questions by Libby Roderick
- Alaska: A History of the 49th State by Clause M. Naske and Herman E. Slotnick
- Alaska Almanac by Alaska Northwest Books
- Tisha: Story of a Young Teacher by Robert Specht
- Bird Girl and the Man Who Followed the Sun by Velma Wallis

Alaska Native History and Culture

- Village Journey: The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission by Thomas Berger
- A Long and Terrible Shadow: White Values, Native Rights in the Americas since 1492 by Thomas Berger
- Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and the National Parks in Alaska by Theodore Catton
- Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska by Kirk Dombrowski
- Chills and Fever: Health and Disease in the Early History of Alaska by Robert Fortune
- Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination by Sherrie Huhndorf
- The Native People of Alaska by Steve J. Langdon
- An Alaska Anthology - Interpreting the Past edited by Stephen W. Haycox and Mary Childers Mangusso
- A Reference in Time: Alaska Native History Day by Day by Alexandra McClanahan
- Native Peoples of Alaska: Traveler's Guide to Land, Art, and Culture by Jan Halliday and Pat Petrivelli
- Interior — Regional History and Perspectives
- Above the Arctic Circle: The Alaska Journals of James A. Carroll, 1911-1922 by James Carroll
- Shadows on the Koyukuk by Sydney Huntington
- On the Edge of Nowhere by James Huntington and Lawrence Elliott
- A Land Gone Lonesome: An Inland Voyage Along the Yukon River by Dan O'Neill
- Two Old Women by Velma Wallis
- Northwest & Arctic — Regional History & Perspectives
- The Roots of Ticasuk: An Eskimo Woman's Family Story by Emily Ivanoff Brown
- Under the Arctic Sun: The Life and Times of Frank and Ada Degnan by Frances Degnan
- The Firecracker Boys: H-Bombs, Inupiat Eskimos, and the Roots of the Environmental Movement by Dan O'Neill
- Ada Blackjack Jennifer Niven
- Give or Take A Century: An Eskimo Chronicle by JE Senungatuk
- A Place for Winter: Paul Tiulana's Story by Paul Tiulana

- The Whale and the Supercomputer: On the Northern Front of Climate Change by Charles Wohlforth
- Like a Tree to the Soil: A history of Farming in Alaska's Tanana Valley 1903-1940

Southeast — Regional History and Perspectives

- Tlingit Stories, Maria Ackerman
- Lord of Alaska: Baranov and the Russian Adventure by Hector Chevigny
- Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native memoir by Ernestine Hayes
- Tao of Raven by Ernestine Hayes

Southwest — Regional History and Perspectives

- Always Getting Ready / Upterrlainarluta: Yup'ik Eskimo Subsistence in Southwest Alaska by James Barker
- Tales of Ticasuk: Eskimo Legends and Stories by Emily Ivanoff Brown
- When the Wind Was a River: Aleut Evacuation in World War II by Dean Kohlhoff
- When Our Words Return by Phyllis Morrow and William Schneider
- Yuuyaraq: The Way of the Human Being by Harold Napoleon
- In Search of the Kuskokwim & Other Great Endeavors by Stephen Spurr
- Slaves of the Harvest by Barbara-Boyle Torrey



Southcentral — Regional History and Perspectives

- Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina by James Kari and James Fall
- The Cook Inlet Collection: Two Hundred Years of Selected Alaskan History by Morgan Sherwood
- Our Stories, Our Lives: 23 Elders of the Cook-Inlet Region Talk about Their Lives edited by Alexandra McClanahan
- A Denaina Legacy, K'tl'egh: Sukdu: The Collected Writings of Peter Kalifornsky by Peter Kalifornsky
- The Copper Spike by Lone Jason

Alaska Native & Inuit Biographies

- Authentic Alaska: Voices of Its Native Writers edited by Susan Andrews and John Creed
- Fighter in Velvet Gloves: Alaska Civil Rights Hero Elizabeth Peratrovich by Annie Boochever & Roy Peratrovich Jr.
- Walter Harper, Alaska Native Son by Mary Ehrlander
- Fifty Miles from Tomorrow, by Willie Hensley
- Growing Up Native in Alaska: Finding the path to Identity edited by Alexandra McClanahan
- Art and Eskimo Power: The Life and Times of Alaskan Howard Rock by Lael Morgan
- Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Aboriginal Reality by Rupert Ross

