

## **Aberdeen, Washington**

### **People and Place**

#### *Location*

Aberdeen, known as the “Gateway to the Olympic Peninsula,” is located along the southern shore of the Olympic Peninsula, where the Wishkah and Chehalis rivers converge. Situated in Grays Harbor County, the area encompasses 12.2 square miles of land and 1.6 square miles of water. At a driving distance of approximately 109 miles from Aberdeen, Seattle is the nearest major U.S. city. Aberdeen lies at 46°58’32’’N and 123°48’52’’W.

#### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Aberdeen was 16,461 in 2000 and has remained quite stable since the 1990 U.S. Census count of 16,565 residents ten years earlier. The 2000 U.S. Census shows an even gender distribution with slightly more females (51.5%) than males (49.5%). The median age of the population in 2000 was 34.9, similar to the national average of 35.3 for the same year. The age structure of Aberdeen demonstrates a significant population drop between the ages of 18 and 24, typical for a community without a major tertiary education provider. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, of the surveyed population 18 years and older in Aberdeen, 90.0% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 10.3% had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 2.6% had attained a graduate or professional degree.

The vast majority of the population of Aberdeen recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census in 2000 was White (84.9%). Other racial categories with which people identified were Black or African American (0.5%), American Indian and Alaska Native (3.7%), and Asian (2.1%). Additionally, a portion of the population identified with some other race alone (5.1%) or with two or more races (3.5%). Of the total population in 2000 surveyed by the U.S. Census, 9.1% identified as Hispanic or Latino. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that approximately 7% of the population was foreign-born. The majority of the foreign-born population was from the Americas outside of the United States and Asia.

#### *History*

Coastal Salish-speaking Indians have inhabited this region since before European contact. The Lower Chehalis people inhabited the area of present-day Grays Harbor and relied heavily on marine resources, including fish, seals, clams, and other shellfish. They traded up and down well-established trade routes throughout the coastal Pacific Northwest.<sup>1</sup>

Aberdeen obtained its name (which means “confluence of two rivers”) from early Scottish immigrants who settled in the area and named it in honor of Aberdeen, Scotland. The town grew up around a saw mill that was established in 1884. Only a few decades earlier the area was a stopping-off point for miners headed to Canada. The few Euro-American families that settled in Aberdeen during the early years were dependent on neighboring Chehalis Indians for resources and transport. By the first decade of the 1900s a significant infrastructure had developed and dozens of lumber and shingle mills lined the harbor as the timber industry grew to dominate the economy of the settlement. With

the construction of a salmon cannery at the mouth of the Wishkah River, fishing became the other economic leg supporting the town.<sup>2</sup>

An historical Aberdeen shipyard is home to the flagship of Washington State, the sailing vessel *Lady Washington*. Built in Aberdeen, it is an historic reproduction of the ship sailed by Captain Robert Gray on his first northwest voyage. Captain Gray was the first American to "discover" Grays Harbor and the first American to circumnavigate the world. Grays Harbor Historical Seaport contains exhibits about shipbuilding and a replica of the *Columbia Rediviva*, the ship commanded by Robert Gray as he explored the Northwest Coast and established the U.S. claim to the Oregon country in 1792. Today, Aberdeen is a community that depends heavily on natural resource industries, including timber and fishing. Because of its location on Highway 101, it also receives a great deal of traffic from tourists on their way to the scenic Olympic Peninsula.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 15% of the employed civilian population 16 years of age and over was employed within local, state, or federal governments. The largest employment sectors for Aberdeen's employed civilian population 16 years of age and over were "sales and office occupations" (25.4%) followed by "management, professional and related occupations" (21.9%).

