

## Astoria, Oregon

### People and Place

#### *Location*

Astoria is located on the northwestern tip of Oregon, bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the west and the Columbia River on the north. The area encompasses 5.75 square miles of land and 3.95 square miles of water. Astoria lies at 46°11'17''N and 123°49'48''W. At 91 miles from Astoria city limits, Portland is the nearest major city.

#### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Astoria was 9813, a slight decrease from the 1990 U.S. Census population of 10,069. The 2000 U.S. Census shows that 52% of Astoria's population was female and 48% was male. The median age of the population was 38.3 years, slightly higher than the national average of 35.3. The age structure of Astoria demonstrates usual population trends for the nation.

The majority of the population of Astoria recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was White (91.1%). Other racial categories with which people identified were Black or African American (0.5%), American Indian and Alaska Native alone (1.2%), Asian alone (2%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone (0.01%). Additionally, a small percentage (2.7%) identified with some other race alone or with two or more races (2.5%). Of the total population of Astoria surveyed by the 2000 U.S. Census, 6% identified as Hispanic or Latino.

A sample of Astoria's population surveyed by the 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 4.5% of the population was foreign-born. The majority of the foreign-born population was from the Americas outside of the United States, followed by a number of people born in Asia. Astoria is also home to many people of Scandinavian decent, including Icelanders, Finns, Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, of the surveyed population 18 years and older, 84.1% had a high school education or higher, 19.7% had earned a Bachelor of Arts degree or higher, and 6.8% had attained a graduate or professional degree. For 27% of the surveyed population, a high school degree or equivalent was the highest level of educational attainment.

#### *History*

American commercial interest in this area began in 1792 when Captain Robert Gray came across the Columbia River in his fur-trading ship. Lewis and Clark's 33-member expedition, the Corps of Discovery, arrived near present-day Astoria and Warrenton in the winter of 1805-06. The expedition is commemorated by the Astoria Column.<sup>1</sup> The Chinook and Clatsop Tribal populations each numbered about 400 when the Corps of Discovery visited their villages along the south bank of the Columbia River. Lewis and Clark noted that the tribes lived in wooden plank houses, were proficient seafarers in their large dugout canoes, and lived off the fish, roots, and berries plentiful in the area. Settled in the area to the south, in villages between the mouth of the Necanicum River and Tillamook Bay, was the considerably larger Tillamook population. By the mid-19th century the Tillamook population had declined to about 200 people; today the Tribe is no longer officially organized.<sup>2</sup>

The Corp of Discovery built Fort Clatsop close to the mouth of the Columbia River and sheltered there throughout the winter months. Members of the Pacific Fur Company arrived subsequently and established Fort Astoria. The resulting community, which grew into Astoria, is now the oldest U.S. settlement west of the Rocky Mountains. By 1850 the first post office and U.S. Customs office west of the Rocky Mountains were established and integrated the community into the national communication and trade network. By the end of the century, salmon canneries, forestry, and shipping industries made the town the most commercially significant hub between Seattle and San Francisco. Until the 1900s emigrants to the area were predominantly of Scandinavian descent, bringing diversity to the area's cultural heritage and economy. Regardless of pervasive Scandinavian traditions such as public steam baths, lutefisk, smorrebrod platters, and church services in Finnish, the area has become a popular backdrop to represent the all-American city in numerous movies.<sup>3</sup>

A devastating fire in 1922 required the downtown of Astoria to be rebuilt. Reconstruction involved extending the land area into the Columbia River with artificial fill. The Port of Astoria initiated a project to build a bridge, spanning the Columbia River between the Oregon and Washington State borders in 1953. With the help of the Oregon Highway Department, and \$100,000 in funding from the Oregon and Washington State Legislatures, the "Bridge to Nowhere" opened to the public ten years later.<sup>4</sup> Over 2000 major shipwrecks testify both to the importance of the mouth of the Columbia River to commerce and fishing, and to its dangerous terrain which has earned it the nickname, "The Graveyard of the Pacific."<sup>5</sup>