Travel Memoirs

- Report of an Expedition to the Copper, Tananá, and Kóyukuk Rivers: In the Territory of Alaska, in the Year 1885 by Henry T. Allen
- White Eskimo: Knud Rasmussen's Fearless Journey into the Heart of the Arctic by Stephen Brown
- Island of the Blue Foxes: Disaster and Triumph on the World's Greatest Scientific Expedition by Stephen Brown
- Kabloona by Gentran De Poncins
- Edwin F. Glenn Journal 1898 by Edwin Glenn
- The Wake of an Unseen Object: Travels through Alaska's Native Landscapes by Tom Kizzia
- Alaska Wilderness: Exploring the Central Brooks Range by Robert Marshall
- Travels in Alaska by John Muir
- Alaska Passages: 20 Voices from Above the 54th Parallel, edited by Susan Fox Rogers





WORKING IN RURAL ALASKA

Tips to help NRCS employees to strengthen relationships with Alaska Native and rural Alaska partners.

Attribution: The following information was developed by and re-published with consent by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska.

PERSONAL CONDUCT

Mindset

- You are a guest in the village, and people will remember you (you represent all of NRCS Alaska!).
- Be humble, laugh at yourself.
- Don't rush or be in a hurry, allow plenty of extra time. It takes time to build trust.
- Practice patience and never show anger. If you are unsure of whether to be friendly or neutral to anyone who has been impolite to you, err on the side of being nice.
- Appreciate that other cultures might have different perspectives from your own.
- Remember that we are neighbors, we may not always agree, but we must live together as neighbors.

Actions

- Say hello and introduce yourself, especially to youth and elders.
- Be helpful: If an elder or someone with a disability needs assistance, offer to help, if they need a seat, offer your seat. Ask the people setting up/taking down a meeting, or loading/unloading a plane or boat, if they need any help.
- Find ways to practice generosity, a major value in Alaska Native cultures.
- Increase your cultural awareness.
- Respect Alaska Native peoples' ideas and traditional ways of knowing. Demonstrate this by listening attentively and never being dismissive.
- Strive for positive/open responses to suggestions (don't automatically respond with "no").
- Create long term relationships that are not solely for our benefit or agenda.
- Own your mistakes, seek out those who you offended, say you are sorry, and learn from your mistakes.
- Participate in community events like open gym when possible.
- Try Native foods; do not refuse an offering.



COMMUNICATION

Self-Awareness

- Alaska Native people may have a slower pace and longer pause time in communications. This is simply a cultural difference. Don't talk too fast.
- When asking for questions/comments, wait a little longer to allow people to respond.
- Value pauses and silent moments.
- Don't expect an immediate response – it may be more appropriate to ask for a response tomorrow, or on your next visit, than right away.
- Be aware of your voice (volume), your speech (tempo), your smile, the distance you stand (level of comfort in a village may be different from what you're used to), how much you talk and how much you listen. Do more listening than talking.
- Practice true listening, or listening at "level 3". Listening at level 3 means you don't interrupt; make sure you are thinking about what they're saying instead of thinking of your response or having your own dialogue in your mind.
- Respect recognized elders as traditional knowledge PhD holders.
- Be respectful when hearing about social ills or community challenges. If we want people to help us, let's meet them where they are. Acknowledge that if basic needs are in jeopardy it's hard to focus on conservation. We can help; it just means reframing our approach.
- Share and acknowledge history. People need to understand the past to take steps to improve future relationships. Break down stereotypes by building personal relationships.

How to Speak and Write

- Explain things in plain language. Plain language means to communicate in a way your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Use short sentences and common, everyday words. Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Avoid negative words when describing indigenous peoples' homelands (e.g. harsh, barren, impoverished, and featureless) or knowledge ("anecdotal," "unproven," "hearsay," etc.).
- Set an open and positive tone by avoiding the expert syndrome (acting like you know everything or saying "I" too much).
- Introduce yourself and be a person, rather than a title. A good start is where you grew up, how long you've been in Alaska, your family, and your interests. Introduce yourself in less than 1 minute.
- Use visuals. Many rural Alaskans are hands-on or visual learners.
- Briefly explain how the visuals are structured (when using graphs, charts etc.)
- Try to include local landmarks or place names (when using maps).
- Listen to village radio stations call in programs; consider a regularly scheduled radio spot covering updates, field projects, local hires, etc.
- Post (visually appealing) flyers in public locations.



