

ALASKA ECONOMIC **TRENDS**

APRIL 2016



**HOW ALASKA'S
INDUSTRIES
STACK UP**

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Hyder ... Alaska?
Inflation lowest since 1988

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

APRIL 2016

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HOW ALASKA'S INDUSTRIES STACK UP

We'll probably never look exactly like the rest of the nation, and here's why

PAGE 4

By NEAL FRIED

HYDER ... ALASKA?

Unusual Southeast border town embraces dual nature

PAGE 7

By SARA WHITNEY

INFLATION LOWEST SINCE 1988

Energy cost drop was biggest change in Anchorage Consumer Price Index

PAGE 11

By NEAL FRIED

THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

PAGE 13

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ON THE COVER: Patrick O'Brien of Southeast Earthmovers Inc. pushes rock for a 2.7 acre habitat island that will be part of Juneau's Downtown Seawalk project.
Photo by Sam Dapceвич

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Native corporations a vital piece of our economic future



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Follow the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development on Facebook ([facebook.com/alaskalabor](https://www.facebook.com/alaskalabor)) and Twitter (twitter.com/alaskalabor) for the latest news about jobs, workplace safety, and workforce development.

The impact of low oil prices on the state budget is dominating headlines and discussions about Alaska's economic future. Speculation about the impact of oil prices and the state budget on our economy too often neglect the significant role Alaska Native Corporations play in Alaska job creation. Like other factors identified in this month's *Trends*, ANC's are a key part of our economy that will help us endure economic challenges.

During 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, the 12 Alaska Native regional corporations represented 57 percent of gross revenue and 63 percent of employment among Alaska's largest 49 businesses. In other words, among our state's largest employers, ANC's generate the most jobs and revenue. In addition, ANC's doubled their profits over the last year. Higher profitability translates into greater shareholder equity and dividends, both of which strengthen Alaska's economy by stimulating aggregate demand. In 2014, ANC's generated \$8 billion in revenue and reinvested nearly \$200 million into Alaska's economy in the form of shareholder dividends.

ANC's' success is noteworthy because they also have a core mission of improving quality of life for shareholders in their regions. Decades before "triple bottom line" goals of social and environmental objectives became common in other firms, ANC's established a socially responsible model for investing in their shareholders and their regions. One component of corporate social responsibility is a shareholder hire preference, which reduces unemployment in rural Alaska and helps meet Governor Walker's goal of Alaska Hire. This vital social mission is a direct result of the vision of Willie Hensley, Byron Mallott, and other founders, which was

embedded in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

Historically, ANC investments were concentrated in government contracting. Today, regional corporations have substantially diversified their investments into real estate, construction, professional services, and other lines of business. Geographic and sectoral diversification reduces risk and positions ANC's to thrive despite changes in commodity prices or federal contracting policies. This stability is crucial when oil prices are likely to reduce employment in our state's oilfield services sector. While some economists project that oil and construction will shrink over the next year, diversified ANC's are less likely to be negatively affected by turbulent resource prices.

In addition to providing employment opportunities, ANC's act as partners in our workforce development system. ANC subsidiaries such as Doyon Associated and Brice Construction help manage registered apprenticeship programs through joint apprenticeship training committees with the building trades. NANA's Red Dog mine operates a model registered apprenticeship program for millwrights. Regardless of the training mechanisms ANC's use, they all prioritize shareholder hire, which helps meet our state objective of improving Alaska Hire.

This month's *Trends* discusses some unique features of Alaska's economy. In the future we expect more diversification, partly because of ANC's. With billions of dollars in revenue, tens of thousands of jobs, and training programs focused on Alaska Hire, ANC's can help Alaska's economy endure and ultimately grow despite low oil prices and a shrinking state budget.

How Alaska's INDUSTRIES STACK UP

We'll probably never look exactly like the rest of the U.S., and here's why

1 Detailed Industry Breakdown

ALASKA AND THE U.S., 2015

	Alaska	U.S.
Natural Resources	5.1%	0.6%
Mining	5.0%	0.5%
Oil and Gas	4.2%	0.3%
Construction	5.2%	4.5%
Manufacturing	4.2%	8.7%
Seafood Processing	3.0%	0.0%
Trade	13.0%	15.2%
Wholesale	1.9%	4.1%
Retail	11.1%	11.0%
Transportation	5.8%	3.4%
Air	1.8%	0.3%
Utilities	0.6%	0.4%
Information	1.9%	1.9%
Financial Activities	3.6%	5.7%
Professional and Business Svcs	8.8%	13.9%
Education and Health Services	13.9%	15.5%
Health Care	10.2%	10.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	10.3%	10.7%
Accommodation	2.5%	1.4%
Food Svcs and Drinking Places	6.3%	7.8%
Other Services	3.4%	4.0%
Government	24.2%	15.5%
Federal Government	4.4%	1.9%
State Government	7.6%	3.6%
Local Government	12.2%	10.0%

Sources: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section; and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

By NEAL FRIED

Alaska's mix of industries has grown to look a bit more like the rest of the nation over time, but we're still a long ways off. It's also unlikely we'll ever mimic the national economy.

In no other state do oil, tourism, fishing, and the federal government play such fundamental roles. And given the small size of our economy, its seasonality, our expansive geography, and our largely public land ownership and natural resource endowment, Alaskans will likely continue to hold a unique mix of jobs.

