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COPPER RIVER CENSUS AREA

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

2024-2029

The CEDS: To analyze the Copper River Census Areas economic conditions and serves as a guide for establishing the goals and objectives of our communities and the Region as a whole that will develop and implementing a plan of action.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Copper Valley Development Association (CVDA) has undertaken revision of the existing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), first drafted in 2003, updated in 2009 and last updated in 2012, with assistance from State and Federal agencies, non-profit organizations, local businesses, and input from the residents of the Copper River Census Area (CRCA). This CEDS is the result of a community-based planning process designed to guide the economic growth of the Copper River Census Area. It aims to assist the coordination of individual efforts, as well as those of organizations and private industry concerned with economic and community development. This five-year plan from 2024-2029 was built on the previous 2012 CEDS, this planning effort will guide CVDA's strategic direction and actions. The CEDS delivers the guidance to prioritize and implement the work required further economic development and stability for the region.

PURPOSE: The CEDS is a continuing process with diverse community participation which should promote sustainable economic development and job opportunities, foster effective transportation systems, enhance and protect the environment, and balance resource use through sound management of development. Every strategy in this plan aims to create employment in the region, raise wage levels in the region and bring private investment to the Copper River Region. This document will be readily accessible to the economic development stakeholders in the community and should be useful as a tool for local decision making.

The Copper Valley Development Association (CVDA) is the Regional ARDOR with the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) authorized by State statute and Federal authorization, with procurement authorities and public service duties and recognized by the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). As such, the CEDS helps facilitate the funding of economic development projects with grants through the EDA and other state and federal agencies.

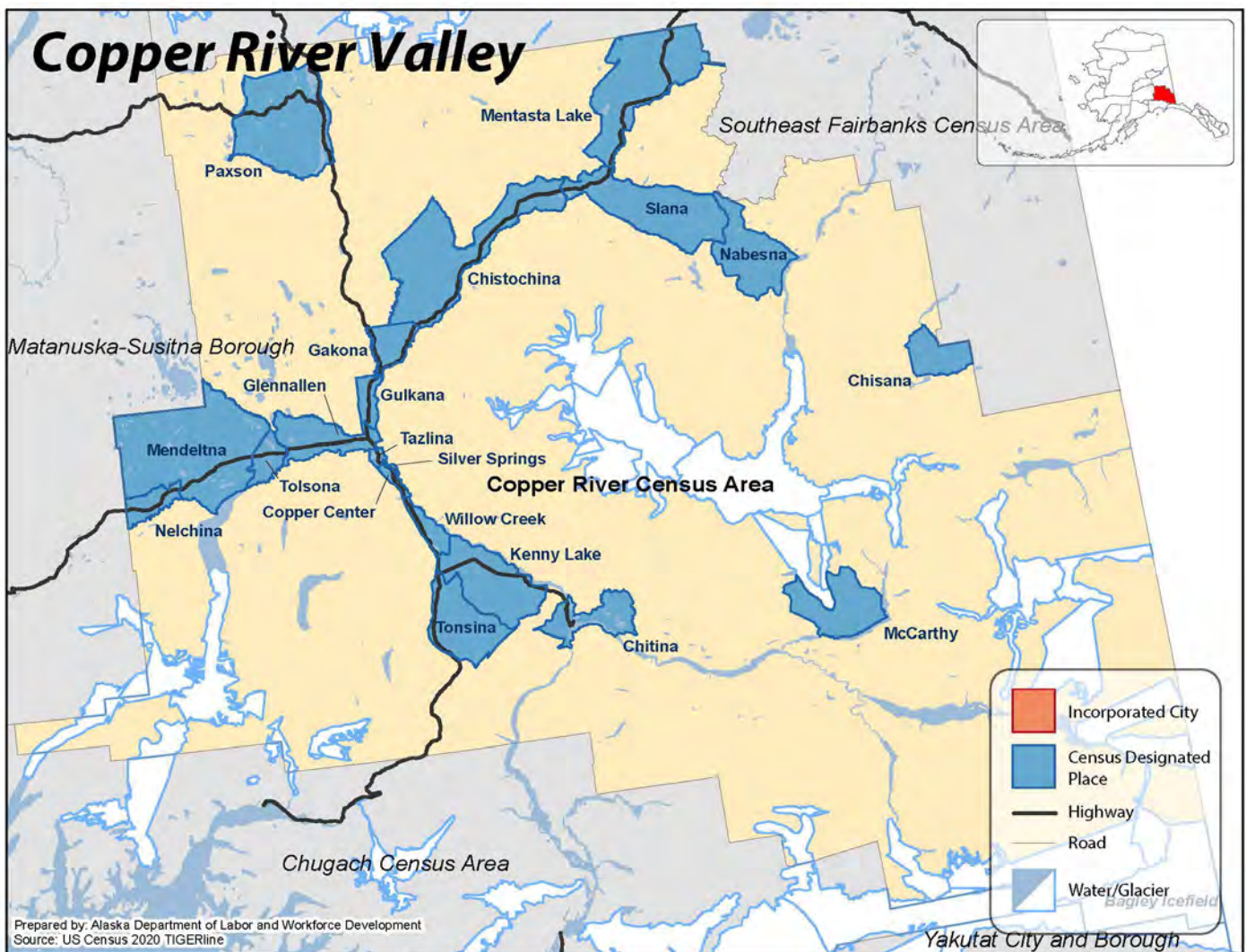
REGIONAL OVERVIEW

THE REGION: The CRCA is an unincorporated Census Designated Place (CDP) with no municipalities, counties, townships, or local government it is an unorganized borough. There are seven Federally Recognized Tribes in the CRCA, in 1980, six of the Village Corporations merged with Ahtna, Inc. The Chitina Native Corporation remains an independent corporation. Other regional organizations are businesses, federal and state agencies, as well as non-profit organizations. The CVDA functions as a public and private partnership to address natural resource and economic development opportunities and serves as a liaison between government and the private sector.

In 2017 the CVDA, with support from the Copper River Chamber of Commerce, Ahtna Inc, CRNA and the Copper River School District, requested the Copper River Area delineation from the Valdez-Cordova, through the Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs, in order to form an independent Census Area with the State and Federal Government. The Copper River Census Area (CRCA) was formed as a result of this effort and separated from Valdez-Cordova Census Area on January 2, 2019, the new census area more accurately depicts the economy, environment, resources, population and diversity of the region.

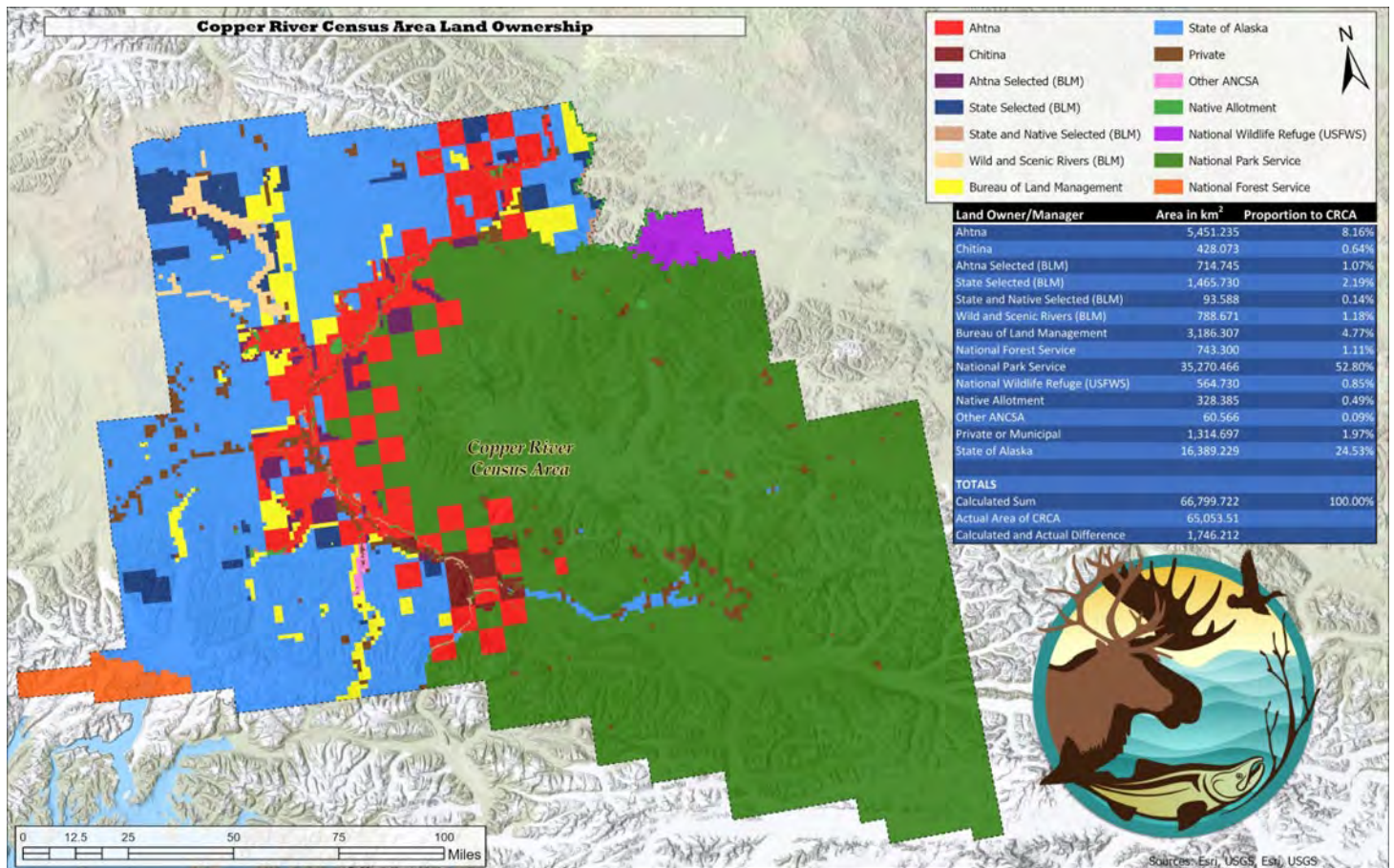
The CRCA encompasses approximately 24, 692 square miles and is bounded by the Alaska and Talkeetna Mountain Ranges to the north, Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge and Canada to the east, Thompson Pass in the Chugach Range to the south and the Matanuska-Susitna borough to the west. This vast region includes the Wrangell and St. Elias Mountain Range, which has nine of the 16 highest mountain peaks in North America. With a population of 2,617 (2020 Census); its largest communities are the CDPs of Glennallen and Copper Center. The CRCA is Located in the

eastern portion of southcentral Alaska and encompasses nearly 16 million acres of land. It is comprised mostly of rugged and mountainous landscape with large glaciers, wild and scenic rivers, and expansive boreal forests. The majority of this land is under federal ownership and is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) or Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Copper River and its tributaries are natal waters for one of the world's most productive salmon fisheries. There are approximately 2000 acres in agricultural production, current crops in production are brome grass hay, and small acreages of potatoes and vegetables. Quantities produced are not sufficient to meet local needs. There is limited livestock production at this time, with local production of beef and hogs. An access road to State agricultural lands has been developed on the west side of the pipeline, with some 2,000 acres identified for agricultural land disposal, with several more thousand acres showing agricultural potential. Agricultural development opportunities exist currently on approximately 75,000 acres. Evidence of human habitation of this area has been determined to be several thousand years old and is home to many Alaska Natives. This area contains several mining districts, some dating back to the 19th century when prospectors first discovered rich gold, silver, copper and lead deposits. Approximately 180 Miles of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), nearly ¼ of the total 800-mile pipeline traverse the Copper River Basin before reaching its terminus in Valdez. and the University of Alaska also manages several small tracts of land near Glennallen and McCarthy.



LAND OWNERSHIP: Very little of the land within the borders of the CRCA is owned by private individuals. Estimates put privately owned land at less than 2%, and predominantly along the road system. The largest landowners in the region are the National Park Service (NPS) about 53%, the State of Alaska about 25%, Ahtna Inc. about 8% and BLM about 5%.ⁱ

The unavailability of land for private ownership is a significant hindrance and impacts the ability of the region to support economic development. Land management responsibilities within the CRCA (apart from those of NPS) lie primarily with the State as seen below.

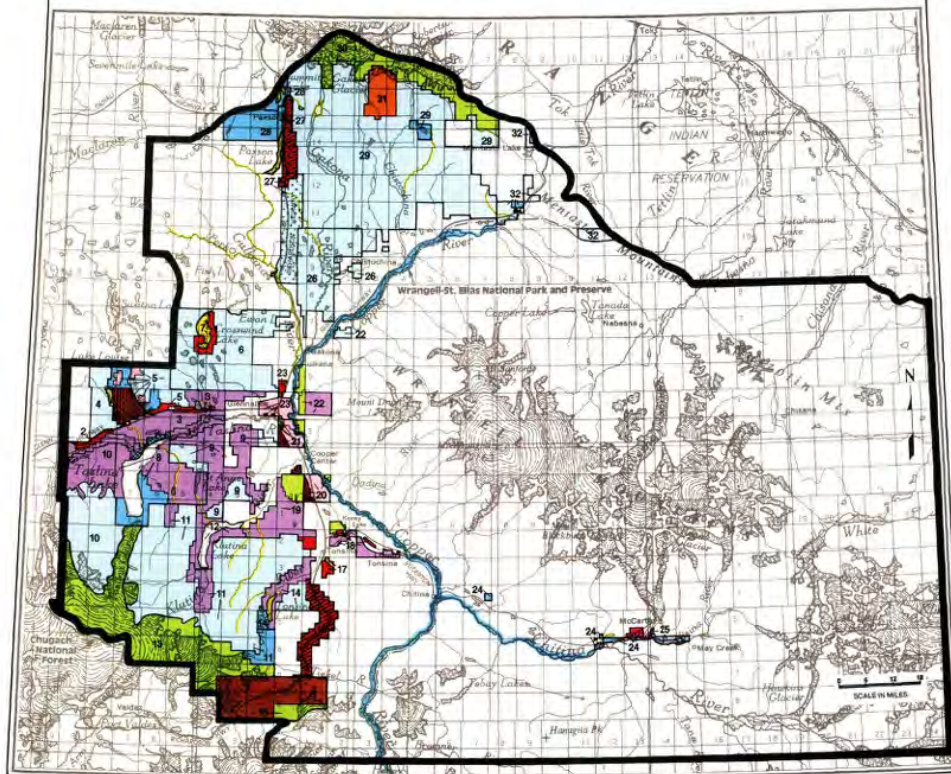


Source: Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC)

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is in the process of updating the 1986 Copper River Basin Area Plan (CRBAP)ⁱⁱ. As of the date of the publication of this report the DNR has not finalized the plan and is currently preparing an Issue Response Summary in response to comments received during the public comment period for the Public Review Draft (PRD) of the CRBAP. The CRBAP addresses the management of approximately 5.4 million acres of state land and water. Native corporations within the planning area are entitled to approximately 1.8 million acres of land. Numerous small tracts of privately owned land, particularly near Glennallen, Copper Center, and Kenny Lake, exist within the area, and the University of Alaska also manages several small tracts of land near Glennallen and McCarthy. This plan will describe the intended uses of state lands. The plan contains recommendations on which tracts of land should be retained by the state, sold to private citizens, or exchanged for other tracts of land.

COPPER RIVER BASIN AREA PLAN - for State Lands

Land Use Designations



PRIMARY SURFACE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

MULTIPLE USE LAND - OPEN TO MINERAL ENTRY
Lands to be retained in state ownership and managed for multiple use.

- Public Recreation
- Wildlife Habitat
- Wildlife Habitat/Public Recreation
- Wildlife Hab./Public Rec./Forestry
- Mining / Wildlife Habitat
- Resource Management
- Heritage Resource / Wildlife Hab./Public Rec.
- Transportation Corridor

LAND OFFERING AREAS

Areas where the state will offer land for private ownership. In most areas, only part of the areas shown will be transferred to private ownership.
These areas will be closed to mineral entry prior to offering.

- Proposed Settlement Offerings
- Proposed Agricultural or Mixed Offerings
- Settlement/ Forestry or Habitat
- Past State Land Offerings

AREAS TO BE CLOSED TO MINERAL ENTRY

All land is open to mineral entry unless otherwise specified.

- Streams & lakes closed to new mineral entry
- Area closed to new mineral entry

Management Units

This map shows generalized land use designations. Only the primary surface designations are shown. The primary uses are not the only uses that will be permitted; the large majority of publicly retained lands are multiple use areas where a variety of other uses, including mining, are allowed. See the Draft Plan for land management guidelines that apply to the whole planning area and a complete statement of management intent for each location.

The map also includes designations for land which is selected by both the state and native corporations. These land use designations only apply if the land is conveyed to the state. The map also does not show small privately owned parcels of land. The plan does not apply to private lands.



December 1986



Source: DNR CRBAP 1986 Plan

HISTORY: Archaeological evidence has established a record of continuous human presence in the middle Copper Basin for the past 1,000 years, although it was probably occupied much earlier. Historically, the Ahtna people were semi-nomadic and extensive travelers, living in small groups of 20 to 40 people. They continually moved from place to place, following food sources according to the seasons. Annual summer fish camps for the entire family and winter villages served as their base camps. Although most Ahtna are no longer nomadic, historical traditions and ways of life, especially the practice of a subsistence lifestyle, continue to this day.ⁱⁱⁱ European exploration of the Copper Basin began in the early 1780s. Russians traveled along the southern coast of Alaska in search of new sources of fur. In 1885 Allen and three companions landed at the mouth of the Copper River and began to ascend the Copper River around the west end of the Wrangell Mountains, Allen's party was the first scientific expedition to cross the Alaska Range from the Gulf of Alaska to the Yukon River. Before going north, Allen explored the upper Copper River Basin, the Chitina River Valley, and the western Wrangell Mountains. He named the Chitina and the Chitistone Rivers (both names incorporating the Athabascan word "chiti," meaning "copper") and established friendly relations with Chief Nicolai and his Copper River group of Ahtna Indians. He measured the heights and named many of the high Wrangell peaks, including Mount Blackburn, Mount Drum, and Mount Sanford, during his long summer sojourn in the area. Spurred by these early explorations there was an influx of prospectors during the Klondike gold discoveries in Canada in the 1890's. These journeys eventually led to mineral development of the Wrangell Mountains. The Kennecott mines were in operation for 27yrs until they were abandoned in 1938 when the ore was exhausted. The 196-mile-long railroad from Cordova, near the mouth of the Copper River, to the Kennecott mining hauled over a billion pounds of ore valued at \$100 to 300 million on the railroad. The railroad bed now

provides the base for most of the Chitina-McCarthy Road along the south flank of the Wrangell Mountains in the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Currently natives and non-Natives who have customarily and traditionally engaged in subsistence activities within the park and live in local, rural communities continue to pursue those activities now. Batzulnetas in the summer of 1848, the Russians and made no further efforts to explore the region.^{iv}

BACKGROUND SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE REGION

POPULATION AND INCOME

The regional population has steadily declined over the last decade, with the high cost of living in rural Alaska driven by high energy costs, the lack of employment opportunities and industry there continues to be outward migration to the urban centers where energy costs and food costs are lower and social services are more readily available. According to the 2020 Census Data population estimates of the CRCA was 2617, a drop in population of 245 from 2010. decrease in population, approximately 9%. Glennallen, Copper Center, Tazlina and Kenny Lake have the highest populations and are also the main shopping areas and service centers for the area, whereas Nabesna, Tolsana, Paxson and Mendeltna have the smallest populations. Due to the census being conducted at the height of the COVID19 pandemic the population counts may not be accurate, a margin of error by the Census Bureau should be considered.

Copper River Census Area Demographics and Income (US Census 2020 and 2022 ACS ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile)

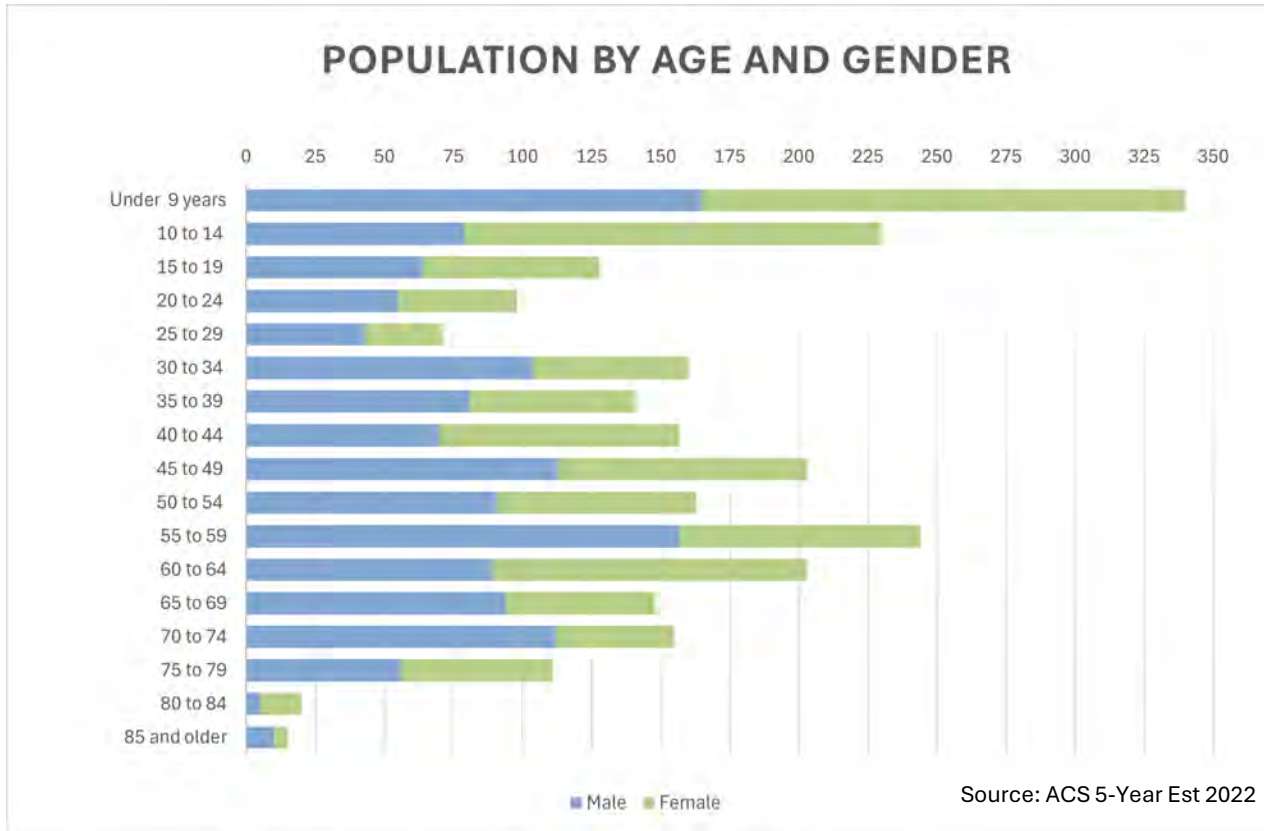
POPULATION CHANGE					2022	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022
Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section/2020 Census Data										
COMMUNITY	2010	2020	2010 - 2020 Change	2010 - 2020 % Change	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PER CAPITA INCOME	OWNER OCCUPIED	RENTER OCCUPIED	POVERTY %
Chistochina	93	60	-33	-35.5%	0.0%	No Info	\$ 43,087.00	15	11	24.4%
Chitina	126	101	-25	-19.8%	0.0%	No Info	\$ 26,383.00	22	23	53.5%
Copper Center	328	338	10	3.0%	17.1%	\$ 65,556.00	\$ 30,202.00	67	45	3.4%
Gakona	218	169	-49	-22.5%	17.4%	No Info	\$ 36,586.00	62	5	16.1%
Glennallen	483	439	-44	-9.1%	5.4%	\$ 78,173.00	\$ 40,134.00	116	122	6.8%
Gulkana	119	110	-9	-7.6%	21.4%	No Info	\$ 34,833.00	13	20	1.4%
Kenny Lake	355	234	-121	-34.1%	0.0%	\$ 39,667.00	\$ 27,999.00	70	0	1.8%
McCarthy	28	107	79	282.1%	0.0%	No Info	No Info	No Info	No Info	No Info
Mendeltna	39	36	-3	-7.7%	0.0%	\$ 75,804.00	\$ 40,952.00	49	0	44.9%
Mentasta Lake	112	127	15	13.4%	0.0%	No Info	\$ 20,080.00	45	20	33.9%
Nabesna	5	2	-3	-60.0%	Not avail	No Info	No Info	No Info	No Info	No Info
Nelchina	59	45	-14	-23.7%	0.0%	No Info	\$ 45,579.00	40	0	0.0%
Paxson	40	26	-14	-35.0%	Not avail	No Info	No Info	No Info	No Info	No Info
Silver Springs	114	111	-3	-2.6%	0.0%	\$ 125,938.00	\$ 67,402.00	45	0	0.0%
Slana	147	116	-31	-21.1%	45.5%	No Info	\$ 28,758.00	12	33	18.5%
Tazlina	297	244	-53	-17.8%	3.4%	\$ 115,156.00	\$ 43,816.00	18	45	12.5%
Tolsana	30	12	-18	-60.0%	0.0%	No Info	No Info	21	0	0.0%
Tonsina	78	55	-23	-29.5%	0.0%	No Info	No Info	0	16	0.0%
Willow Creek	191	190	-1	-0.5%	0.0%	\$ 72,212.00	\$ 44,928.00	46	10	0.0%
Balance	90	95	5							
Total	2862	2617	-245	-8.6%				641	350	

The median household income for the CVCA in 2022 is \$70,606 and a poverty rate of 11.2% compared to the state median household income of \$88,121 and a poverty rate of %11.0%. 70 % of the Communities withing the CRCA have been identified as distressed communities in the Denali Commission 2023 Distressed Communities Report.

