

Crescent City, California

People and Place

Location

Crescent City is located in Del Norte County of northern California at 41°45'22"N and 124°12'02"W. The community is situated approximately 330 miles south of Portland, Oregon, and 356 miles north of San Francisco, California. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, the community encompasses a total area of 2.1 square miles, including 0.3 square miles of water and 1.8 square miles of land.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Crescent City had a total population of 4006 people with a population density of 2252.2 people per square mile of land area. In 2000, the gender distribution showed more females (53.7%) than males (46.2%). The median age of the population in 2000 was 32, lower than the national median of 35 for the same year. A total of 41.2% of the population was under the age of 25, higher than the national figure of 35.3%. Approximately 71.1% of those eighteen and over earned the equivalent of a high school diploma or higher, 11.0% earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 3.1% earned a graduate degree.

The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 75.1% of Crescent City's population lived in family households. The racial composition was 78.3% White, 11% Hispanic or Latino, 6.1% American Indian and Alaska native, 4.6% Asian, 0.5% Black or African American, and 0.1% native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. A total of 4.3% identified with some other race and 6% with two or more races. Approximately 8.2% of the population was foreign-born, with 35% from Mexico and 32% from Asia.

History

The Redwood coast had been home to several American Indian tribes for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. These native people embodied distinct cultures and identities, including speaking separate languages. They lived in villages along the coast and major rivers of the area, each one had a semi-independent political system with ties to one another through an intricate economic, social, and religious web.¹ In the Crescent City area, the main Tolowa villages at the time of European contact were at Battery Point (Ta'atun), Pebble Beach (Meslteltun), south of Point St. George (Tatintun), and north of Point St. George (Tawiatun).² The people utilized the surrounding resources to construct their homes and to hunt and gather food. They relied on a number of local food sources, including deer, elk, fish, nuts, berries, and seeds. The methods they used in hunting and gathering were intertwined with an understanding of the balance in nature. Homes were constructed of planks split from fallen Redwoods that were understood to be one of the Spirit Beings, a divine race that existed before humans and taught people the proper way to live.^{3,4}

When gold was discovered in Myrtle Creek in 1853 and along Trinity River in 1850, thousands of people moved into the area. Natives were moved off their lands and many were massacred if they resisted. Militia units made up of miners and homesteaders were paid by the state government to remove "hostile" Indians from the area. While treaties were signed, they never allocated reservations for tribes, nor were they ratified in Northern California, on the account that the California delegation believed the treaties left too much land in Indian hands. Reservations were only established by administrative decree. Camp Crescent City was

established in 1856 during the Red Cap War, which led to the removal of the Yuroks and seven other tribes to the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation.⁵ While many of the unique aspects of the various tribes of the area have merged today, their languages remain distinct, including Tolowa, Karuk, Hoopa, and Yurok. Many native people of the area continue to fight for their legal rights, a difficult challenge in the face of a lack of treaty guarantees and the absence of federal recognition.^{6,7}

The town of Crescent City, named after its crescent-shaped beach, emerged in the 1850s during the Gold Rush and soon became the chief port of entry and supply center for miners of Oregon and neighboring settlements in California. The community was incorporated in 1854 and agriculture, lumber, and fishing soon became the primary economic mainstays for the community. The Redwood trees provided settlers the lumber they needed for settlement and survival. Commercial logging followed and soon timber became the largest manufacturing industry in the west. The first mill was established in Crescent City in 1853. By 1871, Hobbs, Wall and Co. had formed and dominated the industry until 1939. The first road through the county was the Crescent City Plank Road, which was built in 1858 and ran along the Smith River Canyon to the Illinois River in Oregon.^{8,9}

The 20th century brought improved technologies in harvesting and transporting lumber. A railroad was built in 1906 to transport lumber from Smith River to Crescent City where it was then carried out by ocean schooner. By 1910, the rapid disappearance of the Redwood stands caused alarm to some of the residents of the area, who established the Save the Redwoods League and California's three Redwood reserve state parks. Despite their efforts, logging continued and by the 1960s, nearly 90 percent of the original Redwoods were gone. Redwood National Park was established in 1968.¹⁰ In addition to logging, the fishing industry contributed to the area's economy. A cannery was established in the 1860s near the mouth of the Smith River. When the timber industry began to decline in the mid-1900s, the local fishing industry began to replace it as the main economic force of the community.

