

Winchester Bay, Oregon

People and Place

Location

The coastal community of Winchester Bay is located in Douglas County at 43°40'38"N and 124°10'25"W. Winchester Bay is situated approximately 198 miles south of Portland, Oregon, and 535 miles north of San Francisco, California. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the community encompasses a total area of 3.7 square miles, including 1.0 square miles of water and 2.7 square miles of land.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Winchester Bay had a total population of 488 people with a population density of 183.6 people per square mile of land. In 2000, the percentage of males and females was 53.9% and 46.1% respectively. The median age of the population in 2000 was 49.5, higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. Approximately 82.2% of individuals eighteen years of age and over earned the equivalent of a high school diploma or higher, 30.8% earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 6.4% earned a graduate or professional degree. The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 80.3% of the population lived in family households.

The 2000 U.S. Census reports that the racial composition of Winchester Bay was 96.11% White, 1.4% American Indian and Alaska native, and 0.4% Asian. Less than one percent identified with 0.2% some other race and 1.8% with two or more races. A small percentage (1.4%) identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 4.9% of the population was foreign-born, with residents originating from Canada, the United Kingdom, and Guatemala. The most common ancestries reported in the 2000 U.S. Census were German (13.8%), Irish (12.1%), and English (7.7%).

History

The area of the Winchester Bay was originally inhabited by the ancestors of the modern-day Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua (Kuitsh), and Siuslaw Indians. The sixteenth century brought contact between the local Native American Indians, Spanish, and British explorers. By the 1700s contact increased and by 1791 Lower Umpqua traded with ships that stopped at the mouth of the Umpqua River.¹ Some of the first recorded contact between the Siuslaw and fur trappers from the Hudson's Bay Company occurred in 1826. Two years later, in 1828, conflict between the Lower Umpqua and fur trapper and explorer Jedediah Strong Smith resulted in the loss of many of Smith's company.²

Fur trapping continued to grow in the area and in 1836 the Hudson's Bay Company established a trading fort, Fort Umpqua, upriver near the modern day town of Elkton. In addition to fur trapping, the gold rush brought more Euro-American settlers to the area. Winchester Bay was initially established as a trading point called West Umpqua. The town was established in 1850 and was named after Herman Winchester, a member of an expedition from San Francisco. Winchester served as the County Seat for Douglas County and the first meeting of the Douglas County Commission was held there in 1853.³ Due to popular vote, Winchester Bay lost their role as County Seat to Deer Creek or modern-day Roseburg in 1854 and many local businesses left Winchester Bay for Roseburg. Prominent industries throughout the 1900s included timber, agriculture, and fishing. Today tourism is increasingly becoming a prominent sector in Winchester Bay.

Winchester Bay is located within the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area headquarters.⁴ A 50-mile stretch of sand dunes which offers hiking trails, beaches, 30 lakes, fishing, swimming, riding areas, interpretive exhibits, and wildlife watching. Campgrounds extend throughout the area. The Umpqua River Lighthouse overlooks Winchester Bay and offers summer tours. The Dean Creek Elk viewing area supports approximately 150 Roosevelt Elk on a 1000-acre reserve. Neighboring Reedsport is the home of the Umpqua Discovery Center which houses displays of the area's history.

Events in the area include the Tsalila Festival which celebrates Native American culture and traditions and activities focused on watershed restoration and salmon recovery. Dunefest centers on dune buggies with competitions and shows and the Ocean Festival includes U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Demonstrations and a Seafood BBQ. The Oregon Divisional Chainsaw Sculpting Championships, Dune Musher's Mail Run, and Summer Concert Series are examples of various other activities held throughout the year.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census the industries with highest employment for the population 16 years and over were: construction (14.7%), accommodation and food services (16.3%), and manufacturing (10.0%). The 'agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting' category represented 5.7% of the employed population. The unemployment rate was 15.5% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), higher than the national average of 5.7%. The percent employed was 36.3%, lower than the national average of 50.5%, and 53% were not in the labor force, higher than the national average of 36.1%. Approximately 27% of the labor force was employed by the local, state, or federal government.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Winchester Bay's per capita income in 1999 was \$17,307. The median household income in 1999 was \$31,139, lower than the national average of \$41,944. For whom poverty status was determined, 21.3% 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 362 housing units in Winchester Bay, of which 65.8% were occupied and 34.3% were vacant. Of the vacant housing units 41.9% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. The occupied housing units were 65.6% and 34.5% owner and renter occupied respectively.

Governance

Winchester Bay is an unincorporated town within Douglas County. The State of Oregon has no general sales tax but the Oregon Tourism Commission levies a 1% overnight lodging tax.

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.

Winchester Bay is approximately 76 miles from the National Marine Fisheries Service research station in Newport, Oregon. The closest Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offices are located approximately 29 miles away in Charleston. The Umpqua River Station of the U.S. Coast Guard is located in Winchester Bay proper. Portland is home to offices of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings.