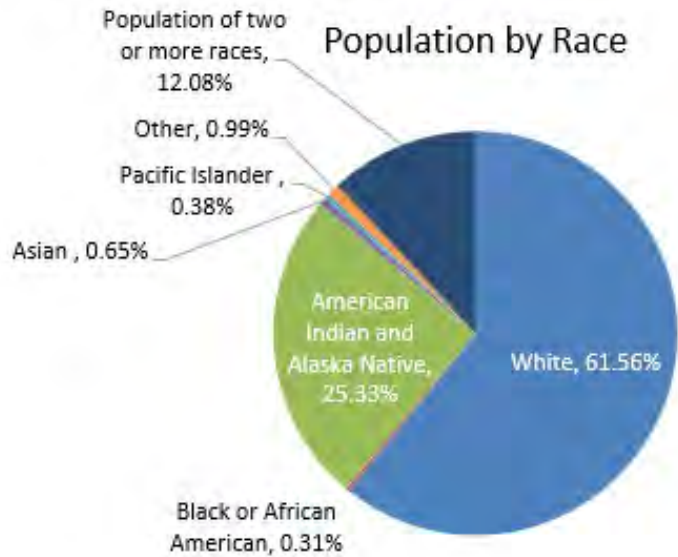
According to Alaska DOT & PF traffic count data, the volume of traffic, at the area known as the HUB, increases in the summer months by about 3 times. In the area east of the Edgerton Hwy (towards Chitina) traffic increases by

about 7 times. The increase of summer traffic by visitors traveling through the region provides an economic opportunity to capture tourism dollars.

The CVCA by race, as seen below, approximately 62% of the population is white, followed by 25% who are American Indian and Alaska Native, less than 1% who are Asian, less than 1% who are Black or African American, less than 1% who are Pacific Islander and 1% other. There is variation by Community. The Ahtna (also Ahtena, Atna, Ahtna-kohtaene, or Copper River) are an Alaska Native Athabaskan people and are the primary Alaska Native group in the region. There are seven native Village Corporations in the Region, six merged with Ahtna Native Corporation and the Chitina Native Corporation remains an independent corporation.



In 2020 forty-seven percent of the population in the CVCA is male and fifty-three percent are women. In 2022 the population percentages for males and females flipped to 47% male and 53% female. The number of prime-age workers between the ages of 18-54 in 2022 was 1026 a 4% drop from the 1250 in 2020. A full distribution of the population by gender and age is below, with females in green and males in blue. Estimates from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development indicate that there is a net migration out of the region between 2012 and 2022 was a loss of 393 residents.



EDUCATION

School district enrollment has been fluctuating in the region since the last CEDS in 2012. Between 2012 and 2022 enrollment in the Copper River School District dropped by 58 students or 12%. Education attainment for adults 25 and older, the State of Alaska and the CRCA are relatively similar. There are some differences in the areas as illustrated in the chart below. The number of people with Associate Degrees and Graduate or Professional Degrees are 3.5% less in the CRCA compared to the state while the number of Bachelor’s Degrees and High School or Equivalent Degrees are 29.1%, the same as the state. Given the small sample size these numbers should be considered general estimates due to high margins of error, but this does illustrate and equal need for technical and professional or management employment opportunities within the region.^{vi}

Education Attainment (Population 25 Years and Older)			
Measure	Copper River Census Area	State of Alaska	Difference
High School or Equivalent Degree	29.1%	29.1%	0.0%
Somes College, No Degree	28.9%	23.7%	5.2%
Associates’ Degree	6.4%	9.9%	-3.5%
Bachelor’s Degree	19.0%	19.2%	-0.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	9.0%	11.3%	-2.3%

Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DATA

Demographics	2020	2022	% CHANGE 2020-2022	CHANGE 2020-2022
Total Population	2,894	2,614	-9.7%	-280
Under Age 15	731	570	-22.0%	-161
15-24	283	253	-10.6%	-30
Prime- Age 25-54 (prime age workers)	1,041	895	-14.0%	-146
55-65	483	447	-7.5%	-36
Ages 65 and older	356	449	26.1%	93
K-12 School District Enrollment	392	406	3.6%	14
General Economic Conditions				
Total Labor Force (jobs, includes self-employed)	1,274	1,220	-4.2%	-54
Total Job Earnings	\$2.65 million	\$2.39 million	11%	\$252 million
Total Private Sector Payroll	\$1.80 billion	\$1.58 billion	14%	\$224 million
Average Annual Wage	\$59,493	\$56,605	5%	\$2,888
Annual Unemployment Rate	5.6%	3.9%	-1.7%	
Economic Sectors by Industry				
	2020	2022	% CHANGE	CHANGE
Class of Worker				
Government Employment (State & Federal) (42.8%)	508	475	-6.5%	-33
Private wage and Salary (51.3%)	609	542	-11.0%	-67
Self Employed (6%)	71	102	43.7%	31
Total Government Payroll (millions)	\$15,674,259	\$18,018,726	13%	\$ 2,344,467
State of Alaska Payroll	\$ 4,401,900	\$ 4,405,104	0%	\$ 3,204
Construction				
Total Construction Employment	71	28	-60.6%	-43
Total Construction Industry Wages/Earnings	\$ 9,455,321	\$ 2,348,600	-75.2%	-\$7,106,721
Heavy Construction	\$9,207,497	\$-	-100.0%	-\$9,207,497
Specialty Trade Contractors	\$247,824	\$-	-100.0%	-\$247,824
Trade, Transportation & Utilities				
Total Trade, Transportation & Utilities Employment	185	203	9.7%	18
Total Trade, Transportation & Utilities Employment Earnings	\$ 8,770,008	\$ 9,630,013	9.8%	\$860,005
Retail Trade				
Retail Trade Employment	87	100	14.9%	13
Retail Trade Wages/Earnings	\$ 2,461,945	\$ 2,887,572	17.3%	\$425,627
Food & Beverage Employment	32	35	9.4%	3
Food & Beverage Wages/Earnings	\$ 2,461,945	\$ 844,646	-65.7%	-\$1,617,299
Gasoline Stations Employment	24	35	45.8%	11
Gasoline Stations Wages/Earnings	\$ 616,801	\$ 1,289,939	109.1%	\$673,138
Transportation and Warehousing Employment	11	42	281.8%	31
Transportation and Warehousing Wages/Earnings	\$ 329,822	\$ 1,613,463	389.2%	\$1,283,641
Utilities Employment (fewer than 3 entities for 2022, no data provided)	\$ 53			
Utilities Wages/Earnings (fewer than 3 entities for 2022, no data) provided)	\$ 4,882,961		-100.0%	-\$4,882,961
Financial				
Financial Employment	20	23	15.0%	3
Financial Wages/Transportaiton	\$ 1,779,761	\$ 1,265,498	-28.9%	-\$514,263
Professional and Business Services				
Professional and Business Services Employment	18	26	44.4%	8
Professional and Business Services Wages/Earnings	\$ 1,033,952	\$ 1,385,381	34.0%	\$351,429
Educational and Health Services				
Educational and Health Services Employment	223	233	4.5%	10
Educational and Health Services Wages/Earnings	\$13,137,450	\$14,328,611	9.1%	\$1,191,161
Leisure and Hospitality				
Leisure and Hospitality Employment (average may - sept 286)	99	166	67.7%	67
Leisure and Hospitality Wages/Earning	\$ 6,071,515	\$ 5,211,653	-14.2%	-\$859,862
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Employment	23	38	65.2%	15
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Wages/Earnings	\$ 3,355,700	\$ 1,213,005	-63.9%	-\$2,142,695
Accomodations and Food Services Employment	76	129	69.7%	53
Accomodations and Food Services Wages/Earnings	\$ 2,715,815	\$ 3,998,648	47.2%	\$1,282,833
Other Selected Statistics				
	2020	2022	% CHANGE	CHANGE
Median Monthly Rental Cost	\$757	\$877	15.9%	120
Median Age	39.7	43.1	8.6%	3.4
Older Population (65+)	12.3%	17.2%	39.8%	4.9%

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor (ADOL); 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; *US Census Nonemployer (self-employment) Statistics and estimates based on business climate surveys;

ENVIRONMENTAL, GEOGRAPHIC AND CLIMATE

The center of the Copper River Region is located at the crossing of the Glenn and Richardson Highways thus serving all ground transportation traffic from Anchorage to the lower 48 by means of the Alaska Highway and is often referred to as the HUB of Alaska. These crossroads are vital to the supply chain for all industries in the state and most of the commerce that sustains the CRCA. This is a key piece of Alaska transportation infrastructure. The heavy traffic in summer months coupled with the permafrost conditions typical to the area are taxing on road conditions. Residents, businesses and visitors to the area continue to reiterate their displeasure with travel conditions and lack of amenities on these roads. The Gulkana Airport, approximately 5 miles from this intersection, is a high value asset to the region that is an underutilized vital resource.

Significant flooding events occurred in Glennallen along the Glenn Hwy in 2022 and 2023, prompting a Presidential declaration of a major disaster and a disaster declaration by Governor Dunlevy for the Copper River Census Area. Flooding in this area had substantial impacts on residents and businesses. These occurrences prevented businesses from operating, residents/homeowners from accessing their property, and the sewer service to 80 properties was disabled for a period of time. The flooding continues to impact the community annually, emergency vehicles cannot reach the people and businesses affected, the flooding creates unsanitary conditions that can result in health and environmental risks. There will continue to be significant economic loss, cost and major repair work to local businesses, residents’ homes, state and federal agency offices due to closures and damages caused by the annual flooding.

Some communities in the CRCA face potential threats of varying severity to its infrastructure imposed by erosion, flooding, and thawing permafrost. The risk may increase over time. They are identified as Group 2 & Group 3 hazards as noted in the 2019 Statewide Threat Assessment: Identification of Threats from Erosion, Flooding, and Thawing Permafrost in Remote Alaska Communities Report Prepared for the Denali Commission. The communities in the region that are affected are Chistochina, Chitna, Copper Center, Gakona, Gulkana, Mentasta Lake and Tazlina.^{vii}

2019 Statewide Threat Assessment**					
Risk Assessment CVCA Effected Communities				Combined Threat Community Ranking	Notes:
Erosion	Flood	Permafrost			
Chisana					Group 2 (Erosion and Flooding): The threat is not expected to detrimentally impact critical infrastructure in the near term, but the community is still vulnerable to the threat. Damages resulting from a moderate flood or compounding erosion could impact operability for a limited period but would not impact the community’s sustainability. An extreme event may cause damages like those described as the impact of a moderate event in Group 1. More research and data collection should be conducted to better understand the threat posed to the community. Note that a community can have a time factor of long or mid-term to be included in Group 2, depending on the severity of damage to critical infrastructure expected if an event occurs. Group 3 (Erosion and Flooding): There is no information available that indicates a threat to critical infrastructure or to the viability of a community, or there is low likelihood that a threat will detrimentally impact the community in the near term. If communities in Group 3 experience threats, they should notify officials and collect data to support understanding the impacts. The time to damage is predicted to be long for all communities in Group 3. Group 2 (Permafrost): Risk of damage due to thawing permafrost is moderate. Permafrost usually has moderate ice content where thaw settlement is anticipated to be moderate. Reported damage due to thawing permafrost is moderate. Underlying permafrost may be discontinuous. Group 3 (Permafrost): Risk of damage due to thawing permafrost is low or nonexistent. Underlying permafrost is sporadic; nonexistent or underlying soils are ice-poor, thaw stable materials such as sandy gravels. No or minor damage has been reported. Combined Threat: Combined threat for the communities evaluated in this study. The communities with the greatest combined threat have the lowest # while the communities with the lowest combined threat have the highest #. ** 2019 State Threat Assessment Report #INE19.03
Chistochina	Grp 3	Grp 2	Grp 3	70/115	
Chitina	Grp 3	Grp 3	Grp 2	95/100	
Copper Center	Grp 3	Grp 2	Grp 3	81/115	
Gakona	Grp 3	Grp 2	Grp 3	84/115	
Glennallen					
Gulkana	Grp 2	Grp 2	Grp 2	32/115	
Kenny Lake					
McCarthy					
Mendeltna					
Mentasta Lake	Grp 3	Grp 3	Grp 3	112/115	
Nabensa					
Nelchina					
Paxson					
Silver Springs					
Slana					
Tazlina	Grp 3	Grp 3	Grp 3	98/115	
Tolsona					
Tonsina					
Willow Creek					
% of Threatened Communities in the Region by group;					
Grp 2 %	5.00%	20.00%	10.00%		
Grp 3 %	30.00%	15.00%	25.00%		

In the Copper River Census Area subsistence harvesting is an activity of paramount importance. Both traditionally and economically, food is one of the most important subsistence uses of wild resources. The current rural subsistence harvest is about 295 pounds of food per person per year, according to the Federal Subsistence Management Program.^{viii} The primary source of protein for many Alaskans’ living in the CRCA.

The Federal Subsistence Board Closed Federal Public Lands to Caribou Hunting by all Users in Units 11, 12 remainder, and 13 for 2023-2024 and 2024 – 2025. The most recent population information indicates the is in serious decline with no harvestable surplus. The July 2023 estimate was 8,823 animals, in October of 2023 estimate was 6,893 animals, well below the State management objective of 35,000–40,000 caribou. ^{ix} On June 18, 2024, for 2024-2025, both Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission and the Bureau of Land Management Glennallen Field Office, requested the closure due to continued decline of the Nelchina caribou herd population.

The Board additionally expressed deep concern about the impacts of this closure on the continuation of subsistence uses and the need for a long-term management and recovery plan for the herd. The Board amended the request to allow caribou harvests for memorial potlatches and cultural programs to support cultural continuation and handing down of knowledge through generations. ^x

INFRASTRUCTURE

BROADBAND

Copper Valley Telephone Cooperative (CVTC) is a member owned community-based telecommunications cooperative providing communication services to the Copper River Census Area by delivering advanced telephone, long-distance, high-speed internet connectivity, wireless voice, and LTE data over state-of-the-art networks. The CVTC provides high-capacity special access services of all sizes and speeds for schools, libraries, hospitals, state and federal government agencies, and other anchor institutions via robust fiber optic and digital microwave. CVTC is in the 8th year of a 10-year plan to bring “Fiber to the Home” to all communities in the region. At the completion of this project 2024 locations can be connected via high-speed internet have download speeds of at least 1Gbps and upload speeds of at least 25 Mbps.

CVTC continues to broaden their services in the region with expanded wireless service in the Chitina-McCarthy area (one of the primary tourism locations in the Copper River Region). Expansion of the fiber optic capability in the region has also continued to be a priority. As of 12/2023 there are 1082 lines in service in the Copper River Region. The following Communities have fiber in that can receive symmetrical gigabit speeds (1G/1G) Chitina, Chistochina, Copper Center/Silver Springs, Gakona, Glennallen, Gulkana, Kenny Lake, McCarthy/Kennicott, Mentasta, Slana/Nabesna (to MP 4 on the Nabesna Road), Tazlina and Tonsina. Mendeltna, Nelchina and Tolsona are planned for 2024 and Paxson is planned for 2025.^{xi}

CVTC is in the process of a Broadband Revamp project to strengthen the telecommunications infrastructure. Currently, connected to a single upstream provider through a subsea Fiber. This configuration presents difficulties in the event of a fiber cut or equipment failure outside of CVT’s network. To address this vulnerability, the revamp implements a dual-headend setup and will connect to a secondary upstream provider reducing the risk of disruptions. This strategic enhancement better equips the cooperative to maintain a consistent service quality. Adding an additional headend in Glennallen with redundant carriers and diverse routes outside of the state of Alaska provides additional protections for CVT’s network that will better serve and keep members connected.

POWER

Copper Valley Electric Association (CVEA) started as a small group of Copper Basin residents in 1952. In February of 1959, the first power from CVEA's diesel generating plant went through 48 miles of line. Starting as a tiny co-op with 38 members has since grown to 2,768 and provides electricity to approximately 3,966 homes and businesses in both the Copper Basin and Valdez areas.

CVEA owns and operates a diverse mix of power plants that includes two hydroelectric plants, a cogeneration plant, and two diesel plants. The total generating capacity is 40 megawatts. In a typical year more than 60% of CVEA's energy comes from clean, renewable, carbon-free, hydroelectric power. CVEA's service areas are tied together with a 106-mile, 138-kilovolt transmission line that is owned and operated by CVEA. The transmission line provides the link to all five generating plants. Power can flow from any of the generating plants to the end consumers. Historically, power flows from Valdez to the Copper Basin in the summer months, as nearly all of the power requirements are met with two hydroelectric plants. In the winter months power is supplied by the two diesel plants. With seasonal generation, electric rates are significantly higher in the winter, the average winter electric bill is 138 percent higher than the US average (\$190 vs \$80).

TRANSPORTATION

In 2022 the Governor Dunleavy, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the Copper Valley Development Association (CVDA) through the cooperative agreement designated the establishment of the first Regional Planning Organization in the State for the Copper River Valley. The Copper River Valley Regional Planning Organization (CRV-RPO). The CRV-RPO, an independent policy committee, housed and administered by the CVDA, the Regional ARDOR with AK-DCCED. Whose purpose is to work together on transportation priorities within the CRCA. The CRV-RPO ensures regional input to identify local transportation needs and allow for better planning, prioritization and decision making that feeds into DOT&PF's capital project development and fosters economic development in the region.

The Gulkana Airport (GKN) serves as a strategic transportation hub for Glennallen and the surrounding Copper River Valley region. The airport is integral to the Governor's priorities of food and energy security and overall economic development. The community with Alaska DOT&P updated the existing 2019 Airport layout plan (ALP) for Gulkana (GKN) Airport. GKN is an underutilized asset for the region, some of its current uses are scheduled and charter flights, military training, medevac services, law enforcement, firefighting, recreational flying, flight training, and mail delivery. Much of the air traffic is generated by flights to the Wrangell – St. Elias National Park and Preserve and other back country areas for tours, hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and other back country activities. During summer and fall, General Aviation (GA) traffic by aircraft not based at Gulkana Airport uses the airport to access fuel and other services. The Airport is owned and operated by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). The DOT&PF Commissioner proposed the Gulkana Airport (GKN) as a candidate for the FAA Re-authorization program's Section 726 General Aviation Airport Runway Extension Pilot Program. The plan recommends a series of projects to be completed in the 0 to 5, 6 to 10, and 11 to 20-year timeframes^{xii}.

Some of the Capital Improvement projects may be funded with FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) but many are not eligible and require other sources of funding from grants and private investment. The FAA approved plans would allow for a runway extension, float moat, lease lots, additional tie down areas and hangers for various

occupants and improved emergency services. The ALP allows for broader economic development opportunities from the private sector and the improved use and access from this vital regional resource.

Alaska DOT&PF projects identified in the 2024-2027 STIP ranged from Rehabilitation to resurfacing and are at various points in execution from design to construction. Other important projects by AK DOT&PF Upgrade the Copper River boat launch facility rest area and parking lot by upgrading individual sites at the rest area (under construction 24'), enhancing road surfacing, and improve parking capacity; resurface the Edgerton Highway between MP 24 and MP 29 (under construction 24'). Other regional infrastructure projects; McCarthy Road Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) study underway with anticipated completion of Fall 2025

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is updating the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan (IATP). The IATP is a 20-year regional multimodal transportation plan that will guide future public investments in transportation infrastructure in the interior Alaska region. The Copper River Census Area is located within the study area. The CRV-RPO and the CVDA are participating in the process of developing the study. The IATP is integral to the Long Range Transportation plan being undertaken for the CRCA.

The Federal Highway Administration - Western Federal Lands (WFL) Highway Division, in partnership with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the National Park Service (NPS), are working together to conduct a corridor study along the McCarthy Road. This study will identify transportation-related improvements for the McCarthy Road corridor. This could include improvements related to road condition and drainage issues, hazards such as landslides, and bridges and culverts. Enhancements related to visitor and recreation access will also be considered. The study corridor extends 60 miles from the eastern end of Chitina to the Kennicott River, and another four miles to the southern end of the Kennicott subdivision.

The DOT& PF is working on the following statewide initiatives Alaska Project Exchange (APEX) map: detailed project information including project scopes, timelines, contact information, maps, and links to more information at <https://dot.alaska.gov/construction>; The Interior Alaska Transportation Plan (IATP) underway with anticipated completion of Fall 2024; Waysides Plan underway to identify facilities, needs and opportunities; Innovation involving Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS): Unmanned Aircraft Systems <https://dot.alaska.gov/uas/> used for flood assessments and avalanche mitigation; Improvements to 511.

WATER AND SEWER

Many homes in the region are fully plumbed and many still have water and sewer challenges, some have private wells, but the water is often of poor quality in the region. There are several community wells in the region and water is typically hauled or delivered water by truck. There is a lack of access to water in the Kenny Lake area where the bulk of agricultural development for the Copper River Region takes place.

Glennallen is the only area in the CVCA that is connected to a piped sewage system operated by the Glennallen Improvement Corporation. Wastewater service active connections is currently 76, 31 residential service connections, 3 institutional service connections, and 42 small commercial service connections^{xiii}. Most residences throughout the Copper River Census Area utilize septic tank systems but permafrost and high-water tables can cause drainage failures.

EMERGING/DECLINING/INDUSTRY SECTORS

Historically the Copper River Valley's economy was generated through farming, mining, hunting, and timber production. The region benefited from bumps in the economy from the pipeline and construction. As the majority of mining, guided hunts, trapping, and timber production in the region closed supporting businesses, such as lodges, grocery suppliers, farmers, and other local businesses, began to decline as the workforce that supported these industries disappeared. In more recent years the cost of utilities, housing, groceries, transportation, health care and miscellaneous goods are about 35% above the national average. The COVID-19 pandemic most industries were distributed to varying degrees, but accommodations and food service were hit the hardest. Several local businesses closed and never re-opened. There is a shortage of housing, limited availability of health care and services like daycare, grocery stores, restaurants, laundry facilities, gas, emergency services. Many of the usual-to-day needs are no longer available. Opportunities in many of these areas exist and could spur economic growth while fulfilling the needs of the communities in the region.