Before the establishment of local lighthouses, shipwrecks were a regular occurrence off the Crescent City Coast. The Paragon was the first ship to sink along the coast in 1850. It was followed by the Tarquin in 1851 and the America in 1855. The most famous shipwreck was the Brother Jonathan, which hit an uncharted reef and sank with the loss of a large gold shipment; only 16 of the 215 passengers survived. The Battery Point Lighthouse, located at the north end of the Crescent City harbor, was commissioned by Congress in 1855 and was in service until 1965. Located 6 miles off the coast to the west of Crescent City, the Point St. George Lighthouse was in service from 1892 until 1975.¹¹

The last major catastrophe to hit Crescent City was a tsunami in 1964, caused by an earthquake that struck Anchorage, Alaska; it was the largest earthquake to ever hit North America. A series of five 500 mph tidal waves destroyed the downtown area, killing 11 people and damaging 150 businesses and homes.¹² The community regrouped and rebuilt and today, Crescent City has a thriving tourism industry that capitalizes on the community's location and easy access to numerous recreational opportunities. Crescent City is surrounded by State and National Parks and recreational opportunities. The Elk Creek Wildlife Area is located adjacent to downtown Crescent City, Tolowa Dunes State Park is slightly north of the city, and the Redwood National Park Headquarters and Visitor Information Center is located in the city's downtown. The Smith River National Recreation Area, and the Redwood National Park are both within a few miles of the city. Hiking, biking, bird watching, fishing, and whale watching are common recreational activities. The Crescent City Harbor offers resources for whale watching cruises,

wind surfing, surfing, fish derbies, and diving. There are three community groups that offer arts and cultural performances, exhibits, and educational programs, including the Community Concert Association, the Del Norte Association for Cultural Awareness, and the Lighthouse Repertory Theatre.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census of the employed population 16 years and over, 'public administration' was the top occupational field at 18.9%, followed by 'health care and social assistance' with 15%, and 'accommodation and food services' with 13.4%. The 'agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting' occupations represented 3.9% of the employed population. The unemployment rate was 13.1%, higher than the national average of 5.7% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). The number employed was 43.4% lower than the national average of 50.5%. A total of 50% were not in the labor force, higher than the national average of 36.1%. Approximately 35% of the labor force was employed by either local, state, or federal governments.

Crescent City's per capita income in 1999 was \$12,833, compared to the national average of \$21,587 for the same year. The median household income in 1999 was \$20,133, lower than the national average was \$41,944. For whom poverty status was determined, 34.6% of the City's population was living below the poverty line in 1999, considerably higher than the national average of 12.4%. In 2000, there were 1754 housing units in Crescent City, of which 90.0% were occupied and 10% were vacant. Of the occupied units 32.8% were owner occupied, while 67.2% were renter occupied. A small percentage of the vacant housing units, 10.8%, were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Crescent City is a municipal corporation that was originally incorporated in 1854.¹³ There are five City Council members including a mayor, a mayor pro tempore, and three council members.¹⁴ In addition to the Council members, the City maintains a City Manager and a City Attorney. Crescent City levies a 7.25% sales tax on regular purchases and a 10% transient lodging tax.^{15,16}

California state law assesses commercial fishing vessels, charter boats, and oceanographic research vessels at 4% of their full cash value for property tax purposes.¹⁷ Some commercial vessels are also subject to a Ballast Water Management Fee of about \$500 per voyage.¹⁸ California levies a fuel tax of \$0.18 per gallon, a portion of which goes toward marine safety and education programs and boating facility administration and development.¹⁹

The State of California levies landing taxes that must be paid by fishermen and fish processors involved in the retail sale of fish products.²⁰ These taxes vary by species and range between \$.0013 and \$.0125 per pound of fish.²¹ The California Department of Agriculture also administers two commodity commissions, the California Salmon Council and the California Sea Urchin Commission, which charge fees for marketing and lobbying on behalf of fishermen involved in these specific fisheries.²²

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains a small office in Crescent City, in support of the Lake Earl Wildlife Area. The closest field office is located approximately 86 miles away in Eureka. The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service office is located in Newport, Oregon, approximately 229 miles away. Crescent City falls under the jurisdiction of

the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and is approximately 330 miles from the closest meeting location in Portland, Oregon. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Cutter Dorado is homeported in Crescent City, and is the northernmost unit of the USCG Group Humboldt Bay. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has an office in Sacramento, California.

