
Akutan Tribal Council Local Economic Development Plan

Presented to the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association



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Location



Figure 1: Location of Akutan and other Aleutian Cities

Akutan is located on Akutan Island in the eastern Aleutians, one of the Krenitzin Islands in the Fox Islands group. It is 35 miles east of Unalaska, and 766 miles southwest of Anchorage. Akutan lies in the maritime climate zone, resulting in mild winters and cool summers. Mean temperatures range from 22 to 55 ° and precipitation averages 28 inches per year. High winds and storms are frequent in the winter, and fog is common in the summer.

History and Culture

Akutan began in 1878 as a fur storage and trading port for the Western Fur & Trading Company. The company's agent established a commercial cod fishing and processing business that quickly attracted nearby Unangan to the community. A Russian Orthodox Church and a school were built in 1878.

Alexander Nevsky Chapel was established in 1918 to replace the original structure. The Pacific Whaling Company made a whale processing station across the bay from Akutan in 1912. It was the only whaling station in the Aleutians and operated until 1939. After the Japanese attacked Unalaska in June 1942, the U.S. government evacuated Akutan residents to the Ketchikan area. The village was re-established in 1944, although many villagers chose not to return. This exposure to the outside world brought many changes to the traditional lifestyle and attitudes of the community. The City was incorporated in 1979.

Akutan is now a fishing community with a permanent population consisting primarily of Unangan. Approximately 100 persons are year-round residents with the majority of the population (up to 1,400 during peak season) are transient fish processing workers that live in group quarters.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities Summary

City of Akutan			
Asset	Present	Description	Ownership
Airstrip	No	Seaplane Base.	State
Marine Highway Service	Yes	The State Ferry operates from Kodiak bi-monthly between May and October	State
Community Hall	Yes	There is a small recreation center, and a gymnasium run by Trident	Private
Water/Sewer	Yes	Groundwater is dammed, treated and piped into all homes. Sewage is piped to a community septic tank, with effluent discharge through an ocean outfall.	City
Electricity	Yes	Diesel generator& Hydropower. \$2.60 per gallon diesel retail.	City
Fuel Storage	Yes	Trident houses the Akutan fuel facility	Private
Medical Services	Yes	Akutan Clinic, Anesia Kudrin Memorial Clinic	Tribal
Dock/Harbor	Yes/No	100-foot public dock and a 58-vessel mooring basin and breakwater. Trident Seafoods owns several commercial docks. There no harbor currently but one is under construction	Private
Public Safety	Yes	VPSO, AK State Trooper Post	State
Fire Protection	Yes	Akutan volunteer Fire Department	Local
Telephone and Internet	Yes	There is no broadband internet access or cell service, but there is non-broadband cell service in the area	Private
Post Office	Yes	Akutan Post Office	Federal
School	Yes	Akutan School, PK through 12	School District

Table 1: Infrastructure in Akutan

Source: State of Alaska Community Database Online

Demographics and Economy

The following information is from the Census Bureau's American FactFinder database. Due to the small population in these areas, the most current information for many of these indicators is 2016, and these represent the 5-year averages from the American Community Survey. If these areas had larger populations, then the Census Bureau would have presented a 1-year average. The year of 2010 was selected as a benchmark year because the data is as authoritative as the Census Bureau can produce as it comes during the decennial census.

Akutan's economy is built first and foremost on the fish processing plant with room and boarding for the employees of Trident. That explains the extraordinarily low unemployment rate because unemployed people would either leave or work. The smaller population and income can be defined by Tridents

interest in automation to lower production costs due to a tightening in profit margins in the commodities market.¹

Indicator	2010	2016	Percent Change
Population	1027	782	-24.0%
Tribal Members	56	102	82.0%
Housing Units	44	64	45.0%
Median Household Income	\$34,375	\$24,464	-29.0%
Unemployment Rate	2.8	0	-100.0%

Table 2: Demographic and Economic Indicators for Akutan
 Source: American FactFinder

The State of Alaska business license information reports 9 active business licenses in Akutan. The registry for active fishing permits shows there were 13 in 2010 and now 4 in 2018, a decrease of almost 70%.