FOOD SECURITY - REGIONAL FOOD HUB

The Alaska Food Security and Independent Task Force, convened by Governor Dunlevy, 2022 Report addressed and identified barriers that the farming community, who are engaged in the growing, harvesting, or raising food, face when starting a new business or how current producers get their products into the Alaska market. Because farming interest and growth continues to increase, there are challenges and weaknesses that food production and food security in the region face. These also create opportunities for economic development and support of our local farmers. Meat processing facility needs are outpacing supply; cold and freezer storage is limited and because of the high cost of energy and are expensive to run. Affordable DEC certified kitchens and processing equipment are needed by smaller entrepreneurial establishments that are producing value-added and cottage foods for sale to restaurants, chefs, grocery stores, retailers, school food programs and wholesale market products. The region is also lacking accessible and affordable distribution systems. Along with processing and food storage facilities there is a need for food safety training and education, and infrastructure support.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

The recently updated Gulkana Airport Layout plan, approved by the FAA and completed in partnership with the CVDA, CRV-RPO and the Alaska DOT & PF provides unique opportunities for economic development and growth in the region outside. There are several areas of economic opportunity for emerging sectors and strengthening some of the existing economic engines in the region. Energy Innovation and Alternative and Renewable Energy, Improved supply chain efficiency for local businesses, A boost in tourism, allow for faster and more efficient aircraft to respond to emergencies, improving the movement of goods and services in the region and throughout the state, workforce development opportunities and technical training, a regional Food HUB to increase Food Security for the region. There are significant economic benefits, enhanced safety, and support for sustainable development, addressing both immediate and long-term needs of the region.

BROADBAND

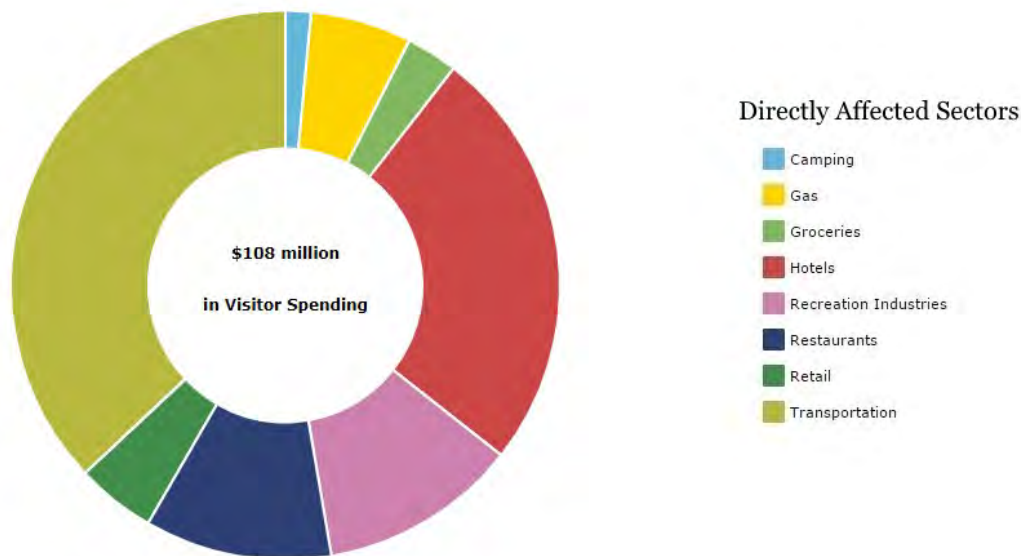
The continuation of the "fiber to the home" project by CVTC brings 1G/1G to the region. This project is providing some of the highest broadband speeds available in the nation and will attract new businesses that previously found slow access to the internet a deterrent to locating a business in the region. In addition to giving the regional a technical advantage that would attract businesses of all sizes and types from areas across the state and the nation,

high speed broadband opens up a world of employment opportunities in technical, professional and vocational areas.

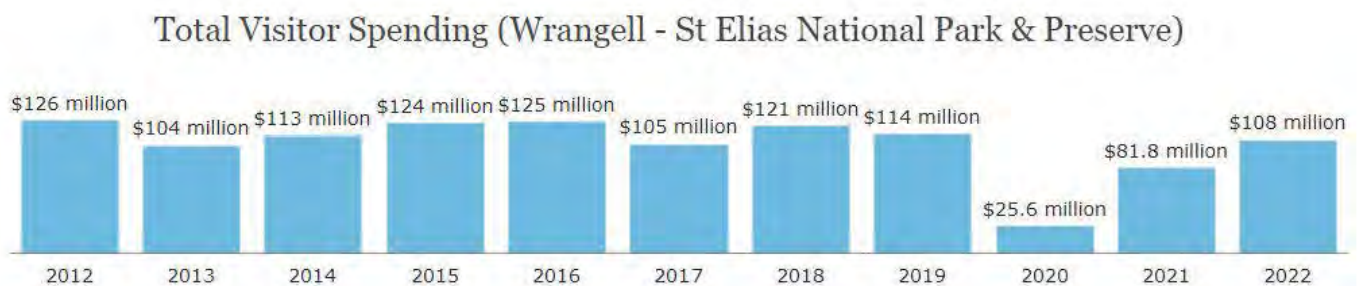
TOURISM

Tourism to the Copper River Region accounted for 6% of all visitors to Alaska in 2023, the area continues to see a significant decrease. Visitor count, as recorded by the Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, Visitor Information Center in Glennallen, shows an estimated 10,826 visitors (down from 49,000 in 2012) were received in the Glennallen area, of number of visitors, 1,207 were from Alaska, 1,963 were international and the rest from the lower 48/ Tourism related businesses are typically sole proprietor or partnership in type, small in nature and dedicated to lodging and/or guiding. ^{xiv}

Recent studies characterize visitors to the Copper River Region as "just passing through". While the average Alaskan visitor spent \$1,434 per person on an average 8.3 night stay elsewhere in the state (\$173/day). There is an opportunity to capture tourism dollars in the region based on the number of visitors passing through on their way to somewhere.



Total Visitor Spending (Wrangell - St Elias National Park & Preserve)



Source: nps.gov visitor spending effects

Most Copper River Region visitors used the Internet to research their trip. There is no local government in the region (non-native) so traditional marketing programs funded by transient room taxes or sales taxes are not possible. The Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce currently operates on a gross yearly budget of under \$50,000.00 and is dedicated primarily to the promotion of the region by internet and local tradeshow but is unable to promote on a national and international level. The Wrangell St Elias National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, adds to the economy by generating revenue for those businesses which operate within its boundary. These are primarily owned by Alaskans residing outside of the Copper River Region. There are currently 12 concession contracts (mostly sport hunting operations) and roughly 56 commercial use authorizations for services in the park. These are issued by the park superintendent and there are currently no limitations on issuance. The Wrangell St Elias National Park is the largest in North America and operates on a budget of roughly \$5 million a year. In 2023 78,305 visitors were recorded by the park visitor center, July was the busiest month, with 20,054 visits, and August the second highest month with 16,829 visits. 3658 by the Slana ranger station and 2230 by the Chitina ranger station. These numbers represent a 20% increase from the previous year and a 370% since the 2020 (the second lowest rate since the park open in 1982). Park management highly encourages business ventures of a non-consumptive nature to apply for a commercial use authorization.^{xv} In 2022, 65.2 thousand park visitors spent an estimated \$108 million in local gateway regions while visiting Wrangell - St Elias National Park & Preserve. These expenditures supported a total of 1,510 jobs, \$58.9 million in labor income, \$94.1 million in value added, and \$161 million in economic output in local gateway economies surrounding Wrangell - St Elias National Park & Preserve. There is an opportunity to capture more tourism dollars.^{xvi}

AGRICULTURE

There are approximately 2000 acres in agricultural production at this time, mostly in the Kenny Lake area. Hay production on 60 to 200 acres farms is prominent and farmers produce some of the highest quality hay in the state. This is sold inside and outside the region. Many families maintain home gardens for personal use. There is limited livestock production at this time, with local production of beef and hogs and yak. The lack of a slaughterhouse in the region/state elevates the price of livestock making it in many cases uncompetitive for sale in and out of the region. An access road to State agricultural lands has been developed on the west side of the pipeline, with some 2,000 acres identified for agricultural land disposal, with several more thousand acres showing agricultural potential. Agricultural development opportunities exist currently on approximately 75,000 acres.

FACTORS AFFECTING ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The following factors affect the economic performance and viability of the region. The high cost of energy, limited housing, lack of health care, high cost of living, limited childcare, availability of private property for development are currently obstacles to attracting new business and a viable workforce to the region. However, there are opportunities within these barriers to provide for economic growth.

ENERGY

The lack of access to affordable energy is the greatest barrier to economic growth and the most difficult hurdle to overcome when trying to attract new businesses to the region. With limited available excess power and year-round fluctuations in cost, business and resource industry development is significantly hampered. The location was not deemed financially viable for many looking to relocate or start-up a business because of the high cost of energy.

OUTMIGRATION AND A DECLINING WORKING AGE POPULATION

Continued outmigration and the declining working-age population continue to have a severe impact on businesses successfully filling open positions from clerks to skilled worker to management. Further from 2013 – 2022 the working-age population, age 18-64 in the CRCA declined by over 15%, the region continues to suffer from the lack of worker availability.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

The majority of businesses operating in the Copper River Region are small in nature with gross yearly sales in the \$60,000-\$100,000 range. And employ a balance of part-time and full-time staff. Most businesses do not benefit from state or federal government assistance programs on startup. Most businesses have a high dependency on the internet for their business success. Typical capital improvement projects planned by local businesses range from energy conservation repairs/replacements to alternative energy system installations and heating system repairs. It is important to note that very few businesses found state and federally funded Capital Improvement Projects for the Copper River Region to be of significant relevance. Some projects that businesses would like to see funded are various utility related projects such as energy projects, in particular an Intertie to connect the Copper River Region to lower the cost of power, a business incubator and business resource center. ^{xvii}

HOUSING:

The lack of available housing inventory and buildable land in the Copper River Region presents a challenge for potential buyers as it will not meet the basic requirements for traditional residential financing by lending institutions. Because the region is an unorganized borough, there are no imposed building codes or required building inspections. The median value of a home is \$235,100 (MOE +/- \$18,412). Of the 2,564 housing units in the region about 42% are occupied. 68.9% of occupied housing units are owned-occupied and not rented. Wells run about \$65per foot and a DEC approved septic system is \$3,000-\$11,000 (for a 3-bedroom home) depending on soil conditions. There are no property taxes in the Copper River Region. Housing inventory is low and the lack of skilled labor in the area is discouraging new construction and renovations. The lack of basic water and sewer increases residential development costs. ^{xviii}

There have been no new rental units constructed, the continued lack of affordable housing is one of the key factors in the inability for businesses to be able to attract qualified and skilled workers. And continues to be one of the factors responsible for the outward migration of the population. Without the development and availability of new/affordable housing in the region the economy of the region will continue to suffer.

The median gross rent in the Copper River Census Area is \$877/month (not including heat/utilities cost). Below the state averages of \$1,329/month ^{xix} Housing is generally not built to energy efficiency standards and the high cost of heating fuel (on average \$4.64/gallon) has a crippling effect on family budgets. ^{xix}

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Cross Road Medical Center is a non-profit Christian Community Health Center located in Glennallen and serving the residents of South-Central Alaska. They provide medical services to the communities of the Copper River Valley and visitors. They offer a variety of medical and health care services, including Pediatric care, Family practice, Men's Health, Women health, Geriatric care, Childhood and adult vaccinations, Disease management and treatment of chronic conditions, hypertension monitoring, Diabetes, Sports physicals, Wellness exams, Telemedicine, Behavioral health, Radiology and have a full-service pharmacy.

In 2013 the Copper River Native Association (CNRA) expanded its services and opened the Robert Marshall Building, a healthcare facility that serves the needs of the residents of the Copper River Valley. Located in Copperville. The clinic eliminated the need for Native beneficiaries to travel four hundred miles to Anchorage to see a doctor. The facility provides medical, behavior health, dental, wellness, social services and a full-time pharmacy. Administrative support services for approximately 3,000 native residents of the area. The clinic provides open access to its state funded programs, including mental health, substance abuse, tobacco cessation and diabetes services.

Emergency medical services are provided through a non-profit 501c3 organization that supports emergency medical needs throughout the Copper River Basin. New funding is sought out every year to provide EMS services in the region is an ongoing obstacle and poses health and safety concerns for residents and visitors to the Copper River Region Census area.

Health Services in the CRCA are limited to Monday through Friday during regular business hours. Neither health care provider is available after hours nor on weekends to provide services and residents in the area would travel 2-4hours to reach a hospital that could provide a range of emergency medical services, often patients are life flighted to larger facilities for the appropriate care depending on the severity of the injury/illness.

The regional Child Advocacy Center's (CAC) mission is to unify a community approach to child abuse prevention and response and to assist Alaskan children and families who live within CAC's service region (the size of Montana) by providing a safe interim place. In FY 2024 Senator Murkowski sponsored a Congressionally Directed Spending request to build a secure facility for victims and itinerant professionals upgrade their existing facility to serve the families and professionals. The CVDA was granted the award through HUD.

This will allow the CAC to focus on the work needed to keep our children safe, support them and their families toward healing and hold those accountable within the justice system. Provide services in a new secure facility within the CAC area of service to care for children and families who are victims of trauma and violence. Provide the necessary professionals with a secure venue to support healing. The large coverage area (approximately the size of Montana), remoteness, and rural makeup of the region will no longer be a roadblock to provide the services necessary for victims and families begin to recover. Victims will no longer have to travel hundreds of miles to find a safe facility.

HIGH COST OF LIVING

Alaska historically struggles with the high cost of living, in 2021 Alaska's cost of living index was 31% above the U.S. average. ^{xx} Energy, housing, health care cost, retail goods and services are among the highest. In the CRCA, as in many rural Alaskan communities' consumable items are prohibitively expensive, if they are available at all. There continues to be outward migration to the urban centers where energy and food costs are lower and social services are more readily available. Population data obtained from the US Census Bureau 2020 shows a decrease in the population of 11% from 2010 to 2020. The major population centers are focused in the Glennallen, Copper Center and Kenny Lake communities which are situated near the junctions of major highways. These are also the main shopping and service centers for the area.

SWOT

ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

STRENGTHS;

REGIONAL COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

- + High Speed Broadband (1G/1G)
- + Gulkana Airport
- + CVDA – Regional ARDOR
 - o CRV - Regional Planning Committee (Transportation)
- + Wrangel St-Elias
- + Location - The HUB of Alaska
- + Partnership with Alaska DOT & PF
- + Independence
- + Alaska Native Corporations
- + No Tax Burden/No Government
- + Chamber of Commerce
- + Subsistence

WEAKNESSES;

REGIONAL COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGES

- High Energy Cost
- High Cost of Living
- Food Security – Imported Food/High Cost of Food/Lack of Fresh Produce
 - High Operating Cost
 - Childcare
 - Housing
- A shortage of Health Care and Emergency Medical Services and Providers
 - Import Dependant

- + Gulkana Airport Facility and Extension
- + Solom Gulch Expansion
- + Regional Food HUB
- + Agriculture
- + Fiber to the Home, Expanding Broad Band Access
- + Increased Energy Supply Potential
- + Access to State and Federal Funding

OPPORTUNITIES;

REGIONAL IMPROVEMENTS AND PROGRESS

- Outmigration / Declining Population
 - Labor Shortage
- Proposed land designation changes to the Copper Basin Area Plan Revision by DNR
 - Declining food production
 - Economic Leakage
- Lack of Infrastructure and Support Services

THREATS;

NEGATIVE REGIONAL IMPACTS OR DECLINE

This SWOT analysis helps the region to identify objectives, the region's capabilities and capacity and potential. Understanding the SWOT in the region is critical to developing the strategic direction and implementation to promote economic vitality.

Vision: To improve the quality of life in Alaska’s Copper Valley through responsible economic development while maintaining and fostering our cultural and natural resource development through education and good stewardship.

Promote strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in the region

The Copper River Region is a vibrant, self-sustaining community; an appealing place for residents and visitors to live, work and play. The following were identified as the primary opportunities to economic development for the Copper River Region by those who participated in the planning process.

ENERGY

GOAL: REDUCE THE COST OF ENERGY IN THE COPPER RIVER CENSUS AREA.

The Copper River Region is strategically located in the heart of Southcentral Alaska with resources that can solve immediate and long-term energy supply issues. The Copper River Region is a resource-rich area with good road connections to the rest of the state. It suffers from low economic activity, poverty, and outmigration due in part to high energy costs. Because the Copper Valley Electric Association (CVEA) grid is isolated from the rest of the state, affordable electric power is provided in the warmer months with hydroelectric power from Solomon Gulch in Valdez and a transmission line between Valdez and Glennallen. In the winter, affordable hydro power is not available on the Copper Valley Grid and must be generated with expensive diesel. In addition, much of the region is not connected to the CVEA regional grid, running on smaller microgrids, and has very high electric costs that rely on diesel generation year-round. Linking the Copper Valley to the Rail Belt Intertie is an opportunity for the wellbeing of the state of Alaska and will establish resilient, redundant, and reliable energy. Some of the additional potential benefits and impacts that may result from this intertie are as follows: Military Power Stability, Mineral Development, Valdez Deep Water Port, Data Storage Facilities, Food Hub and Food Production, Diesel Use and Emissions reduction to name a few.

The Copper Region has vast sources of renewable energy that could be developed further and be utilized to solve the region and future energy needs of the state. **Installed Renewable Energy Resources:** Tikel River Hydro Project 12MW, Allison Creek 6.8 MW; **Studied and Proven, Renewable Energy Resources:** Tiekel River Hydro Project 100 MW, Silver Lake Hydro 15 MW, Chitina Five-Mile Creek Hydro Project 250 KwH-1.5 MW Permitted, Willow/ Squirrel Mtn Wind (Ahtna) 35 MW-70 MW Ahtna: **Potential renewable projects moving forward for additional study and feasibility:** Tolsona Geothermal (Well drilled, Logs at DNR/ Ahtna) 25-150 MW (GeoAlaska), Hailey Creek Hydro 30 MW, O’Brien Creek Hydro 5 MW.^{xxi}

Without reducing the high cost of energy, the region will not attract businesses or families that would provide opportunity for economic growth. Outward migration will continue, and the population will continue to decline.

Objective: Provide industry and residents with access to reliable and affordable energy by looking at alternative renewable energy sources and ensuring continual access to electrical power. **Actions:**

- Convene a regional energy planning/action group to include regional stakeholders to identify and develop renewable energy options.
- Work with Copper Valley Electric Association to support efforts to explore the use of renewable energy projects that reduce winter rates.

- Procure State/Federal funding for reconnaissance study to look at an underwater intertie connection from Whittier to Valdez.
- Procure funding to work with Rural CAP (REAP Grant Recipient) to assist local businesses and residents' access renewable energy improvement funding.
- Connect the Copper River Basin to the Railbelt Grid
- Providing affordable energy interconnections to other remote regions such as Chitina/McCarthy, the Tok Cutoff/Upper Copper River
- Obtain Grants under the IIJA to train mechanics and technicians that will support alternative energy development
- Decrease the dependence on diesel fuel
- Reduce the regulatory burdens for project implementation

Evaluation Measures:

- Reduced energy cost for residents and businesses
- Amount of funding received for planning and reconnaissance studies
- Number of completed studies
- Number of businesses/residents receiving REAP grants
- Number of new workers trained and hire
- Implementation of Renewable energy projects
- Reduced time/cost for regulatory burden
- Reduced usage of diesel fuel

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: DEVELOP GULKANA AIRPORT LAYOUT PLAN (GKN-ALP)

The recently completed GKN Airport Layout Plan (GKN-ALP) by the Alaska DOT&PF is in the final stages of the FAA approval process, anticipated for the summer of 2024. The plan allows for areas of economic development and services vital to the region's economy outside of FAA Airport Improvement Program projects. Areas of Opportunity; **Regional Emergency Services Hangar:** allow for medivac aircraft and personnel based at the Gulkana Airport and could serve a broad area with a range of state and federal agencies partners. Extending the runway could increase cargo operations, increase grocery and freight shipments to the area, shipment of mine products and equipment within the region and to the Lower 48, Allow the Department of Natural Resources Forestry firefighting to establish a portable firefighting tanker base at Gulkana with flights by aircraft. The longer runway will accommodate larger aircraft required for these operations; **Floatpond:** There is community and airport user interest in a float pond on the Gulkana Airport to serve current and future airport users. A floatplane base at Gulkana would be the first public floatplane base with services available to visitors flying to Alaska across the western Canadian border; **Lease Lots:** Currently no vacant lease lots with road and taxiway access, the ALP has planned several options for lease lot development; There is some community interest in non-aeronautical development uses that take advantage of close proximity to the airport and the adjacent Richardson Highway.

Objective: Accelerate the development of the ALP by securing planning funds and partnership with public/private entities to grow business and increase economic opportunities. **Actions:**

- Secure funding through the FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) for eligible build projects

- Secure funding for projects in the ALP that are not eligible for FAA AIP
- Obtain necessary state and federal approvals to advance the ALP
- With DOT& PF and the CRV-RPO establish a regional planning group to advance and prioritize the components of the ALP
- Build on the states international air cargo hub by expanding the states cargo storage and introduce cold storage to the region as an alternative to alleviate the volume at Ted Stevens
- Attract non-aviation business to increase economic development in the region and increase workforce
- Create a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRPT) for the region
- Attract unmanned aircraft development
- Support training and education for aviation related industry workforce.
- Reduce truck traffic related to freight

Evaluation Measures:

- Number of projects funded through the FAA AIP
- Number of projects funded from other sources
- Change in airport usage (compared to previous years)
- Number of new businesses at the airport
- Number of training opportunities
- Increase in Cargo at the airport
- Completion of the LRTP by the CRV-RPO
- Number of trucks delivering freight (compare to previous year)

FOOD SECURITY

GOAL: INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING IN THE REGION.

Recent studies by Alaska Food Securities Task Force and the Alaska Food Policy Council have shown that the agriculture sector in Alaska is growing and the demand for locally produced foods is on the rise. The number of new and beginning farmers has increased by about 45% in Alaska, and the number of farms has increased by 30% in Alaska. Despite this growth, Alaska imports over 95% of its food. If local growers, harvesters, and farmers want to sell their product commercially, it must be trucked hundreds of miles to be processed in one of a few USDA or DEC certified facilities before it can be brought to market for sale. Essentially food that is grown and produced locally leaves the region and never comes back. We do not benefit from our own local resources, and we pay a high cost for food that is imported from outside of Alaska.

As of 2022, there are only three USDA- Certified facilities in Alaska. While there are more DEC approved kitchens, many are not local or available for rent. The Alaska Food Security and Independent Task Force 2022 Report addressed and identified barriers that the farming community, who are engaged in the growing, harvesting, or raising food, face when starting a new business or how current producers get their products into the Alaska market. Because farming interest and growth continues to increase, there are challenges and weaknesses that food production and food security in the region face. These challenges create opportunities for economic development and support of our local farmers. Meat processing facility needs are outpacing supply; cold and freezer storage is limited and because of the high cost of energy, is expensive to run. Affordable DEC certified kitchens and processing equipment are needed by smaller entrepreneurial establishments that are producing value-added and cottage

foods for sale to restaurants, chefs, grocery stores, retailers, school food programs and wholesale market products. The region is also lacking accessible and affordable distribution systems. Along with processing and food storage facilities there is a need for food safety training and education, and infrastructure support.

Objective: Increase the region’s agricultural supply to increase food security and resilience, while reducing the dependency on imported food by developing a regional food HUB. **Actions:**

- Develop USDA and DEC, cold storage and hydroponic grow facilities for use by local farmers
- Develop indoor agriculture for food production utilizing new technologies
- Create opportunities that encourage economic development through entrepreneurship, support local farmers and attract new farmers to the region
- Provide training and educational opportunities for the community, and in the school district that build career pathways and meet the need for a skilled workforce.
- Utilize the central location of the Gulkana Airport to support distribution, export and production for regionally grown products.
- Reduce the cost of food in the region

EVALUATION MEASURES:

- Change in imported agriculture to the region
- Number of new agricultural businesses in the region
- Number of producing farms
- Number of farms that are processing foods locally
- Reduced cost of food
- Number of value-added and cottage foods for sale

OTHER AREAS OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY:

GOAL: DEVELOP REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES THAT SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

In addition to the key goals the following are additional initiatives that were addressed and noted below with the objectives identified below.

