

Florence, Oregon

People and Place

Location

Florence, located along Highway 101 on the Oregon coast, covers 4.9 square miles of land and 0.6 square miles of water. It is approximately 172 miles southwest of Portland and 61 miles west of Eugene. The geographic coordinates of Florence, Oregon are: 43°58'58"N, 124°05'55"W. Florence is the major coastal town in the western portion of Oregon's Lane County.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Florence was 7263, a 40.7% increase from the 1990 U.S. Census. In 2000 the gender structure was relatively evenly divided with slightly more females (54.1%) than males (45.9%). The median age in 2000 was 55.8, which is considerably higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. According to the same data, only 16.8% of the population was age 17 or younger, while 30.3% was between the ages of 30 and 59, and 34.8% was age 67 or older. For the population 18 years and over, 82.2% had a high school education or higher, 16.5% had attained a bachelor's degree or higher, and 7.7% earned a graduate or professional degree. The highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma/equivalency for 29.9% of the population. In 2000, 76.4% of the population lived in family households.

The 2000 U.S. Census shows that the racial composition was predominantly White, (95.9%). Black or African American (0.3%), American Indian and Alaskan native (0.9%), Asian (0.6%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.1%) each constituted less than one percent of the population. Overall, 0.6% classified themselves as belonging to some other race and 1.7% of the population identified with two or more races. A total of 2.4% identified as Hispanic or Latino. Less than five percent (3.5%) of the population was foreign-born. Of those, 26.2% were born in Canada and 17.2% in Germany.

History

The area occupied by Florence is bordered by both the Pacific Ocean and the Siuslaw River, named for the Indian Tribe of the same name who originally inhabited the area. The Oregon coast, including the Florence area, was explored by the Spaniards during the age of exploration, but it was the English Captain Cook who was responsible for giving European names to many of the coastal landmarks in the Florence vicinity. In the latter half of the 19th century Europeans began arriving in earnest. The encroachment of Euro-American settlers upon Siuslaw land, in 1850, roughly coincided with the tail end of a smallpox epidemic that dramatically reduced the tribe's numbers. Dependent upon timber and fisheries, the community of Florence reached a population of 300 in 1900 and was served by a lumber mill and two general stores. Existing in a relatively remote part of the state, Florence was dependent upon the essentials of the mercantile system and ferry links across the Siuslaw River during the first half of the 20th century. Currently, the community has evolved and added retirement and tourism expenditures to its natural resource-oriented economy. Florence features a March festival

that emphasizes a beach clean-up and a shellfish festival in September called “Chowder, Blues and Brews.” The community is home to the Historic Siuslaw River drawbridge and also the nearby Sea Lion caves, both popular among tourists to Florence.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The State of Oregon Economic and Community Development Department lists Peace Harbor Hospital, Fred Meyer retail, and the Siuslaw School District as the top three employers in Florence in 2003.¹ According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 35.1% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 9.9% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Of the population 16 years of age and over, 61% were not in the labor force. Of the employed civilian population, 22.9% worked in ‘Educational, health and social services,’ 16.6% worked in ‘Accommodation and food services,’ and 16.1% worked in ‘Retail trade.’ A total of 12.1% of the employed civilian population was employed by the government at some level (local, state, or Federal); however none were reported as working for the government in the ‘Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining’ industries. Only 3.8% of the employed civilian population over the age of 16 was involved in ‘Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting’ according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

Florence’s per capita income in 1999 was \$18,008 according to the 2000 U.S. Census and the median household income was \$30,505. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 14.4% of the population was below the poverty level in 1999. In 2000 there were 4174 housing units in Florence, 85.4% were occupied and 14.6% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 67.5% were owner occupied and 32.5% were renter occupied. Almost half (49.5%) of the vacant housing units were for ‘seasonal, recreational, or occasional’ use and 23.4% were ‘for rent.’

Governance

Florence is an incorporated town with a Council-Manager form of government. The elected five-member City Council (including the Mayor) is the policy-making body while the City Manager is responsible for daily operations. 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.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Marine Resources Program is based approximately 50 miles south in Newport. There is a field station of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Northwest Fisheries Science Center located in Newport, as well as a U.S. Coast Guard Motor Lifeboat Station. Portland, approximately 173 miles away, holds both Pacific and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings.

