

Port Hueneme, California

People and Place

Location

The City of Port Hueneme (Why-nee-mee), located in Ventura County, is situated 60 miles northwest of Los Angeles, 40 miles southeast of Santa Barbara, and approximately 330 miles south of San Francisco. Port Hueneme covers 4.5 square miles of land and 0.2 square miles of water. The City of Port Hueneme lies at 34°10'N, 119°12'W.

Demographic Profile

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Port Hueneme was 21,845. Between 1990 and 2000, U.S. Census data reports that the population of Port Hueneme increased 7.5%. In 2000 the percentage of males and females was 50.3% and 49.7% respectively. The racial composition of Port Hueneme's population in 2000 was 57.3% White, followed by Asian (6.3%), Black or African American (6.1%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (1.7%), and Pacific Islander (0.5%). A large percentage, 21.8%, identified themselves as belonging to some other race and 6.3 % classified themselves as belonging to two or more races. Overall, 41% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

The median age of Port Hueneme's population in 2000 was 30.3, which was lower than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. The age structure of Port Hueneme is relatively homogenous. Of the foreign-born population, 20.9%, a total of 64% were born in Mexico. Approximately 81.7% of the population of Port Hueneme was living in family households in 2000. The 200 U.S. Census reports that 78% of the population of Port Hueneme over 18 years of age had received a high school degree or higher, 12.7% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 4.2% received a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

History

"Hueneme" is apparently derived from the Chumash Indian village Wene'me or Wene'mu, meaning "resting place" or "half-way." It is believed that the Canalinos Indians, part of the Chumash nation, stopped at "Point" Hueneme as they passed between today's Point Mugu and the mouth of the Santa Clara River. The "Point" is the closest spot (11 miles) from which to navigate the Santa Barbara channel transiting between the mainland and Anacapa Island. In 1856 James Alden, in charge of the Coast Survey steamer *Active*, gave the name Hueneme to the point. Fourteen years later, in 1870, the town was settled and the name was adopted.¹

The 250 miles of shoreline between present-day San Luis Obispo and Oxnard were once home to numerous coastal Chumash villages; "Chumash" means "islander" in the language of mainland Chumash peoples. The Chumash people, settling along the Southern California coast approximately 8000 years before present, made extensive use of their marine, estuarine, and river environments. Traditionally they made a living by hunting, fishing, and utilizing shellfish resources along the coast and on the Channel Islands. Chumash ocean and river fishermen "used a variety of nets, traps, baskets, hooks, spears, and plant poisons to catch or stun fish, and catch seals and sea otters."² On the shore the Chumash gathered mussels and abalone. The Chumash are well known for their redwood-planked canoes, called *tomols*, which enabled them to fish and trade with other coastal villages.

To avoid relocation during the mission period, 1772-1808, many Chumash adopted Spanish surnames.³ “Since the Chumash have no written language, there are few birth records or written documents identifying Chumash people, and as a result, many Latino residents in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties today, unknowingly have a Chumash heritage.”⁴ Today, over 5000 people identify themselves as Chumash Indians.⁵

In 1867, Thomas Bard, who held the claim to a Spanish land grant for the area, and Captain W.E. Greenwald of the U.S. Geodetic Survey surveyed the local shoreline. They learned of an underwater canyon just east of the point that reduced the size of the surf near the shore, leading Bard to believe that the area was an ideal site for a wharf. In 1871 when the Port Hueneme or “Bards” Wharf opened it was the first major wharf between Santa Cruz and San Pedro, extending 1500 feet into the coastal waters. By 1887, the Port Hueneme Wharf had become an important locale for local trade. But in 1898 when the Atlantic Pacific Railroad reached the area and chose to locate in Oxnard, 5 miles northwest of the city, activity at the wharf decreased. In the 1920s Port Hueneme saw increased tourism activity but the wharf never regained its commercial success. In 1939 the original wharf was damaged during a winter storm and then cut in half by a barge that had broken loose from its moorings. However, Richard Bard, son of Thomas Bard, never gave up on his father’s idea of a truly modern deep-sea commercial port. In 1937 the Oxnard Harbor District was created and in 1940 the harbor that is now known as the Port of Hueneme was officially completed. In 1967 construction began on a 1000-foot extension and renovation of the old pier and in 1968 the pier reopened and became a favorite fishing spot for local anglers.