Develop New **Affordable Rental Housing:** The housing shortage in the region is a deterrent, organizations cannot attract people to the area because there is no adequate housing. Most homes built in the 70’s & 80’s have fallen beyond repair. The imminent housing shortage, with high demand and low supply, has made what is out there unaffordable with 41.3% of rental housing between \$1000 - \$2500, 13% of those rentals are more than the States median rental cost of \$1329/month. Without good affordable housing options people will continue to move where they can find housing and the region will not attract a workforce to support local industry, provide for business growth or attract new businesses to the CRCA.

With some of the fastest **Broadband** in the nation there is an opportunity to develop a **Business Resource Center or Business Incubator** that would provide an opportunity for small businesses and entrepreneurs to receive help.

A center may offer programs and services for businesses and employers who are looking for job training opportunities, as well as community education classes for adult learners and kids; assist business owners navigate

the regulatory process; provide a day space with broadband connections and meeting spaces. A supportive facility with resources in the community can also attract businesses to the area if they know they have support.

A data storage facility is now possible because of the regional “Fiber to Home” plan. Copper Valley Telcom has built the infrastructure within in the Copper River Census area to attract some of the largest Data users in the country. With some of the fastest speeds in the nation, broadband connectivity and cold climates the Copper River Census area is a natural location for a company looking to move their **Data Storage** operations to the region.

For the region to thrive a well-prepared and well-trained workforce is required. The readiness of the workforce and the opportunities for young people are limited, and access to businesses and entrepreneurship programs is vital for the region. A local **Resource Center for Distance Learning** would provide training opportunities for the population just entering the workforce as well as re-training workforce to take advantage of new opportunities. There are opportunities outside of our region that provide **Vocational and Technical Training**. With expanded broadband and high-speed internet connections available in the region, distance learning can be achieved. This may alleviate the burden of the cost of traveling out of the area for training, open up opportunities that may not currently be accessible, provide qualified trainers and programs that are not locally available.

Operation of a small facility offering **Vocational Training** in key technical areas such as renewable energy system maintenance, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, heavy equipment operation, automotive mechanics, welding and construction. Partnering with the Copper River School District represents a significant opportunity and could alleviate startup costs and potentially sponsor workforce development workshops in "soft skills". Potential Partners: Copper River School District, Prince William Sound Community College, Copper River Native Association, Ahtna Inc., Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, State of Alaska Dept of Labor and Workforce, Alaska Works Partnership Inc, Private investment.

Community Wells in respective outlying areas of the Copper River Region (where hydrology analysis deems it feasible) would significantly improve the quality of life of many residents currently hauling water from distances in the 20-60 mile range. The operation of each well would result in employment and pose an investment opportunity. Potential Partners: Community Corporations, Resident Associations, Native Village Councils, Private investment.

Waysides and Rest Areas with toilet facilities are needed to serve the traveling public and will lead to a cleaner, safe environment, enhance visitors’ experience, and reduce conflict with areas resident. DOT&PF is currently working on a statewide wayside plan that will look at the need for rest areas and will work with the Copper River Valley -RPO to identify areas most in need. Potential Partners: The Department of Transportation, Division of Tourism, Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, Private investment.

Transfer Sites to accommodate Chitina and McCarthy communities. High tourism traffic dictates the urgent need for a transfer site at both locations and a sanitary landfill within a 60-mile radius of Chitina. Other communities that require transfer stations should be identified. Potential Partners: State of Alaska DNR, WRST National Park, Chitina Chamber of Commerce, McCarthy Area Council, Private investment or community corporation funding.

Develop a **Regional Hydrology Study** that will alleviate the Moose Creek flooding in Glennallen.

Develop a cohesive **Addressing System** to provide accurate physical locations for emergency response.

Removal of abandoned/dilapidated structures to beautify the community. A local hire would be used in the removal of these structures and the general appearance of the community would benefit in support of local tourism.

Objective: Increase services-oriented businesses that will attract and retain the population and strengthen the quality of life in communities. **Actions:**

- Support the increase owner and rental housing available in the region
- Increase childcare operators to navigate regulations required for the startup of a childcare center
- Develop and implement a workforce development plan that provides for more trade certified business/people to support the community.
- Increase access to vocation training opportunities in the region that will attract and retain workers.
- Access to capital funding for small businesses, increased availability to micro loans and easier navigation to access financial programs by entrepreneurs and businesses.
- Develop programs with the Chamber of Commerce that encourage business development
- Improve the quality of life through access to increased recreational opportunities, strengthen community cultural

EVALUATION MEASURES:

- Number of residents (change in population)
- Number of new rental properties
- Quantity of new businesses
- Increase in training opportunities
- Number of childcare facilities and workers
- Reduced outmigration

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020 has had the greatest negative economic effect on the region in recent years. The COVID recession likely led to the sharpest economic decline in recent history, the state losing 40,000 jobs in one month, business closures and outmigration from the region and prior economic downturn in the 2015-2018 recession that was due to low oil prices. The initiatives that were developed during the pandemic are slow to see positive economic results in the region.

- Support the development of a regional resiliency framework that provides an approach for stakeholders in the region to plan for economic resiliency.
- Increased agricultural production to support increased food security and circulates money locally.
- Support the Road Belt Inter-Tie infrastructure project, which will assist in regional economic and natural resource development through the advent of cheaper and more abundant electricity to ensure power reliability and redundancy in the power supply.
- The Copper River Vally – Regional Planning Committee (CRV-RPO) with the Alaska DOT & PF collaborate on regional transportation issues and emergency response as situations arise, including FAA upgrades to Gulkana Airport to support emergency services.
- Support connectivity in the region, Copper Valley Telecom continues to bring “fiber to the home” and is in year 8 of a 10-year project that connects homes with 1Gbps upload speeds to rural communities in the region. The project continues to increase the number of homes this service that is a key to support disaster preparedness and post disaster recovery for broadband infrastructure.

- Strengthen regional collaboration and connectivity in emergency situations. Support the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) for the Copper Valley, this is the regions connection to FEMA
- Support the establishment of an information network
- Assemble a collaborative group of regional stakeholders from communities, businesses and agencies to support and work on long term strategies that will improve and bolster the economy in the region

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The highest class of worker (categories according to the type of ownership of the employing organization) in the Copper River Region is Local, state, and federal government workers 42.3%, followed by employees of private company workers 34.6%; then private not-for-profit wage and salary workers 8.8%; then self-employed in own not incorporated business workers and unpaid family workers 9.5%, and finally self-employed in own incorporated business workers 4.8%. The means of transportation to work 62% of workers drive alone and 11.6% work from home. The employment rate in the copper river census area is 56.7%. The 3 industries for the civilian employed population with the highest employment are educational services, and health care and social assistance 21.0%; public administration 17.4% followed by construction 12.5% and Retail Trade 12.4%^{xxii}. For 2023 the total wage earnings for the region was \$60,571,764 of that government earnings were \$20,311,646 and private sector earnings \$40,260,118.^{xxiii}

Class of Worker

in Copper River Census Area, Alaska
S2406

Measure	Value
Employee of private company workers	34.6%
Self-employed in own incorporated business workers	4.8%
Private not-for-profit wage and salary workers	8.8%
Local, state, and federal government workers	42.3%
Self-employed in own not incorporated business workers and unpaid family workers	9.5%

Source: US Census/2018 - 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The working-age population continues to decline for several reasons. Alaska is losing people ages 18 to 64 to migration. We're also not gaining workers through aging anymore, because the number of 18-year-olds is about the same as the number of 64-year-olds. The biggest story of the last decade was baby boomers turning 65. Alaska's senior population grew from 54,900 in 2010 to 94,000 in 2020, and this growth has not slowed. The senior population has grown 12 percent over the last two years alone, reaching 105,600 in 2022. The trend will continue for a while, as the youngest of the boomers will not turn 65 until 2029. The Unemployment Rate in the Copper River Region for March 2024 is 10.7%, substantially higher than the Alaska Statewide unemployment rate of 4.7% and the National US Rate of 3.9%. There are communities within the Copper River Census area with an unemployment rate as high as 45% and per capita income as low as \$7,786.^{xxiv}

Industry for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over

in Copper River Census Area, Alaska

DP03

Measure	Value
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	2.1%
Construction	12.5%
Manufacturing	5.1%
Wholesale trade	0.5%
Retail trade	12.4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4.9%
Information	6.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	1.9%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2.5%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	21.0%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	9.4%
Other services, except public administration	4.3%
Public administration	17.4%

Source: US Census/2018 - 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

There are little to no workforce development initiatives in the region and the majority of business owners indicate the low skill set and work ethic of employees. Employment is seasonal in nature revolving around tourism with limited opportunities for year-round employment available in the state and federal government sector, as well as in the regional school district. A few essential retail and service businesses remain open year-round. The region's three primary education institutions, Copper River School District, Prince William Sound Community College and Alaska Bible College provide quality academic education but are not geared for vocational training and workforce development. Residents and businesses alike express the need for vocational programs with hands on training in the areas of heavy equipment, construction, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, mechanics, automotive and welding as a means of meeting local trade needs and providing employment opportunities for Copper River Region residents.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND METHODOLOGY

This CEDS is the result of a community-based planning process designed to guide the economic growth of the Copper River Census Area. It aims to assist the coordination of individual efforts, organizations and private industry concerned with economic and community development. It is a continuing process with diverse community participation which promotes sustainable economic development and job opportunities, foster effective transportation systems, enhance and protect the environment, and balance resource use through sound management of development. Every strategy in this plan aims to create employment in the region, raise wage levels in the region and bring private investment to the Copper River Region. This document will be readily accessible to the economic development stakeholders in the community and should be useful as a tool for local decision making.

Community Profiles were developed for each community in the region and contains a summary of the results of public meetings, surveys, and feedback administered between June 1 and May of 2024. Numerous community planning sessions were held in each of the outlying areas. A Regional Roundtable session was held at Glennallen High School in Glennallen. All meetings were advertised in the Copper River Region Weekly Newspaper, KCAM Radio Station, Copper Valley Development Association website and meeting flyers were hung in local public establishments throughout each community such as post office, library's, retail establishments and community associations, in addition flyers and questionnaires were provided to each community liaison for additional distribution.

Participation at community meetings ranged from 2 to 30 people. Participants were asked to voice values and concerns around specific aspects of community life such as housing, education, transportation, health and safety, business, resources and any other areas of concern. From these and guided discussion, goals and objectives were created. The results of the highest priority items are contained within this document. Every attempt to include all opinions shared has been made. Resident and business surveys were made available as a form fill on the Copper Valley Development Website. The draft CEDS was available for public review at the regional meeting, provided to communities and stakeholders, offered by request via email and accessible at the CVDA's office. The availability of the draft CEDS and the regional meeting was advertised on radio, the local paper, CVDA website and email. The draft CEDS received few comments during the public comment period.

Businesses, State and Federal Agencies with local offices also participated in discussions around business and agency needs within the region.

All comments were gathered with the purpose of providing feedback on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), comments were incorporated as they related to the three major considerations that affect economic development, Energy, Transportation and Food Security. All comments were considered and counted, outside of the major considerations, as part of the CEDS, many of these are incorporated in other projects that are necessary to support the growth of the region or within community profiles more specific to individual community needs, to develop the strategic direction action plan and set priorities that improve the quality of life in the CRCA through responsible economic development while maintaining and fostering our cultural and natural resource development through education and good stewardship. Promote strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in the region

Outside of the CEDS, a workshop with regional stakeholders from key sectors included The Copper Valley Development Association, Utility Co-ops, Native Corporations, the Chamber of Commerce, Copper River Valley – Regional Planning Organization, State Chair of the State Board of Education & Early Development, Business Leaders, Alaska Municipal League and Senator Sullivans State Director, convened to strategize the most effective way to partner and apply for the (EPA)’s Community Change Grants (CCG), the program will award approximately \$2 billion in funding to benefit disadvantaged communities.

The Copper River Region is an unorganized borough and limited data is available from which to formulate analysis in some of the individual communities. Various reports were compiled and are referenced in the endnotes of this CEDS. Community profile data was compiled from the 2018-2022 American Community Survey, US Census 2020 data, DCRA Open Data Website, and existing community planning documents provided to the CVDA.

The vast majority of residents and business owners feel strongly about little to no government interference and were hesitant to participate in this planning effort. Some expressed their concern that this effort could result in the establishment of a borough. Many voiced their desire to remain a small, rural region, connected yet self-sustaining.

Some of the partners who supplied information for this report include but are not limited to: Copper Valley Telephone Cooperative, State of Alaska Workforce Development, Copper River School District, Copper Valley Electric Association, Alaska DOT & PF, Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, US Census Bureau & American Community Survey, Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, DCRA, CRNA, Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) Glennallen Improvement District, Copper River Watershed Project. Large landowners, Ahtna, Inc., Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve and the Bureau of Land Management have also provided information.

AREA ORGANIZATIONS, PRIVATE, GOVERNMENTAL, AND NON-PROFIT

Ahtna Inc. <https://www.ahtna.com>
Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web>
Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development <https://labor.alaska.gov>
Alaska Department of Natural Resources <https://dnr.alaska.gov>
Alaska Department of Public Safety <https://dps.alaska.gov/Home>
Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection <https://forestry.alaska.gov>
Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) <https://www.ahtnatribal.org/>
Bureau of Land Management <https://www.blm.gov>
Copper River EMS Council crems@cvinternet.net
Copper River Schools <https://www.crsd.us/>
Copper River Regional Health Network
Cross Road Ministries <https://crossroadmc.org/>
Copper Valley Development Association <https://coppervalley.org/>
Copper Valley Electric Association <https://www.cvea.org>
Copper Valley Telephone Cooperative <https://www.cvtc.org/>
Copper River Watershed <https://copperriver.org/>
AK Department of Transportation and Public Facilities <https://dot.alaska.gov/>
Greater Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce <http://www.coppervalleychamber.com/>
McCarthy Area Council <https://www.mxycouncil.org>
Native Village of Chitina <https://www.chitina.org/>
Native Village of Tazlina
Native Village of Gakona <https://nvgakona.com/>
Native Village of Gulkana <https://gulkanacouncil.org/>
Native Village of Kluti Kaah <http://www.klutikaah.com>
Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium <https://www.mstc.org/>
Cheesh-na Trice <https://www.cheeshna.com/>
Chitina Native Corporation <https://www.chitinanative.com/>
Chitina Electric, Inc
Copper Center Community Association
Glennallen Improvement District
Slana Community Corporation
Association of Silver Springs Area Residents
Kenny Lake Community League
Nelchina-Mendeltna Community Corporation
Tolsona Community Corporation
Community Improvement Association of Chitina
Wrangell-St Elias National Park <https://www.nps.gov/wrst/index.htm>
Copper River Native Association <https://crnative.org/>
Copper River Valley – Regional Planning Organization <https://coppervalley.org/rpo/>

COMMUNITY PROFILES

CHITINA

confluence with the Chitina River, at mile 34 of the Edgerton Highway, 53 miles southeast of Copper Center. It lies outside the western boundary of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, 66 miles southeast of Glennallen.

Chitina falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers. Chitina is usually about 10° warmer than its neighbor, Kenny Lake. The district's yearly temperature is -1.48°C (29.34°F) and it is -14.12% lower than United States's averages. Chitina typically receives about 22.94 millimeters (0.9 inches) of precipitation and has 41.9 rainy days (11.48% of the time) annually. <https://weatherandclimate.com/united-states/alaska/chitina>.

LOCATION & CLIMATE: Chitina is located on the west bank of the Copper River at its



MAIN STREET 1898 - 1913
 DESCRIPTION: MAIN STREET CHITINA, LOOKING TOWARDS THE COPPER RIVER
 PS. HUNT. J 1906

Collection: Hunt, P. Archives, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks



HISTORY & CULTURE: Athabascans have reportedly occupied this region for the last 5,000 to 7,000 years. Archaeological sites are located to the south and east of Chitina. Chitina was historically a large Native village whose population was slowly decimated by the influx of people, disease, and conflicts. Rich copper deposits were discovered at the turn of the century along the northern flanks of the Chitina River Valley, bringing a rush of prospectors and homesteaders to the area. The Copper River & Northwestern Railway enabled Chitina to develop into a thriving community by 1914. It had a general store, clothing store, meat market, stables, tinsmith, five hotels, rooming houses, pool hall, bars, restaurants, dance halls, and movie theater. Most of Chitina was owned by Otto Adrian Nelson, a surveying engineer for the Kennecott Mines. He supplied electric power to all structures with a unique hydroelectric

system. After the mines closed in 1938, support activities moved to the Glennallen area, and Chitina became a virtual ghost town. In 1963, the Nelson estate was purchased by "Mudhole" Smith, a pioneer bush pilot, who sold off the townsite and buildings.

Students in Chitina are home-schooled or attend school at Kenny Lake, 28 miles away. Most Athabascan residents are involved in subsistence activities year-round. During the summer, subsistence dip netting for salmon on the Copper River brings a large number of Alaskans from Anchorage and other areas of the state. Gardening, berry picking, herb gathering, and other wildcrafting are popular pursuits, as are various arts and crafts. Winter activities include trapping, snow machining, dog mushing, skiing and skijoring, and ice fishing.

ECONOMY: Employment is primarily with the village council, village corporation, or the National Park Service. Many residents are self-employed or work in retail establishments. The summer influx of fishermen, tourists, and campers provides some cash income in fish guiding and other services. Many villagers participate in subsistence activities year-round.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 19 residents in Chitna as employed. The public sector employed 35.8% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in the labor force was 64.2%. The ACS surveys median household income estimate could not be computed because there were an insufficient number of sample observations. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$26,383 (MOE +/--\$23,313). About 53.5% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE: Residents haul water from a well at the fire hall or have individual wells. Some residents use stream water during the summer. Outhouses and individual septic systems provide sewage disposal. Less than 20% of homes are completely plumbed. Refuse collection services are available from Copper Basin Sanitation.

There are no public dumpsters in Chitina but in summer trash receptacles are located near the river and at the campground by the bridge for the travelling public. All residents have access to private garbage service. Some take their own waste to the landfill or recycling centers. The Village Council has a program that takes aluminum cans for recycling and provides a drop off place in the Village.

Residents are either served by private wells or haul water to their homes from a public well located at the old fire station. The apartments located in the village as well as public buildings nearby are served by a common well. Most apartment residents do not drink the water from this well due to safety concerns. There is a nominal cost for water at the fire station well. In summer, residents without wells often divert water from a creek, lake or stream using a gravity fed line or pump system. Water is filtered by household water filters. There is no public sewer system, but the village apartments and some private residences have private septic systems. These systems can require pumping and can sometimes freeze in winter making them inoperable.

Electricity is available for most residents from Chitina Electric Company, but the cost is high. Chitina Electric provides homeowners and businesses with electric power. A project was completed for a power plant at the airport. The project includes the extension of the line from town to the airport. Business owners and residents alike expressed their concern with the frequent number of power spikes which has caused extensive privately owned equipment damage throughout the community. A hydro power facility at 5-mile creek with the capacity for .5megw to 5 mg at 5 mine creek has been funded and I scheduled to be constructed. Feasibility study is being conducted don Haley Creek Hydro Installed Large tanks for Gas and Diesel available to the community for purchase. Others use generators for power. There is no electric service for residents living on the McCarthy Road.

There is one gas station that is open year-round located in Chitina, which also provides gas and propane for those living all along the McCarthy Road and the communities of McCarthy and Kennecott. Commercial distributors make retail and commercial deliveries of heating oil, propane and gasoline. Many homes heat or supplement heat with wood fuel. Several small businesses sell firewood, while many cut their own wood from private or public lands.

TRANSPORTATION

The Edgerton Highway and Richardson Highway link Chitina with the rest of the state road system. The state owns the Chitina Airport, located 5 miles north of town along the Edgerton Highway.

The Edgerton Highway and the McCarthy Road are maintained by Alaska DOT, Chitina Station. Limited maintenance is done on the McCarthy Road, (which is a gravel surface) during the winter, although the road is passable, while rough, most of the time. Work to the McCarthy Rd is currently ongoing to improve the sections most damaged

A paved community bike trail was completed in fall of 2008. The trail extends from the Chitina Wayside to One Mile Lake, crossing the road near the post office. There are numerous trails in the area for hiking, four wheeling and snow machining. For those on private land there is often a permit fee for use. The Park has many public use trails. Identifying trails for public use that do not infringe on private property owners and marking them as such, as well as distributing clear, concise information on land ownership is needed to promote use of public trails.

There is a public airstrip at mile 28 of the Edgerton Highway, five miles from Chitina, 2,850' long by 75' wide gravel airstrip. The airstrip is maintained and there are public tie downs, a parking area, pay phone and transfers to shuttle vans. Private airstrips are scattered in the area and many pilots use the multitude of lakes both in the summer and winter months.

There is a state constructed boat launch area on the east bank on the downriver side of the Copper River Bridge. The DOT & PF Copper River boat launch facility rest area and parking lot project will upgrade individual sites at the rest area, enhance road surfacing, and improve parking capacity. The purpose of this project is to improve the access road to the Copper River and provide parking for vehicles and trailers. Other improvements include upgrading individual campsites to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The existing wooden restroom will be repaired, and a new ADA-compliant concrete double-vault restroom building will be constructed.

CAPITAL PROJECTS AND GRANTS: The Native Village of Chitina did not meet with the CVDA, as they were in the middle of completed a strategic planning document. It was not available at the time of the publication of this document.

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description/Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Schedule	Contractor
AEA-AEEE	2010	Funded	Five mile Creek Hydro Feasibility/Conceptual Design - Comments: OTHER FUNDING: Federal	Preliminary	\$303,001		Chitna Electric Inc.
HUD	2009	Funded	Indian Housing Block Grant - Comments: NAHASDA administration, operating & construction funds	Contract	\$49,715		Copper River Housing Authority

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES

CHITINA ELECTRIC, INC. (ELECTRIC UTILITY)
P.O. Box 88, Chitina, AK 99566;

CHITINA NATIVE COPRPORATION (VILLAGE CORPORATION)
P.O. Box 31, Chitina, AK 99566;

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION
(COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT)
P.O. Box 2, Chitina, AK 99566

NATIVE VILLAGE OF CHITINA (TRIBE – FEDERALLY OF CHITINA RECOGNIZED, BIA-RECOGNIZED TRADITIONAL COUNCIL)
P.O. Box 31, Chitina, AK 99566;

CHISTOCHINA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Chistochina is located at mile 32.7 on the Tok Cutoff to the Glenn Highway, 42 miles northeast of Glennallen. Sinona Creek, Bolder Creek, Chistochina River, and Copper River surround the village.

