

Trinidad, California

People and Place

Location

Trinidad, located in northern California at 41°03'43"N and 124°08'29"W, is situated in Humboldt County just south of Redwood National Park. Trinidad lies 294.9 miles north of the nearest metropolitan area of San Francisco. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, the community encompasses a total area of 0.7 square miles, including 0.2 square miles of water and 0.5 square miles of land.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Trinidad had a total population of 311 people, with a population density of 643 people per square mile of land. About 94.9% of the residents were White, 1.6% African American, 0.3% Native American, 0.6% Asian, and 0.3% Pacific Islander. A total of 0.3% identified with some other race and 1.9% with two or more races. Another 22.5% of the population identified themselves as having Hispanic or Latino origins. The community includes a relatively small foreign-born population, making up 5.5% of the inhabitants as compared to the national average of 11.1%.

The people of the Trinidad Rancheria are important members of the Trinidad community. The 2000 U.S. Census states the Rancheria had a total population of 73 people, of which 80.8% identified themselves as American Indian and 19.2% as White. Another 13.7% of the population identified themselves as having Hispanic origins, all of which stated Mexican.

In 2000, the community was composed of 49.5% males and 50.5% females. The median age of Trinidad was 50.2 years compared to the national average of 35.3 years. The 2000 U.S. Census reported that 47.3% of the population was between the ages of 40 and 64, compared to the national average of 30%. The 55 and older age group represented 37.6% of the total population, while the national average for this age group was 12.4%. Only 16.7% of the community was under the age of 25, a significant difference from the national average of 35.3%. The 2000 U.S. Census stated that 14% of the population 18 years and older received a high school degree as their highest educational attainment. Around 88.1% of the population had received a high school degree or higher. Another 46.5% received a Bachelor's degree or higher and 16.4% received a graduate degree or higher, whereas the national averages are 22.3% and 7.8% respectively.

According to the 1990 Census, Trinidad had a population of 362 revealing a 14.1% gross population decrease from the year 1990 to 2000. It is significant to note the changes in ethnic composition in the community over the last decade. The U.S. Census reveals a net percentage increase of 12.2% of those inhabitants who identified themselves as having Hispanic origins, while there was a 90% net percentage decrease of those who identified themselves as Native American.

History

Before the arrival of European settlers, the area now known as Humboldt County was occupied by several diverse nations. The Wiyot, Yurok, Hupa, Karuk, Chilula, Whilkut, and the southern Athabascans occupied specific territories, spoke individual languages, and shared similar, yet distinct cultural systems.¹ Trinidad lies within the original territory of the Tsurai Indians, one of many groups that make up the Yurok Tribe. While the redwood environment did

not provide well for some native groups due to the thick overgrowth and the size of the trees, the Yurok were able to utilize the large trees for shelter and canoes.²

In 1595, a Portuguese ship discovered Trinidad's natural harbor but did not land. Spanish explorers arrived on Trinity Sunday in 1775 and, upon landing, declared the area to be named "Trinidad."^{3,4} The area was used for many years as an anchoring place for ships active in exploration and fur trade. In 1850, the town was established by Americans as a point of entry to the Trinity and Klamath diggings during the Gold Rush. Trinidad was the County Seat from 1852 to 1854. The town was incorporated in 1870 and remains today the smallest city in Humboldt County. By the 1870s, lumber had replaced gold mining and boats arrived at Trinidad to load lumber from the community's two sawmills.⁵ Trinidad Bay served as a lumber port, a whaling station, and a landing site for commercial and sport fisheries.⁶ The economic history of Trinidad also includes fishing and whaling. The Trinidad Head Lighthouse was built in 1871 to aid the vessels transporting these goods.

The Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria is a federally-recognized tribe composed of the descendents of three tribes who share a similar cultural history, the Yurok, Weott, and Tolowa. The Rancheria was established in 1906 by an United States Congressional enactment. In 1908, 60 acres of land were purchased on Trinidad Bay for homeless Indians. However, it was not until the 1950s that people began to develop a community there.⁷ Presently the Rancheria plays an important role in the Trinidad economic base through three main business enterprises, the North Coast Inn, the Seaside Restaurant and Pier, and the Cher-Ae Heights Casino.

