

## **Sunset Beach, California**

### **People and Place**

#### *Location*

Sunset Beach is located in Orange County, approximately 30 miles south of Los Angeles and 97 miles north of San Diego. The geographic coordinates of Sunset Beach, California, are 33°42'59"N, 118°04'05"W.

#### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Sunset Beach was 1097. In 2000 the gender structure was evenly divided with slightly more males (54.6%) than females (45.4%). The median age of the population in 2000 was 39.5, which is slightly higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. According to the same data, 12.9% of the population was under the age of 18, and 64.5% of the population was between the ages of 25 and 59. For the population 18 years and over, 97.9% had a high school education or higher, 47.2% had attained a bachelor's degree or higher, and 14.7% earned a graduate or professional degree. The highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma or equivalency for 14.6% of the population. In 2000, 59.7% of the population lived in family households.

The 2000 U.S. Census shows that the racial composition was predominantly White, (90.2%), followed by Asian (2.1%). American Indian and Alaskan Native and Black or African American each constituted less than one percent of the Sunset Beach population in 2000 (0.3% and 0.1% respectively). Overall, 3.2% classified themselves as belonging to some other race and 4.1% of the population identified themselves with two or more races. A total of 6.1% identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 2.7% of the population was foreign-born in 2000, with 50.0% born in Sweden.

#### *History*

During the early 1900s the Pacific Electric Railway ran north to south through what is now Sunset Beach and played an important role in the development of Orange County. Homes and businesses sprang up alongside the railroad tracks as residents in smaller communities were able to more conveniently commute to larger population centers such as Los Angeles. Sunset Beach became a popular recreation destination and residential community during the early- and mid-1900s.

In 1968 the Orange County Parks Board of Supervisors recognized the need to improve and maintain the beachfront area in the interest of the county's citizens, beginning a series of infrastructure improvement projects. One such project, completed in 1974, redeveloped the right of way of the former rail line to create larger parking facilities for the beach's growing number of visitors. The Sunset Beach Park is a major attraction for visitors to the area. Another popular site lies between the Naval Weapons Station and the Sunset-Huntington Harbor, the Anaheim Bay National Wildlife Refuge, a protected area that is home to diverse marine and bird life. Today, Sunset Beach is an unincorporated residential community known for surfing and other beach sports.<sup>1</sup>

### **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 74.3% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 5.1% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). A total of 21.8% of the population over the age of 16 were not in the labor force. Of the employed civilian population, 14.6% worked in “Educational, health and social services” while 11.6% worked in “Manufacturing” and 10.8% worked in “Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services.” The local, state, or federal government employed a total of 11.8% of civilian population; however none were reported as working for the government in the “Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining” industries. None of the employed civilian population over the age of 16 was involved in “Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting” according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

According to the U.S. Census, Sunset Beach’s per capita income in 1999 was \$53,507, while the median household income was \$65,990 for the same year. In 1999 a total of 6.6% of the population was below the poverty level. In 2000 there were 685 housing units in Sunset Beach, 83.1% of which were occupied, 16.9% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 40.1% were owner occupied and 59.9% were renter occupied. Over half (54.3%) of the vacant housing units were “For seasonal, recreational, or occasional” use.

### *Governance*

Sunset Beach is an unincorporated residential area located within Orange County. Sales taxes are 7.25% based on the standard statewide rate. The annual property tax for Orange County is approximately 1.06% of the property’s assessed value, plus bonded indebtedness, assessment districts, and fees that are approved by the voters.

California state law assesses commercial vessels, charter boats, and oceanographic research vessels at 4% of their full cash value.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Some commercial vessels are also subject to a Ballast Water Management Fee of about \$500 per voyage.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

The National Marine Fisheries Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Coast Guard all have their nearest offices in Long Beach, 9 miles north of Sunset Beach. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services sub-office is located in Santa Ana, 19 miles east of Sunset Beach. Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings are held in Del Mar, 79 miles to the south. The nearest North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting location is in Portland, Oregon, 997 miles north of Sunset Beach.