Facilities

The community of Florence lies on U.S. Highway 101, also known as the Oregon Coast Highway, and is linked to Eugene, Oregon, by Highway 126. Florence is served by the Florence Municipal airport, by larger airports in Eugene, some 60 miles away, and the Portland International Airport.

As the third largest employer in Florence, the Siuslaw School District features an elementary, middle, and high school. Total enrollment in 2001 was 1637. Electricity is provided by the Central Lincoln People's Utility District and water and sewer services by the City of Florence. The Florence Police Department administers local law enforcement with 19 paid officers. The centerpiece of Florence's health care facilities is the Peace Harbor Hospital. Numerous other medical clinics are located in the community. Florence's lodging and accommodations include several hotels, motels, and bed and breakfast operations. Visitors to Florence are also served by campgrounds, recreational vehicle parks, and vacation rentals.

The Port of Siuslaw in Florence offers berths for local pleasure boats and fishing vessels, and can accommodate vessels up to at least 85-feet in length. Barge facilities are also available at the Port. The Port of Siuslaw is governed by a 5-member Port Commission.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

West Coast fishery landings in Florence in 2000 were delivered by 38 commercially registered vessels. In the same year landings in Florence were made in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): crab (112.8 t/\$562,057/10), groundfish (124.3 t/\$442,781/15), highly migratory species (6.9 t/\$11,712/5), salmon (29.7 t/\$113,885/22), shrimp (35.7 t/\$28,529/5), and other species (1.5 t/\$6808/5). Available data indicates that there were zero fish processors operating in the community in 2000.

A total of 41 commercial vessels were owned by Florence residents in 2000, including 19 that participated in the federal groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Florence residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/14/0), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/41/2), shellfish (NA/1/NA), and shrimp (NA/2/0).²

In 2000, a total of four federal groundfish permits were held by five community members. In the same year, recorded data indicates that the number of Florence residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/12/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/33/2), shellfish (0/1/NA), and shrimp (0/2/0).³

According to available data at least 60 commercial fishing permits were registered to Florence residents in 2000, including 56 state registered permits. Recorded data indicates that the number of state permits held by Florence residents in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/13/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/37/3), shellfish (0/1/NA), and shrimp (0/2/0).⁴

Sportfishing

Available data indicates that there is at least one sportfishing charter business operating in Florence. There were seven sportfishing licensing agents in Florence in 2000. In the same year, agents sold 4907 sportfishing licenses at an estimated value of \$80,163.

For the port complex around Florence, the 2000 recreational salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 250 Chinook salmon and 472 coho salmon. The recreational non-salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 213 fish. The top species landed, in order, include: greenstripe, canary, and yelloweye rockfish, and Pacific halibut.

Subsistence

Local community members, both tribal and nontribal, may engage in subsistence fishing for marine and stream resources in Florence 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 Florence is not discussed in detail in this profile due to the lack of available data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 there was one vessel owned by a Florence resident that participated in North Pacific fisheries. The vessel made landings in the following North Pacific fisheries, but landings data (metric tons/value of landings) is confidential: Bering Strait Aleutian Island (BSAI) groundfish, Gulf of Alaska groundfish, halibut, salmon, shellfish, and other finfish.

Four Florence residents served as crew members on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. In the same year, one community resident held a state permit for Alaska fisheries and seven Florence residents held federal permits for North Pacific fisheries.

A total of five commercial fishing permits for North Pacific fisheries were held by Florence residents in 2000. Residents held individual fishing quota shares for North Pacific halibut (10,863) and sablefish (1535). In the same year, residents of Florence held one Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permit for BSAI groundfish and one groundfish License Limitation Program (LLP) permit.

Sportfishing

While the majority of the sportfishermen in Florence target West Coast fisheries, 59 Florence community members purchased Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

¹ State of Oregon. 2004. Oregon Economic & Community Development: Florence 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=Florence&-script=hit%20count&-Find> (access date - November 2004).

² '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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