

# Coos Bay, Oregon

## People and Place

### *Location*

Coos Bay is located in Coos County of southern Oregon at 43°22'00"N and 124°13'00"W. The city lies approximately 220 miles south of Portland, Oregon, and 531 miles north of San Francisco, California. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the community encompasses a total area of 15.9 square miles, including 5.3 square miles of water and 10.6 square miles of land.

### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Coos Bay had a total population of 15,374 people with a population density of 1452 people per square mile of land. In 2000, the percentage of males was 48.6% to 51.5% females. The median age of community members in 2000 was 40.1, higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. Approximately 76.1% of those eighteen and over earned the equivalent of a high school diploma or higher, 18.2% earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 3.8% earned a graduate degree.

The 2000 U.S. Census reports that 76.7% of Coos Bay's population lived in family households. The racial composition was 90.8% White, 2.2% American Indian and Alaska native, 1.4% Asian, 0.4% Black or African American, and 0.3% native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. A total of 3.5% identified with two or more races and 1.4% with some other race. Less than five percent (4.5%) identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 3.8% of the population was foreign-born, with 32.7% from Mexico, followed by 10.4% from Korea, and 8.9% from Germany.

### *History*

The Coos Bay watershed was originally inhabited by the ancestors of the modern day Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, Siuslaw, and Coquille Indians. The area is Oregon's largest coastal estuary and has provided natural resources to local inhabitants for centuries. In 1579 Sir Francis Drake sought shelter for his ship the Golden Hind in the nearby area.<sup>1</sup> Spanish and English ships sailed along the coast as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed that the first Europeans to explore the area were fur traders of the Hudson Bay Company in the 1820s. In 1852, the vessel Captain Lincoln shipwrecked on the north spit of Coos Bay and 52 surviving soldiers explored the area.<sup>2</sup> The California gold rush in the late 1840's drew more Euro-American settlers to the area and by 1853 the first group of settlers reached the Coos Bay area and established the first town, Empire City, in the area.<sup>3</sup> Sawmills, shipbuilding, coal mining, and farming activities were major industries of the surrounding settlements. In 1855-1856 a war with the Indians resulted in the forced relocation of local Tribes onto reservations on Oregon's north coast.

Coos Bay became a midway point between the Ports of San Francisco and Portland for products such as lumber, coal, salmon, and agricultural goods. In the late 1880s to the early 1900s, the economy shifted to the forest and coal mining industries. Dairy farming became important for local agriculturalists and shipbuilding expanded during World War I but declined after the war. In 1908 the C.A. Smith Lumber company opened a mill on Coos Bay which was the largest and most advanced mill on the Pacific Coast at that time. In addition to a new mill, harbor and bar improvements made Coos Bay a perfect lumber shipping port. With the

introduction of fuel oil in the 1920s and 1930s, the coal mining industry collapsed, however new technologies increased the usage of forest products such as veneer, pulp and paper, and plywood. The first railroad reached the area in 1916 and roads were built providing additional modes of transportation. The Great Depression brought about the construction of bridge and highway that connected Coos Bay with the Willamette Valley and other areas in the 1930s.

In 1922 a major fire on Front Street resulted in the relocation of city hall. The City of Coos Bay itself was commonly referred to as Marshfield but changed its name to Coos Bay in 1944. After 1945 the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company and the Menasha Woodenware Company built manufacturing plants in the area. The 1960s brought a peak period of employment for the forest industry followed by declines through the 1980s and 1990s. Despite job losses, the area still prospered and the city grew with additions of an educational facility, shopping centers, and a hospital. Today the timber and fishing industries are the major economic drivers in the area.

