

El Sobrante, California

People and Place

Location

The City of El Sobrante, located in Contra Costa County, is situated approximately 21 miles northeast of San Francisco and 67 miles southwest of Sacramento. El Sobrante covers 3.10 square miles of land and lies at 37°58'38"N, 122°17'39"W.

Demographic Profile

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census the population of El Sobrante was 12,260. Between 1990 and 2000, U.S. Census data reports that the population of El Sobrante increased 24.4%. In 2000 the percentage of males and females was 48.5% and 51.5% respectively. The racial composition of the population was 60.4% White, followed by Asian (12.5%), Black or African American (12.2%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (0.7%), and Pacific Islander (0.3%). Seven percent identified themselves as belonging to some other race and 7.1% classified themselves as belonging to two or more races. Overall, 15.6% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

The median age of the population in 2000 was 37.6, slightly higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. In 2000 approximately 53.8% of the population was between the ages of 25 and 59. Of the foreign-born population (15.9%), 58.6% were born in Asia. A total of 83.8% of the population of El Sobrante were living in family households in 2000. The U.S. Census reports that in 2000 a total of 85.9% of the population of El Sobrante over 18 years of age had received a high school degree or higher, 19.3% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 5.9% received a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

History

In 1769 Gaspar de Portola, the Captain of a Spanish exploration team, found San Francisco Bay while searching for Monterey Bay. Upon Portola's arrival in the area over 10,000 Indians lived in central California's coastal areas between Big Sur and San Francisco Bay. This group of Indians consisted of approximately 40 tribal groups ranging in size from 100-250 members. When the Spanish arrived they referred to the tribal groups collectively as "Costenos," meaning "coastal people." The name was eventually changed to "Costanoan." Native Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area were referred to as Costanoans for years until descendants chose to call themselves Ohlones, meaning "the abalone people."¹

The Ohlones living in the San Pablo Creek Watershed were most likely of the Huchiun clan, a group that lived roughly between Pinole and Oakland. They used the creek's waters to leach tannins from the acorns of coastal oaks, which they ground into a nourishing gruel, and fed off of the salmon that spawned in the watershed. The Huchiun harvested tules, cattails, willows, and sedges, which they used to weave baskets, fishing boats, and huts.² Shellfish were also important to the Ohlone; people that lived along Monterey, San Francisco, and San Pablo Bays gathered mussels, abalone, clams, oysters, and hornshell from the local tidelands.³ The Ohlones, equipped with reed boats, also ventured short distances into the ocean to fish for mackerel, sardine, and other nearshore species.⁴

In 1841 Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado gave the name “El Sobrante”, meaning “the leftover” in Spanish, to an irregular-shaped tract of land on the fringes of four ranchos. The term El Sobrante today refers to the El Sobrante Valley, part of which is unincorporated and therefore falls under the jurisdiction of Contra Costa County. Other areas of El Sobrante have been annexed by the neighboring City of Richmond. Today the town is bordered by San Pablo Bay on the west, Richmond on the southwest, and Pinole on the north.

El Sobrante, like many other communities in the area, was affected by the building boom following World War II. Over the past 40 years El Sobrante has changed from a small rural center to a mostly-developed residential suburb. El Sobrante is also popular among the Sikh community, as the site of the Sikh Center of the San Francisco Bay Area, one of the most important shrines in North America.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the top three occupations in El Sobrante for the eligible labor force 16 years of age and over were “management, professional and related occupations” (32.9%), “sales and office occupations” (27.7%), and “production, transportation, and material moving occupations” (14.2%). In 2002 the top five employers in Contra Costa County were Bio-Rad Laboratories, Bookside Hospital, Chevron, Color Spot Nurseries, and Contra Costa Community College.⁵ The oil refineries of Standard Oil and Shell/Valero are located in the nearby towns of Richmond and Martinez respectively. At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 13.6% of the city’s eligible labor force was employed within local, state, or federal governments, all working outside of natural resource industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining). The 2000 U.S. Census data reports that only 0.3% (15 people) of El Sobrante’s population was employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.