Today, the community of Trinidad is described as a "charming rural residential area" that combines small town living with "a unique mix of social and cultural activities, outdoor recreational activities, and accessibility..." Community members include a diverse mix of commercial fishermen, retired people, students and staff of Humboldt State University, timber industry employees, artists and craftspeople, and the local business community.⁸ Trinidad is also home to a fleet of winter crab fishermen. Local festivals and events include the Blessing of the Fleet, the Trinidad Clam Beach Run, the Fish Festival, and the Storytelling by the Sea Festival.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The economic base of Trinidad was originally founded on fishing and timber. The commercial fishing industry experienced a downsizing in recent years and today the major current industries are tourism and timber.⁹ Major employers in Trinidad and the surrounding area include Humboldt State University (HSU), HSU Marine Lab, Cher-Ae Heights Bingo and Casino, and Mad River Community Hospital. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 0% of the employed civilian population 16 years and over worked in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industries. This percentage may not be indicative of the actual number of people in these professions as many are self-employed, especially in the fishing industry. The 2000 U.S. Census reported that 36% of the community worked in educational, health, and social services. Another 25.1% were employed by the government. The unemployment rate in 2000 was 6.6% compared to the national average of 5.7% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). For the population 16 years and older, 36.7% were not in the labor force, while 59.1% were employed.

In 1999, median household income was \$40,000 and per capita income was \$28,050. Residents whose income was below poverty level in 1999 were 8.8% of the population. Of the

228 housing units in 2000, 73.7% of the housing units were occupied, while 26.3% were vacant. Forty-three percent of the housing units that were vacant were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of the occupied housing units, 62.5% were owner occupied and 37.5% were renter occupied.

Governance

Trinidad is an incorporated city that operates under a Council-Manager charter. Sales taxes are 7.25% based on the standard statewide rate. Humboldt County has no district tax in effect but the County levies a transient lodging tax rate of 10%. The annual property tax for Humboldt County is approximately 1% of the property's assessed value, plus bonded indebtedness, assessment districts, and fees that are approved by the voters.

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 also 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.

Trinidad is 564.6 miles to the Northwest Regional Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service in Seattle, Washington. The community is located 22.8 miles from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Field Office in Eureka and is only 9.8 miles from the closest U.S. Coast Guard Station in McKinleyville. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office is situated 294.9 miles away in San Francisco. Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings are held in Foster City, located 316.3 miles from Trinidad, and Portland, Oregon (391.6 miles), hosts meetings of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

Facilities

Trinidad is accessible by a number of transportation options, including via U.S. Highway 101 which runs by Trinidad. A public transit bus system connects Trinidad to other nearby communities. The Arcata-Eureka Airport in McKinleyville offers service to many West Coast cities and the San Francisco International Airport is located 306.8 miles away.

Trinidad schools include one charter and two primary schools, plus a private high school. Students also attend local high schools in the nearby communities of Arcata (15.9 miles) and McKinleyville (9.8 miles). The main electric supply is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric. Water and sewer services are supplied by Cal-American Water Company. Local law enforcement is administered by the Trinidad Police Chief. The closest health care facility is Mad River Community Hospital in Arcata. Trinidad accommodations include two bed-and-breakfasts,

recreational vehicle parks, vacation rentals, and hotels and motels. Additional lodging is available in neighboring communities.¹⁰

Trinidad Bay is a natural bay that is formed behind Trinidad Head, a “large domed prominence...connected to the mainland only on its northern end.”¹¹ Trinidad Pier, situated in Trinidad Bay, is the northernmost oceanfront pier in California. It is an all-wooden pier that was constructed in 1946 by the Arcata Lumberjacks’ Association. The pier remains one of the main sportfishing craft launching sites along the West Coast. A gas dock and a skiff rental operation are located under the pier.¹² One of the first small local hatcheries in the area is the Prairie Creek Fish Hatchery, located in nearby Orick. The hatchery was constructed in 1936 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.¹³

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Trinidad is known for its crab fishing. The waters are also utilized for salmon, lingcod, rockfish, bottomfish, surf fish, and clamming.¹⁴ In 2000 a total of 38 vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Trinidad. 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): crab (217 t/\$974,425/33), groundfish (2 t/\$5061/7), and salmon (3 t/\$12,066/5). According to available data there were zero fish processors operating in the community in 2000.

