

Depoe Bay, Oregon

People and Place

Location

The City of Depoe Bay, defined by tough basalt formations, is located along U.S. Highway 101 on Central Oregon's coastline. Depoe Bay lies approximately 117 miles southwest of Portland and 13 miles north of Newport. The city is located in Lincoln County and is home to the smallest natural navigable harbor in the world, consisting of six square acres. Depoe Bay, encompassing approximately 1.8 square miles of land and 0 square miles of surface water, is located at 44°48'31"N, 124°03'43"W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Depoe Bay was 1174. Between 1990 and 2000, U.S. Census data reports that the population of Depoe Bay increased by 34.9%. In 2000 the percentage of males and females was 49.7% and 50.3% respectively. The racial composition of the population in 2000 was predominantly White (92.5%), followed by American Indian and Alaska Native (1.7%), Asian (0.6%), Black or African American (0.3%), and Pacific Islander (0.2%). Few individuals (1%) classified themselves as belonging to some other race and 3.7% identified themselves as belonging to two or more races. A small percentage of the population (3.6%) recognized themselves as Hispanic or Latino. A total of 2.4% of the population was foreign-born.

The median age of the population in 2000 was 49.8, which was higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. Depoe Bay had a relatively even age distribution in 2000. Approximately 76.5% of the population of Depoe Bay was living in family households in 2000. The U. S. Census reports that 86.8% of the population over 18 years of age had received a high school degree or higher, 21.7% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 9.9% received a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

History

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, a federally recognized confederation of 27 bands, originally ranged from northern California to southern Washington. Members of the Tillamook, Alesha, Siuslaw, Coos, Coquille, Takelma Six, Joshua, Tutuini, Mackanotni, Shastacosta, and the Cheteo tribes and bands are just a few of the people that make up the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz.¹ The discovery of gold in the Rogue River Valley in 1851 brought thousands of miners to the area. In 1853, to curb fighting between the Indians and the miners, the federal government forced these people onto the Siletz and Grand Ronde Reservations. The Siletz Reservation extended from Cape Lookout in Tillamook County on the north to the mouth of the Umpqua River on the south.² In 1956 when the government passed the Western Oregon Termination Act, terminating the Siletz Tribe, the reservation was reduced from over 1 million acres along the Oregon coast to a 36-acre tribal cemetery. But in 1977, after years of working together, the Siletz was the first tribe in Oregon to be restored to federal recognition.³

Today the Siletz Indian Reservation is situated in the central portion of Lincoln County and contains the 39-acre Government Hill parcel, 3630 acres of timberlands, as well as several parcels of land purchased by the Tribe.⁴ The Confederated Tribe of the Siletz received the right to self-govern through congressional legislation in 1992, giving the Tribe control and

accountability over tribal programs and funding. According to the 2000 U.S. Census the reservation had a population of 274. For more information on the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz see the Newport and Siletz Community Profiles.

Fred W. Vincent and his father sailed up the Oregon Coast in 1878 and upon discovering the small harbor named it Wreckers Cove. In 1894 the U.S. government allotted lands around Depoe Bay to Charles Depot, a local Siletz Indian chief and tribal judge.⁵ Depoe Bay was named after Charles Depot, who was given the name because he worked at the military train depot near Toledo, Oregon.⁶ Prior to the arrival of the Roosevelt Highway in 1927, the area was mainly occupied by a few members of the Siletz Tribe. But in 1927 the Sunset Investment Company of Portland platted a modern townsite and named it in honor of Mr. Depot, whose family name had evolved from Depot to DePoe. However it is believed that “DePoe” was too “fancy” for the government and therefore when the post office was established in October 1928, it was named Depoe Bay.⁷

Agriculture, timber, fishing, and tourism have been important industries throughout Lincoln County’s history. Depoe Bay is known as the “Whale Watching Capital of the World,” partly due to a resident pod of grey whales which makes their home there ten months out of the year.⁸ Depoe Bay is also popular for ocean charter fishing, boating, hiking, and biking. The city is also known for the Depoe Bay City Park, the Harbor, Rocky Creek State Park, Fogarty Creek Beach, and Boiler Bay. A large sea wall runs the length of the downtown area enabling visitors to shop and dine always within view of the ocean.