Where we have much less

Manufacturing

Although the country's manufacturing industry is much smaller than it used to be, the average U.S. worker is still more than twice as likely as an Alaskan to work in manufacturing, at nearly 9 percent versus 4 percent. (See Exhibit 1.)

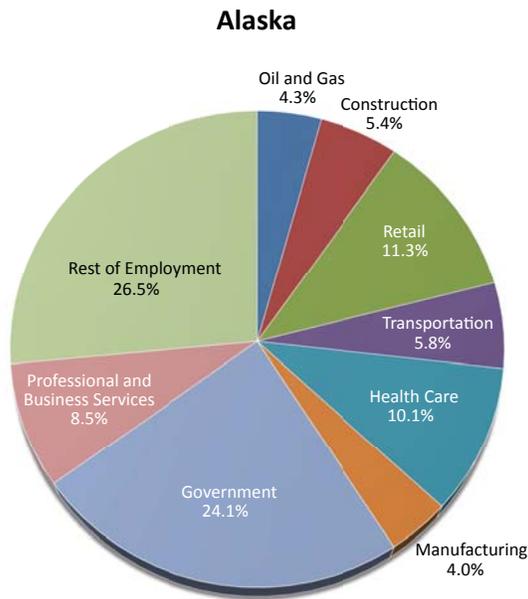
Digging a bit deeper reveals an even bigger difference. Seventy-one percent of Alaska's manufacturing jobs are tied to seafood processing, versus less than half a percent nationally. Manufacturing here and nationwide are really two different industries.

On a related note, a worker is 100 times more likely to be a commercial seafood harvester in Alaska than nationwide. Because fishermen are self-employed and can't be compared with any of the other job numbers in this article, they're harder to measure, but using 2012 federal estimates allows a general comparison.

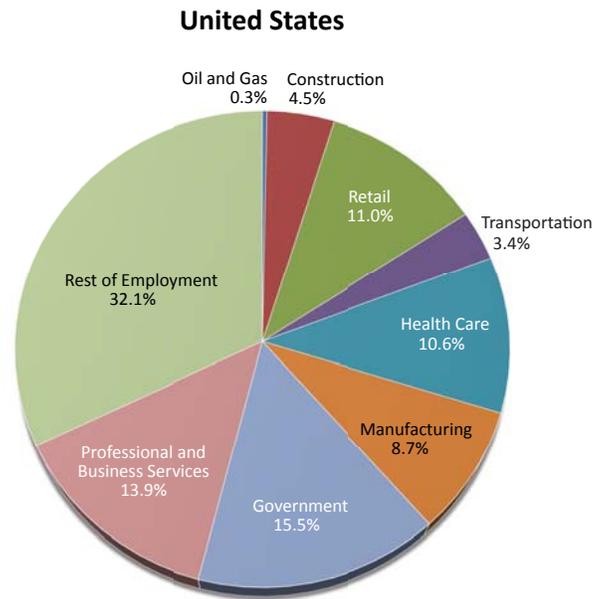
2

Percent of Total Employment by Major Industry

ALASKA VS. THE UNITED STATES, 2015



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Financial and professional services

Alaska is home to many real estate, title, and mortgage offices; banks; insurance companies; credit unions; and security firms — collectively categorized as “financial activities” — but their percentage of our employment falls well below the national average.

One major reason is that Alaska isn’t home to many national or regional headquarters for any financial or insurance firm. Financial service companies here only provide local services.

It’s a similar story with professional and business services in that many of these companies cater to larger corporate operations, which are underrepresented in Alaska. Alaska’s smaller economy is also not as specialized. This broad category includes legal, accounting, waste, consulting, and landscaping services as well as holding companies, call and telemarketing centers, and computer design firms, to name just a few.

Where we have much more

Government

Nearly a quarter of all payroll jobs in Alaska are in government, versus 16 percent nationwide. A decade ago, it was 31 percent in Alaska.

Alaskans are more than twice as likely to work for the federal or state government. Our share of federal jobs is proportionally bigger than any other state, mostly because we have a large military presence (though active-duty military aren’t included in these numbers) and the federal government is our largest landlord.

Like the federal government, state government has a large land base and natural resource base to manage. It also has some atypical responsibilities such as managing the Alaska Permanent Fund, the Alaska Railroad, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, and many airports. The State of Alaska also carries responsibilities that local governments handle elsewhere, such as courts, prisons, and public safety for many smaller communities.

Alaska’s local government presence is just slightly higher than the nation’s. See the May 2015 issue of *Alaska Economic Trends*, “Government Jobs by State,” for additional explanation.

Oil and gas

In 2015, 4.2 percent of Alaska’s wage and salary jobs were in the oil and gas industry. While that doesn’t sound like a large number, it’s more than 14 times the percentage for the nation as whole. Or, said differently, 0.3 percent of the nation’s workers are employed by

the oil industry. (See Exhibit 2.) That may seem surprising, because the oil industry has been through an enormous growth spurt nationally in recent years. Between 2005 and 2015, national oil employment grew by 73 percent, or 202,000 jobs. That did bump up U.S. oil employment, from 0.1 percent to 0.3 percent, but compared to Alaska its share is barely on the radar.