Facilities

Winchester Bay is accessible by ground transportation along Highway 101. The closest airport servicing Winchester Bay residents is the North Bend Municipal Airport, approximately 19 miles south in North Bend. The Newport Municipal Airport, located 62 miles south in Newport, Oregon, also offers commercial services.

Students in Winchester Bay attend two public schools within the Reedsport School District 105. An elementary school supports kindergarten through grade six and the Reedsport Junior/Senior High School supports grades seven through twelfth. Southwestern Oregon Community College in Coos Bay is the closest local community college and the University of Oregon is the nearest four-year college, located in Eugene, Oregon.

Water is supplied to Winchester Bay residents by the City of Reedsport, Verizon Communications administers telephone communications, and electric power is provided by the Central Lincoln Peoples Utility District. Public safety is administered by the Douglas County Sheriff's office, located in Roseburg, Oregon, and the Oregon State Police. Emergency services are provided by the Winchester Bay Rural Fire Protection District with one fire station, approximately 20 volunteer fire fighters, and emergency medical technicians. The closest hospital is the Lower Umpqua Hospital, located 13 miles away in Reedsport followed by the Bay Area Hospital approximately 22 miles away in Coos Bay. There are approximately two hotels or motels, two bed and breakfast facilities, two vacation rental facilities, one resort, and several state, county, and private campgrounds and recreational vehicle (RV) parks identified by the local Chamber of Commerce.⁵

Winchester Bay is included within the Port of Umpqua Port District, which owns a dock in Winchester Bay. In 2000 a complete renovation of the dock provided facilities for at least 35 commercial vessels, five fish buyers, a dock assistant, and a hyster to facilitate offloading of catch.⁶ In addition to the commercial docks, the Salmon Harbor Marina RV Park serves the recreational fishing sector. The Marina RV Resort is the one of the largest on Oregon's coast and lies next to the Salmon Marina. It includes 500 moorage slips with electricity and shore power, two public boat ramps, showers, a fuel dock, and boat repair facilities.⁷

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Currently there are two processors located in Winchester Bay, Sportsmen's Cannery and Smokehouse and Umpqua Aquaculture Inc. In 2000 there were 57 vessels that delivered landings

to Winchester 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/1), crab (250.8 t/\$1,170,610/23), groundfish (33.6 t/\$129,193/20), highly migratory species (44.4 t/\$105,495/10), salmon (44.1 t/\$159,668/33), shellfish (confidential/confidential/3), shrimp (0.1 t/\$711/4), and other species (30.8 t/\$196,940/12).

Winchester Bay residents owned 17 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, seven of which participated in the federal groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Winchester Bay residents that participated in each said fisheries by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/7/0), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (0/14/2), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/0).⁸

In 2000 there were no federal groundfish fishery permits held by Winchester Bay community members. Recorded data indicates that the number of residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (0/1/0), crab (2/5/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (14/12/3), shellfish (0/0/NA), and shrimp (3/3/0).⁹

According to the available data, 10 permits were registered to Winchester Bay residents in 2000, all of which were registered state permits. 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 (0/6/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (0/13/5), shellfish (0/0/NA), and shrimp (0/4/0).¹⁰

Sportfishing

Winchester Bay had at least one outfitter guide business in 2003. Five licensed charter vessel businesses were located in the community in the same year. Presently, Winchester has one licensing vendor. In 2000, there were no licenses sold by licensing agents.

For the community of Winchester Bay, the 2000 recreational salmonid catch in the Ocean Boat Fishery was 4432 Chinook salmon and 2882 coho salmon. The recreational non-salmonid catch was a total of 2147 fish. The top species landed included yellowtail rockfish, lingcod, canary rockfish, yelloweye rockfish, greenstriped rockfish, and quillback rockfish.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 there were no vessels owned by Winchester Bay residents that participated in North Pacific fisheries. One resident served as a crewmember on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

Fishermen based in Winchester Bay purchased one sportfishing licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000. There were no residents operating sportfishing guide businesses in Alaska in 2000.

¹ Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. 2005. *Culture and History*, [Online]. Available URL: http://www.ctclusi.org/cultural_historical.asp (access date - November 2005).

² Jedediah Smith Society. 2005. *Biography*, [Online]. Available URL: <http://www.jedediahsmithsociety.org/bioforstudents.html> (access date - November 2005).

³ Oregon Historical County Records Guide. 2005. Douglas County History, [Online]. Available URL: <http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/county/cpdouglashome.html> (access date - November 2005).

⁴ Chamber of Commerce. No date. Reedsport/Winchester Bay, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.reedsportcc.org/lodging.html> (access date - August 2005).

⁵ Reedsport/Winchester Bay Chamber of Commerce. No date. Lodging and Campgrounds, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.reedsportcc.org/lodging.html> (access date - August 2005).

⁶ Port of Umpqua. 2005. Port Projects, [Online]. Available URL: http://www.portofumpqua.org/port_projects.html (access date - August 2005).

⁷ The Marine RV Resort. 2005. Salmon Harbor Marina, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.marinarvresort.com/marina.htm> (access date - August 2005).

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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