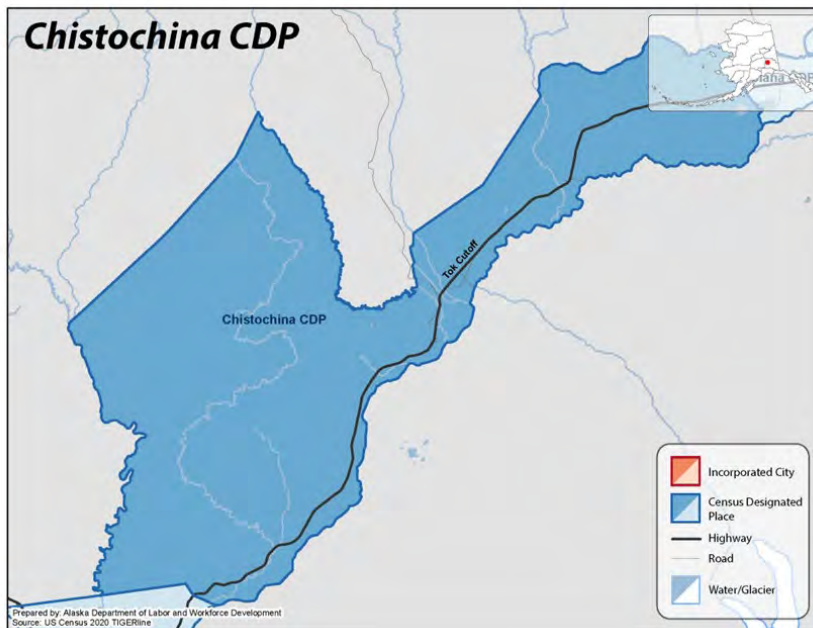
Chistochina falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.^{xxv}



DELTA CHISTOCHINA WATERSHED 1901

DESCRIPTION: DELTA CHISTOCHINA WATERSHED SURVEY 1901
Collection: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

AREA MAP:



HISTORY & CULTURE: Chistochina began as an Ahtna fish camp and stopover place for traders and trappers. The village access road later became part of the Valdez-Eagle Trail, constructed by miners during the gold rush to the Eagle area in 1897. Chistochina Lodge was built as a roadhouse for prospectors. The trail was used for construction of U.S. Army Signal Corps telegraph lines from Valdez to Eagle between 1901 and 1904. Gold was mined along the upper Chistochina River and its runoff creeks. The area was settled by homesteaders, although it has remained a traditional Native village.

Chistochina is the most traditional of all Copper River Athabascan Indian villages. Subsistence

activities are a crucial component of lifestyle in the village. Since the 2004 language classes have been initiated and a Tribal Youth Program was established to provide culturally appropriate character education for youth. The TYP program teaches cultural values and provides after school and summer activities that reinforce values in the community and at home. During the first year of the program parents and community members revised a character education curriculum to ensure it reflected cultural values. The program was implemented at the Chistochina School during year 2 but was severely disrupted during the

third year when the Chistochina School was closed. Youth are currently being bussed to schools in Slana and Glennallen. The program has attempted to continue lessons and activities but is now regrouping to find alternative ways of providing values-based character education. Discussions included topics such as how the term culture is often used in the community without understanding its purpose, the need to teach knowledge of clan system and protocols for pot laches, and the need to protect cultural and intellectual property rights and protocols. ^{xxvi}

ECONOMY: The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 24 residents in Chistochina as employed. The public sector employed 60% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in the labor force was 40%. The ACS surveys had no information on the median household income. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$43,087 (MOE +/- \$21,648). About 24.4% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Almost half of residences have individual wells; the remaining residences haul treated water from the community center. Some residents use individual septic tanks, but the majority have outhouses or pit privies. About 40% of homes are completely plumbed. Electricity is provided out of Tok on a Diesel generated micro grid by AP&T. Local land fill is closed refuse and waste is transported to the private dump in Glennallen

TRANSPORTATION: Chistochina is accessible year-round by the Glenn and Richardson Highways via the Tok Cutoff. Small aircraft may land at a state-owned 2,060' long by 90' wide turf/gravel airstrip.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: The Cheesh'na Tribal Council were unable to meet with CVDA by the time document was published.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

ALASKA POWER ASSOCIATION

703 West Tudor Road, Suite 200
Anchorage, AK 99503-6650

CHEESH-NA TRIBE (TRIBE - FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED; BIA-RECOGNIZED TRADITIONAL COUNCIL)

HC01 Box 217, Gakona, Alaska 99586

MT. SANFORD TRIBAL CONSORTIUM (Regional Health Corporation)

Mile post 33.5 of the TOK Cutoff
Chistochina Clinic

COPPER CENTER / SILVER SPRINGS

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Copper Center is located between miles 101 and 105 of the Richardson Highway. It is on the west bank of the Copper River at the confluence of the Klutina River. It lies just west of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.

Copper Center falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers. Winters in Copper Center are long and cold, and summers are relatively warm. Temperature extremes have been recorded from a low of -74 to a high of 96 °F.

Silver Springs is located along the Richardson Highway, just south of Glennallen. It is on the west bank of the Copper River, just south of its junction with the Tazlina River.

Silver Springs falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

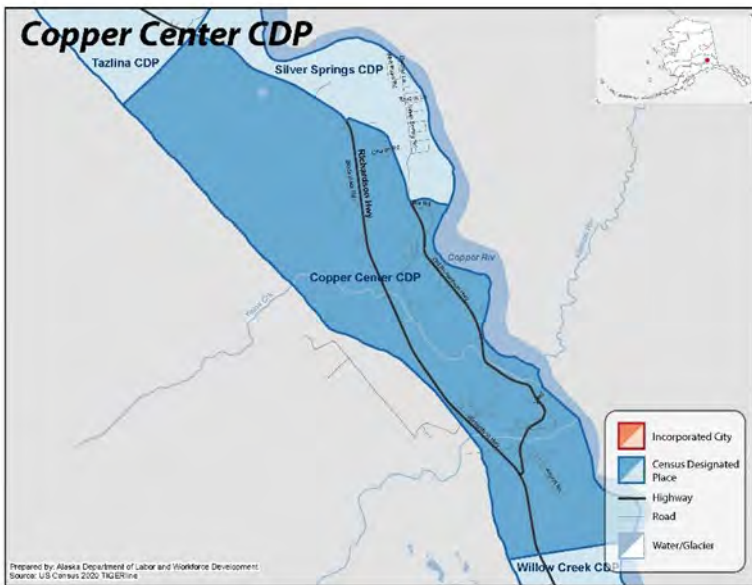


COPPER CENTER ROADHOUSE 1944

DESCRIPTION: FRONT VIEW OF COPPER CENTER ROADHOUSE WITH TWO CARS PARKED OUTSIDE AND SMALLER BUILDINGS LOCATED TO THE LEFT. LARGE SIGN IN IMAGE: COPPER CENTER. PHOTO SHOWS FOUR DORMERS, TWO IN FRONT AND TWO ON THE SIDE OF THE ROADHOUSE. WINDOWS AND DOORWAYS ARE TRIMMED IN A LIGHT COLOR THAT CONTRASTS WITH THE DARK WOOD.

Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

AREA MAPS:

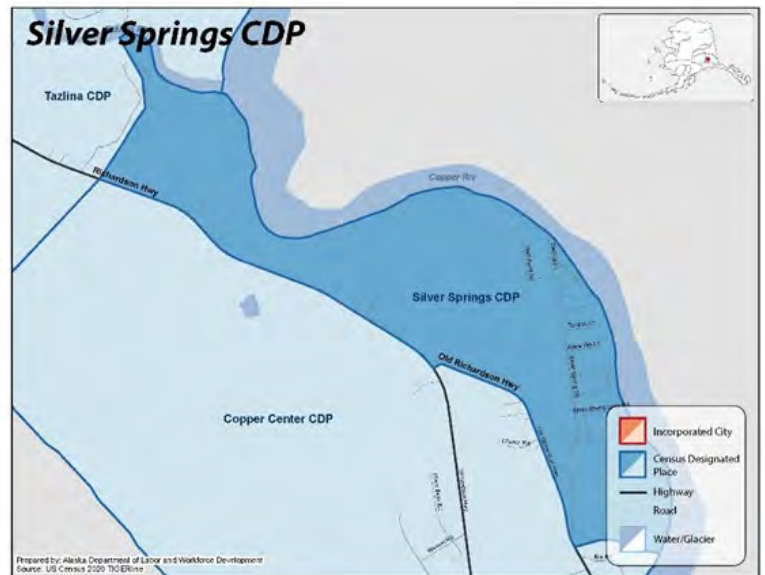


HISTORY & CULTURE: The Ahtna people have occupied the Copper River basin for the past 5,000 to 7,000 years. They had summer fish camps at every bend in the river and winter villages throughout the region. Copper Center was a large Ahtna Athabascan village at one time. In 1896 Ringwald Blix built Blix Roadhouse, which was very highly regarded for its outstanding services. The Trail of '98 from Valdez joined with the Eagle Trail to Forty Mile and Dawson. 300 destitute miners spent the winter here, many of whom died of scurvy. Copper Center became the principal supply center for miners in the Nelchina-Susitna region. A telegraph station and post office were established in 1901. A school was constructed in 1905. In 1909 it was designated a government agricultural experiment station. In 1932 the original roadhouse was destroyed to build the Copper Center Lodge. This lodge is on the National Register of Historic Roadhouses and is

now considered the jewel of Alaskan roadhouses. In the late 1930s and early 40s, construction of the Richardson and Glenn Highways made the region more accessible. The first church in the Copper River region, the Chapel on the Hill, was built here in 1942 by Vince Joy and U.S. Army volunteers stationed in the area. Mr. Joy built other churches and a Bible college in the area over the years.

Athabascans represent the primary Alaska Native group. There are two distinct settlements in Copper Center, one with an Alaska Native population and the other with a non-native population.

ECONOMY: The economy is based on local services and businesses and highway-related tourism. The National Park Service's Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center was completed in 2002. The Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge is open seasonally, Historic Lodges, Bars, Restaurants, RV Parks, river boat charter services, a Gas Station and several other businesses operate from Copper Center. The George I. Ashby Memorial Museum is located in Copper Center established in 1984 is open seasonally Many Native residents depend on subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering.



The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 126 residents in Copper Center as employed. The public sector employed 54.1% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 17.1%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 32.6%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$65,565 (MOE +/- \$13,918). The per capita income (in 20220 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$30,202 (MOE +/- \$7,2741). About 3.4% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 67 residents in Silver Springs as employed. The public sector employed 70.5% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 29.5%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$125,938 (MOE +/-

\$38,565). The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$67,402 (MOE +/--\$19,831). 0% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: The majority of homes use individual water wells and septic tanks. Others haul treated well water from a site operated by Copper Center Safe Water. A private Glennallen firm delivers water to home storage tanks for a fee. The school operates its own well-water system. 75% of homes are fully plumbed. Refuse collection services are available from Copper Basin Sanitation. There is a local landfill and an incinerator at mile 102 Richardson Highway. Copper Valley Electric generates power at the Solomon Gulch Hydro Facility, a cogeneration plant in Valdez and, diesel plants in Glennallen and Valdez.

TRANSPORTATION: Transportation: Copper Center lies on the Richardson Highway. A state-owned 2,200' long by 55' wide gravel airstrip provides for chartered flights and general aviation.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: There are no Capital Projects or Grants listed for the Copper Center or Silver Springs Communities. The following are projects from the 2012 CEDS

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description/Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Schedule	Contractor
HUD	2009	Funded	Indian Housing Block Grant - Kluti Kaah - Comments: NAHASDA administration, operating & construction funds	Contract	\$128,069	Complete	Copper River Housing Authority
HUD	2008	Funded	Indian Housing Block Grant - Kluti Kaah - Comments: NAHASDA administration, operating & construction funds	Design	\$113,155	Complete	Copper River Housing Authority
DCRA	2005	Funded	Community Projects & Improvements - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$27,574	Complete	Silver Springs Residents Assn.
DCRA	2003	Funded	CP&I/Road Improvement & Drainage - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$26,319	Complete	Silver Springs Residents Assn.
DCRA	2001	Funded	CF&E/Training Facilities & Equipment Upgrade - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$27,014	Complete	Silver Springs Residents Assn.
DCRA	2000	Funded	Road Improvements - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$40,209	Complete	Silver Springs Residents Assn.

OBJECTIVES: The CVDA met with the residents at the Native Village of Kluti Kaah for a planning session to discuss their goals and objectives. Emergency services, affordable housing and cheaper energy were some of the top goals for the community. The following are the goals and objectives that were generated from our meeting.

Objective: Affordable and better-quality rental housing

Objective: Affordable Child Care

Objective: Increase in special needs providers,

Objective: Expand Prince William Sound College Opportunities and early development programs

Objective: Make reliable and less expensive energy available to the community

Objective: Make Potable water available through a community well

Objective: To have local laundry facilities and transfer station

Objective: Promote Eco-Tourism, and capture more tourism dollars

Objective: Encourage a community garden, more growers and opportunities for start up businesses

Objective: Build a Cultural center that will preserve and share Kluti Kaah History with the community and its neighbors

Objective: Implement a residential addressing system

Objective: Promote More collaboration with outside entities

Objective: Build a Multi-Purpose Building that would accommodate many of the objectives and promote community activity, education and provide services.

OBJECTIVES: A small number of residents from Silver Springs and Copper Center Community chose to participate in two CVDA planning session to discuss goals, objectives and strategies, the regional need for emergency Medical Services, and a lower cost of energy were at the top of the priority list. More local community needs were derived through discussion and determined, in no particular priority the following list of goals and objectives:

Objective: Increase privately owned rental housing inventory to support/attract incoming families working in the region

Objective: Attract good quality educators and provide an environment where they will stay for the long term.

Objective: Provide vocational training opportunities for youth and those re-entering the job market.

Objective: Lower electrical cost.

Objective: Access for non-motorized boats on the copper river

Objective: Better access to area resources

Objective: Create a plan that would address the Yetna Creek Flooding and Flooding on the Old Rich.

Objective: Update Road Signs and resurface state roads

Objective: Find resources to repave subdivision roads (Silver Springs Road mile .5-1.5 owned by HOA)

Objective: Options for additional private transportation services

Objective: Support service for older population

Objective: Better access to non-emergency medical services

Objective: Attract Quality Dr's, RN's etc

Objective: Access to 24/7 emergency services/response

Objective: Build a community Hall that will serve the region shared by Silver Springs and Copper Center

Objective: Clarify the boundaries between Kluti Kaah and Copper Center

Objective: Provide for a Regional Addressing System, to better identify home locations for emergency response and deliveries.

GAKONA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Gakona is at the confluence of the Copper and Gakona Rivers, 15 miles northeast of Glennallen. It lies at mile 2 on the Tok cutoff to the Glenn Highway, just east of the Richardson Highway. Gakona is located in the Chitina Recording District.

Gakona falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

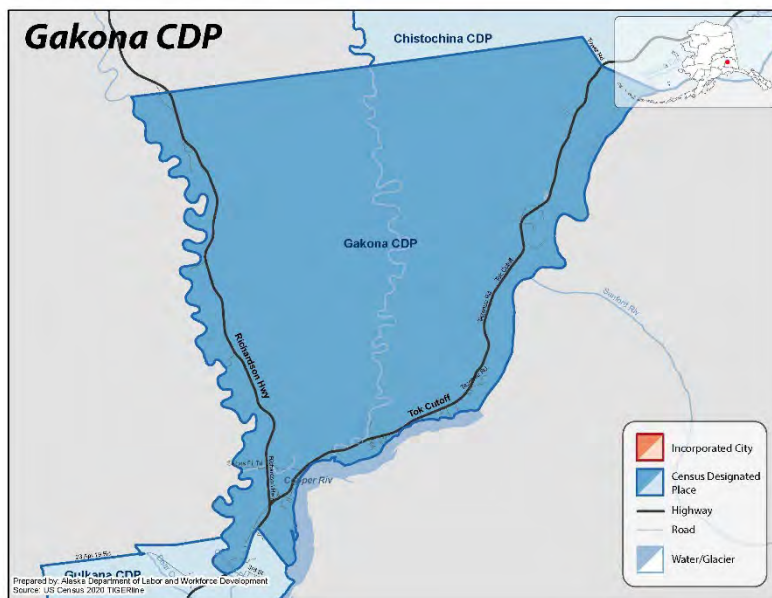


GAKONA SCHOOL 1952

DESCRIPTION: VIEW OF THE GAKONA SCHOOL IN 1953.

Collection: Alaska. Dept. of Environmental Conservation. Division of Water.

AREA MAP:



HISTORY & CULTURE:

Ahtna Athabascans have lived in the Copper River basin for 5,000 to 7,000 years. Gakona served as a wood and fish camp and later became a permanent village. In 1904 Doyle's Roadhouse was constructed at the junction of the Valdez-Eagle and Valdez-Fairbanks Trails and became an essential stopping point for travelers. There was also a post office, stagecoach station, and blacksmith shop here. Some buildings are still standing. Gakona Lodge was built in 1929 and is on the National Register of Historical Places. The lodge contains many old relics of the gold rush era.

Gakona has a commercial district, a non-native residential area, and an Athabaskan village. A federally recognized tribe is located in the community -- the Native Village of Gakona. The community has a commercial district, a non-Native residential area,

and an Athabaskan village. Gakona is the Athabaskan name meaning "Rabbit River".

ECONOMY: The community has a commercial district, a non-Native residential area, and an Athabaskan village. Gakona depends upon local businesses and seasonal tourist travel. There are lodges, B&B's, restaurant, bar, brewing company, and several businesses that are in Gakona. Summers provide income for local fishing and hunting guides, rafting operations, and outfitters. Some residents rely on subsistence activities and trapping. Recording equipment for the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP) is located near Gakona.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 38 residents in Gakona as employed. The public sector employed 32.8% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 17.4%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 49.1%. The ACS surveys estimated average median household income could not be computed because there were an insufficient number of sample observations. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$36,586 (MOE +/--\$14,237). 16.1% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Most residences have individual wells and septic systems and complete plumbing. The school uses its own well-water system. Refuse collection services are available from Copper Basin Sanitation, which hauls waste to the Glennallen landfill. Residences outside of the native village function primarily on individual wells and septic systems with complete plumbing. The elementary school which once functioned in Gakona was closed due to low enrollment. Students now travel to Glennallen for elementary and secondary schooling. Electricity is provided by Copper Valley Electric Association to most homes although some operate on private generators. Many homes have bulk fuel delivered by private carrier for cars, home heating oil and propane. Other homes heat with wood and more recently pellet stoves or biomass wood bricks in conventional wood stoves. Local health clinics include Gakona Clinic, Cross Road Medical Clinic in Glennallen and CRNA Clinic in Copper Center. There are no Emergency Medical Services available.

HAARP: The High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program, or HAARP, is a scientific endeavor aimed at studying the properties and behavior of the ionosphere. "The ionosphere stretches roughly 50 to 400 miles above Earth's surface, right at the edge of space. Along with the neutral upper atmosphere, the ionosphere forms the boundary between Earth's lower atmosphere — where we live and breathe — and the vacuum of space." (NASA) . The operation of the research facility was transferred from the United States Air Force to the University of Alaska Fairbanks on Aug. 11, 2015, allowing HAARP to continue with exploration of ionospheric phenomenology via a land-use cooperative research and development agreement.

TRANSPORTATION: The Glenn/Tok cutoff and Richardson Highway provide access to the Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the Lower 48. A 5,000' paved runway is available at nearby Gulkana.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS:

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description/Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Contractor
DCRA	2011	Funded	Viable 911 Dispatch - Comments: Legislative Gakona Grant - emergency equipment	Complete	\$14,400	Gakona Volunteer Fire Department
DCRA	2011	Funded	Construction and Equipment and Facility Upgrades - Comments: Legislative Grant - purchase and construct 928 sq. ft. building for community functions	Complete	\$250,000	Gakona Volunteer Fire Department

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST: CVDA did hold larger meetings within the vicinity of Gakona in Glennallen. There are no Capital Projects or Grants listed for the Gakona Community.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

GAKONA VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT (COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT)
P.O. Box 337 Gakona, AK 99586

COPPER RIVER BASIN CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
PO Box 103, Gakona, AK 99586

COPPER VALLEY ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED (ELECTRIC UTILITY)
P.O. Box 45, Glennallen, AK 99588

NATIVE VILLAGE OF GAKONA (Federally recognized Tribe)
P.O. Box 102 Gakona, AK 99586

GLENNALLEN

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

The community of Glennallen lies along the Glenn Highway at its junction with the Richardson Highway, 189 road miles east of Anchorage. It is located just outside the western boundary of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.

Glennallen falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.



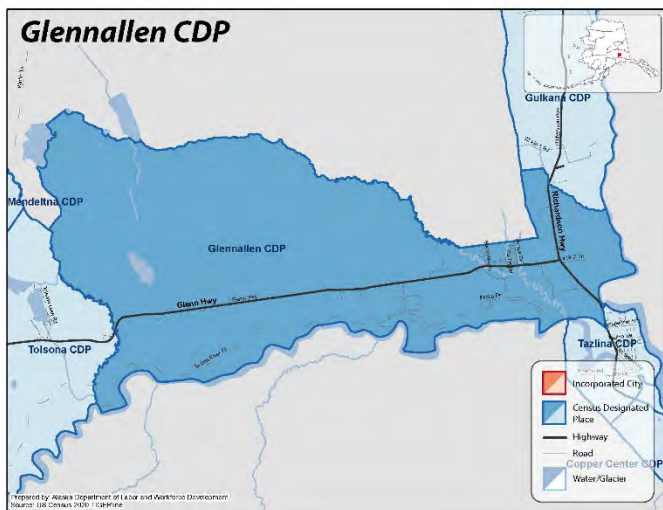
GLENNALLEN, VIEW OF MT. DRUM 1953

DESCRIPTION: VIEW DOWN ROAD INTO GLENNALLEN, SHOWING THREE QUONSET HUTS, A LOG CABIN, AND SEVERAL WOODEN STRUCTURES. MOUNT DRUM IN DISTANCE.

Collection: Steve McCutcheon, McCutcheon Collection, Anchorage Museum, B1990.14.5.TV.065.5

AREA MAP:

HISTORY: The name was derived from Maj. Edwin Glenn and Lt. Henry Allen, both leaders in the early American explorations of the Copper River region. It is one of the few communities in the region that was not built on the site of a Native village.



CULTURE: The area has historically been occupied by the Ahtna, although Glennallen is currently a non-Native community.

ECONOMY: Glennallen is the supply hub of the Copper River region. Local businesses serve area residents and Glenn Highway traffic with supplies, services, schools, and medical care. Restaurants, RV parks, lodging, fuel, and other services cater to independent travelers. Offices for the Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Troopers, and the Department

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 314 residents in Glennallen as employed. The public sector employed 79.5% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 15.9%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in

2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$78,173 (MOE +/- \$22,178). The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$40,134 (MOE +/- \$9,198). About 6.8% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their

respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Many year-round homes are fully plumbed. Although most residents have private wells in the Glennallen area, the water is often of very poor quality. Glennallen Heights utilizes two wells to serve a piped system, and a local private business delivers water by truck to fill home water tanks. The majority of downtown is connected to a piped sewage system operated by The Glennallen Improvement Corporation. The sewage system has 76 active connections, 31 residential connections, 3 institutional connections and 42 small commercial connections and runs from the Ahtna Building at (MP 115 on the Richardson Hwy) To BLM Compound (MP 186.5) & Up Terrace Drive to the Glennallen Community Center (formerly the Murdock Campus Center). Most residences have individual septic tank systems, but permafrost and high-water tables cause drainage failures. Refuse collection services and the Class 2 permitted landfill are operated by Copper Basin Sanitation in Glennallen. Copper Valley Electric (CVEA) offices are located in Glennallen. The CVEA generates power from the Solomon Gulch Hydro Facility, a cogeneration plant and diesel plants in Glennallen and Valdez.

TRANSPORTATION: Glennallen is located at milepost 187 on the Glenn Highway, northeast of Anchorage and just west of the junction with the Richardson Highway. It is the supply hub of the Copper River region. The Gulkana Airport, five miles northeast of Glennallen is primarily used for scheduled and charter flights, military training, medevac services, law enforcement, firefighting, recreation flying, flight training, mail delivery, back country areas for tourism, hunting, fishing camping hiking and other back country activities. There are two Permafrost conditions of the road which are often a source of complaints from visitors and regular business travelers through the town. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is proposing Wayside at the intersection of the Glenn and Richardson Highways, plans have not been finalized as of the publication of this document. Years of spring break-up flooding on the Glenn Hwy between Terrace Drive and approximately MP 186 continue to have a negative effect on the health, safety and the economy of the residents and businesses in the Glennallen area. The Glenn/Tok Cutoff and Richardson Highway provide year-round road access to other areas of the state. Brenwick's Airport provides public air access, and scheduled services are available. The 2,070' turf airstrip is owned and operated by Copper Basin District, Inc. The Gulkana Airport is located 4.3 miles northeast.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS:

Capital Projects and Grants							
Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Schedule	Contractor
Alaska DOT&PF	2027	Approved	Rehabilitate MP 158-172 of the Glenn Highway. This segment of highway is located 17 miles West of Glennallen and includes the intersection with Lake Louise Road.	Design		Construction 2027	

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST:

Residents, agencies, and local businesses participated in two CVDA planning sessions to discuss goals, objectives and strategies, the regional need for lower energy cost and emergency medical services, were at the top of the list. New affordable housing is needed for organizations and businesses to attract workers. Along with the lack of housing support services like childcare, laundry facilities, affordable groceries, amenities, and recreational activities it is difficult to attract and retain a good work force of trades and professionals. The community expressed a desire to have more community based recreational and cultural programs.

