

Valley Ford, California

People and Place

Location

Valley Ford is located in Northern California's Sonoma County at 122°55'23"W and 38°19'05"N. The community is a part of the Santa Rosa metropolitan area and covers a total area of 3.27 square miles (all land). Valley Ford sits approximately 6 miles inland from the coast on U.S. Highway 1 and is about 58 miles north of San Francisco.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the total population of Valley Ford was 60. The gender balance in the community was skewed with slightly more males (53.3%) than females (46.6%). The median age of 30.7 in 2000 was younger than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that Valley Ford's population was 70% White. A total of 30% identified with some other race. A large percentage (35%) of Valley Ford's population identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. In 2000 Valley Ford was home to zero foreign-born residents. About 100% of those eighteen and over earned the equivalent of a high school diploma or higher, while 26.3% earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 13.2% earned a graduate degree. Approximately 78.3% of Valley Ford's population lived in family households in 2000.

History

Valley Ford is located inland from Bodega Bay; another community in which fishing plays an important role, and with which it shares much of its history. Long before Euro-Americans inhabited the area surrounding Sonoma County the Miwok and Pomo Indians lived throughout region. The Coastal Miwok fished, hunted, and gathered on a seasonal basis in the coastal areas for their sustenance. During the summers, the Pomo harvested clams, seals, and bird eggs, and fished in coastal waters. The Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo banded together in the 1990s and were recognized as the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria in 2000. Native fishers harvest salmon and various other species. Salmon holds cultural significance for the Miwok and Pomo as it was historically a staple of their diet. In recent decades native fishers have seen a decline in the size of the area's salmon populations, although the coho population seems to have risen in the last few years.¹

Europeans first spotted the attractive coastline in the early 1600s, but it was not until the 1700s that explorers brought their schooners in to anchor there.^{2,3,4} The first European settlers were Russian fur traders who came south from Alaska in 1812. They sought otters and seals, as well as a warmer climate to grow food for individuals living in their northern outposts. They built Fort Ross, 24 miles to the north of Bodega Bay, with the help of local Indians. The Russians enslaved the Pomo and exploited the area's natural resources. Spanish missionaries began inhabiting coastal California in the late 1700s, setting up missions regardless of prior occupation of the land. By the 1800s the Spanish had begun to use the local Miwok and Pomo Indians as laborers. California came under Mexican control during this time and plots were granted to Mexican citizens, who built ranchos along the Sonoma coast. The Russians left the area around 1841. Many of the area's Indians went into servitude for Mexicans who through state confiscation now

controlled much of the land that was previously under the stewardship of the Native Americans who labored for them. By 1850 those Native Americans who were not working as farm laborers engaged in fishing to earn a livelihood.^{5,6}

Residents of the inland community of Valley Ford rely predominantly on marine facilities in Bodega Bay. The area's fishing industry received a boost when rail lines were created between Sonoma County and San Francisco in the 1870s. These rail lines opened up a large market for local fishers.⁷ Commercial fishing especially took off during World War I, connecting the area to a global economic network. The industry, primarily focused on salmon, drove the local economy and structured local life. The industry has fluctuated significantly over the past century, due in large part to human-influenced changes in the marine and coastal environment, and to transformations in the industry itself. These fluctuations are reflected through in- and out-migration from the area.^{8,9}

Contemporary commercial fishers in the area harvest albacore, Chinook salmon, halibut, rockfish, Dungeness crab, sole, and more recently sea urchin. In recent years, the deposition of silt has become a problem, as the depth of Bodega Bay's channel has been decreased to 5 feet in some areas. Numerous vessels have run aground in the channel's shallow waters. The siltation problem is paramount to the community as Bodega Bay is the only port between San Francisco and Fort Bragg that is large enough for many of today's ocean-going vessels. The channel was scheduled to be dredged again in the fall of 2004.¹⁰

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to data collected from the 2000 U.S. Census the unemployment rate for Valley Ford in 2000 was 0% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), while 86.8% of those 16 years of age and older were employed in 2000, and 13.2% were not in the labor force. A total of 15% of employed residents 16 years and older worked in agriculture, fishing, forestry, or hunting. This statistic may not be accurate as those who work in natural resource industries are often self employed, and as a result, are often undercounted by the U.S. Census.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Valley Ford's per capita income in 1999 was \$24,750, while the median household income was 45,903. In comparison, the national per capita income was \$21,587, while the national median household income was \$41,994. In 2000, there were 21 housing units, at 100% occupancy. In addition, 57.1% and 42.9% were owner and renter occupied respectively.