Transportation

Our vast geography makes transportation more important, tying nearly 6 percent of Alaska's private jobs to transportation versus 3 percent for the U.S.

It takes a lot more to move something or someone in Alaska than it does elsewhere. For example, what might involve a single truck delivery in most of the nation often requires a truck, ship, airplane, and maybe a four-wheeler in Alaska.

In addition to all the extra effort it takes to get around the state, transportation's larger role here includes one of the busiest international air cargo airports in the country and a sizable visitor sector.

Where we look about the same

Retail

Some Alaskans may not believe it, as we seem to have fewer buying options, but the retail industry is Alaska's largest private employer and is as proportionately deep as the nation's.

Both statewide and nationally, 11 percent of workers are in retail trade. This wasn't always the case in Alaska, but with the meteoric growth of new retailers that began in the early 1990s, Alaska caught up with the rest of the country.

For small communities with fewer local buying options, the rise of online shopping has bridged some of the gap. There's some evidence that Alaskans rank among the nation's most ardent online shoppers.

It's a different story at the wholesale trade level, where Alaska has half the representation of the rest of the country. Seattle and other Lower 48 cities continue to serve this need for Alaska.

The visitor sector

Given the size of the state's visitor sector, it is not surprising that proportionately more Alaska jobs are in accommodations such as hotels and bed-and-breakfasts. But when it comes to bars and restaurants, Alaska still

Some companies cater to larger corporate operations, which are underrepresented in Alaska. Alaska's smaller economy is also not as specialized.

has some catching up to do. In the June 2015 issue of *Alaska Economic Trends*, "Bar and Restaurant Jobs in Alaska," Alaska ranked 49th in the country for its share of employment in food and drinking places.

Health care

If this article had been written a decade ago, health care would have been under the "where we have less" segment. But because health care played catch-up for decades and grew considerably faster than national health care, it has finally reached nearly the same share of total employment. In the process, it has become one of the largest employers in the state and, hands down, the largest generator of new jobs in the last few decades.

Construction

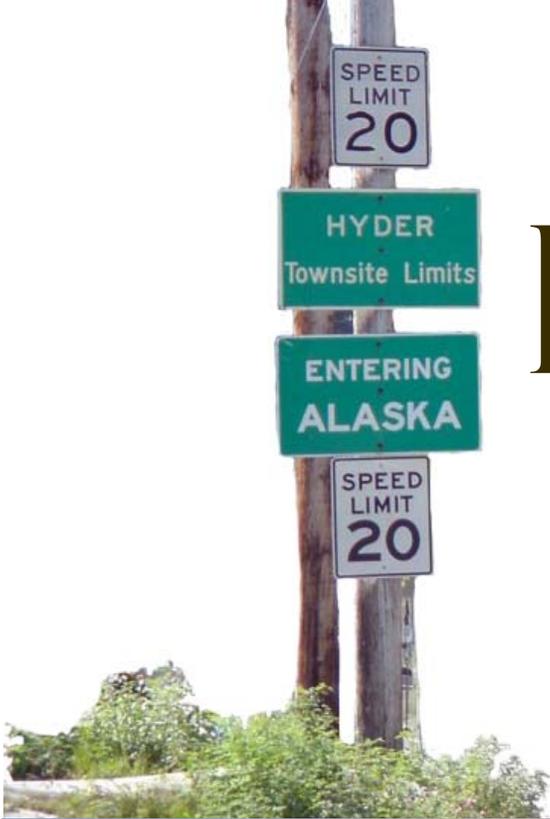
Given our young state's infrastructure needs and construction's historical role in our economic development, one might expect Alaska's construction workforce to be proportionately much larger than the nation's. And before the 1990s, it was.

But since then, instead of leading the state's economic growth with such events as the construction of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline, it has taken the lesser role of accommodating general population and economic growth, becoming only slightly bigger proportionally than the national construction sector.

Information and other services

The information industry is largely made up of the media, including television and radio stations, newspapers, cable companies, publishers, and telecommunications. The makeup of "other services" is even more eclectic and includes businesses involved in maintenance and repairs, funeral homes, laundromats, and civic and social organizations. In all of these categories, Alaskans and Americans overall consume similar amounts of services.

Neal Fried is an economist in Anchorage. Reach him at (907) 269-4861 or neal.fried@alaska.gov.



HYDER, ...ALASKA?

Unusual Southeast border town embraces its dual nature

By **SARA WHITNEY**

At first, Hyder might look like a cartographer's mistake. The easternmost town in Alaska juts out from the Southeast Panhandle into what looks like Canadian territory on the other side of the Salmon River, and for all practical purposes, it's a cultural and physical part of British Columbia.

Hyder is one of the few communities in Southeast Alaska accessible by road — but its road isn't connected to Alaska, and weekly ferry service from Ketchikan ended in the early 1990s. Instead, Hyder's road leads into the larger, Canadian town of Stewart, two miles from the U.S. border.

B.C. travelers can drive right into Hyder, and therefore into the United States, without passing through border security. However, they're stopped once they try to reenter Canada — and that's only allowed during certain hours, a fairly recent and controversial change.