### *Facilities*

Sunset Beach is accessible by road, air, and sea. The Pacific Coast Highway runs north and south through the community. Interstate 5 and Interstate 405 are also located within close proximity. The John Wayne Orange County Airport, located in Santa Ana, is 19 miles east of Sunset Beach, and the Los Angeles International Airport is located approximately 31 miles north. Greyhound and Amtrak provide bus and rail service respectively to nearby communities and linkages to metropolitan areas throughout the country.

There are no schools in Sunset Beach. Students may attend schools in the nearby communities of Huntington Beach and Westminster. Water and sewer services are provided to area residents by the Huntington Beach Water Division. Southern California Edison supplies electric utilities to Sunset Beach, and the Southern California Gas Company provides natural gas. Because Sunset Beach is in an unincorporated area of Orange County, it does not have its own municipal police department. The Orange County Sheriff's office administers local law enforcement, and the Orange County Fire Authority provides fire and emergency response services. There are no hospitals in Sunset Beach, although a major hospital and a variety of medical clinics are located nearby in Huntington Beach. Similarly, there are no lodging accommodations located directly in Sunset Beach; there are hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts in the nearby communities of Huntington and Long Beach.

The Sunset-Huntington Harbor area has five marinas with capacities for more than 3000 vessels. The main marine facility is the Sunset Beach County Park, which is operated and maintained by Orange County. The popular beachfront park has a 45-acre beach, a 627-space parking lot, and various visitor accommodations and amenities. The Orange County Sheriff's Harbor Patrol, in cooperation with agencies such as the U.S. Coastguard and U.S. Navy, is responsible for patrolling the Sunset-Hunting marina area.

### **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

#### *Commercial Fishing*

No vessels delivered landings to Sunset Beach in 2000, however two commercial vessels were owned by Sunset Beach residents in the same year. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Sunset Beach residents in 2000 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), shrimp (NA/0/0), and other species (0/0/2).<sup>8</sup> According to available data, there were no seafood processors operating in Sunset Beach in 2000.

In 2000, no federal groundfish permits were held by community members. In the same year, recorded data indicates that the number of Sunset Beach residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: highly migratory species (NA/0/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (0/0/1).<sup>9</sup>

According to available data, there were at least two state-registered, commercial fishing permits held by Sunset Beach residents in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of state permits held by Sunset Beach residents in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: highly migratory species (NA/0/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (0/0/2).<sup>10</sup>

### *Sportfishing*

A number of charter vessels operate out of the area targeting albacore, bluefin tuna, marlin, yellowtail, rock cod, salmon, shark, yellowfin tuna, and other species. Many of these charter vessels also offer seasonal whale watching tours. In 2002 and 2003, there were no charter businesses which serviced sport fishermen and tourists in Sunset Beach. There are no license agents selling sportfishing licenses in Sunset Beach. In 2000 residents of Orange County purchased: 26,250 resident sportfishing licenses, 47 non-resident sportfishing licenses, 7 sport salmon punch cards, and 29 abalone report cards. Sunset Beach community is nearby the port group consisting of Seal Beach, Long Beach, and San Pedro, a total of 54 commercial passenger fishing vessels served 148,977 anglers in 2000. These vessels reported 883,806 landings consisting of more than two dozen species. Seabass (various species), barracuda, flatfishes (unspecified), and rockfishes (unspecified) accounted for 47.6%, 14.1%, 10.4%, and 9.2% of the landings respectively.

### *Subsistence*

Local tribal and nontribal community members might be engaged in subsistence fishing in the Sunset Beach area. However, specific information on subsistence fishing in Sunset Beach 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 no involvement in North Pacific fisheries by residents of Sunset Beach.

### *Sportfishing*

While the majority of the charter boats in Sunset Beach target West Coast fisheries, a total of 10 Sunset Beach community members purchased Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

---

<sup>1</sup> Orange County Parks Department. 2005. Sunset Beach, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ocparks.com/default.asp> (access date - May 2005).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> 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).

<sup>5</sup> 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).

- 
- <sup>6</sup> 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).
- <sup>7</sup> 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).
- <sup>8</sup> '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.
- <sup>9</sup> '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.
- <sup>10</sup> '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.