Aberdeen's economy also relies on commercial and charter fishing, shellfish harvesting, seafood processing, tourism, and wood processing. Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining employed 7% of the employed civilian population 16 years of age and over in 2000. The Weyerhaeuser Company, located in Aberdeen, is Grays Harbor County's largest employer, employing and contracting over 2000 workers.<sup>3</sup>

According to 2000 U.S. Census data 52.7% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 5.8% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 41.4% of the population over 16 years of age was not in the labor force, as compared to the national average of 36.1%. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that 22.2% of Aberdeen's population in 1999 lived below the poverty level. The median household income in 1999 was \$30,683 and the per capita income was \$16,092. In 2000 there were 7536 housing units in Aberdeen. Of all occupied housing units, 58.4% and 41.6% were owner and renter occupied respectively. About 13.5% of the housing units were vacant, of which 3.5% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

### *Governance*

Incorporated in 1890, the City of Aberdeen is one of four municipalities in Grays Harbor County.<sup>4</sup> The City operates under a mayor-council form of government, with a mayor and a twelve-member City Council. Grays Harbor County levies an 8.3% sales tax and a 3% lodging tax.

Several taxes directly impact commercial and recreational fishermen. Commercial fishermen operating in Washington waters are subject to the Business and Occupation (B&O) tax under the "extraction" classification (0.48%); those fishing outside of Washington waters but selling fish within Washington are subject to the tax under either

the “wholesaling” or “retailing” classifications (0.48% and 0.47% respectively), unless the fish are sold in interstate or foreign commerce.<sup>5</sup> Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).<sup>6</sup>

Washington State levies a Food, Fish, and Shellfish Tax, paid by the first commercial processor of food fish or shellfish, including: Chinook, coho, and chum salmon or eggs (5.62%); sockeye and pink salmon or eggs (3.37%); oysters (0.09%); sea urchins/cucumbers (4.92%); and shellfish and other food fish or eggs (2.25%). Tuna, mackerel, and jackfish are exempt from this tax. Additionally, there is an Enhanced Food Fish Tax, which applies to the “first possession of enhanced food fish by an owner in Washington State” and is based on the “value of the enhanced food fish at the point of landing.”<sup>7</sup> The rate of the tax depends upon the species of fish or shellfish.

Vessels used for commercial fishing purposes part-time are subject to an annual Washington State Watercraft Excise Tax levied at 0.5% of the fair market value of the boat. Vessels used for commercial fishing purposes full-time are subject to personal property taxes at the base rate levied by the state. Washington also levies a 10% excise tax on fishing equipment, a three percent tax on electric motors and sonar fish finders, and import duties on tackle and pleasure boats to fund sportfish restoration programs.<sup>8</sup> Washington State levies a tax of \$0.28 per gallon on motor vehicle fuel. Since most of this tax is used to maintain terrestrial roadways, Washington boaters are entitled to a refund of about \$0.17 per gallon. The difference includes state sales tax and a penny per gallon contribution to a Coastal Protection Fund. Most diesel fuel sold at docks has already had this tax removed.<sup>9</sup>

There is a National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Office located approximately 109 miles to the northeast in Seattle. Offices of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and meetings of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council are also located in Seattle. Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings are routinely held in both Seattle and Tacoma. A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife office is located about 11 miles east in Montesano, Washington. There is a U.S. Coast Guard Station (USCG) located in Aberdeen at the entrance to Grays Harbor that guards Grays Harbor bar, one of the most hazardous bars in the Pacific Northwest. The USCG station at Aberdeen has four vessels and is responsible for marine safety between Queets River and Ocean Park and from Preacher’s Slough to 50 nautical miles offshore.

### *Facilities*

Aberdeen is accessible by land, sea, and air. U.S. Highway 12 runs east and west and connects Aberdeen to the Interstate 5 corridor. Highway 101, which circumscribes the Olympic Peninsula, also runs through Aberdeen. Port of Grays Harbor provides moorage facilities to local residents. Aberdeen Airport, available for public use, has one runway and is located immediately adjacent to the harbor, one mile north of Aberdeen. The Sea-Tac International Airport, located 88 miles to the northeast, is the closest airport offering international service.