Objective: Work with DOT&PF to engineer a permanent solution to the flooding in Glennallen.

Objective: Clean up junk cars

Objective: Update/Upgrade the sewer system

Objective: Brand the Glennallen as a destination for winter tourism, attract sponsored events to the area.

Objective: Regional Addressing System, to better identify home locations for emergency response and deliveries.

Objective: Gulkana Airport Extension – Details in Strategic Direction Action Plan

Objective: Regional Food HUB – Details in Strategic Direction Action Plan

As the central hub of the Copper River Region, Glennallen’s vision, goals, objectives, and strategies are addressed from a regional standpoint and spelled out in the Strategic Direction Action Plan

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

AHTNA INC.
P.O. Box 649, Glennallen, AK 99588

COPPER VALLEY ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION,
INCORPORATED (Electric Utility)
P.O. Box 45, Glennallen, AK 99588

COPPER RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT
P.O. Box 108, Glennallen, AK 9958

COPPER VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
P.O. Box 469 Glennallen, AK 99588

GLENNALLEN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION
P.O. Box 343, Glennallen, AK 99588

COPPER VALLEY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 9, Glennallen, AK 99588

COPPER VALLEY COMMUNITY LIBRARY
Mile 186 Glenn Hwy, Glennallen, AK 99588

GLENNALLEN LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE
186 Glenn Hwy, Glennallen, AK 99588

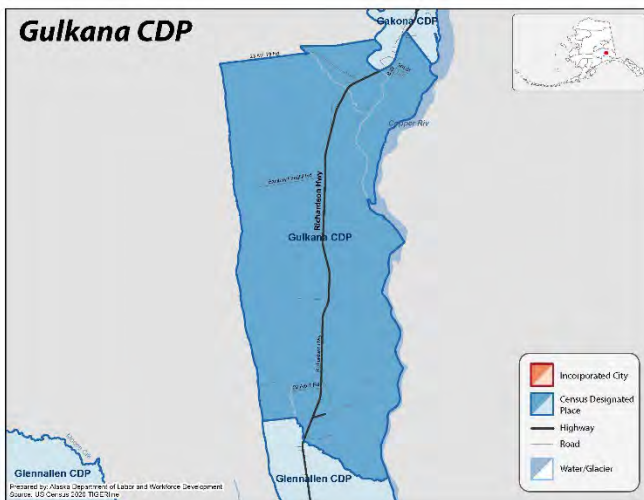
GULKANA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Gulkana is located on the east bank of the Gulkana (Kulkana) River at its confluence with the Copper River. It lies at mile 127 of the Richardson Highway, 14 miles north of Glennallen. Gulkana Village is in the Gulkana Census Designated Place (CDP) within the State of Alaska's Chitina Recording District. The Gulkana CDP encompassed approximately 36 square miles and runs north to the Gakona junction, and south to Glennallen.

Gulkana falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

AREA MAP:



GULKANA ROADHOUSE 1944

DESCRIPTION: FRONT ANGLED VIEW OF LARGE BUILDING HAVING FOUR DORMERS AND ARCHED ROOF IS SHOWN WITH VEHICLES PARKED IN FRONT, INCLUDING A BUS FROM OHARRA BUS LINES, AND SMALLER BUILDINGS TO THE RIGHT

Collection: Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

HISTORY & CULTURE: The Ahtna people have occupied this area for 5,000 to 7,000 years. Gulkana was originally established in 1903 as a telegraph station and was named "Kulkana" after the nearby river. The Gulkana Roadhouse was built in the early 1900s by C.L. Hoyt, a fur dealer who ran the roadhouse until 1916. A store, post office, and stage station were located nearby. Gulkana was originally located across the river from its present site; it was cut in half by construction of the Richardson Highway during World War II. In the early 1950s, the first house was built at the new site. Chief Ewan and his family were the first Native residents, and eventually all of the villagers relocated.

Gulkana is an Athabascan village. Subsistence activities supplement incomes. The sale, importation, and possession of alcohol is prohibited.

ECONOMY: Residents of Gulkana depend somewhat on subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. Employment opportunities are limited. Construction of a biomass wood pellet production plant is currently underway and is expected to generate employment as well as lower the cost of heating for local residents. Gulkana Village operates Soaring Eagle Transit system which is of vital importance to the region and an important source of employment and revenue for the Village. A number of seasonal tour operators work from the Gulkana River.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 33 residents in Gulkana as employed. The public sector employed 57.9% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 21.4%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 26.3%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$50,833. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$34,833 (MOE +/- \$9,547). About 1.4% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Community’s existing infrastructure, including paved roads, streetlights, security cameras, a piped water system, and a wood boiler heating system for centrally located community facilities. Water is currently derived from a well, treated, and stored in a 100,000-gallon tank, the Village is in the process of getting a new water storage tank. The current one is leaning and requires constant upkeep, including more frequent fillings. A piped water and sewer system serves most homes. A community septic tank treats wastewater. Individual septic tanks are also used by a few residences. Permafrost and high water tables are problematic in this region. Copper Basin Sanitation provides refuse collection, using the Glennallen landfill.^{xxvii}

Wood Pellet Mill. In the last 15 years the community constructed a wood pellet mill to create local jobs and to produce a locally needed product. The mill was completed but never opened. The local project champion has since moved away, there is a limited supply of nearby wood, and the community is not big enough to form a company to source/import wood from elsewhere. Some community leaders have suggested components of the mill be sold, and there is likely a market for the components.

Safety is a priority for residents. The Village Council has invested in streetlights and cameras to support safety and visibility in the community. Some residents expressed ongoing concerns around safety, especially given the community’s proximity to the Richardson Highway. CRNA serves Gulkana with mental and behavioral health services. There used to be a primary clinic in Gulkana, but it closed when the facility fell into disrepair. There is a primary care clinic in the nearby community of Gakona. In 2020, Gulkana reclaimed the former Village site from the State of Alaska. The community is still deciding how to use the space, which is across the Gulkana River from the current Village site. There are no utilities at the site. In the short term, the community is exploring ways to secure and protect the site from unwanted uses such as unauthorized camping.^{xxviii}

TRANSPORTATION: The GVC operates Soaring Eagle Transit, a transit service serving the region. In 2022, Gulkana received \$4.2 million in federal funding for a multi-purpose operations and maintenance facility. The facility will provide heated, dry space for emergencies, a warming shelter for customers, administrative and operations offices, and three maintenance bays. The community is exploring possible locations; see the community facility planning chapter for a list of options under consideration.^{xxix}

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: Gulkana Community Master Plan, March 2024

In the fall of 2023, the Gulkana Village Council engaged in a yearlong planning process with consultants Agnew::Beck Consulting. The plan was inspired by a series of upcoming infrastructure projects, and the recognition that the community would benefit from defining the long-term needs and desires of residents to inform upcoming growth and investment.

Vision: To responsibly steward the land, honor the legacy of our people, and enhance the lives of Gulkana Tribal Members.

Mission: To improve the quality of life for our people by promoting self-independence and wellness while honoring and respecting our traditions, providing stewardship of our lands, and inspiring unity and faith for future generations.

The following are the Goals, Strategies and actions by Focus Area^{xxx}

Economic Development Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Continue to provide on the job training and prioritize local hires for GVC positions.			
B. Evaluate the condition of the wood pellet mill machinery and sell components to existing wood pellet plant operators.			

Land Use and Housing Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Construct planned housing.	CRBRHA		
B. Shift single-person households to new housing to provide openings for families.	CRBRHA		
C. Rehabilitate existing homes in need of stabilization and weatherization.			
D. Demolish abandoned homes that are beyond repair.			
E. Provide more signage and/or install fencing to protect the Old Village site and educate visitors about appropriate use.		In progress	
F. Use the Old Village site for culture camps and outdoor community gatherings.			

Community Facilities and Utilities Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Identify site and construct new community hall. A list of potential sites is identified in Figure 11 in the community facility planning chapter (Section 9). Key features of the community hall to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functionality to be used as mass/emergency shelter (e.g., showers, air conditioning, air filtration, emergency supplies). Built to the highest fire safety and climate mitigation standards. Space to feature cultural artifacts, local art, and history 	GVC	Partially funded	
B. Decommission/remove building on former clinic site.			
C. Extend community hall parking across street at former clinic site.			
D. Pursue U.S. Department of Agriculture grant for space for residents to process wild game and fish. Determine if this space is included in new community hall or a standalone space.	GVC	In progress	
E. Identify site for new transit facility. A list of potential sites is identified in Figure 13 in the community facility planning chapter.	GVC		
F. Complete upgrades to water plant.	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), GVC		
G. Extend water and sewer lines to planned development areas and to existing homes currently without utilities.	ANTHC, GVC		
H. Add hydrants for cleaning/flushing to town center.			
I. Ensure water lines at future water plant can integrate with emergency tanker vehicles for fire protection.			
J. Complete needed efficiency upgrades and maintenance repairs to the boiler.	GVC	In progress	

Culture, Wellness, and Safety Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Partner with Copper River School District to provide space for afterschool and summer tutoring.	Copper River School District	In progress	
B. Encourage CRNA to provide more evening/ weekend programs so more residents can participate.	CRNA	In progress	
C. Maintain and expand outreach for community activities like game night and holiday meals, especially in the winter.	GVC		
D. Maintain cameras and signage at Village entrance to discourage uninvited visitors.	GVC		
E. Encourage Gulkana volunteers to join the Gakona Volunteer Fire Department.	GVC, Gakona Volunteer Fire Department		
F. Provide additional subsistence skills training (like culture camps) for children and adults. See <i>community facilities and utilities for related action to establish a fish and game processing facility</i> .	GVC, Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission		

Environment Actions

The following table includes potential actions to support implementation of the goals and strategies in this section, as well as a means of tracking progress.

Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Completion
A. Work with CRNA to implement recommendations in the Copper River Climate Change Adaptation Plan.	CRNA, GVC		
B. As part of planning for new facilities, consider climate change impacts (e.g., melting permafrost, air quality from wildfires, etc.) on the future facility.	GVC, Copper River Basin Regional Housing Authority (CRBRHA), CRNA		
C. Implement recommendations in the updated Gulkana Hazard Mitigation Plan.	GVC, FEMA, Ahtna	Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated in 2023	
D. Implement outstanding actions from 2017 Gulkana Community Wildfire Protection Plan.	GVC, Ahtna Inter-Tribal Resource Commission, Ahtna, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, Alaska Department of Forestry, utilities	In progress	
E. Continue with Gulkana River erosion monitoring work in partnership with ANTHC and other organizations.	GVC, ANTHC, FEMA		

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

GULKANA VILLAGE (Tribe - federally recognized; BIA-Recognized Traditional Council)
P.O. Box 254, Gakona, AK 99586

KENNY LAKE

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Kenny Lake lies off of the Richardson Highway, between miles 1 and 22 on the Edgerton Highway and between miles 1 and 11 of the Old Edgerton Highway. It is along the preferred route into the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.

Kenny Lake falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

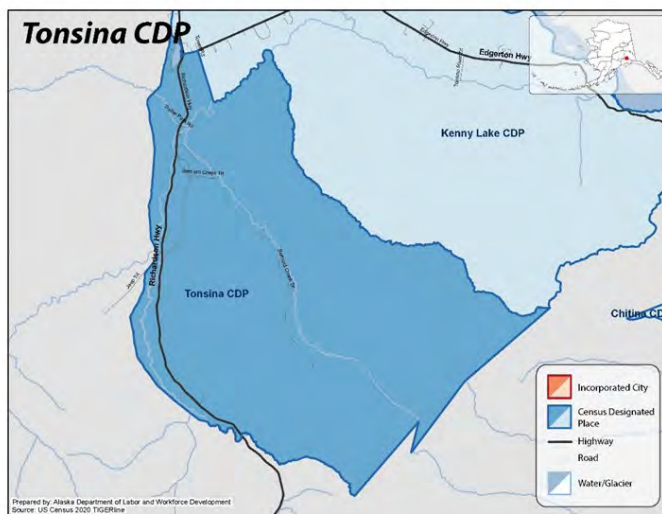
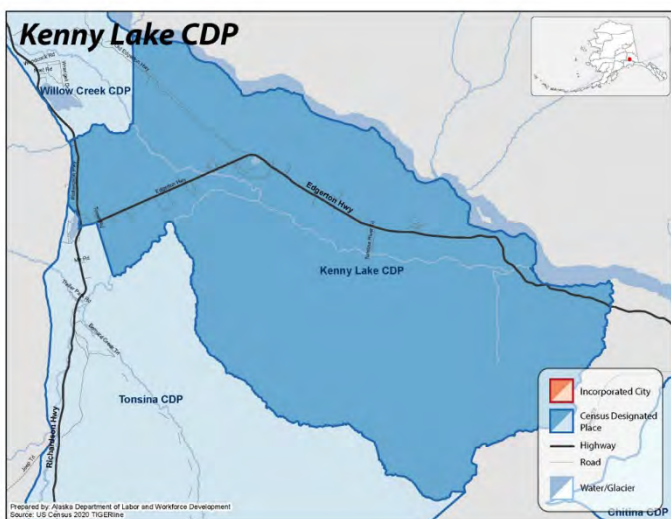


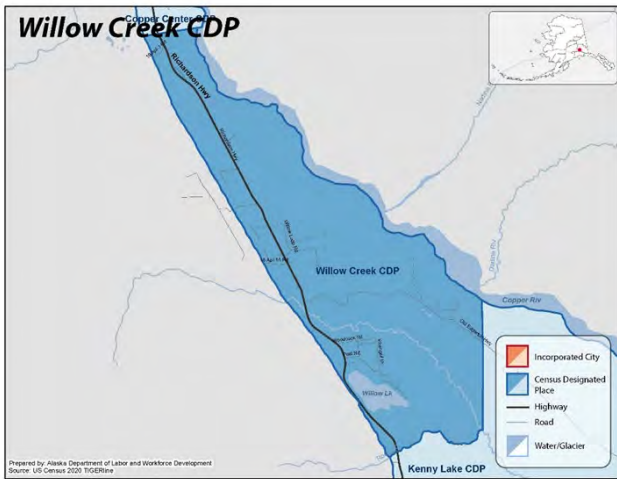
A.R.C. ROADHOUSE AT KENNY LAKE 1931

DESCRIPTION: A TWO-STORY LOG BUILDING. A SIGN ABOVE THE ENTRANCE READS, "ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION"; A SIGN JUST UNDER THE ROOF READS "KENNY LAKE". THERE ARE TELEGRAPH POLES AND ANOTHER CABIN NEARBY.

Collection: Walter W. Hodge Papers, ca. 1925-1948 Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

AREA MAPS:





HISTORY & CULTURE: Kenny Lake: The Ahtna people occupied the region historically. The area was settled by homesteaders in the 1960s due to the rich fertile soil and agricultural potential. Many of these homesteaders cleared 20 acres of land, built a cabin, and lived there for 6 months of every year for five years, as required to obtain ownership, then subdivided and sold their properties. Until the 1970s, the Old Edgerton Highway was the only road into Kenny Lake. Kenny Lake was built as an agricultural community.

Willow Creek: Willow Creek is a Census Designated Place (CDP) in the Copper Valley Census Area. Willow Creek first appeared in the 2000 United States Census. There are over 100 homes in the Willow Creek area -- about 70% are occupied.

Tonsina: A post office, general store, and United States Army Signal Corps telegraph station were established in Tonsina in 1902. The Tonsina Lodge was built in 1903 along the Valdez-Eagle Trail; it burned in 1928. The Tiekel Lodge, now closed and Tsaina Lodge were also built in this area. Development began during construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). TAPS Pump Station 12 was constructed nearby to move oil over Thompsen Pass to the pipeline terminal in Valdez. There is no clearly-defined community in Tonsina; it is best characterized as an occupied geographic area.

ECONOMY: The Kenny Lake community values a small-scale rural lifestyle and does not support any economic development planning effort. Concerns where an increase in population or in business activity is concerned derive primarily from the fact that there is a limited water supply in the area. The quality of the source is also poor. Agricultural crops such as hay and vegetables are grown locally, and livestock is locally raised as well. Lack of a slaughter facility in the Copper River Region significantly raises the sale price of locally grown livestock, reducing its competitiveness in the market. A small number of businesses operate from Kenny Lake, Willow Creek and Tonsina, both year-round and seasonally to provide. Tourism plays a significant role in the community as an on-route stop for those visitors headed to McCarthy and Kennicott. There are a number of bed and breakfast providers, a gas station, RV park, grocery store, laundromat and eateries, shuttle service to McCarthy/Kennicott. There is an established eco-tourism operator in Kenny Lake. Residents expressed a need for access to firewood from State sources that is currently not being met.

Kenny Lake: The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 69 residents in Kenny Lake as employed. The public sector employed 50% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 50%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$39,667 (MOE +/- \$32,584). The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$27,999 (MOE +/- \$23,442). About 1.8% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

Willow Creek: Tonsina North Agricultural Development, through appropriations the pipeline was diverted to open thousands of acres for agricultural development. Currently it has been completed and there are multiple farming operations on the Ag Road.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 48 residents in Willow Creek as employed. The public sector employed 39% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 61%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$72,212 (MOE +/- \$45,575). The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$44,928 (MOE +/- \$5,523). About 0% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

Tonsina: The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 16 residents in Tonsina as employed. The public sector employed 100% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 0%. There is no information provided for the average median household income or the per capita income. About 0% of all residents had

incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Most residents and businesses haul water from one of two community wells, located at MP 5 of the Edgerton Highway, or have water delivered by truck from Glennallen. There are a few successful private wells. The schools use their own well-water systems. The majority of occupied households have individual septic tank systems and are fully plumbed. Refuse dumpsters are available from Copper Basin Sanitation, which provides disposal at the Glennallen landfill. The area is served by the Copper Valley Electric Association, the lack of 3 phase power along the Edgerton Hwy has been referenced as a hindrance to the operation of existing businesses.

The Kenny Lake school is part of the Copper River School District which is a REAA district. Kenny lake school serves grades Pre-K – 12, the enrollment for the 2022-23 school year was 61.

TRANSPORTATION: The Edgerton Highway connects Kenny Lake to the entire state road system. Several landing strips are available nearby for small aircraft landings. There is a bike path along the Edgerton Highway from MP 3 to MP 7. A state-owned airstrip is available at Upper Tonsina, and other airstrips are in the vicinity.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST: Two meetings were held in Kenny Lake Community Center for Kenny Lake and the surrounding communities to participate in the planning session. The following objectives was derived from that meeting. The need for cheaper energy and emergency services is a high priority, access to harvest firewood and affordable housing (purchase and rental) to support the community.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

KENNY LAKE COMMUNITY LEAGUE
HC 60 Box 231, Copper Center, AK 99573

KENNY LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
MP 5 Edgerton Hwy, Kenny Lake, AK 99573
HC 60 Box 222-2 Copper Center, AK 99573

McCARTHY / KENNICOTT

LOCATION AND CLIMATE: McCarthy lies 61 miles east of Chitina off the Edgerton Highway. It is on the Kennicott River at the mouth of McCarthy Creek, 12 miles northeast of the junction of the Nizina and Chitina Rivers, in the heart of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

McCarthy falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.



WILMA KNOX ON A BRIDGE 1953

DESCRIPTION: WILMA KNOX LEANS ON A BRIDGE IN MCCARTHY, ALASKA, WITH BUILDINGS IN THE BACKGROUND. FROM CAPTION: "IT WAS VERY EARLY MORNING IN MCCARTHY WHEN BOB GOT THIS PICTURE OF ME LEANING OVER THE OLD BRIDGE AT THE EDGE OF TOWN. NOTICE THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE CLOUDS IN THE SKY AND THE SNOW ON THE MOUNTAINS IN THE BACKGROUND. YOU CAN ALSO SEE TWO OF THE OLD HOUSES JUST ACROSS THE BRIDGE." IN 1953, CORDOVA AIRLINES STARTED A REGULAR SERIES OF AERIAL TOURS FROM ANCHORAGE, ALASKA TO THE OLD MINING TOWN OF KENNICOTT AND THE NEARBY GHOST TOWN OF MCCARTHY. THIS PHOTO IS FROM THE FIRST TOUR.

Citation: Robert and Wilma Knox papers, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage.



KENNICOTT MINE 1953

Tourists walk along railroad tracks past abandoned mine buildings in Kennicott.

Collection: Robert and Wilma Knox papers, 1949-2001. University of Alaska Anchorage. Consortium Library. Archives & Special Collections

HISTORY & CULTURE: The Kennecott copper mines, and camp were established about 1908 across from the Kennicott Glacier, 4.5 miles up the mountain from McCarthy. An early misspelling named the mine and mining company Kennecott, while the town, river, and glacier are spelled Kennicott. In 1911, the Copper River & Northwestern Railway carried its first carload of ore from Kennecott to Cordova. Since no gambling or drinking were allowed at the town of Kennicott, nearby McCarthy developed as a colorful diversion for the miners. Housing over 800 residents, it provided a newspaper, stores, hotels, restaurants, saloons, and a red light district. Kennicott became a company town with homes, a school, hospital, gym, tennis court and silent movie theater. Over its 30-year operation, \$200 million in ore was extracted from Kennecott, the richest concentration of copper ore known in the world. In 1938, the mines closed and both towns were abandoned.

The old mine buildings, artifacts, and colorful history of McCarthy attract visitors during the summer months. The area ranks as one of the nation's most endangered landmarks by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Emergency stabilization of the old buildings has been required, and future work will be necessary.

ECONOMY: Employment is limited and seasonal. Local businesses include lodges, food services, B&Bs, a museum, a small store, gift shops, flight seeing services, a shuttle service, and guide services. There are also businesses which provide home and road building and maintenance services, and that provide fuels to local residents. The National Park Service employs several residents seasonally.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 2 residents in McCarthy as employed. The public sector employed 100% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in the labor force was 0%. The ACS surveys have no established information for median household income, per capita income, or poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Water is drawn by hand from a clear water spring. This is an area of great concern to community members since this spring is in fact the communities only water source and vulnerable to contamination from natural and manmade sources. Outhouses are prevalent, although a few septic systems are in use. Incinerating, composting, and recycling of solid wastes is encouraged. There is no central electric system and many homes have turned, quite successfully, to renewable energy sources such as solar. The community has been actively searching for a solution to the lack of a trash pickup/removal location whereby arrangements could be made with Copper Basin Sanitation for service. Although the year-round community only totals 28, summer tourism will bring as many as 10,000 visitors through the town of McCarthy. There is little or no support from State or Federal sources in dealing with the logistics of accommodating this traffic. Copper Valley Telecom has launched a Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) project along McCarthy Road, covering the stretch from the Copper River Bridge to Mile 56. Serving over 100 homes and cabins, this initiative will provide a minimum 100/100 Mbps service, this project is funded entirely by the USDA ReConnect 4 grant without requiring matching funds. The planned route for this project will run along the Department of Transportation’s right-of-way and extend to CVT’s Central Office in McCarthy. While this project follows McCarthy Road, it does not encompass fiber deployment for the town of McCarthy. The Fiber-to-the-Home initiative within McCarthy will be addressed in a future project.