Data for 2000 indicates that Trinidad residents owned 11 vessels, eight of which participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Trinidad residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/9), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/0/3), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/0).¹⁵

A single Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permits was held by one Trinidad resident in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of community members holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/11), groundfish (0/0/1), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/9), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (0/0/2).¹⁶

According to available data, 30 permits were registered to Trinidad residents in 2000, of which 29 were registered state permits. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/0/12), groundfish (0/0/1), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/14), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (0/0/2).¹⁷

Sportfishing

Trinidad Bay, with its protected harbor and pier, offers deep water angling for salmon, lingcod, bottomfish, rockfish, crabbing, clamming, and surf fishing.^{18,19} Trinidad had at least three sportfishing business vessel permits in 2003. Internet fishing guide sources indicate that there is at least one sportfishing businesses located currently within the community.²⁰

Subsistence

Nontribal and tribal fishermen, including members of the Trinidad Rancheria, may utilize marine and stream resources for subsistence means from the areas within and surrounding Trinidad. Under the trust doctrine, the federal government is charged to protect tribal resources and by constitutional mandate to protect natural resources. The government-to-government

agreements made between tribal groups and the United States through treaties guarantee fishing rights on traditional grounds.

Specific information on subsistence fishing in Trinidad 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, Trinidad residents owned one vessel that was involved in North Pacific fisheries. Community members landed fish in the following fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): Gulf of Alaska groundfish (confidential/confidential/1), halibut (confidential/confidential/1), and shellfish (confidential/confidential/1).

One community member served as a crewmember in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. One Trinidad resident held registered state permit(s) in 2000. Two Alaska state and federal permits were registered to Trinidad residents in 2000, including one halibut and one shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits.

Sportfishing

In 2000 Trinidad residents purchased four sportfishing licenses for Alaskan fisheries.

¹ Van Kirk, S. 1999. Humboldt County: a briefest of histories, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.humboldthistory.org/> (access date – August.2004).

² Foster, L. No date. California’s redwood country, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.fostertravel.com/CAREDW.html> (access date - August.2004).

³ Coldwell Banker Sellers Realty. 2003. Trinidad, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.coldwellbankersrealty.com/towns/trinidad.html> (access date - August.2004).

⁴ Greater Trinidad Chamber of Commerce. 2002. Trinidad history, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.trinidadcalif.com/> (access date – August.2004).

⁵ West of PCH. 2003. Trinidad Head, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.westofpch.com/lighthouse/trinidad.html> (access date - August.2004).

⁶ Trinidad Inn. No date. Discover Trinidad, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.trinidadinn.com/trinidad.htm> (access date - August.2004).

⁷ Cher-Ae Heights Casino. No date. History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.cheraeheightscasino.com/history.html> (access date - August.2004).

⁸ Trinidad Realty. No date. Area information, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.trinidadrealty.com/Area%20Information/area_news.htm (access date - August.2004).

⁹ Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2004. California State counties, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.psmfc.org/efin/docs/communities_2004/communities_pages65_84.pdf (access date - August.2004).

¹⁰ WorldWeb.com. 2004. Trinidad, CA where to stay, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.northcoast-ca.worldweb.com/TrinidadCA/WheretoStay/> (access date – August.2004).

¹¹ Lighthouse Friends.Com. 2003. Trinidad Head Lighthouse, CA, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=61> (access date – August.2004).

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- ¹² Pier Fishing in California. 2004. Trinidad Pier, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.pierfishing.com/pier_of_the_month/04-98.html (access date - August.2004).
- ¹³ National Park Service. No date. Historic structures: Redwood National Park, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.nps.gov/redw/cultural_hist.htm (access date - August.2004).
- ¹⁴ Community Realty. 2002. Trinidad, California, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.relocate-america.com/states/CA/cities/trinidad.htm> (access date - August.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.
- ¹⁸ Trinidad Realty. No date. Area Information, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.trinidadrealty.com/Area%20Information/area_news.htm (access date - August.2004).
- ¹⁹ Greater Trinidad Chamber of Commerce. 2002. Fishing/tours, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.trinidadcalif.com> (access date – August. 2004).
- ²⁰ Sportfishing businesses determined via internet search: Available: URL: <http://www.caohwy.com>; <http://www.trinidadcalif.com> (access date – September.2004).