

Gold Beach, Oregon

People and Place

Location

Gold Beach is the County Seat of Curry County and is located at 42°24'27"N and 124°25'14"W. The community is situated along the southern coast of Oregon at the mouth of the world famous Rogue River and is considered "the heart of America's Wild Rivers Coast."¹ The nearest major metropolitan area is Portland, which is found 298.9 miles to the northeast. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Gold Beach encompasses a total area of 2.5 square miles, including 0.2 square miles of water and 2.3 square miles of land.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Gold Beach had a total population of 1897 people with a population density of 813.7 people per square mile of land. Gold Beach revealed a 22.7% gross population growth from years 1990 to 2000. In 2000 a total of 93.1% of the inhabitants were White, 0.3% African American, 2.2% Native American, 0.9% Asian, and 0.05% Pacific Islander. The ethnic composition of the community also changed between 1990 and 2000, with a net percentage decrease of 1.4% for those inhabitants who identified themselves as having American Indian or Alaska Native origins. A small percentage, 1.2%, identified with some other race and 2.3% with two or more racial groups. Another 2.7% of the population identified themselves as having Hispanic or Latino origins. The 2000 U.S. Census identified 1.5% of the inhabitants as foreign-born, of which 28.6% were born in Romania.

In 2000, the gender distribution in Gold Beach was relatively balanced with 48% males and 52% females. The median age of community residents in 2000 was 44.8, compared to the national median age of 35.3. The 2000 U.S. Census stated that 23.5% of the population 18 years and older received a high school degree as their highest educational attainment. In the same year, 74.5% received a high school degree or higher compared to the national average of 22.3%. It is also noteworthy that 17.9% received a bachelor's degree or higher, while the national average was 22.3%. Additionally, 7.4% had received a graduate degree or higher.

History

The community of Gold Beach was born in 1853 when gold was discovered in the sand of the Rogue River. Initially the settlement was called Ellensburg, although people referred to the quickly established community as Gold Beach. In 1858 it became the County Seat of Curry County. The gold sluicing in this area was never as profitable as other gold fields, and once the gold was exhausted the community survived mainly on income earned from silver salmon runs.²

In the Gold Beach area in 1877, R.D. Hume opened the first salmon cannery in Oregon and a fish hatchery.³ At this time it was not known that salmon could be caught using hook and line gear, but in 1896 while a man named Mr. Frank was trout fishing with a fly rod in the Rogue River, he caught an extremely surprising 18 lb. salmon with his fly rod. Sportfishing in the river after that event became a new pastime. Since then salmon has been an important community resource, surviving as the lumber, fur, and gold industries faded. Commercial fishing for salmon in the Rogue increased quickly after 1908 and largely depleted the stock. This led to the end of commercial fishing on the river in 1935. Following the closure of commercial fishing, sportfishing in the area has become even more popular and today anglers are still drawn to the area to fish for salmon, trout, steelhead, and other types of sport fish.⁴

The community's natural resources continue to draw large numbers of tourists and sport fishermen to the area. Yearly festivals and events include America's Wild Rivers Coast Seafood, Art and Wine Festival, Rogue River Salmon Derby Competition, Fisherman's Fish Fry, and Clam Chowder Festival.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The major industries in Gold Beach are fishing, lumber, and recreation and tourism. The five largest employers of the area include Curry County, Central Curry School District, Freeman Marine, U.S. Forest Service, and state offices.⁵ The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 4.7% of the employed civilian population 16 years and over worked in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. This percentage may not be indicative of the actual number of people in these professions as many are self-employed, especially in the fishing industry. Another 19.6% worked in educational, health and social services and 14.2% were employed in retail professions. Additionally, 12.7% worked in arts, entertainment recreation, and accommodation and food services, while 25.3% were employed by the government. The U.S. Census states that the unemployment rate in 2000 was 3.6% compared to the national average of 5.7% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). For the population 16 years and older, 41.3% were not in the labor force, while 56.1% were employed.

In 1999, median household income was \$30,243 and per capita income was \$16,717. About 12.4% of the population was living below poverty level in 1999. Of the 987 housing units in the community in 2000, 84% were occupied and 16% were vacant. Around 37.3% of the vacant units were for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of the occupied housing units, 66.3% were owner occupied, while 33.7% were renter occupied.

Governance

Gold Beach is an incorporated city that operates under a Council-Manager charter. 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.

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.

Gold Beach is 177 miles from the National Marine Fisheries Service research station in Newport, Oregon. Gold Beach is also home to an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) field office. The community is 79.1 miles from the nearest U.S. Coast Guard Unit in Coos Bay and 298.9 miles from the closest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office in Portland. Pacific and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings are held 298.9 miles away in Portland.