Port Hueneme attracts thousands of visitors every year. The Port Hueneme Beach Festival (August) and Harbor Days (October) offer various outdoor activities and present visitors and residents with the opportunity to tour the Port Hueneme Light House, constructed in 1943. The ninth Annual Ventura County Boat show is held at the Channel Islands Harbor in July.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Port Hueneme’s economy is driven by five primary sectors: oil production, defense, manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism. According to the 2000 U.S. Census the top three occupations in Port Hueneme in 2000 for the eligible labor force 16 years of age and over were “sales and office occupations” (31.2%), “management, professional and related occupations” (25.6%), and “production, transportation, and material moving occupations” (15.6%). At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 21.6% of the city’s eligible labor force was employed within local, state, or federal governments. The 2000 U.S. census reports that 3.8% of Port Hueneme’s population was employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting. In 2000 9.3% of the population over 16 years of age was registered in the armed forces.

Port Hueneme’s harbor plays a significant role in the local community. The Port of Hueneme, one of the city’s largest employers, generates over \$450 million each year. Additionally 3500 jobs in Ventura County are directly tied to the Port’s activities.⁶ The Port serves as an import/export platform for break-bulk, neo-bulk, and dry-bulk cargo. Additionally, the port is utilized by offshore oil operations in nearby Santa Barbara Channel, local sport and commercial fishing fleets, and is home to a large dockside refrigeration facility. The Port also serves as a U.S. Customs Port of Entry and Foreign Trade Zone. The Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), which shares its military wharfs with the adjacent deep-water harbor, occupies more than half of the total land area of the Port. The Port and NBVC account for more than

14,364 jobs in the city, with a combined payroll of \$399 million. Direct and induced activity from the Port and Navy account for more than 28,070 jobs and \$1.123 billion in combined economic impact throughout Ventura County.⁷

According to the 2000 U.S. Census a total 62.4% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 4.9% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Of the population of Port Hueneme over 16 years of age 34.3% was not in the labor force, which is slightly less than the national average of 36.1%. For whom poverty status was determined, 12.2% of the city's population was living below the poverty line in 1999. The median household income in 1999 was \$42,246 and the per capita income was \$17,311. In 2000 there were 7908 housing units according to U.S. Census data. The percentage of occupied housing units that were owner versus renter occupied were 49.1% and 50.9% respectively. The percent of vacant housing units was 8.1%, of which 36.6% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Incorporated in 1948, Port Hueneme is one of 10 incorporated cities located in Ventura County, originally named San Buenaventura County by early Spanish settlers, meaning "good fortune."⁸ The city has a Council-Manager form of government with the Mayor and Council members elected for four-year terms. Port Hueneme levies a 7.25% sale and use tax on regular purchases and an 8% transient lodging tax.^{9,10} The property tax rate range for Ventura County is 1.06-1.14%.¹¹

By California state law commercial vessels, charter boats, and oceanographic research vessels are assessed at 4% of their full cash value.¹² 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.¹³ Some commercial vessels are also subject to a Ballast Water Management Fee of about \$500 per voyage.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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 vary by species and range between \$.0013 and \$.0125 per pound of fish.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

There is a National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Office located approximately 85 miles south in Long Beach and a California Department of Fish and Game office located about 190 miles south in Port Hueneme. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is 60 miles south in Los Angeles. Port Hueneme falls under the jurisdiction of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Marine Safety Office/Group Lost Angeles-Long Beach. The Channel Islands Station is the closest USCG office and is located in nearby Oxnard; the station has three boats at their disposal.

Facilities

Port Hueneme is accessible by ground via California Highway 1 (southeast to Malibu and Long Beach) and U.S. Interstate 101 (northwest to Ventura and Santa Barbara and southeast to Los Angeles). Oxnard Airport is located 3 miles northeast of the city and offers commuter

service, charter planes, and helicopter transport. Los Angeles International Airport is Port Hueneme's closest international airport, located approximately 60 miles southeast of the city. Metrolink commuter service to Los Angeles and Amtrak passenger service connect nearby in Oxnard.

The Hueneme School District offers 9 elementary schools, 2 junior high schools, and 1 private high school. The nearest public high school is in the Oxnard Union High School District. Oxnard College, located in nearby Oxnard, is home to over 2000 students. Electricity in Port Hueneme is supplied by Southern California Edison. Port of Hueneme Water Agency (PHWA) provides water services to area residents. The City operates the water treatment plant on behalf of PHWA. Public safety in Port Hueneme is administered by the Port Hueneme Police Department. There is a medical center located 5 miles to the northeast in Oxnard and the closest hospital is located 3 miles past Oxnard in Ventura. There are four hotels in Port Hueneme but additional accommodations exist nearby in Ventura and Oxnard. Additional local facilities include the Orvene S. Carpenter Community Center, Ray D. Prueter Library, an athletic center, City Hall/Civic Center, and a Historical Museum.

