

Kneeland, California

People and Place

Location

Kneeland is located in Humboldt County, about 12 miles east of Humboldt Bay. Kneeland is roughly equidistant from the nearby communities of Eureka and Arcata (14 miles) and lies approximately 283 miles north of San Francisco and 315 miles north of Sacramento. Because Kneeland is not defined as a place for the purposes of the U.S. Census and lies in an unincorporated portion of Humboldt County, no data are available on the land area encompassed by the community. According to the Humboldt County Community Development Services, Kneeland has no formally defined boundaries.¹ The geographic coordinates of Kneeland, California, are 40°45'41"N and 123°59'37"W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Kneeland was 244. In the same year the gender structure was evenly divided, with slightly more females (51.6%) than males (48.4%). The median age of the population was 41.5, a value higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year.

For the population 18 years and over, 89.3% had a high school education or higher, 39.0% had attained a bachelor's degree or higher, and 9.6% earned a graduate or professional degree. These percentages compare favorably to the national levels of educational attainment for the same year. The highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma/equivalency for 8.6% of Kneeland's population, while 32.1% reported having some college but no degree.

The 2000 U.S. Census shows that the racial composition was predominantly White, (95.9%), followed by American Indian and Alaskan Native (1.6%). Overall, 0.9% of residents classified themselves as belonging to some other race, and 1.6% of the population identified with two or more races. About 0.4% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. A small percentage (2.2%) of the population was foreign-born; of the foreign-born residents, 50.0% were born in Guatemala.

History

Several native groups occupied the Humboldt County area before and after the arrival of European settlers. Kneeland lies within the original territory of the Wiyot, who relied heavily on salmon, locally harvested roots, and marine resources for subsistence purposes. Native groups may have maintained the prairies immediately surrounding Kneeland as hunting grounds via strategic burning practices. Prior to 1860, there were an estimated 1500 to 2000 Wiyot living within the Humboldt County area.² By 1920, their numbers had declined to around 100, due to introduced diseases and deadly conflicts with Euro-American settlers and the military. Today, many members of the contemporary Wiyot Nation live on the Table Bluff Reservation, located 16 miles south of nearby Eureka.

The first nonnative explorers entered Humboldt Bay in 1806, but the region was not permanently settled by Euro-Americans until the 1850s, when the Gold Rush brought a flood of new residents.³ Nearby coastal communities (Eureka, Arcata, and Trinidad) quickly developed as shipping and supply centers for the mining industry. After the Gold

Rush waned, area residents began to capitalize on locally abundant timber, land, and marine resources and the region became a major center for logging, ranching, and fishing.

The Kneeland area, which lies above the timberline and is dominated by prairie vegetation, attracted settlers interested in cattle and sheep ranching. Initially known as Kleizer's Prairie, the area features prime grazing land and climatic conditions suitable for cultivating hay and other fodder crops.⁴ In 1852, John A Kneeland and his sister Mandana established a ranch in the area, which then became known as Kneeland's Prairie. Other ranchers followed suit, taking advantage of lucrative markets for meat products in nearby mining and logging communities. The 1850s were marked by heated conflict between white settlers and native peoples who sought to defend their claims to the land surrounding Kneeland, but native resistance was severely undermined when the U.S. Army established two stations in the vicinity and began regular patrols to defend settler's ranches. This era was also characterized by conflicts among squatters, until the Homestead Act of 1862 established a framework for formally settling the area. The early 1860s brought a wave of homesteaders from elsewhere in the U.S. (including states as distant as Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri) and from foreign locales (especially Ireland), but many of these settlers sold their land to larger ranching operations during a period of consolidation in the 1870s. At the turn of the century, several substantial ranches owned by prominent local families dominated the area.

Community interdependence among these isolated ranches was fostered by the need to keep roads passable and coordinate access to markets for meat and agricultural products.⁵ In 1869, area residents constructed the first Kneeland School, which also served as a church and a central meeting place. A post office was constructed in 1880, and some hotels catering to stagecoach passengers traveling from Humboldt Bay to San Francisco briefly operated in Kneeland in the 1880s. Starting in the 1940s, extensive commercial logging became an important economic activity in the Kneeland area, which hosted a short-lived sawmill. In 1962, a small airport was constructed in the vicinity of Kneeland, which had long been a convenient site for emergency landings when weather or navigation problems prevented pilots from reaching nearby Eureka.