Community Development Quota (CDQ) Groups

Western Alaska groundfish fisheries are managed under several federal programs. The Community Development Quota program reserves 10% of the catch for groundfish, pollock, and crab within a region to qualified Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) communities within 50 miles from shore. Akutan is eligible for CDQ community.



Figure 2: Map of CDQ Communities in the Aleutian Islands
 Source: North Pacific Management Council

¹ Marel Fish. "Whitefish Showhow 2016: Interview with Dave Abbasian, Operations Manager, Trident Seafoods." (YouTube, 12/7/2016). Accessed 3/27/2017 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsVbqLZMnYc>

Existing Community Projects

The major community project in Akutan is the construction of a harbor and integration of the harbor into the transportation system. This harbor will provide moorings for up to 57 large fishing vessels, provide refuge for disabled craft, and improve the local transportation network. The harbor is complete, but there is no road connecting it to Akutan.



Figure 3: Akutan Harbor construction in progress
Source: <https://akutanharbor.com/>

Existing Workforce Competencies

In 2016, over 77% of workers in Akutan were in the food manufacturing industry with local government (14%) trade, transportation, and utilities (~4%) accounting for almost another 20% of employment.

2016 Workers by Industry	Number of workers	% of total employed
Manufacturing	163	77%
Local Government	30	14%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	8	4%
Leisure and Hospitality	6	3%
State Government	2	0.9%
Professional and Business Services	1	0.5%
Educational and Health Services	1	0.5%

Table 3: Akutan 2017 Workers by Industry
Source: Alaska Local and Regional Information

Regarding Akutan’s workforce experience, the vast majority have experience in manufacturing and trade.

Number of Resident Workers with Experience in Industry 2012–2016
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Manufacturing	167
Trade	38
Accommodation and food services	13
Transportation and warehousing	7
Health care and social assistance	5
Real estate and rental and leasing	4
Construction	3
State government	3
Administration and support and waste management	2
Information	2
Professional, scientific and technical services	2
All Other Industries	1

*Table 4: Number of Resident Workers with Industry Experience from 2012 to 2016
Source: Alaska Local and Regional Information*

Local Government/Community Stakeholders

Community Organizations

- City of Akutan
- City of Akutan Planning and Zoning Commission
- Akutan Traditional Council
- Akutan Corporation
- Akutan Fisheries Committee
- Akutan School
- Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (IGAP)
- Anesa Kudrin Memorial Clinic
- Akutan Residents
- Trident Seafood

Borough Government

Akutan is within the Aleutians East Borough.

Municipality/Village

Akutan was incorporated as a second-class city in October 1979 and as such, state law defines Akutan's powers, duties, and functions.

Native and Village Corporations

- **Tribal Governments (*Akutan Tribe*):** Tribal governments have the status of federally recognized tribes. They have responsibility for specific local health and social service programs and have access to sources of federal funding.
- **ANCSA Village Corporations (*Akutan Village Corporations*):** Village corporations are the major surface landowners in Akutan and the entire Akutan Island, and many residents are shareholders in these corporations.
- **ANCSA Regional Corporation (*Aleut Corporation*):** Regional corporations are the major subsurface landowner in the area, and are a significant partner in land and economic development.

Existing Community Plans

Between January and June 2005, the City of Akutan underwent a comprehensive planning process to update and make current its 1983 plan. Akutan places importance on planning and has undergone a series of comprehensive planning processes, the last occurring in 2000.

Akutan has been looking to develop the area's geothermal assets and has drilled three wells in search of optimal access to subterranean heat. Also, construction of a road to connect Akutan to its currently unused harbor continues to be a priority.