According to 2000 U.S. Census data 63.7% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 3.5% unemployment rate in 2000 (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Of the population of El Sobrante over 16 years of age 33.9% was not in the labor force, which is slightly less than the national average of 36.1%. For whom poverty status was determined, 9.5% of the city’s population was living below the poverty line in 1999. The median household income in 1999 was \$48,272 and the per capita income was \$24,525. There were 4803 housing units according to 2000 U.S. Census. The percentage of occupied housing units that were owner versus renter occupied were 63.7% and 36.3% respectively. The percent of vacant housing units was 2.6% of which 9.4% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

El Sobrante, located in the valley by the same name, is a U.S. Census Designated Place. The town is run by the Municipal Advisory Council. El Sobrante levies a 8.25% sale and use tax on regular purchases and a 10% transient lodging tax.^{6,7} Under Proposition 13 the maximum property tax rate for Contra Costa County is 1% of the property’s net taxable value.⁸

California state law assesses commercial vessels, charter boats, and oceanographic research vessels at 4% of their full cash value.⁹ Vessels registered in California with either the Department of Motor Vehicles or the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) are assessed property taxes by the county tax collector where it is moored.¹⁰ Some commercial vessels are also subject to a Ballast Water Management Fee of about \$500 per voyage.¹¹ 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.¹²

The State of California also levies landing taxes that must be paid by fishermen and fish processors involved in the retail sale of fish products. These taxes vary by species and range between \$.0013 and \$.0125 per pound of fish.¹³ 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.¹⁴

The National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Southwest Fisheries Science Center has laboratories located 86 miles south in Santa Cruz and there is a NMFS Regional Office located approximately 409 miles south in Long Beach. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Marine Region has an office located 42 miles south in Belmont. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is 21 miles south in San Francisco. The Pacific Fishery Management Council holds meetings approximately 41 miles south in Foster City. El Sobrante falls under the jurisdiction of the United States Coast Guard Marine Safety Office San Francisco Bay, one of the largest and busiest marine safety units in the Coast Guard.

Facilities

El Sobrante is accessible by ground and air. The major road connecting El Sobrante to neighboring cities is Interstate 80 northeast to Sacramento and south to San Francisco. The San Francisco International Airport is located 25 miles south of El Sobrante. Bus transportation throughout the area is provided by the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District. The Contra Costa Commute Alternative Network provides additional options for El Sobrante commuters.

There are several elementary, middle, and alternative schools located in El Sobrante, and one high school. The nearest college, Contra Costa College, serves over 3000 students and is located 3 miles southwest in San Pablo. East Bay Municipal Utility District provides water and wastewater services to El Sobrante and Pacific Gas and Electric supplies electricity and natural gas. Public safety in the City is administered by the Contra Costa Sheriff's Office. The nearest medical facility is the Doctor's Medical Center located 9 miles southwest in San Pablo. El Sobrante is located approximately 5 miles from San Pablo Bay. There are no port facilities located in El Sobrante proper, however the Port of Oakland and the Port of San Francisco are located 15 and 20 miles south respectively. Additional local facilities include a public library, several parks, and the May Valley Community Center.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Landings data for El Sobrante were recorded as part of the Other San Francisco Bay and San Mateo County Ports port group which includes the nearby communities of San Mateo, South San Francisco, Pigeon Point, Point Montara, Pescadero, Point San Pedro, Albany, Pleasanton, Pleasant Hill, Danville, Fairfield, Vacaville, Concord, San Bruno, Rockaway Beach Palo Alto, Los Gatos, Alamo, Fremont, San Francisco area, Oakley, Port Costa, Antioch Bridge, Crockett, Antioch, Rio Vista, Martinez, Pittsburg, Collinsville, Benicia, Bird Landing, Suisun City, Brentwood, Walnut Creek, Pinole, Alviso, Daly City, Campbell, Martins Beach, San Carlos, Moss Beach, Redwood City, Emeryville, McNears Point, China Camp, Vallejo, Rodeo, San Jose, Newark, Yountville, Livermore, Glen Cove, Los Altos, Burlingame, Poster City, Pacifica,

Sunnyvale, Hayward, Mountain View, Lafayette, San Leandro, Napa, El Cerrito, Farallone Island.