Today the towns of Astoria and Warrenton form a deeply connected community, sharing not only history, but also infrastructure, such as the Chamber of Commerce, and other characteristics. This connection is particularly reflected in their involvement in the fishing industry. While separate profiles have been compiled for Warrenton and Astoria, the Astoria-Warrenton area can be considered as a cohesive community.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

While the fishing industry has long formed the economic foundation of Astoria, the largest employers are related to the infrastructure of the community. In order of the number of employees, the five leading employers in 2003 were the U.S. Coast Guard, the Astoria School District, the Columbia Memorial Hospital, Clatsop County, and the Clatsop Community College.<sup>6</sup> Other main industries in Astoria in 2000 were educational, health and social services; retail trade; and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services. According the 2000 U.S. Census 17.1% of the surveyed population worked for the local, state, or federal government and 2.5% were in the armed forces.

The employment structure of Astoria illustrates the influence of these employers and the fishing industry. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the unemployment rate was 6.67% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), 59.9% of the population age 16 years and above was employed, and 35.8% of the population age 16 and above was not in the labor force. Of the surveyed employed civilian population over 16 years of age, 3.1% were involved in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, however this figure is not inclusive of the self employed population, many of whom may

be involved in the fishing industry. Of the surveyed population recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census, 15.9% were below the poverty line. According to the 2000 U.S. Census the per capita income was \$18,759 and the median household income was \$33,011 in 1999.

Astoria had a total of 4858 housing units in 2000, 87.6% of which were occupied according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Of the occupied housing units, 51.3% were owner occupied and 48.7% were renter occupied. Of the vacant housing units, 14.4% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational or occasional use.

### *Governance*

The City of Astoria, located in Clatsop County, was incorporated in 1856 and provides a full range of municipal services. The local government is organized under a Manager-Council format where the City Council serves as the highest authority within the city government regarding issues of public policy.<sup>7</sup> The State of Oregon has no general sales tax but levies a 1% tax on overnight lodging.

Fishing businesses located in Oregon or deriving income from Oregon resources must pay a corporate excise or income tax totaling 6% of their net Oregon income. Wholesale fish dealers, canners, and bait dealers pay a landing fee that is determined from a percentage of the value of the food fish purchased from commercial harvesters. Salmon and Steelhead Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) landing fees are \$0.05 per pound for round, \$.0575 per pound for dressed, and \$.0605 per pound for dressed with heads off. Other regular landing fees are based on value; salmon and steelhead are 3.15% of value (including eggs and parts); all other fish and shellfish are 1.09% of value, and near-shore species are 5% of value.

Vessel owners must pay registration and title fees, and marine fuel taxes that support boating facilities, marine law enforcement, and boating safety education. Fishing boats and equipment may be taxed as personal property if they are valued at less than \$1 million. If their value exceeds this amount, they are taxed as industrial property. In 2004, title transfer fees are \$30 and registration fees are \$3 per foot based on center length of vessel. Oregon levies a fuel tax of \$0.24 per gallon of gasoline and use fuel. The Oregon Department of Agriculture administers four commodity commissions, Oregon Albacore Commission, Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, Oregon Salmon Commission, and Oregon Trawl Commission. Fishermen pay fees to these commissions for marketing and lobbying on behalf of fishermen involved in these specific fisheries.

An Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Field Office and U.S. Coast Guard Station are based in Astoria. There is also a field station of the NOAA Fisheries Northwest Fisheries Science Center located nearby in Hammond. Portland, approximately 91 miles to the east, holds both Pacific and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings. The district office for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is also located in Portland.