Part of Canada, more or less

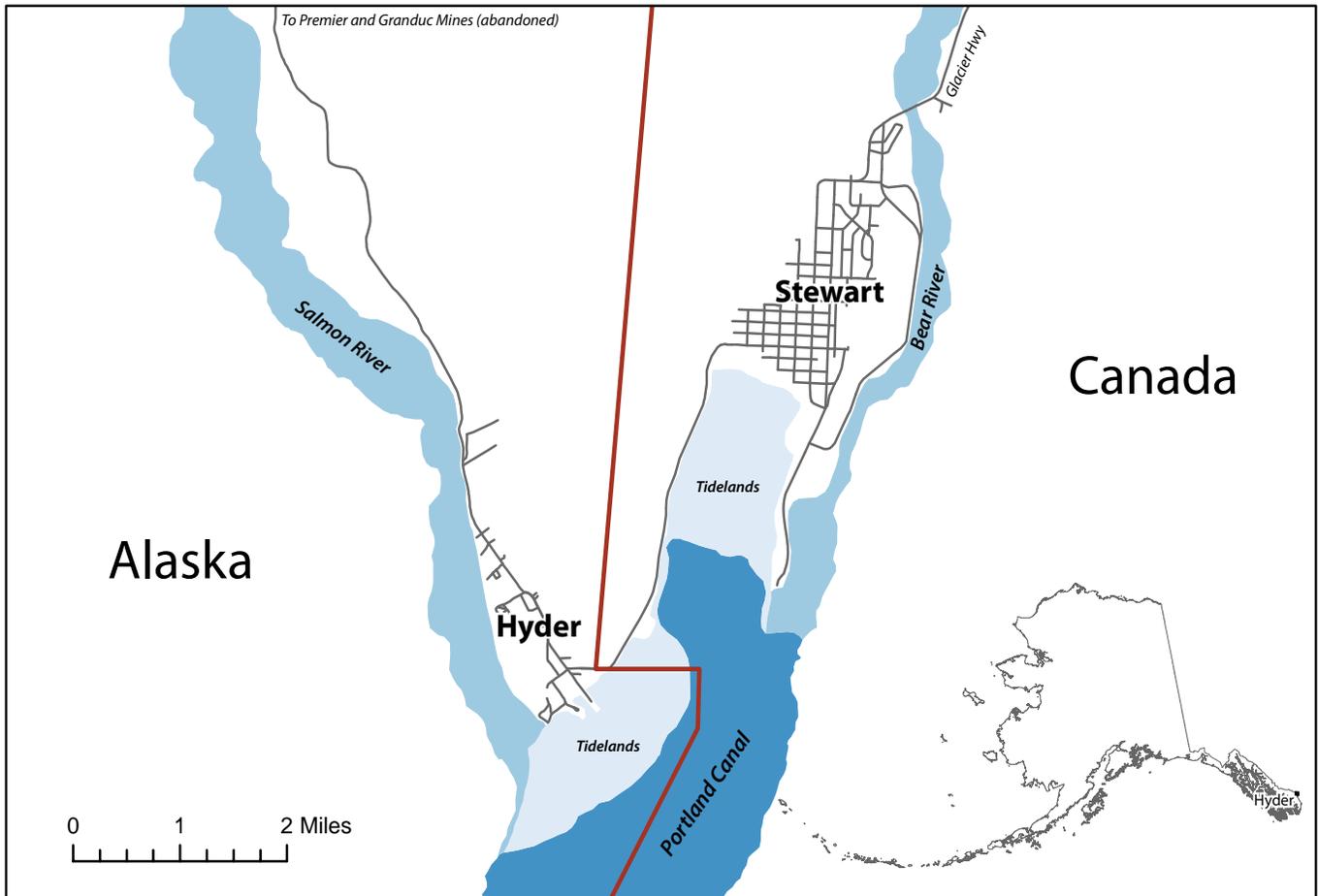
The Alaska town of less than 100 residents has long embraced its dual nature. Although Hyder is on Alaska time, it runs unofficially on Pacific time with the rest of B.C. With the exception of Hyder's U.S. Post Office,



The sign on Hyder's general store provides some local demographic information. Photo by Flickr user Zoe52

both towns accept Canadian and U.S. currency. The towns share an international chamber of commerce, residents mark both countries' holidays, and Hyder's electricity and phone service come from a Canadian company. Calling Hyder requires a 250 B.C. area code, and it's the only town in Alaska without the 907 prefix. If you call the Alaska State Troopers, they'll dispatch the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

For many travelers and Canadians, passing through Hyder is a quick way to cross visiting Alaska off their bucket list. That's brought some recognition to the



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

town, which has also garnered international attention (whatever that means in this case) from two films being shot there. A 1982 remake of “The Thing” was filmed at the Granduc Mine near Stewart, and 2002’s “Insomnia,” starring Al Pacino and Robin Williams, was partially filmed in Hyder and Stewart.

What’s less well-known or understood is why Hyder belongs to Alaska in the first place.