Today, Kneeland consists of a loose collection of horse, sheep, and cattle ranches (many of which are owned by descendants of the first Euro-American settler families) and rural residences. The community has no central commercial district or downtown area, but the Kneeland Post Office, Kneeland Elementary School (built in 1952), the Kneeland Airport, and the Kneeland Volunteer Fire Department provide services to area residents and form a central location for community activity. The surrounding forested areas remain sites of timber extraction for Pacific Lumber and other local logging companies.⁶

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Because Kneeland has no central commercial district, most residents derive income from farming and ranching enterprises and/or commute to jobs in nearby Eureka, Arcata, and other communities in the Humboldt Bay area. The fishing, lumber, and tourism industries are major employers in the area. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 72.7% of the community's potential labor force was employed and there was a 1.3% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor

force). Of the population over the age of 16, approximately 26.3% were not in the labor force (not actively seeking work). Of the employed civilian population, 25.5% worked in 'Educational, health and social services' while 11.4% worked in 'Construction,' and 9.4% worked in 'Manufacturing.' Approximately 32.2% of the employed civilian population worked for the government at either the local, state, or federal level; a total of 8.3% worked for the government in the 'Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining' sectors. Of the employed civilian population over the age of 16, about 10.1% were involved in 'Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting' in some capacity.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the per capita income in Kneeland was about \$22,832 in 1999, compared to a national per capita income of \$21,587. The median household income in Kneeland in the same year was about \$53,750, compared to a national median household income of \$41,994. Approximately 0.4% of Kneeland residents were living below the poverty level in 1999, a value that compared very favorably to the national poverty level of 12.4%. In 2000 there were 102 housing units in Kneeland, 90.2% of which were occupied and 9.8% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 87% and 13% were owner occupied and renter occupied respectively. Approximately 40% of the vacant housing units were for 'seasonal, recreational, or occasional' use.

Governance

Kneeland is located in an unincorporated portion of Humboldt County and has no municipal government. Therefore, Kneeland falls under the legal jurisdiction of the Humboldt County Government, headquartered in nearby Eureka (14 miles). Sales taxes in Kneeland are based on the standard statewide rate of 7.25%. Humboldt County levies a 10% transient lodging tax, and the annual property tax for the county is approximately 1% of the property's assessed value.

California state law assesses commercial fishing vessels, charter boats, and oceanographic research vessels at 4% of their full cash value for tax purposes. Some commercial vessels are also subject to a Ballast Water Management Fee of about \$500 per voyage. Humboldt Bay Harbor District charges a general tariff called the Harbor Improvement Surcharge for both vessels and cargo. The charge is \$5 per foot of sailing draft for vessels and \$0.08265 per metric ton of cargo for those using the Bar and Entrance Channel. An additional \$5 per foot of draft and \$0.08265 per metric ton is charged for use of the North Bay and Samoa Channels. 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.

The State of California levies landing taxes that must be paid by fishermen and fish processors involved in the retail sale of fish products. These taxes are calculated per pound of fish landed and vary by species. 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.

Kneeland is 586.6 miles from the Northwest Regional Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service in Seattle, Washington, and 669 miles from the Southwest Regional Office in Long Beach, California. The nearest California Fish and Game Field Office is located nearby in Eureka (14 miles), and the closest U.S. Coast Guard Station is

located in McKinleyville (20 miles). Kneeland is located 286 miles from the nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Center in San Francisco. The closest meetings of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council are held in Foster City, located 307 miles from Kneeland. The nearest North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings are held 420 miles away in Portland, Oregon.

Facilities

Kneeland lies about 12 miles east and inland from the nearest major thoroughfare, U.S. Highway 101, which runs along the edge of Humboldt Bay and passes through Eureka and Arcata. A single rural road, Kneeland Road, connects the town to the highway and the communities that lie along it. The nearby Kneeland Airport provides two paved public runways, and the Arcata/Eureka Airport (14 miles) offers carrier flights. The nearest major international airport is located 272 miles away in San Francisco.

Kneeland hosts a single elementary school (Kneeland Elementary School) but has no middle or high school facilities. Older students attend middle schools in nearby Arcata and Freshwater (5 miles), and high schools in Eureka. Pacific Gas and Electric provides electricity to Kneeland area residents. The Kneeland Volunteer Fire Department and the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office administer fire safety and law enforcement services in the area. There are no water or sewer services available in Kneeland, therefore residents rely on private wells and septic tanks.⁷ The closest health care facility is St. Joseph Hospital in nearby Eureka. Kneeland offers no lodging options, but neighboring communities, such as Eureka and Arcata, host a number of hotels.