Port Hueneme is home to the largest commercial deep-water harbor between Los Angeles and San Francisco. The boundary of the Oxnard Harbor District, which owns and operates the Port of Hueneme, also encompasses the greater City of Oxnard area. According to the Port, the niche markets that Hueneme serves include: the import and export of automobiles, fresh fruit and produce, and forest products. There are no public facilities for small boats and leisure craft in the Port.

The Channel Islands Harbor, located one mile northwest of the city, provides over 2400 berthing facilities for pleasure and sportfishing vessels. Additionally, the harbor maintains guest berths for 70 craft. The Channel Islands Harbor is a No-Discharge Zone, meaning the discharge of sewage, whether treated or untreated, is prohibited. The Harbor is administered by the Harbor County Department, Ventura County. Two marine repair yards are based on the east side of the channel and lifts can handle crafts up to 60 tons.¹⁸

One aquaculture facility in Port Hueneme, located at the U.S. Navy Civil Engineering Lab, commercially produces all species of California abalone and abalone seed.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

A total of 75 unique vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Port Hueneme in 2000. 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 (59,953 t/\$11,052,716/70), crab (confidential/confidential/2), groundfish (0.3 t/\$1450/5), highly migratory species (14 t/\$26,690/5), salmon (confidential/confidential/3), and other species (confidential/confidential/13). In 2000 at least one seafood processor was operating in Port Hueneme, Hueneme Fish and Bait Processors.

Port Hueneme residents owned eight vessels in 2000, including four vessels that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Port Hueneme residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/1).¹⁹

Recorded data for 2000 indicates that the number of Port Hueneme residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/1), groundfish

(0/0/5), highly migratory species (NA/0/1), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/2), and other species (0/0/17).²⁰

According to available data, 43 state permits were registered to Port Hueneme 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 (0/0/1), groundfish (0/0/6), highly migratory species (NA/0/1), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (0/0/4), and other species (0/0/31).²¹

Sportfishing

The sportfishing industry in southern California is well developed. In Port Hueneme sportfishermen are involved in both West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. Port Hueneme, located on the eastern edge of the Santa Barbara Channel, offers sport fishermen diverse fishing habitats including undersea canyons, rocky substrate, and sandy bottoms. There are two locations in Port Hueneme for sport fishermen to purchase fishing licenses; Port Hueneme Sportfishing is one of the licensed agents. In the port group consisting of Port Hueneme, Oxnard, Ventura, and Santa Barbara, a total of 35 commercial passenger fishing vessels (CPFV) or “party boats” reported 352,260 fish landings belonging to over 26 species in 2000. The number of anglers reported on those vessels totaled 77,345. In 2002 and 2003 there were two CPFVs licensed in Port Hueneme and each vessel purchased an ocean enhancement stamp allowing anglers to fish in ocean waters south of Point Arguello in Santa Barbara County.

Located on Dock 1, Port Hueneme Sportfishing provides charter fishing services to city residents and tourists. The charter company offers one half to full day trips and overnight excursions. In addition to charter fishing, the Port Hueneme Pier located in Port Hueneme Beach Park is frequented by resident anglers.

Subsistence

Local tribal and nontribal community members might be engaged in subsistence fishing in the Port Hueneme area. However, specific information on subsistence fishing in Port Hueneme 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, Port Hueneme residents owned one vessel that was involved in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year community members landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): salmon (confidential/confidential/1).

In 2000 two Port Hueneme residents served as crewmembers aboard vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year one community residents held two registered state permits. In 2000 residents of Port Hueneme held one herring and one salmon Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permit.

Sportfishing

While the majority of the charter boats in Port Hueneme target West Coast fisheries, 22 Alaska sportfishing licenses were purchased by Port Hueneme community members in 2000.

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 - ² Encyclopedia of North American Indians. No date. Chumash, [Online]. Available: URL: http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na_007400_chumash.htm (access date - July 2004).
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 - ⁶ The Port of Hueneme. No date. Port of Hueneme: history, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.portofhueneme.org> (access date - July 2004).
 - ⁷ Port Hueneme Chamber of Commerce. No date. Business and Employment, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.huenemechamber.com/employe.htm> (access date - July 2004).
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 - ⁹ 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).
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 - ¹⁸ The Log. 2004. Navigation Information: Channel Islands Harbor, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.thelog.com/special/specialview.asp?c=116486> (access date - September 2004).
 - ¹⁹ '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.
 - ²⁰ '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.

²¹ '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.