Few strong ties with Southeast

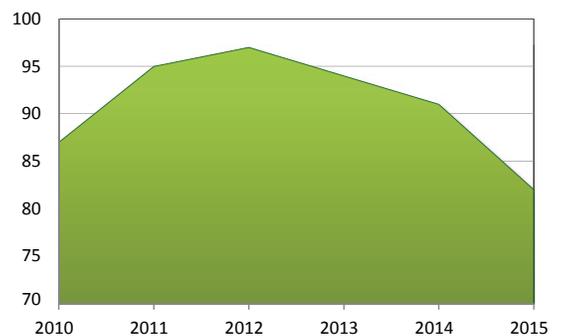
Hyder lies at the head of Portland Canal, a 130-mile fjord that forms a natural border between the United States and Canada. The town is about 75 air miles from Ketchikan, but that’s where its association with Southeast Alaska appears to end.

In 2006, Hyder residents strongly opposed joining an expanded Ketchikan Gateway Borough or the newly created Wrangell Borough. They didn’t want to be part of any borough if they could help it, but agreed to be part of a new census area called Prince of Wales-Hyder.

Although residents are mostly Americans, the town’s ties to the much-larger Stewart — whose population fluctuates between 500 and 750 — are closer and go way back.

1 Population Under 100

HYDER, 2010 TO 2015



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section



The U.S. Post Office in Hyder is the one place in town that doesn't accept Canadian currency. Photo by Flickr user Eugenio Vacca

The struggle over the U.S. border

The area was originally inhabited by a Canadian tribe, the Nisga'a, but as with much of the north, the population changed with the discovery of gold in the late 1800s. What followed was a dispute between Canada and the United States over who got what land, driven by the desire for better access during the Gold Rush.

The rub was some wording in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1825, a treaty that defined borders when the U.S. bought Alaska from Russia. The path the border was to take through the Portland Canal area was so vague and so vehemently disputed that it required international arbitration.

Great Britain and 'the big betrayal'

Canada's proposal would have claimed much of Southeast Alaska, including what are now Juneau, Skagway, Wrangell, and Ketchikan. Ultimately, though, the U.S. succeeded in pushing its border farther east, thanks to Great Britain.

Canada asked Britain to sit on the 1903 Boundary Commission to help the two sides negotiate, but Britain sided with the U.S., raising the ire of many Canadians and contributing to the rise of the Canadian independence movement. Historians believe the decision was a strategic move to garner American support for other British interests.

Ultimately, the boundary commission chose to draw

a line down the middle of Portland Canal, which bisected the adjacent peninsula and gave the western half to Alaska.

From there, with discoveries of gold and silver lodes, Hyder formed on the western side of the peninsula with Stewart on the east, and the population began to climb.

From mining to tourism

In the early 20th century, prospectors on the American side of the peninsula applied for a U.S. Post Office under the name "Portland City," but the government rejected the request, saying too many U.S. cities already used the word "Portland."

Hyder was then named after Canadian mining engineer Frederick Hyder, who predicted great mineral success for the town. He was partially correct.

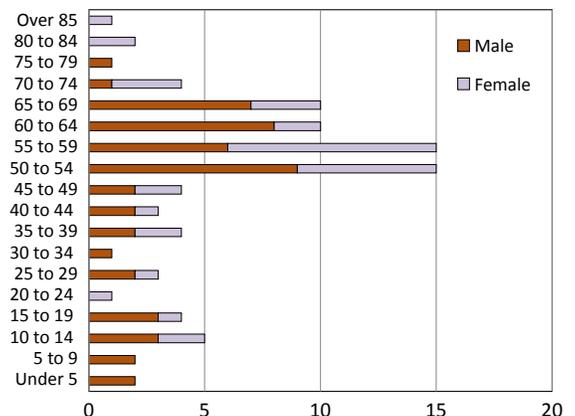
Hyder and Stewart were mining towns through the first half of the 20th century, with Hyder as the access point.

Hyder's mining industry boomed through the 1920s and '30s with extraction of silver, gold, copper, lead, zinc, and tungsten. Its population peaked at 254 in 1930.

But when the town's Riverside Mine closed in 1950, the population bottomed out at 30 people. After that, major mining was limited to the Canadian side, and it remained strong until the mid-1980s.

2 Older, With More Men

HYDER BY AGE AND GENDER, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Since the shift away from mining, Hyder's economy has relied mainly on visitor traffic. In 2015, the town had 15 active business licenses, and most were tourism-related.

Creative marketing over the years

In the 1960s, Hyder marketed itself as the "Friendliest Ghost Town in Alaska." Today, tourists can get "Hyderized" at a local bar by ordering a special shot of 190-proof Everclear. But the town's most industrious revenue-generating project was probably the water bottling plant.

About 15 years ago, the town built a 73,000-square-foot plant to market its glacially fed groundwater. The lack of an operator and distribution problems brought the \$1 million project to a halt, however, after four years of work. Getting the product to market, from an American town landlocked in Canada, was the biggest problem.

Today, the now-defunct bottling plant is where Hyder's children attend school.

Town has few local services

For many years, children attended school in Stewart. However, Hyder now has its own school, part of the Southeast Island School District. About 13 children meet at the old water bottling plant.

The nonprofit Hyder Community Association contracts with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to provide road maintenance. But beyond that, the town has no municipal government and few basic services.