Reported landings for this port group in 2000 were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic (confidential/confidential/1), crab (confidential/confidential/1), groundfish (1 t/\$2112/5), salmon (confidential/confidential/3), shrimp (438 t/\$245,851/5), and other species (8 t/\$16,380/12). There are no fish processors operating in El Sobrante. See the San Francisco Community Profile for more information regarding processors in the San Francisco Bay Area and San Jose and Lafayette Community Profiles for additional information on these communities.

El Sobrante residents owned four vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, including two vessels that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by El Sobrante residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/1), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/0/4), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/0/1), and other species (0/0/1).¹⁵

El Sobrante residents held zero Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permits in 2000. Recorded data indicates that in 2000 the number of El Sobrante residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/1), crab (0/0/2), groundfish (0/0/2), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/15), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/1), and other species (0/0/4).¹⁶

According to available data, 38 state and zero federal permits were registered to El Sobrante residents in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/2), crab (0/0/2), groundfish (0/0/2), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/26), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/2), and other species (0/0/4).¹⁷

Sportfishing

El Sobrante residents are involved in sportfishing in both West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. Two sportfishing license agents are located in El Sobrante. There were two Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessels licensed in El Sobrante 2002 and 2003.

Subsistence

Specific information on subsistence fishing in El Sobrante 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 El Sobrante residents were scarcely involved in North Pacific fisheries. In 2000, residents owned three vessels that were involved in North Pacific fisheries. Available data indicates zero landings were made by community members in the same year.

Additionally, in 2000 there were zero El Sobrante residents serving as crewmembers in North Pacific fisheries. Data indicates that there were no state or federal permits registered to community residents in the same year.

Sportfishing

A total of 20 Alaska sportfishing licenses were purchased by El Sobrante community members in 2000.

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- ¹ National Park Service. No date. An 'Unvanishing' History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/seac/sfprehis.htm> (access date - November 2004).
 - ² San Pablo Watershed Neighbors Education and Restoration Society. No date. A History of the Watershed, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.aoinstitute.org/spawners/history.html> (access date - December 2004).
 - ³ Santa Cruz Public Libraries. 1991. An Overview of Ohlone Culture, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/spanish/ohlone.shtml> (access date - November 2004).
 - ⁴ McEvoy, A.F. 1986. The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries 1850-1980. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 368 p.
 - ⁵ California Employment Development Department. 2002. Major Employers in Contra Costa County, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/majorer/contrer.htm> (access date - December 2004).
 - ⁶ 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).
 - ⁷ 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).
 - ⁸ Office of the County Assessor. 2004. 2004-2005 Annual Report, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.scc-assessor.org/scc/assets/docs/653748ARfinal0405.pdf> (access date - November 2004).
 - ⁹ 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).
 - ¹⁰ California Department of Motor Vehicles. 2003. How to register a vessel, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/boatsinfo/boatreg.htm#how> (access date - July 2004).
 - ¹¹ 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).
 - ¹² 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).
 - ¹³ State of California. No date. Fish and Game Code Section 8040-8070, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycod?section=fgc&group=08001-8070> (access date - July 2004).
 - ¹⁴ State of California Department of Agriculture. 2004. List of Marketing Programs, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/mkt/mkt/mktbrds.html> (access date - July 2004).
 - ¹⁵ '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.
 - ¹⁶ '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.
 - ¹⁷ '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.