There are numerous festivals and events in Depoe Bay throughout the year. In April the city holds a Classic Wooden Boat Show, Crab Feed, and Ducky Derby. One of the first events in Depoe Bay was the First Free Fish Fry, which took place in the 1930s. Over time the fish fry evolved and now every year since 1956 the city holds a Salmon Bake in September. The Salmon Bake, using techniques developed by the coastal Indians, usually draws over 2000 people who consume about 2500 lbs of salmon. Supporters of the event include the Chamber of Commerce and citizens of Depoe Bay; proceeds make up the largest part of the funding for Chamber and town events throughout the year. The Salmon Bake takes place at the Depoe Bay Park overlooking the harbor.⁹

Another fishing-related event is the Fleet of Flowers, which takes place every Memorial Day. This ceremony originated in 1936 to honor two Depoe Bay fishermen who died attempting to rescue fellow fishermen caught in a storm. In remembrance, local fishermen went out in their vessels, threw flowers on the water, and scattered the ashes of their former mates. The ceremony has expanded to include not only those who have died at sea “but also anyone who has found pleasure, beauty, solace, or adventure upon it, or those who have expressed a desire to have their ashes placed into the ocean.”¹⁰

The City of Depoe Bay has adopted an ordinance allowing the storage of fishing gear at “the gear owner’s swelling or adjacent lot under the same ownership.”¹¹ The ordinance ended more than seven years of debate between fishermen and some city residents who were worried about potential odors and the sight of stacks of crab pots across the street from their homes. The rule, passed unanimously, defines “commercial fishing gear” to include “traps/fish traps/fishing lures; ropes or lines pertaining to crab or fish traps, including buoys and floats; plastic totes or tubs used for storage or line and longline gear; rigging, which includes poles, extensions, stays and/or booms, or mast gear from salmon or tuna fishing; and pools and winches (girdies, power blocks and occasional gill net reel), excluding drag nets or gear.”¹²

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Depoe Bay is a small community that depends heavily on the tourist industry. At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 9.8% of the employed civilian population 16 years of age and over was employed within local, state, or federal governments. The majority of Depoe Bay's employed civilian population 16 years of age and over was employed in "sales and office occupations" (28.4%), "management, professional, and related occupations" (24.7%), and "service occupations" (23.7%). Natural resource jobs including "agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting" employed 4.4% of the population in 2000. Lincoln County's top four industries are lumber, fishing, tourism and recreation, and food products manufacturing. The top five employers in Depoe Bay in 2002 were the City of Depoe Bay (12), Sea Hag Restaurant (9), Spouting Horn Restaurant (9), Tidal Raves Restaurant (9), and Ainslee's Salt Water Taffy (7). Tourism in Depoe Bay is well developed with over 12 hotels located in the city.

According to 2000 U.S. Census a total of 50.2% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 5.4% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Approximately 46.9% of the population over 16 years of age was not in the labor force as compared to the national average of 36.1%. The U.S. Census reports that in 1999 the income of 8% of the population was below the poverty level. The median household income in 1999 was \$35,417 and the per capita income was \$24,994. In 2000 there were 911 housing units in Depoe Bay. The percentages of occupied housing units that were owner versus renter occupied were 66.1% and 33.9% respectively. About 35.9% of the housing units were vacant, of which 65.4% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Depoe Bay, incorporated in 1973, operates under a Council-Mayor government with six City Council members. 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.

The National Marine Fisheries Service has a Fisheries Science Center field station located 13 miles south in Newport. Newport is also home to an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife field office, as well as their Marine Resources Program. The city is home to a US Coast Guard (USCG) Motor Lifeboat Station Depoe Bay, established in 1940. The USCG maintains a presence in the harbor due to its heavy use as a recreational port and a harbor for refuge.¹³ The Station's area of responsibility is bound by Cape Kiwanda to the north and Spence Creek to the south, covering 1500 square miles. Depoe Bay is 117 miles from the closest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office in Portland. The closest Pacific Fisheries Management Council and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings are also located in Portland.