### *Facilities*

Astoria is accessible by road, air, and sea. Highway 101 connects Astoria to other major transportation routes. Public transportation is provided by a local bus service. The Astoria Regional Airport, operated by the Port of Astoria, is located 10 minutes from Astoria, Seaside, and Warrenton. The closest major commercial airport is located in Portland. The Port of Astoria offers services to both commercial and recreational boaters

at two marinas and serves as a cruise ship port-of-call with two piers and a marine terminal. The Port of Astoria is the first deep-draft port encountered upon entering the Columbia River, and is located only 14 miles from the Pacific Ocean. The Port maintains nearly 7250-feet of total dock space on three piers. A comprehensive Central Waterfront Master Plan, adopted in 2001, drives the growth and direction of activity on these piers. Two marinas offer year-round, monthly, or daily moorage for commercial and recreational vessels to 100-feet. The haul-out and 10-acre boatyard provide services at rates significantly lower than those in urban areas. The Port of Astoria collects revenue from enforced tariffs.<sup>8</sup>

Astoria is home to seven schools providing elementary through high school education. There is one tertiary education provider in Astoria, the Clatsop Community College. The City of Astoria sources water from the Bear Creek Watershed and maintains wastewater treatment systems. Available utilities include natural gas, electrical power, and solid waste management. The Astoria Fire Department operates two stations, and is made up of 25 paid and volunteer firefighters. The Astoria Police Department is comprised of 21 paid and reserve officers. Both the Columbia Memorial Hospital and the regional Columbia Memorial Hospital are located in Astoria and receive emergency services from ambulance and Life Flight Services. Additionally, three general clinics are available.<sup>9</sup> Both local and regional newspapers are available and two public libraries are located in Astoria. There are a number of overnight accommodations in Astoria, including bed and breakfasts, hotels, and motels.

Several local and regional associations and networks operate in the Astoria and Warrenton area, including the Women's Coalition for Pacific Fisheries and the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union. The Oregon Trawl Commission is located in Astoria and consists of eight commissioners appointed by the Director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The Pacific Marine Conservation Council also operates from Astoria. The Council is a driving force in advocating cooperative research and science-based policy, as well as community-based fisheries management with special attention to West Coast rockfish populations.

Additionally, several festivals take place in the Astoria-Warrenton area including the Blessing of the Fleet, held in nearby Ilwaco in early May and Seaman's Day and the Annual Crab Derby, both held in Warrenton in late July. The Astoria Warrenton Crab and Seafood Festival occurs in late April. Numerous readers, musicians, artists, story tellers, and workshop presenters who work in commercial fishing and related industries come to Astoria for the event which attracts a wide audience. A Scandinavian Midsummer Festival takes place in June. Festivities include Nordic dishes, costumes, parades, music, princesses, trolls, crafts, folk dancing, and hex burning.

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

Recorded data indicates that in 2000 a total of 334 unique vessels (all commercially classified) delivered landings to Astoria. According to recorded data the landings were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic (5907 t/\$794,612/29), crab (1399 t/\$6,530,137/92), groundfish (45,284 t/\$12,980,569/151), highly migratory species (1682 t/\$3,273,354/112), salmon (52 t/\$138,537/82), shrimp (3947 t/\$3,816,430/48), and other species (178 t/\$633,751/84).

Astoria residents owned 184 vessels in 2000; 12 vessels took part in the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program. Community members owned 69 vessels that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. Recorded data indicates that the number of vessels owned by Astoria residents participating in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/0/6), crab (0/30/1), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/138/0), shellfish (NA/7/NA), and shrimp (NA/16/7).<sup>10</sup>

Twenty Astoria residents held a total of 21 Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permits in 2000. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number of Astoria residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/2/6), crab (4/30/1), groundfish (3/1/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (18/162/1), shellfish (0/5/NA), shrimp (12/16/6), and other species (2/0/2).<sup>11</sup>

A total of 187 state and federal permits were registered to Astoria residents in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of state permits held by community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/2/14), crab (7/56/1), groundfish (8/1/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (22/0/2), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (13/27/9), other species (2/0/2).<sup>12</sup>