Aberdeen has six public elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools, plus one school that offer instruction to students from kindergarten through grade twelve.<sup>10</sup> There is also one private elementary school and one two-year accredited college. Grays Harbor Public Utility District administers electricity for city residents. The City of Aberdeen’s Sewer Plant and Water Department provides residents and businesses

with sewer and water services. Public safety in Aberdeen is provided by the Aberdeen Police Department, with assistance from the Grays Harbor County Sheriff's Department. The Aberdeen Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency services. Grays Harbor Community Hospital, located in Aberdeen, provides medical services to residents in the area. There are ten hotels and motels located within Aberdeen.

Aberdeen's port facilities are part of the Port of Grays Harbor complex. This facility is the largest coastal marina in the Pacific Northwest and is home to Washington State's largest charter fishing fleet.<sup>11</sup> With a 650 vessel moorage capacity (for vessels up to 200-feet in length) the Marina offers boat manufacturing and repair services, refrigerated shoreside processing facilities, and vessel supplies.

There are several non-profit organizations based in Aberdeen that focus on fishery-related issues, including Friends of Grays Harbor, a volunteer citizen's group made up of crabbers, fishermen, oyster growers, and citizens, dedicated to foster and promote the economic, biological, and social uniqueness of a healthy Grays Harbor estuary.<sup>12</sup>

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

There were at least two processors operating in Aberdeen in 2000, Associated Seafoods Company and Brady's Oysters Inc. Of the 44 unique vessels that delivered landings to the Port of Grays Harbor in 2000, 37 were commercial vessels and the remaining were for tribal commercial, personal use, and aquaculture. Landings data for Aberdeen were recorded as part of the Grays Harbor Port Group which includes the nearby communities of Bay City, Oakville, and Hoquiam. Reported landings for this port group in 2000 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 (186.5 t/\$925,167/18), salmon (1.6 t/\$4,340/4), and shellfish (confidential/confidential/1).

Aberdeen residents owned 55 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, 31 of which participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. Recorded data indicates that the number of vessels owned by Aberdeen residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (2/0/0), crab (21/0/0), groundfish (6/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (24/10/2), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/1/0), and other species (8/0/0).<sup>13</sup>

Seven Aberdeen residents held a total of six Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permits in 2000. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number of Aberdeen residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (19/0/0), groundfish (1/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (33/9/0), shellfish (4/0/2), shrimp (7/1/0), and other species (3/0/0).<sup>14</sup>

Available data indicates that 115 state and six federal permits were registered to Aberdeen residents in 2000. According to recorded data the number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (32/0/0), groundfish (3/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (52/8/3), shellfish (4/1/NA), shrimp (8/0/0), and other species (4/0/0).<sup>15</sup>

Though several tribes along the West Coast participate in commercial fishing, little data exists on tribal commercial fishing in the Aberdeen area. Pacific Coast treaty

Indian tribes include the Hoh, Makah, and Quileute Indian Tribes, and the Quinault Indian Nation. The closest treaty Indian nation to Aberdeen is the Quinault, whose tribal center is located approximately 45 miles north in Taholah, Washington, in Grays Harbor County. According to the Boldt Decision,<sup>16</sup> the Quinault's usual and customary fishing area includes the following rivers and streams: Clearwater, Queets, Salmon, Quinault, Raft, Moclips, Copalis, and Joe Creek. Ocean fisheries are utilized in the waters adjacent to their territory, between Destruction Island and Point Chehalis.<sup>17</sup> The closest non-treaty Indian tribe is the Shoalwater Bay Tribe, located 32 miles south in Tokeland, on the north end of Willipa Bay in Pacific County. Tribes collect taxes from tribal members who sell fish and shellfish to help pay for tribal natural resource management programs. The nearby tribes of Shoalwater Bay and the Quinault Indian Nation most likely compete for similar fishery resources as nontribal fishermen fishing out of Aberdeen.