Facilities

Depoe Bay is accessible by ground and sea. The community is connected to neighboring cities by U.S. Highway 1, which runs north and south from Washington to California. Local bus service is provided by Lincoln County Transit. The Newport Municipal Airport provides air taxi service to the Portland International Airport, the closest airport offering international service. Private planes utilize the Siletz Bay Airport, five miles north of Depoe Bay.

Depoe Bay does not have a local school district. Students in Depoe Bay attend K-12 in the Lincoln County School District, 13 miles south in Newport. The District serves over 6000 students and offers 11 elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools, and one alternative school. The Oregon Coast Community College, located in Newport, serves over 3500 students.

Central Lincoln Public Utility District and Northwest Natural Gas are the primary electricity and gas suppliers for the city. The City's Glender Sanitary Department administers wastewater treatment facilities for the community. Lincoln County Sheriff's Department provides public safety in Depoe Bay. The City of Depoe Bay provides community residents with water from Rocky Creek, and N. Depoe and S. Depoe creeks. Depoe Bay is home to the Samaritan Depoe Bay Medical Clinic but the nearest hospital, Samaritan North Lincoln Hospital, is located 13 miles north in Lincoln City. Additionally, the Samaritan Pacific Community Hospital is located in Newport. There are several community businesses and natural attractions in Depoe Bay including a public library, the "spouting horns" – gyserlike plumes that occur along the coast, Boiler Bay State Scenic Viewpoint, Fogarty Creek State Recreation Area, and many others.

Depoe Bay Harbor, known as the smallest harbor in the world, can provide moorage to a total of 137 boats (5% commercial/95% recreational).¹⁴ The Harbor provides landings and floats to accommodate excursion and commercial fishing vessels as well as dry storage space. The entrance to the harbor is 30 feet across and has a depth of approximately 8 feet. In January 2004 the Oregon State Marine Board approved funding towards a new marine fuel station at Depoe Bay. The new station will hold 2000 gallons of gasoline and 4000 gallons of diesel.¹⁵ The Harbor was also granted federal funds in June 2004 for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dredge Depoe Bay Harbor.¹⁶

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

A total of 14 vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Depoe Bay in 2000. 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 (43 t/\$206,976/7), groundfish (1 t/\$4609/5), salmon (confidential/confidential/2), and other species (confidential/confidential/3).

Depoe Bay residents owned 15 vessels in 2000, including six vessels that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Depoe Bay residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/11/0), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/17/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/0).¹⁷

In 2000 the number of Depoe Bay residents that held permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/1/0), crab (0/10/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/13/0), and shellfish (0/0/NA).¹⁸

According to available data, 36 state permits were registered to Depoe Bay 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: coastal pelagic (0/1/0), crab (0/20/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/15/0), and shellfish (0/0/NA).¹⁹

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians has partnered with Oregon Smoked Foods, Inc. to offer Siletz Tribal Smokehouse Smoked Salmon. The Tribe receives a portion of all sales of Siletz Tribal Smokehouse brand products. The Smokehouse is located on Highway 101, south of the historic Depoe Bay Bridge.

Sportfishing

According to available data, approximately 12 Depoe Bay residents held charter boat licenses in 2000. In the same year there were at least 19 charter vessels operating out of Depoe Bay; 16 were registered to Depoe Bay residents, and one to a residents of Lincoln City, Clatskanie, and Salem. Depoe Bay had at least one outfitter guide business in 2003. Tradewinds, a local charter fishing business, offers fishing, whale watching, and charter excursions year round. Other charter businesses include Dockside Charters, Joan-E Charters, and Zodiac Adventures.

Depoe Bay has nine sportfishing license vendors, however in 2000 there were zero license sales reported in Depoe Bay. For the community of Depoe Bay, the 2000 recreational salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 448 Chinook salmon and 3171 coho salmon. The recreational non-salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was a total of 101,757 fish. The top species landed include black rockfish, blue rockfish, canary rockfish, kelp greenling, and lingcod.