TRANSPORTATION: McCarthy Road is accessible from Richardson via Edgerton Highways. The 60-mile McCarthy Road starts in Chitina and continues into the Wrangell-St. Elias Park. The McCarthy Road is not maintained by the AK DOT&PF in the Winter. A footbridge is used to cross the Kennicott River. There are many gravel airstrips in the vicinity. The state-owned gravel airstrip is 3,500' long by 60' wide. DOT performs irregular winter maintenance of McCarthy airport.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS:

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description/Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Schedule	Contract or
ECI Grant	2022		Kennicott-McCarthy Volunteer Fire Department				
MAC Small Grant	2022		McCarthy Access &				

			Westside Road Maintenance				
MAC Small Grant	2022		Hanagita Road Maintenance 2022				
MAC Small Grant	2022		Mail shack outhouse repair				
MAC Small Grant	2022		McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum 				
MAC Small Grant	2022		Kennicott-McCarthy Recreation Alliance				
MAC Small Grant	2022		McCarthy Community Playgorund				
AK DOT & PF	2024	Funded	McCarthy PEL Study	Develop	ment	2025	Jacobs

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST:

Residents, agencies, and businesses participated in two CVDA planning sessions to discuss goals, objectives, and strategies. MCarthy is a community that wants to maintain self-reliance, and a smaller community that regards and respects each other as individuals. The desire to attract people and create a larger year-round community was expressed. Local community needs were derived through discussion and determined, in no particular priority the following list of goals and objectives projects:

Objective: More year-round services for the community to support the community’s needs. Such as general store, laundry facilities, etc.

Objective: A year-round stand-alone community center that supports the community and family events, meetings, education, arts, health, and wellness without religious or retail affiliations.

Goal: Increase privately owned rental housing inventory

Goal: Create an environment for a home-schooling co-op;

Goal: Every resident should be able to dispose of Trash and recycling locally; local transfer station

Goal: Provide access to harvest firewood on park lands.

Goal: Maintain access to natural resources; keep the water source clean

Goal: Repair and Maintain Nazina Road; safe roads

Goal: Find optimum place for a parking areas for winter and summer without impacting view shed or town feel in

Goal: Reasonable access to non-emergency health care

Goal: Access to fresh and less expensive food and produce; community kitchen

Goal: Have well trained volunteer Fire and EMS first responders, obtain funding to complete the firehouse

Goal: Maintain and foster self reliance

Goal: Provide a shared space to enhance and support community activities that will foster stronger community relations.

Goal: Provide the children in the community a safe play space.

Goal: Provide a laundry/shower facility

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

MAC: MCCARTHY AREA COUNCIL

PO Box MXY, Glennallen AK 99588

Mile 61 McCarthy-Kennecott Rd, Glennallen AK, 99588

WMC: WRANGELL MOUNTAINS CENTER

Address: PO Box 142972

KENNICOTT MCCARTHY VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

PO Box MXY 8b, McCarthy AK 99588

MCCARTHY EMS

MP 59.4 McCarthy Road, McCarthy, AK 99588

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve

MCCARTHY KENNICOTT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

PO Box MXY, Glennallen, AK 99588

BLACKBURN HERITAGE FOUNDATION

MENDELTONA/NELCHINA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Mendeltona Census Designated Place (CDP) is located between mileposts 150.5 and 165 of the Glenn Highway and includes about 14 miles of the Lake Louis Road to the north. It is located about 30 miles southwest of Glennallen and abuts the Nelchina CDP. Total area is 459 square miles.

Nelchina CDP is located between mileposts 137.5 and 150.5 of the Glenn Highway. It begins at the Mat-Su Borough line which is the Little Nelchina Bridge and abuts the Mendeltona CDP. Total area is 47.9 square miles.

Both areas fall within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, with long, cold winters, and mild summers.

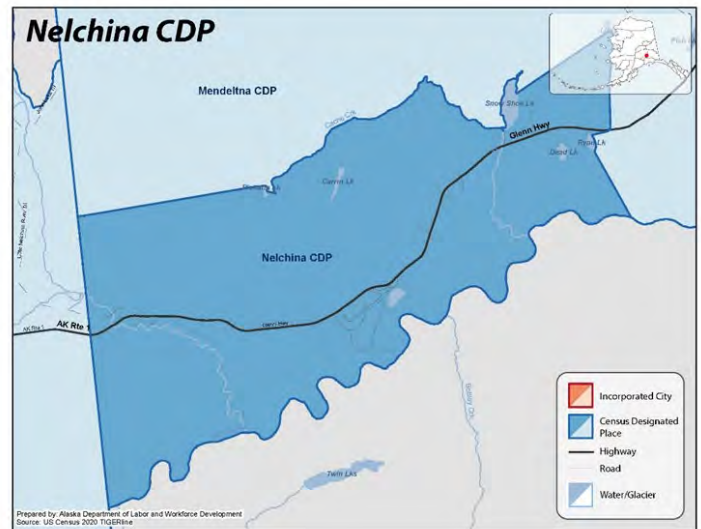
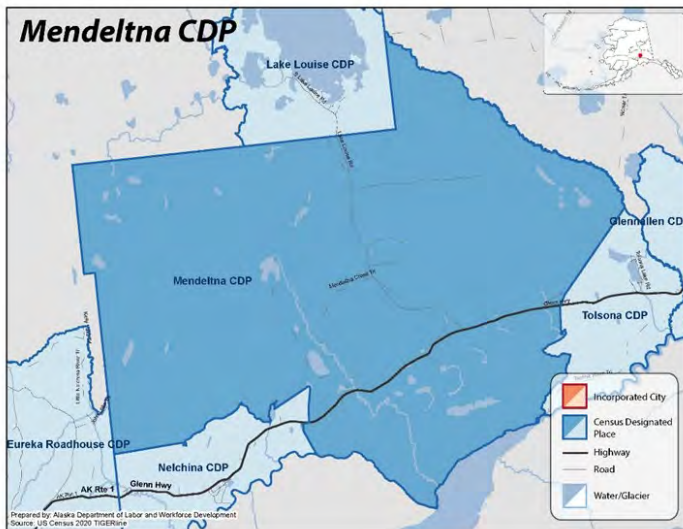


FISH WHEEL ON MENDELTONA CREEK 1952

DESCRIPTION: SIGN FOR MENDELTONA LODGE NEXT TO A FISH WHEEL ON THE BANK OF A RIVER

Collection: AMRC. Sidney Hamilton Photograph Collection; Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center

AREA MAPS:



HISTORY & CULTURE: Mendeltna is an Athabascan name first reported by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1915. Mendeltna was originally a stop on the trail used by Native Alaskans from Lake Tyone to Tazlina Lake. Gold in the creeks draining from the Chugach Mountains brought prospectors to this area in the late 1800s.

Nelchina is an Athabascan name. Gold in the creeks draining from the Chugach Mountains brought prospectors to this area in the late 1800s. Nelchina area offered several trails into the mountains. Nelchina was a mining settlement established around 1913. It was first reported by Theodore Chapin in a 1915 USGS publication.

The Nelchina-Mendeltna Community Corporation was established in 1988. It has received and continues to receive Community Assistance Program (CAP) funds (previously known as Revenue Sharing) to build, maintain, and operate a refuse transfer facility and youth encampment facility, and has a registered volunteer fire department. Its board members also advocate for local issues and recommend revenue sharing to surrounding non-profits as possible.

ECONOMY:

Mendeltna: The area offers rooms and cabins at the Tazlina Lodge, and an RV campground at Mendeltna Creek. Most residents commute to surrounding or remote areas for year-round employment. Others are retired, summer only residents (snowbirds).

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 15 residents in Mendeltna as employed. The public sector employed 16.9% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 83.1%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$75,804 (MOE +/- \$54,799). The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$40,952 (MOE +/- \$15,698). About 44.9% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

Nelchina: The area offers a state maintenance yard, rooms and cabins at the Nelchina Lodge, a local B&B, a church, a grocery store/gift shop/parts store (Grizzly Country Store), and various home-based businesses. Most residents commute to surrounding or remote areas for year-round employment. Others are retired, summer only residents (snowbirds).

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 46 residents in Nelchina as employed. The public sector employed 50.5% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 49.5%. The ACS surveys did not establish an average median household income. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$45,579 (MOE +/- \$19,224). The ACS Survey reported 0% of residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Public facilities located within the Mendeltna and Nelchina CDP areas include an Alaska Department of Transportation maintenance station, Little Nelchina State Rec Area (6 camping sites and pit toilets), a highway rest area with pit toilets, a community church, youth encampment facility with ball field, community refuse transfer facility, and fire department equipment trailers. There are several turnouts with trail access and turnouts with public access to at least seven ADF&G stocked lakes.

Utilities include electric and telephone (with internet). A fiber optic line is under construction and expected in the area by 2025. Water and sewer facility are privately owned. The residents haul water or have individual wells. Outhouses and septic tanks are used for sewage disposal, with septic tank pumping service available out of Glennallen. Heating fuel is delivered from Glennallen.

TRANSPORTATION: Both Mendeltna and Nelchina communities are located along the Glenn Highway and access the statewide road system. There is a state-owned airstrip (Tazlina) at MP 156 and several private airstrips in the area.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: Projects listed below are from the Copper River Census area 2012 CEDS

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description/Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Schedule	Contractor
DCRA	1999	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna Solid Waste Transfer Station Ph IV - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$10,527		
DCRA	1999	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna Community Recreation Site Construction - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$14,825		
DCRA	1998	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna Solid Waste Transfer Station - Phase III - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$27,888		
DCRA	1997	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna Solid Waste Transfer Station - Phase II - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$29,170		
DCRA	1997	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna School Recreation - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$26,316		
DCRA	1996	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna Distance Learning/Medical Link Equipment Purchase - Comments: Capital Matching	Completed	\$26,316		
DCRA	1995	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna Solid Waste Transfer Station – Phase I-Comments: Capital Match	Completed	\$26,316		
DNA	2012	Funded	Nelchina/Mendeltna Volunteer Fire Department Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)	Completed	\$18,000		

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST: Residents participated in two CVDA planning sessions to discuss goals, objectives and strategies. The residents of Mendeltna and Nelchina expressed a desire to remain outside of an organized borough with minimal government intervention. The residents would like to bring more life/involvement from the community and attract younger families as the population ages out.

Objective: Retain Community Assistance Program (CAP) funding to support the upkeep and maintenance of the transfer site, youth encampment, volunteer fire department, and support the surrounding non-profits.

Objective: Provide well-trained volunteer fire and EMS first responders to include search and rescue and back country rescue.

Objective: Properly equip the volunteer fire department to effectively protect the community. This may include a heated building for a permanent fire truck supplied by Glennallen.

Objective: Maintain and improve the youth encampment

Objective: Install a community well to support the fire department and provide water to community members, similar to the one at Kenny Lake.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES

NELCHINA -MENDELTONA COMMUNITY CORPORATION (Community Non-Profit)

HC 01 Box 2430 Glennallen, AK 99588

MENTASTA LAKE

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Mentasta Lake is located 6 miles off the Tok-Slana Cutoff of the Glenn Highway on the west side of Mentasta Pass, 38 miles southwest of Tok Junction.

Mentasta Lake falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

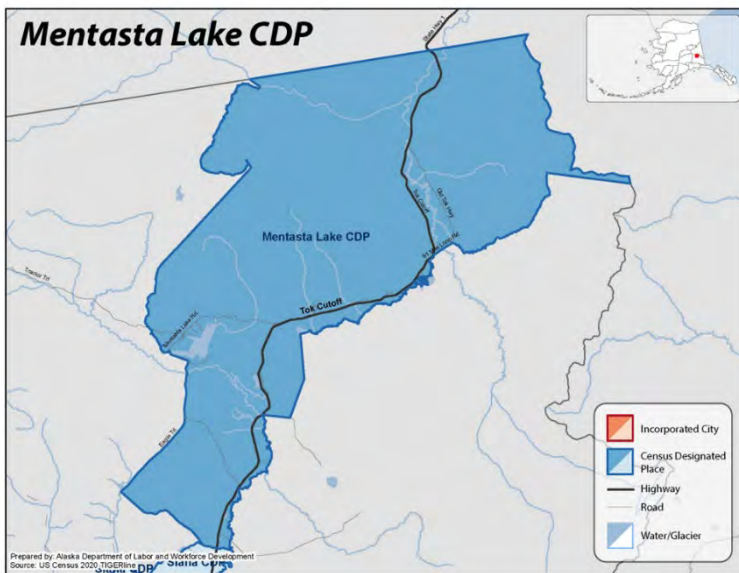


MENTASTA LAKE, MENTASTA ROAD 1943

DESCRIPTION: VIEW OF MENTASTA LAKE WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE REMAINS OF A WOODEN DOCK

Collection: A. C. Kuehl Photographs; Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center

AREA MAP:



HISTORY & CULTURE: The area is reported to have been the best-known route of Native immigration across the Alaska Range. Early village settlements have been located at various sites around the lake. The families that presently reside in Mentasta Lake come from Nabesna, Suslota, Slana, and other villages within the area. The U.S. Army Signal Corps established a telegraph station at Mentasta Pass in 1902. A post office was established at the village in 1947 but was discontinued in 1951.

The community is primarily Athabascan, and subsistence activities are an important component of its cultural identity. Mentasta Lake Alaska. In 1990 Katie John, Doris Charles, and the Mentasta Village Council, represented by the Native American Rights Fund, sued the U.S. in Federal Court claiming that the federal government had unlawfully excluded navigable waters

and subsistence fishing from the protections of ANILCA. The Katie John case challenged the federal agencies' refusal to extend the priority to navigable waters in Alaska, and eventually resulted in the priority being extended to navigable waters that are found within the boundaries of federally owned lands in Alaska.

Mentasta is home to the “headwaters people,” who have been stewards of the Upper Copper River lands for centuries. Mentasta Lake is connected to the Tok Cutoff from the Richardson Highway by a 6-mile spur road. The Slana River that drains into the Copper River and its tributaries are at the heart of the community’s homeland. These rivers are spawning grounds for salmon and whitefish, Dall sheep graze on mountain slopes, caribou migrate across the land, and moose browse the forested lowlands. Spruce and birch forests are home to berries, bark, wood, roots, and many plants essential to our traditional way of life.

ECONOMY: Subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering make up much of Mentasta Lake's economy. Cash employment is limited and seasonal.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 49 residents in Mentasta Lake as employed. The public sector employed 44.5% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 55.5%. The ACS did not provide an average median household income. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$20,080 (MOE +/- \$12,305). About 33.9% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Almost half of homes have individual wells and septic tanks and are fully plumbed. Treated well water is available from the washeteria, and privies are used by most residents. Solid waste is hauled to a landfill approximately 10 miles from the community. There is a school within the community offering kindergarten through grade 12. Alaska Power and Telephone Company services the community. A post office and small village store also serve the community. Tribal Broad Band is being studied and designed, and set to be deployed in 2025 through AITRC.

TRANSPORTATION: Mentasta Lake is connected to the Tok Cutoff to the Glenn Highway by a six-mile spur road. There is a small airstrip at Mentasta Lodge. Most roads conform to Bureau of Indian Affairs and/or State of Alaska standards. Roads are maintained by the state, but many are not regularly maintained.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: Village members participated in a CVDA planning sessions to discuss goals, objectives, and strategies. The following Vision Statement and Objectives are taken from the Mentasta Traditional Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, a process which occurred prior to this CEDS revision.

Mission: We the TAA’ TL’ AA DENEAY (Headwater People) of Mentasta Tribe hereby declare our mission to serve our people. That our children, their children, grandchildren and their great-grandchildren through all generations shall enjoy the same inherent rights as our grandfathers and grandmothers; also to allow for tribal sovereignty, adaptability and growth through self-determination. Our mission is to also allow our people who shared a common custom, concern, language and, land; our customary laws, the traditional uses of our land and our unwritten tribal laws as a tribe.

Priorities:

Connection to and drawing from cultural values and practices (fundamental, but the community’s responsibility.

1. Develop economic drivers to bring more resources into Mentasta and keep more money in the village to be reinvested.
2. Build a community resource to support mental, physical, and spiritual health by providing physical space for exercise, programming, and community gatherings.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST:

Objectives

1. Strategy: Develop economic drivers to bring more resources into Mentasta and keep more money in the village to be reinvested

Project: Expand Mentasta Store: The core strategy for this priority is to build up the existing village store. This strategy envisions a larger store that can supply the village with fresh groceries, supplies, and gasoline. As the store develops, new jobs will include opportunities for young people to learn skills and experience their first working opportunity. Providing places within the village to purchase gas, food, and supplies saves community members the 100-mile round trip to the currently nearest grocery and gas station while allowing community finances to remain in the community to be reinvested. The store will be a place to gather, find fresh and healthy foods, and increase the financial independence of community members allowing the Council to focus in other areas.

2. Strategy: Improve pipeline for employment opportunities

Project: Improve employment: Alongside the store expansion is another strategy to increase economic opportunity: build up accessible trainings for good jobs outside of the village and for businesses to be started by tribal members within the villages to employ tribal members in Mentasta. This strategy considers that employment success depends on intentional support that begins with young people being introduced to what possibilities exist for them as adults and what are the steps to be prepared to realize those possibilities. While currently job training may be available, they are often not taken advantage because of barriers like proximity, this strategy seeks to bring those trainings and early preparation closer to within the village to address those barriers. This strategy also envisions new and supported pathways for business that can use the resources in Mentasta to create jobs and economic opportunity in the village. Paving the way for tribal members to start business like logging and tourist excursions would bring revenue and jobs independent of the Council's responsibilities. However, setting up the administrative and regulatory steps for motivated tribal members to undertake will increase the success and sustainability for those businesses.

3. Strategy: Build a community resource to support mental, physical, and spiritual health through physical space for exercise, programming, and community gatherings.

Project: Build new recreation center: This strategy has both longer term and shorter-term aspects. In both cases the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of community members and especially young people are the focus. In the short term, the strategy is to repair the existing Rec Hall to house healthy activities for young people in Mentasta. In the long term, this strategy envisions a new building where healthy physical activities including gym space, room for community to gather and to host community programs centered on community health. The benefits of exercise on overall health are clear. Having community owned space that promotes a safe and supportive environment for healthy lifestyles and cultural practices is essential.^{xxxi}

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

MENTASTA TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

P.O. Box 6019, Mentasta Lake, AK 99780-6019

PAXSON

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Paxson lies on Paxson Lake, at mile 185 of the Richardson Highway, at its intersection with the Denali Highway. It is south of Delta Junction and 62 miles north of Gulkana.

Paxson falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

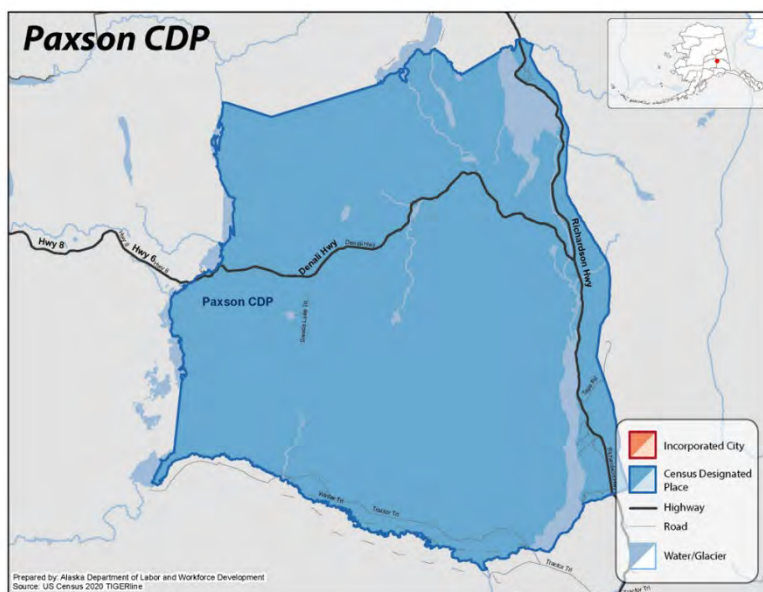


PAXSON'S ROADHOUSE 1931

DESCRIPTION: SIGN READS 'PAXSON LODGE. DAN C. WHITEFORD, PROP. GOOD FISHING BIG GAME HUNTING'. THERE ARE A SET OF CARIBOU ANTLERS OVER ONE DOOR, AND A SET OF MOOSE ANTLERS OVER ANOTHER DOOR. THE LOG BUILDING IS AT THE BASE OF A SMALL HILL.

Collection: Walter W. Hodge Papers, ca. 1925-1948; Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

AREA MAP:



HISTORY & CULTURE: More than 400 archeological sites indicate that this area has been inhabited for at least 10,000 years. In 1906 Alvin Paxson established the Timberline Roadhouse, which consisted of a small cabin for a kitchen and two tents for bunkhouses, at mile 192. His cook, Charles Meier, later started Meier's Roadhouse at mile 174. Paxson then built a two-story roadhouse at mile 191. He later added a barn with a drying room, a pump, sleeping quarters, two rooms, and a bath. A post office, store, wood house, and small ice room followed. The Denali Highway was built in the 1950s from Paxson to Cantwell and the Denali National Park. The 160-mile gravel road was the only access into the park prior to construction of the George Parks Highway. The Denali Highway also provides access to the Tangle Lakes Recreation Area,

Summit Lake, and the largest active gold mine in Alaska.

The American Community Survey 2022, show no persons employed, there is no local school. It is a non-native community.

ECONOMY: The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 0 residents in Paxson as employed. The ACS did not provide an average median household income. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was not provided. Information on Residents with incomes below the poverty level was not provided. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Recreational cabins are in use in this area. There is a DOT&PF maintenance facility in this areas and they generate their own power. Individual wells and septic tanks are used by seasonal residents,

TRANSPORTATION: Paxson Lodge owns and maintains a 1,800' long by 60' wide gravel airstrip, and float planes can land at Summit Lake. The Richardson Highway provides access to Anchorage or Fairbanks. The Denali Highway provides summer access to Cantwell and the Denali Park.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: Paxson does not have an organized community corporation or residents' association. CVDA did not hold community planning sessions as the vast majority of properties in the area are recreational in nature and only occupied in the summer months.

SLANA/NEBESNA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Slana stretches along the Nabesna Road, which runs south of the Tok Cutoff at mile 63. It lies at the junction of the Slana and Copper Rivers, 53 miles southwest of Tok.

Slana falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

Nabesna is located in the northern part of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Nabesna is accessed via Nabesna Road, a gravel road connecting to the Tok Cut-Off at Slana.

Nabesna falls within the gulf coast transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

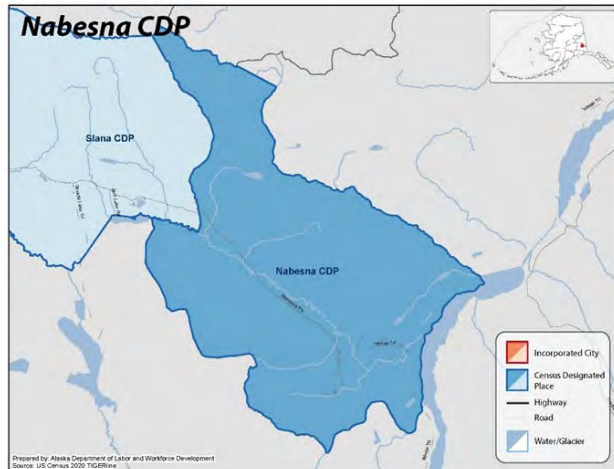
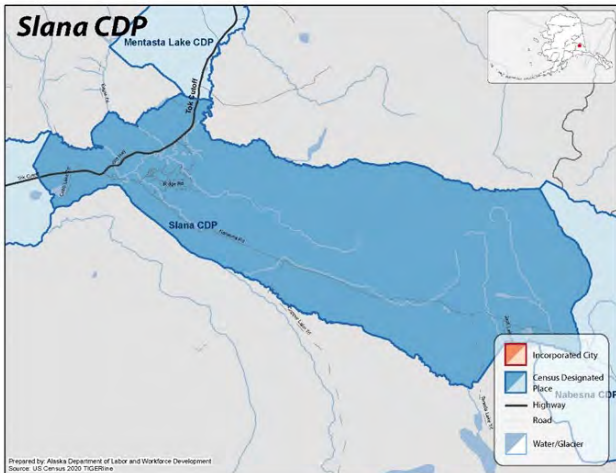


CHOW LINE AT SLANA 1942

DESCRIPTION: TROOPS OF 97TH ENGINEER REGIMENT IN CHOW LINE AT SLANA, ALASKA, 1942, DURING ALASKA HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION. THE ACCESS ROAD (NOW GLENN HIGHWAY) WAS STARTED ALONG HILL IN BACKGROUND BY 97TH ENGRS A-CO

Collection: Lael Morgan Collection; Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

AREA MAPS:



HISTORY & CULTURE: Slana is a Native village name, derived from the river's name. The Nabesna Mine opened in 1923, which employed 60 people at its height. Over 30 different minerals were extracted from this site, although gold was the primary source of profit. It operated sporadically through the late 1940s.