### *Sportfishing*

Sport fishermen in Aberdeen are involved in both West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. In 2000 approximately five salmonid charter fishing operators serviced sportfishermen and tourists. Four Aberdeen residents operated three charter vessels in Aberdeen and one in Long Beach. One Long Beach resident operated a vessel out of Aberdeen. There are four licensed agents selling fishing permits in Aberdeen. In 2003 there were 12,108 sportfishing license transactions valuing \$181,398 in Aberdeen. In Catch Record Card Area 2.2 (Grays Harbor) the 2000-2001 sport salmon catch, based on catch record cards, was 2736, including: 842 Chinook, 1554 coho, and 349 jacks. In the same year a total of 105 sturgeons were caught in coastal river systems.

### *Subsistence*

Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities are fundamental to the way of life of some coastal community members. Today, members of the Quinault Nation, the Shoalwater Bay tribe, and other nontribal subsistence fishermen obtain fishery resources from the waters surrounding Aberdeen. While tribal and nontribal individuals participate in subsistence fishing, tribal catches are reserved for tribal use only. Subsistence fishing is not discussed in great detail in this Community Profile due to the lack of available data.

## **Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

In 2000 Aberdeen residents owned 17 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 Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish (confidential/confidential/1), Gulf of Alaska groundfish (confidential/confidential/3), halibut (confidential/confidential/1), herring (confidential/confidential/1), salmon (243 t/\$415,660/11), shellfish (confidential/confidential/1), and other finfish (confidential/confidential/2).

In 2000 43 Aberdeen residents served as crewmembers in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year 25 community residents held registered state permits and 15 held registered federal permits.

A total of 40 state and federal permits were registered to individuals in Aberdeen in 2000. In 2000 residents of Aberdeen held three groundfish License Limitation Program permits. In the same year, Aberdeen residents held 1 crab, 4 BSAI groundfish, 1 halibut, 2 herring, 13 salmon, and 9 shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. Aberdeen residents held 130,519 halibut and 377,352 sablefish individual fishing quota shares in 2000.

### *Sportfishing*

While the majority of the charter boats generally target West Coast fisheries, 109 Alaska sportfishing licenses were purchased by Aberdeen community members in 2000. There were no sportfishing businesses in Aberdeen that participated in Alaskan fisheries in 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis. No date. The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.chehalis-tribe.org/> (access date - May 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce. No date. City of Aberdeen, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.graysharbor.org/cities/aberdeen.php> (access date - December 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Grays Harbor Economic Development Council. No date. Grays Harbor County manufacturing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ghedc.com/ghmanuf.html> (access date - June 2004).

<sup>4</sup> City of Aberdeen. 2004. Home, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ci.Aberdeen.wa.us/index.htm> (access date - June 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2004. Commercial fishing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/Industry/Fish/default.aspx> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2002. Information on Washington's Tax Structure: Fish Taxes, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/industry/fish/default.aspx> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2001. Commercial Fishing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/Industry/Fish/default.aspx#enhanced> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>8</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures. 2004. Environment, Energy, and Transportation Program: Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/esnr/FISHHUNTWILD.htm> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Washington State Department of Licensing. 2003. Fuel Tax Frequently Asked Questions, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.dol.wa.gov/vs/ft-faq.htm> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>10</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. No date. Search for Schools, Colleges, and Libraries, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/> (access date - April 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Port of Grays Harbor. No date. Aberdeen Marina, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.portofgraysharbor.com/Aberdeen/> (access date - June 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Friends of Grays Harbor. No date. Home, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.fogharbor.org/index.html> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>13</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>14</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>15</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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<sup>16</sup> Center for Columbia River History. No date. Boldt Decision, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/legal/boldt.htm> (access date - October 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Pacific Fishery Management Council. 2004. Groundfish Bycatch Programmatic DEIS, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/gfbdpeis/apdx.d.pdf> (access date - October 2004).