Subsistence

Nontribal and tribal fishermen, including members of the Confederated Tribe of the Siletz, utilize marine and stream resources for subsistence means from the areas within and surrounding Depoe Bay. 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 Depoe Bay is not discussed in detail in this profile due to the lack of available data on both state and federal levels.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000, Depoe Bay residents owned three 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 landing): crab (confidential/confidential/1), Bering Strait Aleutian Island (BSAI) groundfish (confidential/confidential/1), Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish (confidential/confidential/2), halibut (confidential/confidential/3), and salmon (confidential/confidential/1), and other finfish (confidential/confidential/2).

In 2000 a total of six Depoe Bay residents served as crewmembers aboard vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year two community residents held registered state permits and five held registered federal permits.

A total of 10 state and federal permits were registered to individuals in Depoe Bay in 2000. In the same year residents held 1 crab and 2 groundfish License Limitation Program permits. In 2000 residents also held 3 BSAI groundfish, 1 halibut, 1 shellfish, and 1 other finfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. The halibut and sablefish individual fishing quota shares for people residing in the community were 1,028,518 and 110,450 respectively.

Sportfishing

While the majority of the charter boats generally target West Coast fisheries, Depoe Bay community members purchased 16 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

¹ Oregon State University. No date. Confederated Tribes of Siletz: History, Tradition, and Culture, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/soc204/plazad/native2/marya/marya.htm> (access date - November 2004).

² Confederated Tribes of the Siletz. 2003. About the Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.npaihb.org/profiles/tribal_profiles/Oregon/Confederated%20Tribes%20of%20Siletz%20Indians%20Tribal%20Profile.htm (access date - November 2004).

³ Oregon State University. No date. Confederated Tribes of Siletz: History, Tradition, and Culture, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/soc204/plazad/native2/marya/marya.htm> (access date - November 2004).

⁴ Confederated Tribes of the Siletz. 2003. About the Tribe, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.npaihb.org/profiles/tribal_profiles/Oregon/Confederated%20Tribes%20of%20Siletz%20Indians%20Tribal%20Profile.htm (access date - November 2004).

⁵ Lincoln County place names. 2001. Depoe Bay, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://users.wi.net/~census/lesson19.html> (access date - November 2004).

⁶ On this day in Oregon. 2003. How Depoe Bay was named, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.onthisdayinoregon.com/09_09.html (access date - November 2004).

⁷ Lincoln County place names. 2001. Depoe Bay, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://users.wi.net/~census/lesson19.html> (access date - November 2004).

⁸ Lincoln County place names. 2001. Depoe Bay, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://users.wi.net/~census/lesson19.html> (access date - November 2004).

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- ⁹ StateofOregon.com. 2001. City History: Annual Salmon Bake, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.stateoforegon.com/cgi-bin/cities/history.pl?&city=depoe+bay> (access date - November 2004).
- ¹⁰ StateofOregon.com. 2001. City History: Fleet of Flowers, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.stateoforegon.com/cgi-bin/cities/history.pl?&city=depoe+bay&history=2> (access date - November 2004).
- ¹¹ Newport News Times. 2004. Depoe Bay concludes change in crab pot storage rules, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.newportnewstimes.com/articles/2004/11/05/news/news17.txt> (access date - November 2004).
- ¹² Newport News Times. 2004. Depoe Bay concludes change in crab pot storage rules, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.newportnewstimes.com/articles/2004/11/05/news/news17.txt> (access date - November 2004).
- ¹³ Congresswoman Hooley. 2004. Oregon Water Projects Slated for Over 14\$ Million in Federal Funding, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/or05_hooley/WaterProject061604.html (access date - November 2004).
- ¹⁴ Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2004. West Coast Marine Fishing Community Descriptions, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.psmfc.org/efin/docs/communities_2004/ (access date - August 2004).
- ¹⁵ Oregon State Marine Board. 2004. Depoe Bay Marine Fuel Funding Approved, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.marinebd.osmb.state.or.us/News/2004/Jan16News.html> (access date - November 2004).
- ¹⁶ Congresswoman Hooley. 2004. Oregon Water Projects Slated for Over 14\$ Million in Federal Funding, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/or05_hooley/WaterProject061604.html (access date - November 2004).
- 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.
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