Slana developed rapidly in 1983 when the BLM opened over 10,000 acres to homesteading. Individuals received five acres of free land in Slana, it was one of the last opportunities for homesteading on federal land. Eight hundred claims were filed, but most were soon abandoned. Alaskan winters took their toll. Many tried to live in hastily built cabins and tents, with temperatures down to -60° F. Jobs were scarce and the climate was not suited to farming. Today, about 50 people live in the settlement on private property and is comprised primarily of homesteaders. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates there were 196 housing units in the community and 45 are occupied (a decline of about 42% since the 2010 Census).

ECONOMY: Roadside lodge providing gas, liquor, an auto mechanic, and RV parking closed in the last 2 decades leaving the majority of those services unavailable within the community. Other local businesses include a lodging facility, RV parking for 43 vehicles with water, sewer, electric, showers, DSL internet and pay phone, a general store, art gallery. A Park Ranger Station and state highway maintenance camp are located nearby. The state campground at mile 62 on the Glenn/Tok cutoff has been recently upgraded with newly built handicap access, outhouses, water pump, picnic tables, bearproof trash containers and fire pits. Subsistence activities account for the majority of residents income. The majority of residents feel that the restrictions placed on use of land by the National Park Service have a negative impact on the ability of existing businesses and potential businesses to develop.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 12 residents in Slana as employed. The public sector employed 14.8% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 45.5%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 72.8%. The ACS survey estimate could not be computed for median household income because there were an insufficient number of sample observations. The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$28,758 (MOE +/- \$19,150). About 18.5% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for Nabesna could not be computed for the following areas because there were an insufficient number of sample observations: number of people employed, public sector employed, local unemployment, percentage of workers not in labor force median household income, per capita income or residents with incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

WRANGELL ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE: The Nabesna Road allows access to Alaska's largest national park, the Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve, located on the north side of the park. Nabesna Gold Mine, operated from 1925 – 1945, limited, small scale mineral extraction has occurred since then. The Nabesna Mine and its structures are privately owned and situated on private property (located at the end of the road). Park visitors should avoid the Nabesna Mine area altogether. The mine tailings extend onto adjacent park lands and these tailings contain high levels of metals and are acidic. Surface waters in the area contain contaminants of potential concern (COPCs) including arsenic, cadmium, chromium, mercury, nickel, and lead. Environmental exposure may be hazardous. NPS is investigating potential cleanup actions at the site as part of an ongoing environmental investigation. "4-Mile" Road leads into the Slana Settlement. At mile 4.6 the Land Status changes from Preserve to Park. The north side of the road is "National Preserve" whereas the south side is "National Park." Sport hunting is allowed in the preserve but not in the park. Subsistence hunting by local, rural residents is allowed in both the park and preserve. There are waysides, several trails heads, rest areas, parking, access to primitive camping, cabins, a campground and scenic views from MP 6 – MP 28. At Mile 28.1 Land Status - National Preserve. Both sides of the road are now "National Preserve." Road conditions deteriorate beyond this point, there are several trails from here to the end of the maintained road at MP 42. At Mile 42.5 is the Rambler Mine trail.^{xxxii}

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Sources of water in Slana are primarily individual wells and hauling in portable tanks. Others draw water from Rufus Creek. The school operates an individual well. Outhouses, honey buckets, and septic systems are used for sewage disposal. Approximately one-third of the homes have complete plumbing. The landfill was closed in 1990. The Slana Community Corporation has received additional funding from DEC and Village Safe Water Program to assist residents add sewers and wells and repair wells that have dried up. There is no central electric system. Electricity is provided by Alaska Power & Telephone at a commercial rate of 66 cents per Kwh and effective residential rate (after PCE) of 30.0 cents per Kwh (up from the 11.19 cents from 2010) as shown on the Alaska Energy Authority PCE report 2023. Total production generated in 2023 was 1,416,887 Kwhs from Diesel. The high cost of commercial rates severely impacts local business and negatively affects Slana’s attempt to bring other businesses. The Slana School, part of the Copper River School District, which is a REAA district, for the 2022-2023 School year 15 students were enrolled in grades KG - 12. There is a post office established in 1977. A carrier delivers year-round on Nabesna Rd. While there is currently no internet service to residents along the Nabesna Road, Copper Valley Telecom will seek funding to bring fiber to the home to this Nabesna road and further expand their infrastructure in the region, as part of their next phase of planning

TRANSPORTATION: Slana has road access to the statewide system via Glenn and Richardson Highways. Gasoline and diesel is at Posty’s Trading Post in Chistochina. Slana has road access to the statewide system via Glenn and Richardson Highways. The nearest public airstrip is to the south at Chistochina, but a 1,200' by 100' private gravel airstrip exists. The Nabesna Road is a 42-mile State Hwy, unpaved and intermittently maintained by the Alaska State DOT. Rough road conditions and washouts at creek crossings are common. This is a remote area with limited services. No fuel is available in Slana. Fill up in Glennallen (76 miles south), Chistochina (28 miles south - Posty's Trading post is not open 24 hours. A local company provides transportation service - one local offering a regular schedule within the copper basin, service to Anchorage and Valdez 3 times a week and call out service.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: Some of the following projects were from the Copper Valley Census Area 2012 CEDS

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description/Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Schedule	Contractor
State of AK	2024 / 2025	Preliminary	Construct Emergency services Building to house EMS equipment	Pending	\$300,000		
	2025	Funded	Add water/sewer services to 3 homes and address 2 dried up wells	Pending			Village Safe Water
DEC/VSW	2010	Funded	Wells and Septic Systems - Comments: Design and construction of Individual on-site wells and septic systems.	Complete	\$808,501		Slana Community Corporation
AEA-AEEE	2010	Funded	Carlson Creek Hydro - Comments: OTHER	Complete	\$40,001		Alaska Power Company
DEC/VSW	2009	Funded	On-Site Wells & Septic Systems - Comments: Renewal and Replacement	Complete	\$1,080,000		
DEC/VSW	2009	Funded	Design and Construction of Water and Sewer Facilities	Complete	\$1,515,779		

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST: Local residents, business owners and community organizations participated in two CVDA planning sessions in Slana and Nabesna to discuss goals, objectives, and strategies. The regional need for lower energy costs and emergency medical services were at the top of the list. The following are a list of goals that are a priority for the community:

Goal: To have safe potable water available for the community.

Goal: To have affordable better-quality housing and increased inventory

Goal: To attract quality teachers for the Slana School.

Goal: DOT & PF to increase and provide better maintenance for Nabesna Road and control flooding

Goal: Attract businesses to support basic community needs, General Store/Gas

Goal: Work with the park to better identify and attract more tourism the Nabesna Road side of the WSTE National Park

Goal: Encourage community and culture.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

SLANA COMMUNITY CORPORATION

PO Box 861, Slana, AK 99586

SLANA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP.

P.O. Box 946, Slana, AK 99586

ALASKA POWER ASSOCIATION

703 West Tudor Road, Suite 200 • Anchorage, AK 99503-6650

TAZLINA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Tazlina is located 5 miles south of Glennallen on the Richardson Highway, at mile 110.5. It is comprised of several small residential subdivisions and a business district. Copperville, Aspen Valley, Tazlina Terrace, and Copper Valley School Road are all part of this area.

Tazlina falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

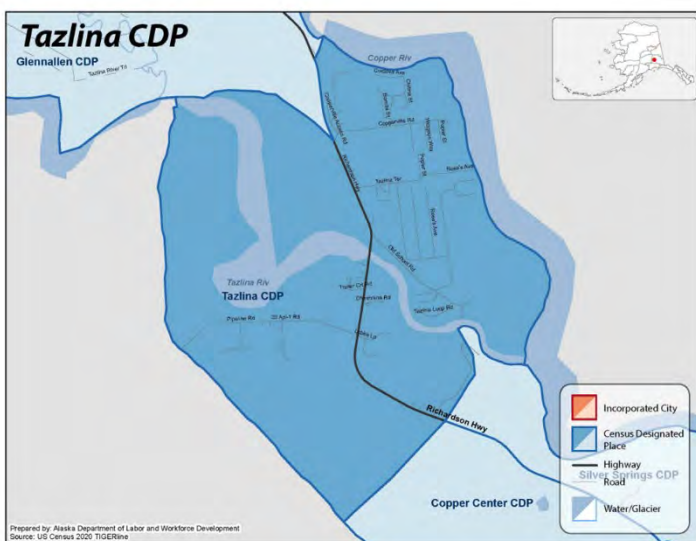


TAZLINA RIVER BRIDGE 1906

DESCRIPTION: SINKING THE FIRST CRIB OF THE TAZLINA RIVER BRIDGE ON MAR. 18, 1906.

Collection: Mary Whalen Photograph Collection; Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

AREA MAP:



HISTORY & CULTURE: The village reportedly was a fishing camp of the Ahtna tribes who historically moved up and down the Copper River and its tributaries. Tazlina is Athabascan for "swift water." By 1900, a permanent village had been established on the north and south banks off the Tazlina River near its confluence with the Copper River. During the pipeline era, Tazlina developed around the old Copper Valley School, a boarding school that housed students from all over the state. The Copper Valley School closed in 1971.

Two organizations represent Tazlina: The Native Village of Tazlina and the Association of Tazlina Residents.

ECONOMY: Some residents depend on subsistence fishing and hunting. Local businesses include a combined grocery, liquor, hardware, gas, and sporting goods store, B&B's. The Division of Forestry, Alaska DOT&PF maintenance, Division of State Parks, and Division of Communications are located in the area.

The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 201 residents in Tazlina as employed. The public sector employed 67.4% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 3.4%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 30.2%. The ACS surveys established that average median household income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$115,156 (MOE +/- \$31,288). The per capita income (in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$43,816 (MOE +/- \$9,187). About 12.5% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Occupied homes are fully plumbed. The majority of residents have individual wells and septic systems. Others haul well water from the Copper Center Safewater well or have water delivered by truck from Glennallen. Refuse is collected by Copper Basin Sanitation from Glennallen.

TRANSPORTATION: Tazlina is located on the Richardson Highway. There is a state-owned 900' long by 42' wide gravel airstrip and a seaplane facility at Smokey Lake. A picnic area off the Richardson at mile 111, and in 2013 the DOT & PF made rest area improvements and stabilized the embankment at the Tazlina Wayside, The project also included a hardened boat ramp that allows for a motorized boat launch at MP 110.6, the Tazlina River Bridge.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS:

No Capitol Projects were identified at the time of this planning session.

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST:

The Native Village of Tazlina participated in a CVDA planning session to discuss goals, objectives, and strategies, they also shared their Strategic plan for 2023. The regional need for lower energy costs and emergency medical services was also a high priority for the community. The following list of goals are the outcomes from the planning session with CVDA.

- Goal: To have more energy efficient affordable house for the community
- Goal: Make available opportunities for vocational training and education
- Goal: Build a more sustainable teacher base
- Goal: Reduce the high cost of energy and fuel.
- Goal: Access to a secure potable water source
- Goal: To have safe pathways for residents and visitors. Across the Tazlina Bridge and Bike paths, improve access and add lighting.
- Goal: Access to 24/7 EMS and weekend and after-hours medical services
- Goal: Create a regional unified addressing system
- Goal: Access to fresh affordable food year round
- Goal: Protect and conserve natural resources
- Goal: Create opportunities for more service providers in the region
- Goal: Afford Tazlina residents' opportunities to come together as a community
- Goal: Make available affordable childcare options

NATIVE VILLAGE OF TAZLINA STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 (DRAFT)

Mission Statement: To be a place with a clean environment where all residents are safe, health, sober and drug free; where residents are actively involved in community affairs, communicate and share information honestly and openly, and work cooperatively with each other and with other entities; where residents are politically involved and work to preserve the Native culture, traditions and subsistence lifestyle; where each village resident has opportunity to obtain a good education and be involved in honest gainful employment.

Vision Statement: Where our people are sovereign, sober, self-sufficient, culturally, emotionally, and spiritually balanced.

Core Values: Subsistence lifestyle with emphasis on natural resources protection for future generations.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Enhance Opportunities for Organizational Development

- Employee Individual Development Plan
- Council Training
- Review Policies & Procedures
- Land Plan
- Safety Classes
- Hire Grant Writer for Future Projects

Engage Tribal Membership in Positive Resources

- Newsletter
- Recognition Event

Utilize Resources to Ensure Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

- Tribal Member Cultural Knowledge Assessment

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES

COPPER VALLEY ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED (ELECTRIC UTILITY)
P.O. BOX 45, GLENNALLEN, AK 99588

NATIVE VILLAGE OF TAZLINA (TRIBE - FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED; BIA-RECOGNIZED TRADITIONAL COUNCIL)
P.O. Box 87 Glennallen, AK 99588

TONSINA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

Tonsina is located at mile 79 on the Richardson Highway, south of the Tonsina River, next to Kenny Lake, 52 miles northeast of Valdez.

Tonsina falls within the gulf coast transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

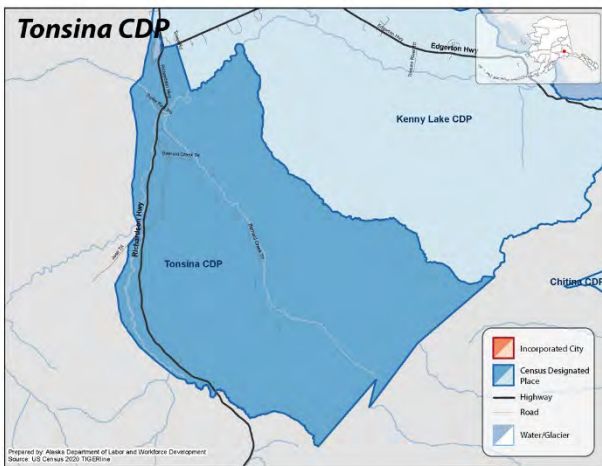


TONSINA HUNTING LODGE 1935

DESCRIPTION: TONSINA HUNTING LODGE 80 MILES NORTH OF VALDEZ. OCTOBER 5, 1935. WHERE WE WERE HELD UP FOR TWO DAYS BECAUSE OF SLIDES."

Collection: Victor Rivers family papers, 1915-1976; University of Alaska Anchorage. Consortium Library. Archives & Special Collections

AREA MAP:



HISTORY & CULTURE: A post office, general store, and United States Army Signal Corps telegraph station were established in Tonsina in 1902. The Tonsina Lodge was built in 1903 along the Valdez-Eagle Trail; it burned in 1928. The Tiekel Lodge and Tsaina Lodge were also built in this area. Development began during construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). TAPS Pump Station 12 was constructed nearby to move oil over Thompsen Pass to the pipeline terminal in Valdez.

There is no clearly-defined community in Tonsina; it is best characterized as an occupied geographic area.

ECONOMY: The Alaska DOT & PF Ernestine State Highway Maintenance camp is the nearest employer. Alyeska, decommissioned Pump Station 12 in 2023. There is a lodging, a

roadhouse, B&B's, a restaurant and general provision store. Squirrel Creek Campground and State Recreational Site, adjacent to the Richardson Hwy at MP 79.5, is 160 acres with 25 campsites, toilets and access to water, the small campground is bound by the Tonsina River and Squirrel Creek. Subsistence activities supplement income.

The 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 16 residents in Tonsina as employed. The public sector employed 100% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 0%. The average median household income estimate could not be computed because there were an insufficient number of sample observations. The per capita income estimate cannot be displayed because there were an insufficient number of sample cases in the selected geographic area. About 0% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: Households have individual water wells and septic systems and are fully plumbed. Seasonal residents have water delivered by truck or haul water from a public tap. Copper Basin Sanitation provides garbage collection and hauls refuse to the Glennallen landfill.

TRANSPORTATION: Tonsina is connected to the remainder of the state road system by the Richardson Highway.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS: Tonsina has no organized community corporation or residents' association, the CVDA did not hold community planning sessions in Tonsina but there were other local meetings advertised (Kenny Lake, Glennallen) and the CVDA invited participation. There are 21 occupied housing units in the area.

There are no Capital Projects or Grants listed for the Tonsina Community.

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES: There are no local community corporations or resident associations listed for the Tonsina Community.

TOLSONA

LOCATION AND CLIMATE:

The community is located around milepost 170 of the Glenn Highway, about 17 miles west of Glennallen, at the foot of Tolsona Mountain (elevation: 2,974'). Tolsona Lake Road provides access to Tolsona and Moose Lakes.

Tolsona falls within the transitional climate zone, characterized by a semi-arid atmosphere, long, cold winters, and mild summers.

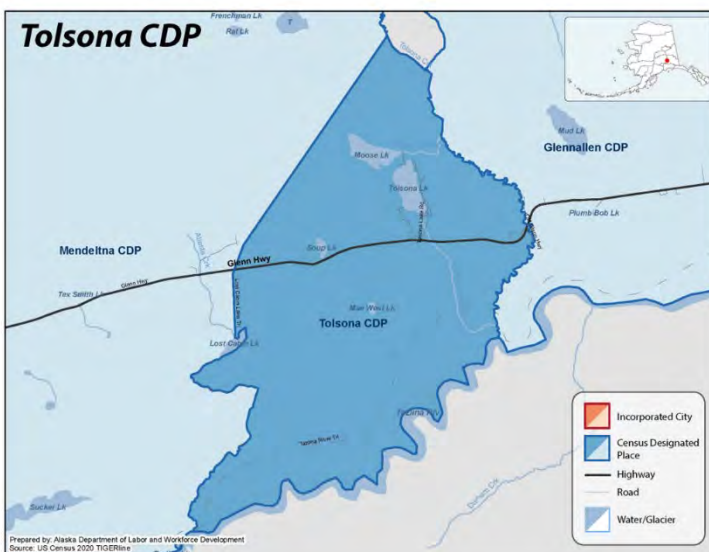


TOLSONA LAKE RESORT 1962-1967

DESCRIPTION: VIEW OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOLSONA LAKE RESORT AT TOLSONA LAKE, ALASKA. SIGN READS: "TOLSONA LAKE RESORT BAR CAFÉ"

Collection: Christine M. McClain papers, 1907-1992; University of Alaska Anchorage. Consortium Library. Archives & Special Collections

AREA MAP:



HISTORY & CULTURE: Tolsona is an Athabascan name, attributed to Tolsona Lake and River. The name was first published by the United States Geological Survey in 1915. Many homes in Tolsona are seasonally occupied.

ECONOMY: Lodges, wilderness campground, and RV park serve residents and visitors. Area lakes provide good trout fishing and ice fishing for burbot in winter.

The 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated 29 residents in Tolsona as employed. The public sector employed 100% of all workers. The local unemployment rate was 0%. The percentage of workers not in labor force was 0%. The average median household income estimate could not be computed because there were an insufficient number of sample observations. The per capita income estimate cannot be displayed because there were an insufficient number of sample cases in the selected

geographic area. About 0% of all residents had incomes below the poverty level. All ACS statistics are published with their respective margin of error (MOE). Some of the statistics here are calculated from the original ACS data. The MOE was unable to be carried through the calculations.

FACILITIES & UTILITIES: 90% of the residents are hauling water in portable tanks from neighboring wells. Most homes have individual septic systems. A landfill is available at mile 168.5 Glenn Highway, the facility owner is the Tolsona Community Corporation. Electricity is provided by Copper Valley Electric Association but there is no electric power available to properties on the north side of the highway. There are no schools located in the community and students are either homeschooled or travel to Glennallen. The nearest medical service provider is Cross Road Medical Center in Glennallen, there is no after hours or weekend healthcare available. Tolsona Volunteer Fire Department, is operated and main

TRANSPORTATION: The community lies on the Glenn Highway and accesses the statewide road system. There are several air strips in the area, and air taxi services are available. A seaplane base is used on Tolsona Lake. A local company provides transportation service - one local offering a regular schedule within the copper basin, service to Anchorage and Valdez 3 times a week and call out service. DNR and the State own adjacent land and roads that access private property, historically making it difficult, or next to impossible for private property owners to maintain and improve roads that are the only access to their property.

CAPITAL PROJECTS & GRANTS:

Lead Agency	Fiscal Year	Project Status	Project Description/Comments	Project Stage	Total Cost	Schedule	Contractor
Tolsana Community Corp	2024	Funded	Drill New Community Well	Construction		Summer of 2024	
Tolsana Community Corp	2024-2025	Funded	Well House - Small building to house the Well with heating and electrical				
DCRA	2011	Funded	Firefighter's Safety Equipment and Apparatus Repair - Comments: Legislative Grant - modify existing vehicle into rapid response vehicle	Complete			Tolsona Fire Department

POTENTIAL PROJECTS LIST:

The CVDA did not hold community planning sessions in Tolsona however community members were inviting to the Glennallen meeting as well as the regional meeting 12 miles away. given its proximity to Glennallen. The Tolsona Community Corp provided the following information on projects and goals. There are 21 occupied properties in the area. The following are a list of projects:

Emergency Response:

Goal: To have quality and qualified Emergency response services available in the community

Objective: Provide EMS training opportunities to access for local residents.

Transportation:

Goal: To have a resource to maintain and improve roads.

Objective: Work with DOT&PF and DNR to resolve improvement and maintenance issues adjacent to State owned properties

ORGANIZATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICES:

TOLSONA COMMUNITY CORPORATION (COMMUNITY NON-PROFIT)

P.O. Box 23, Glennallen, AK 99588

- ⁱ Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AIRTC)
- ⁱⁱ Department of Natural Resources, Copper River Basin Area Plan; 1986 & Draft 2023
- ⁱⁱⁱ ahtna.com/about/history-and-culture/
- ^{iv} nps.gov/wrst/learn/historyculture/human-history.htm
- ^v Alaska Department of Education & Early Development
- ^{vi} Source: 2018 - 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables
- ^{vii} 2019 Statewide Threat Assessment, Denali Commission
- ^{viii} Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Federal Subsistence Offices
- ^{ix} Department of Interior press release 10/20/23, 6/18/24
- ^x Department of Interior press release October 20, 2023, June 18, 2024
- ^{xi} Data and information furnished by Copper Valley Telecom
- ^{xii} GKN Airport Layout Plan 2024
- ^{xiii} Data and information furnished by the Glennallen Improvement District
- ^{xiv} The Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce Stats
- ^{xv} Annual Park Recreation Visitation; National Park Services Stats
- ^{xvi} Annual Park Recreation Visitation; National Park Services Stats
- ^{xvii} USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Soil Survey of Copper River Area, Alaska 1999
- ^{xviii} US CENSUS, Population and Housing Characteristics, 2020
- ^{xix} US CENSUS, Population and Housing Characteristics, 2020
- ^{xx} Alaska Statewide CEDS October 2022
- ^{xxi} Valdez – Whittier Transmission Line Discussion Paper; 5.16.2024; CRV Regional Energy Planning Group
- ^{xxii} 2018 - 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- ^{xxiii} Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- ^{xxiv} US Census/2018 - 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- ^{xxv} <https://dced.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=43bd22405e974774bfc2c16ced6745a8#>
- ^{xxvi} Cheesh'na Tribal Council, Community Plan, 2012
- ^{xxvii} Gulkana Community Master Plan, March 2024
- ^{xxviii} Gulkana Community Master Plan, March 2024
- ^{xxix} Gulkana Community Master Plan, March 2024
- ^{xxx} Gulkana Community Master Plan, March 2024
- ^{xxxi} Mentasta Traditional Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan
- ^{xxxii} <https://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/nabesna-road-guide.htm>