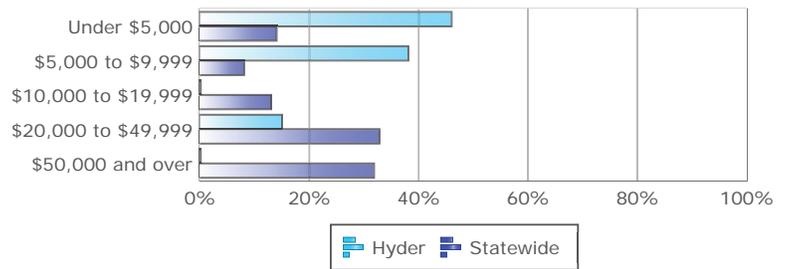
Residents rely on wells and septic systems, and the town has a landfill. According to the association, the town plans to work with the state to come up with a better arrangement.

An older, largely white population

Although demographic data for a place this small are scarce, they provide a reasonable picture of who lives there. With an older, largely male, and almost entirely white population, Hyder doesn't look much like the

3 Low Average Wages for Residents

HYDER VS. STATEWIDE, 2014



Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

rest of Alaska.

The town's population, which has fluctuated between 75 and 100 since 1990, was estimated at 82 in 2015. (See Exhibit 1.)

As of the 2010 Census, it was 59 percent male, with a median age of 54.8 — considerably older than Alaska's 33.8 years at that time. (See Exhibit 2.)

Also in 2010, residents were 90.8 percent white, 1.1 percent Alaska Native or American Indian, 1.1 percent Pacific Islander, and 6.9 percent other or two-plus races. In contrast, Alaska was 69.3 percent white, 15.6 percent Alaska Native, 5.4 percent multi-race, 3.5 percent black, 4.0 percent Asian, and 0.5 percent Pacific Islander.

Less than half are employed

Hyder had 65 residents over the age of 16 in 2014. Just 40 percent were employed, which doesn't factor in self-employment and a handful of federal jobs, nor anyone who works in Stewart.

The majority of those employed in Hyder weren't employed year-round, which is reflected in its lower-than-average yearly wage for residents. (See Exhibit 3.)

The low percentage in the labor force is also due to Hyder's considerably older population, many of whom are retirement age. Of residents working for an employer in 2014, 62 percent were over the age of 50.

Sara Whitney is the editor of *Alaska Economic Trends*. Reach her in Juneau at (907) 465-6561 or sara.whitney@alaska.gov.

Inflation Lowest Since 1988

Energy cost drop was the biggest change in Anchorage Consumer Price Index

By NEAL FRIED

It isn't big news to most Alaskans that energy prices have fallen dramatically over the past year. We're reminded every time we fill our cars or read the news, and we know that falling oil prices have put a major damper on our state budget. But inflation went up just half a percent in 2015, largely related to that price drop, and that's also big news because it affects us in a number of other ways.

The inflation rate of 0.5 percent for Anchorage, which has the state's only consumer price index, is the lowest recorded since 1988. (See Exhibit 1.) This rate is tied to bargaining agreements and wage rate negotiations,

child support payments, and real estate agreements. Also, beginning next year, Alaska's minimum wage will be adjusted annually according to the inflation rate.

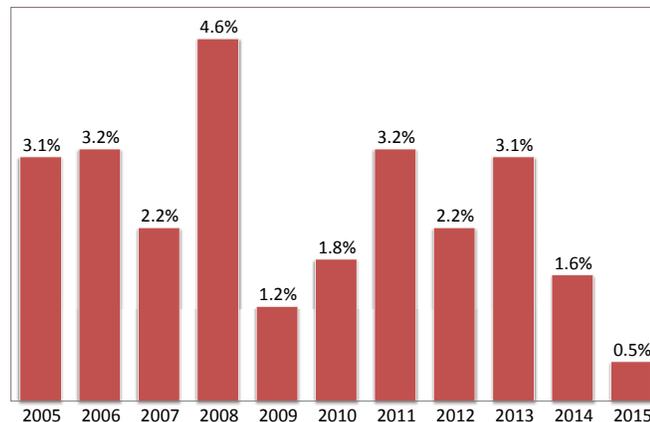
Energy prices and transportation

The Anchorage Consumer Price Index, which measures the change in the values of goods and services in the city, shows energy costs fell by 10.3 percent in 2015, the largest annual decline since 2009. (See Exhibit 2.) Gasoline prices alone fell nearly 25 percent.

Energy is the most volatile category of the consumer price index, and it has a big effect on transportation, which correspondingly fell by nearly 7 percent last

1 Inflation Was 0.5 Percent in 2015

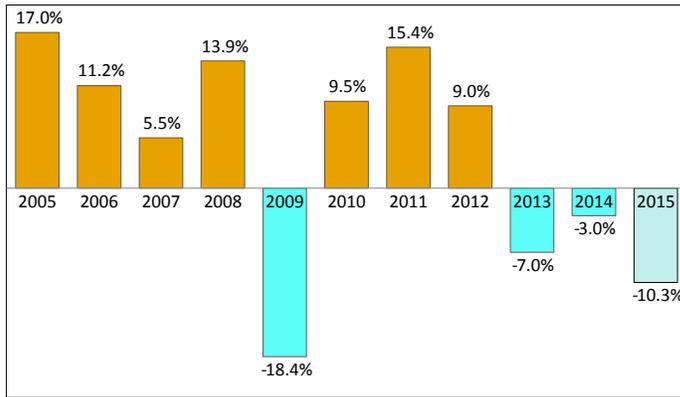
ANCHORAGE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, 2005 TO 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