Facilities

Crescent City is accessible by air and sea, and road via Highway 101. The school system falls under the Del Norte County Unified School District and supports approximately 16 schools, of which 3 are private schools and 13 are public, including five alternative schools that support various curriculums from kindergarten through twelfth grade. There are 2 high schools, 1 middle school, and 10 elementary schools (inclusive of alternative schools). The College of the Redwoods is the local community college and the Humboldt State University is the closest 4-year college located in Arcata, California.

The City of Crescent City supplies water and sewer services to community residents, while electric power is provided by Pacific Power. Public safety is administered by the Crescent City Police Department comprised of a Chief of Police, 2 sergeants, 1 detective, and 12 officers. The California Highway Patrol also operates an office in Crescent City with 1 lieutenant, 20 patrolmen, and 12 vehicles. The closest hospital is Sutter Coast Hospital in the city proper, followed by Curry General Hospital in Gold Beach, Oregon. There are approximately 17 hotels/motels in Crescent City, 1 resort, 2 bed and breakfast facilities, and various national, state, county, and private campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks.

The Crescent City Harbor supports recreational and commercial fisheries, along with tourism. The Harbor includes a yacht club, ice house, boatyard, tackle shop, fresh fish market, dive shop, marine supply store, and much more.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 a total of 200 vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Crescent City. Landings in the community were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic (3.7 t/\$6,341/6), crab (1408 t/\$6,107,840/137), groundfish (3955 t/\$2,469,443/118), highly migratory species (309 t/\$700,660/38), salmon (120.3 t/\$461,247/74), shrimp (1296 t/\$1,429,924/55), and other species (3.7 t/\$7,250/25). There is currently only one processor in Crescent City, Caito Fisheries, which has several locations throughout California. They process various species and market their products wholesale.

Crescent city residents owned 108 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries. Sixteen vessels participated in the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program and 74 participated in the Federal Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Crescent City residents in 2000 that participated in each said fisheries by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/8/90), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/24/48), shellfish (NA/1/NA), and shrimp (NA/15/29).²³

In 2000 a total of 21 Federal Groundfish fishery permits were held by 19 community members. Recorded data indicates that the number of Crescent City residents holding permits in each said fisheries by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/3), crab (1/6/98), groundfish (0/0/43), highly migratory species (NA/1/7), salmon (0/21/77), shellfish (0/1/NA), shrimp (4/11/40), and other species (0/0/50).²⁴

According to the available data for 2000 a total of 468 permits were registered to Crescent City residents, including 447 registered state permits and 21 federal permits. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/4), crab (3/7/105), groundfish (0/0/52), highly migratory species (NA/1/0), salmon (0/22/124), shrimp (8/14/55), and other species (0/0/52).²⁵

Sportfishing

Crescent City, which belongs to the Fort Bragg, Eureka, and Crescent City Port Complex, received a total of 49,983 commercial passenger fishing vessel landings in 2000, made by a total of 11,574 anglers. The species landed were unspecified rockfish, Chinook salmon, lingcod, Pacific mackarel, cabezon, unspecified flatfishes, albacore, and California sheephead.

Subsistence

Specific information on subsistence fishing in Crescent City is not discussed in detail in this Community Profile due to the lack of available data. The California Department of Fish and Game uses the term “recreational” to refer to fishermen that do not earn revenue from their catch but rather fish for pleasure and/or to provide food for personal consumption. Therefore information on subsistence fishing in California is captured, to some degree, within the above sportfishing data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000, there was one vessel owned by a Crescent City resident that participated in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year six residents served as crew members on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries. Crescent City residents held two permits in 2000, including one federal groundfish License Limitation program permit, and one state Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission salmon permit.