The nearest marine facilities fall under the jurisdiction of the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation, and Conservation District in Eureka. These facilities include the Port of Humboldt Bay and the Woodley Island Marina. Humboldt Bay is the only deep-water port along the West Coast between Coos Bay, Oregon, and San Francisco. The Port of Humboldt Bay supports four shipping terminals that offer a variety of features and services. Fairhaven Terminal includes one berth with a 500-foot wooden pile dock; Fields Landing Terminal includes one berth with a 900-foot dock; Schneider Dock has one berth with a 400-foot concrete, unlimited load dock; and Sierra Pacific Industries/Eureka Dock has one berth with a 475-foot wooden dock.⁸ The Woodley Island Marina provides 237 slips for commercial and recreational vessels, guest docking facilities, hoists, work area, café and bar, laundry, ships chandlery and boat sales, rentals, and lessons.⁹

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

According to recorded data, zero vessels delivered landings to Kneeland in 2000 and there are no seafood processors located in the community. There were four commercial vessels owned by Kneeland residents in 2000, all of which participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. Recorded data indicates that the number of vessels owned by Kneeland residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/2), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/1/2), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/1).¹⁰

In 2000, one community member held a single federal groundfish permit. In the same year, recorded data indicates that the number of Kneeland residents holding permits

in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/2), groundfish (0/0/2), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/1/3), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/3), and other species (0/0/1).¹¹

According to available data, 14 state commercial fishing permits were registered to Kneeland residents in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of state permits held by Kneeland residents in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/2), groundfish (0/0/2), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/5), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/4), and other species (0/0/1).¹²

Sportfishing

In 2002, at least three charter businesses serviced sport fishermen and tourists in Kneeland. There are currently no agents selling sportfishing licenses in Kneeland. In 2000, Humboldt County sold: 122,642 resident sportfishing licenses, 66 nonresident sportfishing licenses, 9572 sport salmon punch cards, and 2605 abalone report cards. In the northern California port group consisting of Fort Bragg, Eureka, and Crescent City, 15 commercial passenger fishing vessels served 11,574 anglers in 2000. These vessels reported 49,983 landings composed of at least nine species. Rockfish (unspecified) and Chinook salmon accounted for 81.2% and 16.1% of the landings respectively.

Subsistence

Local tribal and nontribal community members might be engaged in subsistence fishing in the Kneeland area. The California Department of Fish and Games captures those fishermen that do not earn revenue from fishing, but use it to provide food for personal consumption, under their “recreational” data. Therefore, specific information on subsistence fishing in Kneeland is not discussed in detail in this Community Profile due to the lack of available data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

According to recorded data for 2000, Kneeland residents were not involved in North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

While the majority of the charter boats in Kneeland target West Coast fisheries, one Kneeland community member purchased an Alaska sportfishing license in 2000. In the same year there were no sportfishing businesses in Kneeland that participated in Alaskan fisheries.

¹ Humboldt County Community Development Services. 2005. Personal Communication, 12 April.

² Wiyot Tribe. No date. History and Culture, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.wiyot.com/history.htm> (access date - March 2005).

³ Van Kirk, Susie. 1999. Humboldt County: A Briefest of Histories, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.humboldthistory.org/BriefHChistory.html> (access date - April 2005).

⁴ Cooper, Russell. 1987. Kneeland through the years. *The Humboldt Historian*, January-February.

⁵ Cooper, Russell. 1987. Kneeland through the years. *The Humboldt Historian*, January-February.

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- ⁶ Van Kirk, Susie. 1999. Humboldt County: A Briefest of Histories, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.humboldthistory.org/BriefHChistory.html](http://www.humboldthistory.org/BriefHChistory.html) (access date - April 2005).
- ⁷ Humboldt Municipal Water District. 2005. Personal Communication with Author, 14 April.
- ⁸ Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District. No date. Port of Humboldt Bay: shipping terminals, [Online]. Available: URL: http://humboltdbay.cnrs.humboldt.edu/about/shipping_terminals.htm (access date - August 2004).
- ⁹ Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District. No date. Woodley Island Marina: facilities, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://humboltdbay.cnrs.humboldt.edu/marina/facilities.html> (access date - April 2005).
- ¹⁰ '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.
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