2 Energy Prices Took a Nose Dive

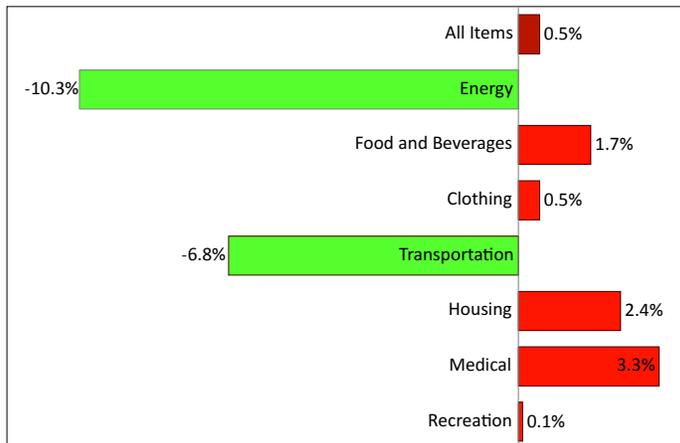
PERCENT CHANGE BY YEAR, 2005 TO 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

3 Price Changes for Various Goods

ANCHORAGE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

year. After housing, transportation has the second-largest “weight” in the consumer price index at 16 percent, which refers to the percentage of a household’s income they spend in that category.

The drop in energy prices has little effect on the cost of heating in most Anchorage homes, though. Most use natural gas, for which prices are regulated by the Alaska Regulatory Commission.

It may seem counterintuitive, but Anchorage’s piped gas prices *increased* by 7 percent in 2015, while in the mostly unregulated U.S. overall, they fell by 12 percent and pushed national inflation rates even lower than Anchorage’s. National inflation was 0.1 percent in 2015, the second-lowest rate since 1960.

Other categories fell too

Lower energy prices weren’t the only reason the inflation rate hit a near-historical low. (See Exhibit 3.) Food, the category with the third-largest weight, increased just 1.7 percent, in contrast to the 10-year average of 2.7 percent annually. Clothing prices also increased by just half a percent, and the cost for recreation remained nearly the same.

Housing was an exception

Because consumers spend the largest chunk of their money on housing each year, it’s the category with the largest weight at 41 percent. Anchorage housing costs went up 2.4 percent in 2015, which was above the decade average of 2.0 percent. Some of that jump was due to Anchorage homes using natural gas. If Anchorage homes used fuel oil, like most of the state outside Southcentral, the cost of housing would have increased less.

Among all the major categories in the index, medical costs increased the most. This was no surprise, as no other category has come close to health care’s cost increases since the early 1980s.

Neal Fried is an economist in Anchorage. Reach him at (907) 269-4861 or neal.fried@alaska.gov.

The Month in Numbers

	Prelim.	Revised	
	2/16	1/16	2/15
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
United States	4.9	4.9	5.5
Alaska Statewide	6.6	6.6	6.4

NOT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED			
	2/16	1/16	2/15
United States	5.2	5.3	5.8
Alaska Statewide	7.7	7.3	7.4

Anchorage/Mat-Su Region			
	2/16	1/16	2/15
Municipality of Anchorage	5.8	5.4	5.4
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	9.6	9.1	8.9

Gulf Coast Region			
	2/16	1/16	2/15
Kenai Peninsula Borough	10.2	9.4	9.4
Kodiak Island Borough	5.1	5.6	5.1
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	12.1	11.6	12.6

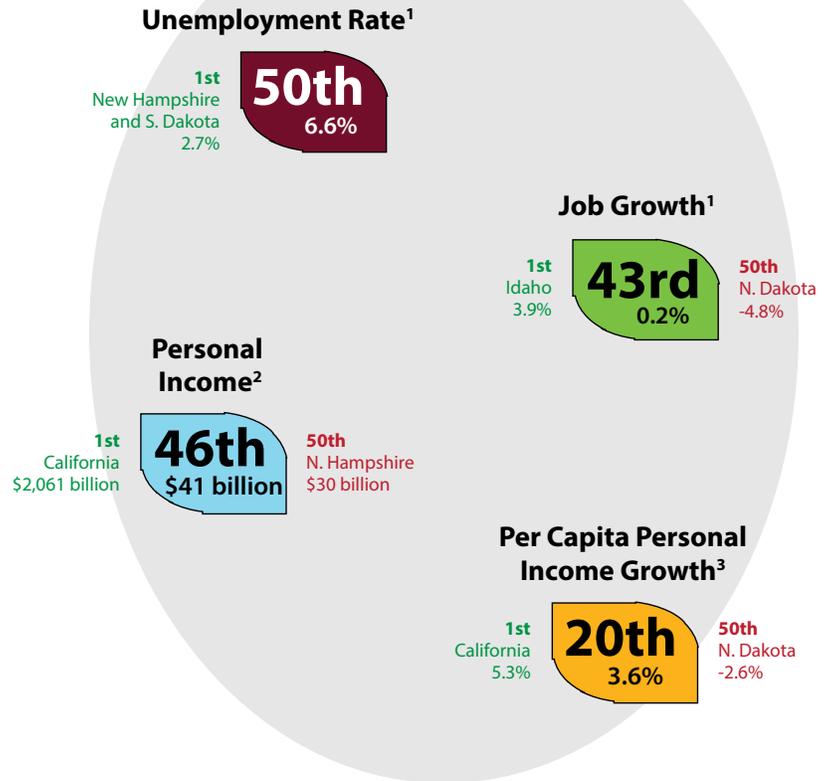
Interior Region			
	2/16	1/16	2/15
Denali Borough	21.7	22.2	22.0
Fairbanks North Star Borough	6.6	6.4	6.3
Southeast Fairbanks CA	13.3	12.8	13.3
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	20.8	19.5	21.2