Purpose and Vision

We are traditional users of subsistence foods, and we value our culture, families, children, and elders. We are friendly people living a healthy lifestyle in a place where our children can play safely and grow, benefiting from our heritage, which we maintain in harmony.

The City of Akutan's vision for the community is to protect their heritage, culture, and traditional values while encouraging the development of new infrastructure and economic growth for the benefit of the community. This vision includes supporting the continued advancement of social and health care services to provide for the health and welfare of the people.

These five key areas summarize the overall strategy to achieve their vision for Akutan:

- Infrastructure Development - adequate and safe community-wide infrastructure to support community needs and economic development.
- Economic Development - sufficient economic development to provide a steady source of current and future jobs within the community.
- Traditional Heritage - opportunities for traditional and subsistence activities around the island and enjoyment of a relationship with nature and natural places.
- Public Utilities - obtain and install superior, reliable public utilities.
- Social Wellness - assurance of the safety, health, and welfare of all community residents.

Identification of Barriers to Community and Economic Development

- The region’s economy is tied tightly to the fishing industry. The barriers to economic development are shortening fishing seasons, the types of fish being caught are changing, and the rise of farmed seafood internationally, and an aging fishing fleet put the existing economic base of Akutan at risk. Management of fish stocks, revitalizing the fleet and seeking efficiencies in fishing and food manufacturing is essential to ensuring the economic base of Akutan.
- Natural hazards and isolation provide a constant barrier to economic development. Weather-related hazards, such as cyclonic storms, can make transportation by land and air unreliable and unsafe. Volcanic and seismic activity pose a probable risk of property damage. The remote location and lack of agricultural land cause a high cost of living for all supplies, and food specifically.

SWOT Analysis



Figure 4: SWOT Analysis

Goals

Goal 1: Plan for, develop, and seek funding for adequate and safe community-wide infrastructure to support community needs and economic development opportunities.

- Seek funding to develop roads that support and encourage economic development.
- Seek funding to upgrade existing and new Akutan resident housing.
- Seek funding to develop new office building(s) for the Akutan Corporation and city.
- Encourage the continued progress of the boat harbor through participation in planning efforts and by seeking additional funding.

Goal 2: Seek and develop economic development opportunities to provide a steady source of current and future jobs within Akutan.

- If feasible, develop uplands commercial fishery support businesses following the development of the boat harbor.
- Study the feasibility of and develop a plan for geothermal business development.
- Construct a café/duplex facility.
- Improve the overall utility of local stores through the upgrade of electrical systems and commercial appliances (refrigeration/freezer systems).
- Study long-term guest housing needs, decide on locations and build additional guest housing. Study the feasibility of developing tourism businesses, such as lodging, natural history, and cultural tours, crafts sales, boat tours, and sports fishing.

Goal 3: Preserve the traditional and cultural Native heritage and provide opportunities for traditional and subsistence activities around the island; enhance the relationship between people and their natural surroundings.

- Study the feasibility of and develop an operations plan for constructing a Cultural Heritage Center (Native arts and crafts, traditional foods, language, and dance).
- Seek funding for a feasibility study and business plan.
- Seek funding for project implementation.

Goal 4: Obtain and install superior, reliable public utilities.

- Plan for the renewal and replacement of the city's hydropower facility.
- Encourage geothermal development to support electric power generation.
- Plan for the renewal and replacement of the city's bulk fuel facility.
- Seek funding for the renewal and replacement of individual water/sewer lines connected to residents' homes.
- Plan and develop a sophisticated and feasible method for recycling a wider variety of island refuse items.
- Encourage the exploration and development of feasible alternative energy sources (e.g., wind energy).

Goal 5: Provide for the safety, health, and welfare of all community residents.

- Seek funding for a search and rescue vessel, and obtain necessary training of residents to staff the vessel.
- Support the development of a daycare/preschool facility.
- Seek funding for a larger clinic.