Coos Bay offers a multitude of recreational options for visitors. Hiking, biking, kayaking, bird watching, fishing, and whale watching are common recreational activities. The Cape Arago Lighthouse and State Arago State Park are located 12 miles southwest of Coos Bay. Crabbing and clamming activities along with tidepool walking are popular activities in the protected bay. Coos Bay also offers museums, both art and historical, antique stores, and various shopping opportunities. The year is filled with community events and festivals such as the South Coast Dixieland Clambake Jazz Festival held in March, the Blackberry Arts Festival in August, and the Annual Salmon Derby in September.<sup>4</sup>

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census “health care and social assistance” was the top occupational field (17.7%) for the employed population 16 years and older, followed by “retail trade” with 15.3%, and “educational services” with 8.2%. The “agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting” occupations represented 3.6% of the employed population. The unemployment rate was 9.3%, higher than the national average of 5.7% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). A total of 48.7% of the Coos Bay population was employed, slightly lower than the national average of 50.5%, and 48% were not in the labor force, higher than the national average of 36.1%. Approximately 15.6% of the labor force was employed by local, state, or federal governments.

In 1999 Coos Bay’s per capita income was \$18,158, compared to the national average of \$21,587. The median household income in 1999 was \$31,212, lower than the national average was \$41,944. For whom poverty status was determined, 16.5% of the city’s population was living below the poverty line in 1999, higher than the national average of 12.4%. In 2000, there were 7094 housing units in Coos Bay, of which 91.6% were occupied and 8.4% were vacant. Of the occupied units 59.7% were owner occupied, while 40.3% were renter occupied. Only a small percentage of the vacant units, 11.6%, was for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

### *Governance*

Coos Bay was originally incorporated in 1874 under the name of Marshfield and renamed Coos Bay in 1944.<sup>5</sup> The city operates under a City Charter. There are seven City Council members including a Mayor and six Council members. In addition to the Council members, the city maintains a City Manager and a municipal judge. The state of Oregon has no general sales tax. The lodging tax is levied at 1% of the fee charged to the customer for overnight lodging and

funds the Oregon Tourism Commission. Property tax is determined by a permanent rate set for the taxing district. The tax rate ranges from \$7 to \$15 per \$1000 of real market value. Assessed values are limited to a 3 percent annual growth rate.

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.

Coos Bay is approximately 98 miles from the National Marine Fisheries Service research station in Newport, Oregon. The closest Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is located approximately 9 miles away in Charleston. The U.S. Coast Guard has a Group/Air Station located approximately 3 miles north of Coos Bay in North Bend. The closest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office and Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings are located 220 miles away in Portland.

### *Facilities*

Coos Bay is accessible via air, sea, and road. The North Bend Airport (3 miles), Newport Municipal Airport (83 miles), and Portland International Airport (220 miles) are utilized for air transportation. The major road connecting Coos Bay to nearby communities is U.S. Highway 101. There are two bus companies that operate in Coos Bay, Greyhound and Porter Stage. While there is commercial freight rail service to Coos Bay the closest passenger service is provided by Amtrak located in Eugene, Oregon.

Coos Bay School District #9 supports approximately 11 schools, including 2 private and 9 public schools. Of the public schools, there are 3 high schools (inclusive of one charter school), 3 middle schools (inclusive of one charter school), and three elementary schools. Southwestern Oregon Community College is the local community college and the University of Oregon is the closest four-year college located in Eugene, Oregon.

Water is supplied to community residents by the Coos Bay-North Bend Water Board, Verizon Communications provides telephone communications, and electric power is administered by Pacific Power. Public safety is provided by the Coos Bay Police Department comprised of a Chief of Police, two Captains, four patrol sergeants, two detectives, twelve patrol officers, and one School Resource Officer. The Coos Bay Fire Department responds to fire and safety calls from three distinct fire stations, which staff 15 career personnel and 18 volunteer fire

fighters. The closest hospital is the Bay Area Hospital in the city proper, followed by the Coquille Valley Hospital in Coquille, Oregon. There are approximately 7 hotels, 4 bed and breakfast facilities, and various national, state, county, and private campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks identified by the local Chamber of Commerce.<sup>6</sup>

Coos Bay Harbor supports a large array of commercial vessel traffic with most recreational and commercial fishing facilities located at the mouth of Coos Bay in Charleston and the larger commercial cargo located in the Upper Bay Cargo area. The fishing facilities in Charleston are managed by the port district of Coos Bay Harbor. The majority of the commercial fishing vessels, approximately 95-99% are moored in Charleston which provides approximately 550 moorages of which approximately 200 are occupied by commercial fishing vessels.<sup>7</sup> Recreational fishers are drawn to the area because of its safe conditions in a protected bay and bar area. Commercial cargo is comprised of barge traffic and deep draft vessels transporting logs and wood chips.