VILLAGE VISITS

Planning and Prioritizing

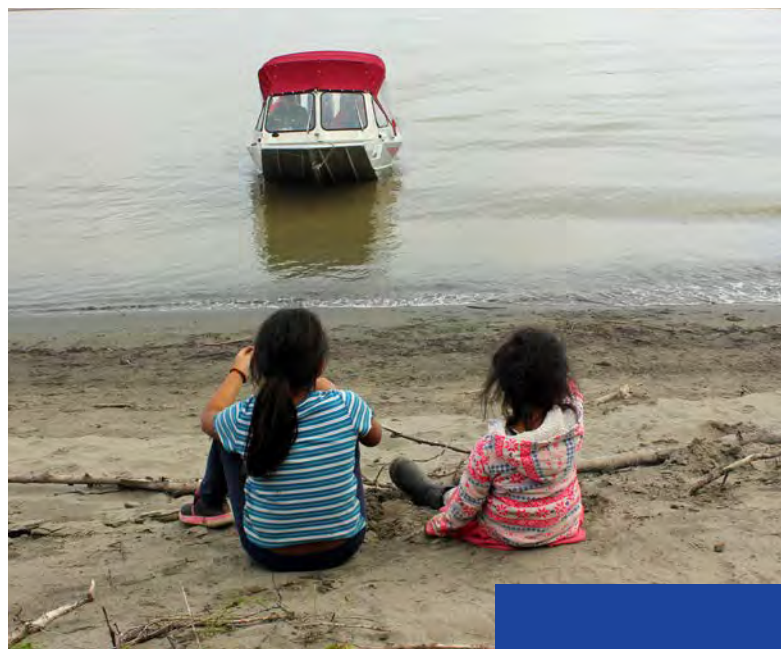
- Visit villages as much as you can, formally and informally.
- Be proactive: plan village visits and put them on the calendar. Plan around subsistence seasons/activities.
- Know who the First Chief, President, and/or tribal elders are.
- Take time to know Tribal office administrative staff by name and thank them for their help; take notes and remind yourself.
- Arrive early for meetings, visit people beforehand, and stay after the meeting.
- Plan for expected questions and prepare transparent, complete answers ahead of time when giving presentations.
- Provide consistency: Assign staff to villages; expect staff to develop relationships with villages; maintain continuity in your position, your projects, and your relationships; have the assigned point of contact introduce other employees to those communities they have a relationship with.
- Travel how local people travel: fly on the local airlines or go by snow machine or boat when possible. It provides a greater connection to the land, aids in your local credibility, and it's an amazing experience.
- Stay overnight. When possible, stay with a family in the village rather than the school or commercial facility.
- Bring a fresh snack with enough to share. Bring a bag of fruit, homemade baked goods, your moose sausage, etc.
- Consider arranging a presentation to students, especially when staying in the school.

Interacting in the Village

- Weather, snow conditions, recent hunts, and family updates are good topics to break the ice.
- At formal village/tribal meetings take notes on a whiteboard, flip chart, chalkboard or projector screen; if you are not certain how to summarize a comment/suggestion, ask. Wrap up at the end of the meeting the concerns you heard and any action items.
- Remember traditional ways are circular. A meeting about moose management may include discussions and stories about other species, changes in weather, and changes in the distant past.
- Attend important village events.

After the Meeting

- If questions/concerns beyond your expectation or expertise, get back to them after you have found an answer or connect them with the right person.
- Document and file trip notes, especially on any promises or agreements that were made; don't make promises you can't uphold.
- Hold post-project talks with the community; close the loop.



INVEST IN YOUR PARTNER AND PARTNERSHIP

- Seek common ground with your program by exploring the village/tribal plans/priorities.
- Make yourself available. Spend time in the village.
- Engage with tribal and rural partners at the beginning of a project during the planning stage. Continue throughout the project and share the outcomes, both positive and negative.
- Seek advice from elders as you move forward. With elder support, we are given much more muscle to use in a humble yet powerful way.
- Be sure to include all ages of the community, include youth activities, not just one group.
- Recognize and respect the uniqueness of each village. Each village has its own tribal government and priorities.
- Share condolences when a prominent village elder or leaders passes away. Consider an office wide condolence card/letter. If invited to a funerary or mortuary celebration, plan on attending.
- Nurture a friendship with an elder or community member.
- Involve village leaders/youth in field projects directly or through school classroom programs and/or tribal meetings.
- Engage with youth – a wise investment for the future. Share information about youth career development and employment programs.
- Target career and science events on the school calendars.
- Support search and rescues and other community emergencies.
- Spend money at the store, village events, holiday celebrations, etc.





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