Facilities

Gold Beach is accessible by a number of transportation options. Greyhound provides bus service to nearby communities and to greater metropolitan areas throughout the country via Highway 101, the major route intersecting Gold Beach. The local Gold Beach Municipal Airport is a landing base for small planes. The community is also located 312 miles from the Portland International Airport.

Local schools include one K-8 elementary school and a high school. The main electric supply is provided by Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative. Water and sewer services are supplied by the City of Gold Beach. The Gold Beach Police Department administers local law enforcement. Curry General Hospital provides medical services to Gold Beach residents. Lodging accommodations in the community include bed-and-breakfasts, hotels, and motels, campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks, and vacation rentals.

The Port of Gold Beach offers landings for commercial and recreational craft, as well as a small freight item facility.⁶ The harbor entrance is only 13-feet deep. According to a study by Oregon Sea Grant, “[a] major concern for all Oregon ports is that as fishing tonnage drops, there is less justification for dredging, which is required to keep most of the ports safe for commerce.”⁷ The nearest ODFW fish hatchery is the Elk River Hatchery, located North of Gold Beach along the Elk River in Port Orford.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 a total of 50 vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Gold Beach. 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 (30 t/\$133,107/5), groundfish (43 t/\$236,173/36), salmon (confidential/confidential/1), and other species (131 t/\$173,950/17). According to available data there were no fish processors operating in Gold Beach in 2000.

Gold Beach residents owned 20 vessels in 2000, seven of which participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Gold Beach residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/3/3), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/8/4), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/0).⁸

One Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permit was held by one Gold Beach resident in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of individual community members holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/3/3), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/6/7), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (1/2/2).⁹

According to available data, 40 permits were registered to Gold Beach residents in 2000, of which 39 were registered state permits. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by Gold Beach community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/6/3), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/6/10), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (2/10/2).¹⁰

Sportfishing

Gold Beach had at least 27 outfitter guide businesses in 2003. Ten licensed charter vessel businesses were located in the community, of which two had their homeport in Brookings, Oregon. Internet sources indicate that there were at least 28 sportfishing businesses in 2003 and at least 29 currently.¹¹

Migrating fish make their first appearance in the Rogue River at the end of March and range in weight from 15-40 lbs. The fall Chinook salmon run begins in mid July and goes through October. Summer steelhead and coho salmon runs start in late August and mid-September. The Gold Beach ocean charter season goes year-round and targets lingcod and rockfish.¹²

Presently, Gold Beach has nine licensing vendors. In 2000, the number of licenses sold by active agents was 3566 at a value of \$60,984. For the community of Gold Beach, the 2000 recreational salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 74 Chinook salmon. The recreational non-salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was a total of 15,416 fish. The top species landed include black rockfish, blue rockfish, canary rockfish, and lingcod.

Subsistence

Many local community members engage in subsistence fishing. Both nontribal and tribal fishermen utilize marine and stream resources for subsistence means from the areas within and surrounding Gold Beach. 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 Gold Beach is not discussed in detail in this Community Profile due to the lack of available data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Two Gold Beach residents served as crewmembers aboard vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. Two community members held two registered salmon Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits in the same year.

Sportfishing

Gold Beach residents purchased 27 sportfishing licenses for Alaskan fisheries in 2000.

¹ City of Gold Beach. No date. Factsheet, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.goldbeach.org/html/PressRoom/pressroom_factsheet.cfm (access date - October 2004).

² City of Gold Beach. No date. Gold Beach Historic Snapshot, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.goldbeach.org/html/history.cfm> (access date - November 2005).

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- ³ Gilden, J. 1999. Oregon's Changing Coastal Fishing Communities: Appendix B, Oregon Community Summaries: Gold Beach, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs/o99001.html#appb> (access date - November 2005).
- ⁴ City of Gold Beach. No date. Gold Beach Historic Snapshot, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.goldbeach.org/html/history.cfm> (access date - November 2005).
- ⁵ Oregon Economic & Community Development Department. 2004. Gold Beach 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=Gold%20Beach&-script=hit%20count&-Find> (access date - October 2004).
- ⁶ NOAA Coastal Services Center. 2002. Gold Beach port and harbor profile, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/products/tsunamis/htm/cascadia/gbeach.htm> (access date - October 2004).
- ⁷ Gilden, J. 1999. Oregon's Changing Coastal Fishing Communities: Appendix B, Oregon Community Summaries: Gold Beach, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs/o99001.html#appb> (access date - October 2004).
- ⁸ '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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- ¹⁰ '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.
- ¹¹ Goldbeach.net. 2003. Fishing guides, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.goldbeach.net/fishing.htm> (access date - October 2004).
- ¹² City of Gold Beach. No date. Fishing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.goldbeach.org/html/ThingsToDo/fishing.cfm> (access date - October 2004).