There were at least four seafood processors operating in Astoria in 2000: Bornstein Seafoods, Inc.; Crystal Ocean Seafoods; Fish Hawk Fisheries, Inc.; and Josephson's Smokehouse and Dock. Approximately 154 employees were employed by these processors in the same year. In 2000 approximately 10,119,325 lbs of fish were processed at an estimated value of \$16,870,071. In the same year the top three processed products in the community, in terms of pounds and revenue earned were flounders, Dungeness crab, and shrimp. Bornstein Seafoods, historically a groundfish processing and distribution company, is expanding to process and distribute Oregon seafood products. In the 1990s the company invested in the Astoria processing plant which specializes in bait sardine processing, and purchased an Ocean Beauty plant in Newport, Oregon. In spring of 2005, Bornstein Seafoods began construction of a new \$6.8 million processing facility on Port of Astoria property.

### *Sportfishing*

Astoria had at least six outfitter guide businesses in 2003. Six licensed charter vessel businesses were located in the community in the same year. For the Astoria-Warrenton port group, the 2000 recreational salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 766 Chinook and 13,712 coho salmon. The recreational non-salmonid catch was 1533 fish, consisting primarily of black rockfish.

### *Subsistence*

Many local community members engage in subsistence fishing. Both tribal and nontribal fishermen utilize marine and stream resources for subsistence means in Astoria and the surrounding area. 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 Astoria is not discussed in detail in this Community Profile due to the lack of available data on both state and federal levels.

## **Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

In 2000 Astoria residents owned 54 vessels that were 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 landings): Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish (confidential/confidential/1), Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish (confidential/confidential/3), halibut (77.5 t/\$440,080/4), herring (240.9 t/\$50,930/6), salmon (1,104.5 t/\$1,543,430/48), and shellfish (confidential/confidential/1).

In 2000 a total of 108 Astoria residents served as crewmembers in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year 74 community residents held registered state permits and 27 held registered federal permits.

A total of 112 state and federal permits were registered to individuals in Astoria in 2000. In the same year residents of Astoria held six groundfish License Limitation Program permits. In 2000 Astoria residents held 1 finfish, 13 BSAI groundfish, 9 halibut, 14 herring, 58 salmon, and 1 shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. The halibut and sablefish individual fishing quota shares for people residing in the community were 2,542,582 and 977,046, respectively.

### *Sportfishing*

A total of 112 Alaska sportfishing licenses were sold to Astoria community members in 2000. In the same year available data indicates that there were no local sportfishing businesses participating in Alaskan fisheries.

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<sup>1</sup> State of Oregon. No Date. City of Astoria History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.stateoforegon.com/cgi-bin/cities/history.pl?&city=astoria&history> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>2</sup> National Geographic. No Date. Lewis and Clark, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/journey\\_leg\\_14](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/journey_leg_14). (access date - July 2004).

<sup>3</sup> NW Source: Travel. 2004. Astoria, OR, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.nwsorce.com/travel/scr/tf\\_detail.cfm?id=2825](http://www.nwsorce.com/travel/scr/tf_detail.cfm?id=2825) (access date - July 2004).

<sup>4</sup> State of Oregon. No Date. City of Astoria History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.stateoforegon.com/cgi-bin/cities/history.pl?&city=astoria&history> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Astoria Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce. 2004. Historical Facts, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.oldoregon.com/Pages/Quickfacts.htm> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Community and Economic Development Department. 2004. Astoria Community Profile, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://info.econ.state.or.us:591/FMPro?-db=Community.fp4&-Format=forms.htm&-lay=webpage&-op=eq&sort%20name=Astoria&-script=hit%20count&-Find> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Oregon Blue Book. 2004. City Government, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://bluebook.state.or.us/local/cities/citiesgen.htm> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Port of Astoria. 2004. Port Facilities, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.portofastoria.com/portfacilities/cruise/index.html> (access date - August 2004).

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<sup>9</sup> Community and Economic Development Department. 2004. Astoria Community Profile, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://info.econ.state.or.us:591/FMPro?-db=Community.fp4&-Format=forms.htm&-lay=webpage&-op=eq&sort%20name=Astoria&-script=hit%20count&-Find> (access date - July 2004).

<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.

<sup>11</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>12</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.