Sportfishing

Fishermen based in Crescent City purchased 52 sportfishing licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000. There were no Crescent City residents operating sportfishing guide businesses in Alaska in 2000.

¹ National Park Service. No date. American Indians, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.nps.gov/redw/area_amerind.htm (access date - October 2004).

² Office of Historic Preservation. No date. Del Norte: landmarks: county listing, [Online]. Available: URL: http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=21416 (access date - October 2004).

³ National Park Service. No date. American Indians, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.nps.gov/redw/area_amerind.htm (access date - October 2004).

⁴ Crescent City-Del Norte County Chamber of Commerce. 2004. Our history, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.northerncalifornia.net/our_history.cfm (access date - October 2004).

⁵ The California Military Museum. No date. Historic California posts: Camp Crescent City, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.militarymuseum.org/CpCrescentCity.html> (access date - October 2004).

⁶ National Park Service. No date. American Indians, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.nps.gov/redw/area_amerind.htm (access date - October 2004).

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- ⁷ National Park Service. No date. American Indians today, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.nps.gov/redw/area_amerind2.htm (access date - October 2004).
- ⁸ National Park Service. No date. American Indians today, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.nps.gov/redw/area_log.htm (access date - October 2004).
- ⁹ Crescent City-Del Norte County Chamber of Commerce. 2004. Our history, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.northerncalifornia.net/our_history.cfm (access date - October 2004).
- ¹⁰ National Park Service. No date. American Indians today, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.nps.gov/redw/area_log.htm (access date - October 2004).
- ¹¹ Crescent City-Del Norte County Chamber of Commerce. 2004. Our history, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.northerncalifornia.net/our_history.cfm (access date - October 2004).
- ¹² Lighthouse Friends.com. 2003. Battery Point (Crescent City) Lighthouse, CA, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=58> (access date - October 2004).
- ¹³ Municipal Code for Crescent City, General Provisions, Title 1. 2005. [Online]. Available: URL: <http://municipalcodes.lexisnexis.com/codes/crescentcity/> (access date - March 2005).
- ¹⁴ City of Crescent City. 2005. No title, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.crescentcity.org/citycouncil.htm> (access date - March 2005).
- ¹⁵ California State Board of Equalization. 2004. California City and County Sales and Use Tax Rates, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.boe.ca.gov/pdf/pub71.pdf> (access date - July 2004).
- ¹⁶ California State Board of Equalization. 2001. California Counties Transient Lodging Tax Revenue, Rate and Date for the Fiscal Year 2000-01, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.sco.ca.gov/ard/local/locprep/adhoc/county/0001cotranslodgtax.pdf> (access date - July 2004).
- ¹⁷ State of California Board of Equalization. No Date. Property Tax Rules, Rule 151. Vessels Subject to the Four Percent Assessment, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.boe.ca.gov/proptaxes/pdf/r151.pdf> (access date - July 2004).
- ¹⁸ State of California Board of Equalization. 2004. Ballast Water Management Fee, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.boe.ca.gov/sptaxprog/bllstweb12.htm> (access date - July 2004).
- ¹⁹ U.S. Department of Transportation. 2001. Provisions Governing the Distribution of State Motor Fuel Tax Receipts: California, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/hwytaxes/2001/california.htm> (access date - July 2004).
- ²⁰ State of California. No Date. Fish and Game Code Section 8040-8070, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=fgc&group=08001-09000&file=8040-8070> (access date - July 2004).
- ²¹ For a listing of landing taxes by species, view the full text of the California Fish and Game Code, Sections 8040-8070 at the following website:
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=fgc&group=08001-09000&file=8040-8070>
- ²² State of California Department of Agriculture. 2004. List of Marketing Programs, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/mkt/mkt/mktbrds.html> (access date - July 2004).
- ²³ “‘NA’ refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.”
- ²⁴ “‘NA’ refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.”
- ²⁵ “‘NA’ refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.”