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

In 2000, a total of 250 vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Coos Bay. 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 (confidential/confidential/2), crab (829.3 t/\$3,948,153/78), groundfish (4285.1 t/\$5,473,938/144), highly migratory species (191.9 t/\$369,404/46), salmon (222.6 t/\$808,358/113), shellfish (1.8 t/\$3,206/7), shrimp (2978 t/2,814,650/49), and other species (150.2 t/\$82,667/47).

Coos Bay residents owned 129 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, eight of which participated in the 2003 Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program and 51 that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Coos Bay residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/4/0), crab (0/27/3), groundfish (0/6/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/67/2), shellfish (NA/3/NA), and shrimp (NA/22/5).<sup>8</sup>

In 2000, a total of 13 groundfish permits were held by 15 community members. Recorded data indicates that the number of Coos Bay residents holding permits in each said fishery in 2000 by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/3/0), crab (0/23/2), groundfish (0/4/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/1), salmon (0/58/4), shellfish (0/6/NA), shrimp (4/19/8), and other species (0/2/2).<sup>9</sup>

According to the available data, 171 permits were registered to Coos Bay residents in 2000, of which 158 were registered state permits, and 13 were federal permits. The number of permits held by community members in each said fishery in 2000 by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/3/0), crab (0/25/2), groundfish (0/4/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/62/6), shellfish (0/7/NA), shrimp (4/27/12), and other species (0/4/2).<sup>10</sup>

According to available data at least 2 seafood processors operated in Coos Bay in 2000. Species processed include but are not limited to shellfish, various species of groundfish, sablefish, Pacific whiting, pink shrimp, and tuna. Coos Bay is a large estuary that encompasses both the towns of North Bend and Charleston which are profiled separately, please see these Community Profiles for additional information on fish processed in the area.

### *Sportfishing*

Coos Bay was home to at least one outfitter guide business and two licensed charter vessel businesses in 2003. Internet fishing guide sources indicate that there are at least two sportfishing businesses currently operating in the community.<sup>11</sup> There are seven sportfishing license vendors in Coos Bay. In 2000, the number of licenses sold by active agents was 6201 at a value of \$102,897. For the community of Coos Bay, the 2000 recreational salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 4078 Chinook and 1641 coho salmon. The recreational non-salmonid catch was a total of 54,234 fish. The top species landed include black rockfish, blue rockfish, canary rockfish, lingcod, yellowtail rockfish, widow rockfish, and yelloweye rockfish.

## **Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

In 2000, there was one vessel owned by a Coos Bay resident that participated in North Pacific fisheries. Eighteen residents served as crew members on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries in the same year. In 2000 one Coos Bay resident held a federal permit and one held a state permit.

A total of four permits were registered to individuals in Coos Bay in 2000. In the same year residents held two Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) crab permits and one CFEC Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish permit.

### *Sportfishing*

Fishermen based in Coos Bay purchased 109 sportfishing licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Coos Bay Oregon. No date. History of Coos Bay, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.coosbay.org/cb/aboutcb/CBHisotry.htm> (access date - August 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Coos County Historical Society. 2004. *A Selective Chronology of South Coast History: Origins to 1900*, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.cooshistory.org/> (access date - August 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Oregon Bay Area History. No date. No title, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.coohisotry.org/ptwo.html> (access date - August 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Oregon Coast Visitors Association. No date. No title, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.visittheoregoncoast.com/home.cfm> (access date - August 2005).

<sup>5</sup> City of Coos Bay Oregon. No date. History of Coos Bay, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.coosbay.org/cb/aboutcb/CBHisotry.htm> (access date - August 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Oregon's Bay Area Chamber of Commerce. No Date. No Title, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://oregonsbayareachamber.com/cbplain.htm> (access date - August 2005).

<sup>7</sup> M. Callery, Communications Director, Port of Coos Bay, OR. Pers. commun. October 2005.

<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.”

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