Northern Region			
	2/16	1/16	2/15
Nome Census Area	13.0	12.1	12.9
North Slope Borough	5.9	5.3	5.6
Northwest Arctic Borough	17.3	15.9	17.2

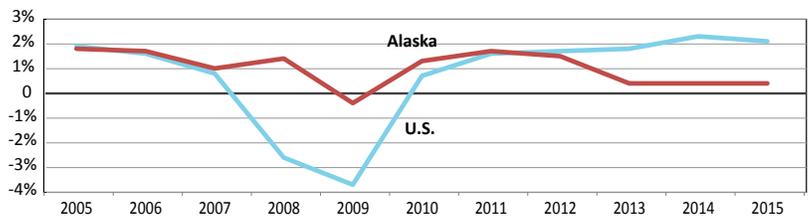
Southeast Region			
	2/16	1/16	2/15
Haines Borough	17.1	14.9	16.4
Hoonah-Angoon Census Area	21.2	19.6	23.3
Juneau, City and Borough	5.3	5.1	5.4
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	9.3	8.8	9.2
Petersburg Borough	11.8	11.3	12.0
Prince of Wales-Hyder CA	16.7	16.5	16.4
Sitka, City and Borough	5.9	5.9	6.0
Skagway, Municipality	25.3	22.9	23.7
Wrangell, City and Borough	11.0	11.0	10.3
Yakutat, City and Borough	11.7	11.6	11.5

Southwest Region			
	2/16	1/16	2/15
Aleutians East Borough	2.5	3.2	2.5
Aleutians West Census Area	2.5	2.8	3.2
Bethel Census Area	15.0	14.4	15.8
Bristol Bay Borough	15.2	13.8	21.2
Dillingham Census Area	10.5	9.7	10.0
Kusilvak Census Area	24.9	23.7	24.9
Lake and Peninsula Borough	16.7	16.4	17.7

How Alaska Ranks



Job Growth in Alaska and the Nation⁴



All data sources are U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section, unless otherwise noted.

¹February 2016

²2015

³Percent change, 2014 to 2015

⁴Annual average percent change

Safety Minute

Safety and Health Conference set for April 6 and 7

The Alaska Safety Advisory Council, along with the Alaska Occupational Safety and Health section of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, will sponsor the 35th Annual Governor's Safety and Health Conference April 6-7 at Anchorage's downtown Dena'ina Center.

The theme for this year is "Safety Excellence: The Continuous Process," focusing on meeting front-line safety and health needs of Alaska's industries. AKOSH will host a pre-conference on Tuesday, April 5 and offer 10-hour construction and general industry courses. A post-conference will be held April 8 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. that will focus on hazard recognition in the workplace.

More than 55 exhibitors will participate. ASAC has

selected more than 40 experienced and qualified speakers to present, primarily on workplace safety and regulatory requirements such as confined space, trenching and excavation, electrical hazards, and global harmonization.

To register and see a detailed schedule of exhibitors, sponsors, and presenters go to akgshc.com/

For a confidential, cost-free evaluation of your work site or help developing your business' safety and health program, contact AKOSH Consultation and Training at 1251 Muldoon Road, Suite 10, Anchorage, AK 99504 or (800) 656-4972.

Safety Minute is written by the Labor Standards and Safety Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Employer Resources

Some employers must give shutdown, layoff notice

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, or WARN, protects workers and communities by requiring some employers to provide 60 days' notice before certain types of plant closings and mass layoffs.

Private employers, including nonprofits, are covered by WARN laws, as are public and quasi-public entities that operate in a commercial context and are separately organized from regular government. WARN does not apply to regular federal, state, and local governments that provide public services.

In general, employers must adhere to WARN if they have 100 or more employees, not counting employees who have worked less than six of the last 12 months or those who work less than 20 hours a week on average. Employees entitled to notice under WARN include hourly and salaried workers as well as managerial and supervisory employees, but business partners are excluded.

A covered employer must give notice if an employment site (or one or more facilities or operating units within an employment site) will be shut down and result in 50 or more employees losing their jobs during any 30-day period. Notice is also required if a pending mass layoff not related to a plant closing will cause job loss at the site for 500 or more employees during any 30-day period, or for 50 to 499 employees if they make up at least 33 percent of the employer's active workforce.

Employers must provide this notice to affected workers or their representatives (such as a labor union), to the state dislocated worker unit, and to the appropriate local government unit.

For more information about WARN, please go to <http://jobs.alaska.gov/RR/WARN>.

Employer Resources is written by the Employment and Training Services Division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.