Governance

Valley Ford is an unincorporated area and falls under the governance of Sonoma County. Valley Ford has a 7.5% sales and use tax rate, and a 9% transient lodging tax. The County is governed by a board of five supervisors. The board manages the public money which comes to the County from property tax, sales tax, fees, and federal and state income grants. These funds are used to pay for road construction, law enforcement, the court system, land use planning and enforcement, open space preservation, local bus service, public health programs, human service programs, and regional parks. The board also manages the County landfill, the public water transmission system which delivers water to cities, and several sewage treatment facilities.¹¹

California state law assesses commercial fishing vessels, charter boats, and oceanographic research vessels at 4% of their full cash value for property tax purposes. Some commercial vessels are also subject to a Ballast Water Management Fee of about \$500 per voyage. 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 vary by species and range between \$.0013 and \$.0125 per pound of fish. 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.

The nearest enforcement office for the National Marine Fisheries Service is approximately 17 miles away in Santa Rosa. A California Fish and Wildlife Office is located in Yountville, in neighboring Napa County, 51 miles away. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Office is 58 miles away in San Francisco, as are meetings of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council. The neighboring community of Bodega Bay is home to the closest U.S. Coast Guard Station.

Facilities

Valley Ford is accessible by ground via U.S. Highway 1 that connects Valley Ford to the neighboring communities of Bodega Bay and Tomales. Commercial airports lie nearby in San Francisco (58 miles) and Santa Rosa (17 miles). Valley Ford's students attend school in Marin County's Shoreline Unified School District, enrolling in Tomales Elementary and Tomales High School. Valley Ford's electric supply is provided by Pacific Gas and Electric and residents tap groundwater for their water supply. The community is policed by the Santa Rosa Police Department and the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office. Nearby hospitals lie 17 miles away in Santa Rosa and 10 miles away in Sebastopol. Valley Ford is home to two overnight accommodations, one hotel and an inn. A variety of accommodations are available in the nearby communities of Bodega Bay, Sebastopol, and Santa Rosa. Due to the community's inland location, Valley Ford does not offer any marine facilities, however facilities exist in the nearby community of Bodega Bay. See the Bodega Bay Community Profile for more information on marine services in the area.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000, Valley Ford residents owned one vessel that fished in the region's fisheries and participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by community members that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/0/2), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/0).¹²

Recorded data indicates that the number of residents holding state permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/3), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (0/0/1).¹³

At least seven permits, all state registered, were held by Ventura residents in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/0/5), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (0/0/2).¹⁴

Sportfishing

According to the available data the community of Valley Ford did not participate in the local sportfishing industry in 2000.

Subsistence

Specific information on subsistence fishing in Valley Ford 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

According to the available data for 2000 the residents of Valley Ford were not involved in North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

According to the available data Valley Ford residents did not participate in Alaska’s sportfishing industry in 2000.

¹ T. Colombo, Tribal Representative for the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Bodega Bay, CA. Personal communication, 28 September 2004.

² Bodega Bay.com. 2004. Bodega Bay Area History – 200 Years of Change, [Online]. Available: http://www.bodegabay.com/visitor_info/overviewmap.html (access date - September 2004).

³ Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. No date. Historical Background, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.coastmiwok.com/basicinterface/tools/custom/personal.asp?owner=0&id=3&user=coastmiwok524200023&bkgd=8&col=2&templ=16> (access date - September 2004).

⁴ Go Boating America. 2004. Windswept Getaway, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://goboatingmag.com/main/article.asp?id=528> (access date - September 2004).

⁵ Bodega Bay.com. 2004. Bodega Bay Area History – 200 Years of Change, [Online]. Available: http://www.bodegabay.com/visitor_info/overviewmap.html (access date - September 2004).

⁶ Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. No date. Historical Background, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.coastmiwok.com/basicinterface/tools/custom/personal.asp?owner=0&id=3&user=coastmiwok524200023&bkgd=8&col=2&templ=16> (access date - September 2004).

⁷ Bodega Bay.com. 2004. Bodega Bay Area History – 200 Years of Change, [Online]. Available: http://www.bodegabay.com/visitor_info/overviewmap.html (access date - September 2004).

⁸ Coldwell Banker. 2002. Bodega Bay Area Profile: Economy, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.bodegabayhomes.com/economy.html> (access date - September 2004).

⁹ Go Boating America. 2004. Windswept Getaway, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://goboatingmag.com/main/article.asp?id=528> (access date - September 2004).

¹⁰ Benfell, Carol. 2004. Channell Dredging to Begin, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www1.pressdemocrat.com> (access date - September 2004).

¹¹ Sonoma County. 2004. Board of Supervisors, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/board/index.htm> (access date - November 2004).

¹² '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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