

## **Ferndale, Washington**

### **People and Place**

#### *Location*

Ferndale is situated in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountain range along the northeastern shores of Washington State's Puget Sound, and is close to Bellingham (6 miles to the south) and the international border between the United States and Canada (13 miles north). The city area encompasses 6.3 total square miles, comprised of 6.2 square miles of land and 0.1 square miles of water. Ferndale lies at 48°50'48''N and 122°35'23''W. At a driving distance of about 98 miles from Ferndale, Seattle is the nearest major U.S. city. Vancouver, British Columbia is closer, at 43 miles, but lies across the international border.

#### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Ferndale was 8758, an increase from the population of 5398 recorded ten years earlier. In 2000, the U.S. Census records show that 51.1% of Ferndale's population was female and 48.9% was male. The median age of the population was 32 years, which is below the national average for that year of 35.3 years. The age structure of Ferndale demonstrates usual population trends for a community without a major tertiary education provider. A total of 87.6% of the population lived in family households in 2000.

The majority of the population of Ferndale recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census were White (84.8%). Other racial categories with which people identified were Black or African American (0.8%), American Indian and Alaska Native alone (2.6%), Asian alone (2.4%), and Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.3%). Additionally, a portion of the population identified with some other race alone (5.3%) or with two or more races (3.8%). Of the total population of Ferndale surveyed by the 2000 U.S. Census, 9% identified as Hispanic or Latino.

A sample of Ferndale's population surveyed by the 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 13.7% of the population was foreign-born. The majority of the foreign-born population was from the Americas outside of the United States, followed by a number of people born in Europe. The largest numbers of people denoting ancestry associated themselves with German, English, Irish, and Norwegian backgrounds.

According to the U.S. Census, of the surveyed population 18 years and older in Ferndale in the year 2000, 81.8% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 16.4% had earned a Bachelor of Arts degree or higher, and 5.2% had attained a graduate or professional degree. For 37.2% of the surveyed population, a high school degree or equivalent was the highest level of educational attainment.

#### *History*

Ferndale is located close to the homes of the Lummi and Nooksack Tribes, and the ancient history of the area is the history of Coast Salish peoples who lived by hunting, fishing, gathering, and trading in the region. European exploration in the late 1700s, followed by trappers, traders, and gold miners in the early 1800s were harbingers of major changes to come. In 1855 the Lummi signed the Treaty of Point Elliot with the United States. The Nooksack never signed a treaty with the United States, and in 1873

were ordered to move to the Lummi Reservation on the coast. However, because the Nooksack did not feel an affinity with the Lummi, most returned upriver to their ancestral lands. In the 1970s, after receiving Federal recognition as a Tribe, the Nooksack established a small reservation at Deming.

The history of Whatcom County is described in some detail in the Bellingham Community Profile. History specific to the location of Ferndale indicates a typical western Washington pattern of agricultural- and other natural resource-based settlement by European Americans in the late 1800s, marked by a rivalry between towns for growth and regional supremacy. Ferndale grew around the Nooksack River as follows.

According to some sources, about 15 families had settled in Ferndale by 1872.<sup>1</sup> The first pioneers to settle in the Ferndale were Billy Clark, Cecelia Chanique, his Native American wife, and their children, who built a home in 1873. Mr. Clark was from Texas, but had gone to Canada to work for the Hudson Bay Company and became an English subject. Therefore, despite occupying the house on the Nooksack for more than a decade, he was unable to file claim on it under the Homestead Act. Family friend Roger Darius filed the claim and was technically the first non-Indian property owner in the area.

The name Ferndale was adopted in 1876, having been coined by Alice Eldridge to replace the informal name Jam, referring to the nearby log jam on the river. The Lummi called the area *Te-tas-um*. Ferndale's place as a center of commerce was challenged by upstart West Ferndale on the other side of the river, but eventually the east side prevailed. By 1882, Ferndale had two stores, two saloons, one hotel, and a post office, and was considered a contender for County Seat (won by Fairhaven, now a part of Bellingham). By 1889, there were more stores, two schools, a church, a sawmill, and a telegraph office. In addition, that year Ferndale had the County champion baseball team and a notable coronet band.<sup>2</sup> The Hovander Homestead, built in 1903, is now a park. In recognition of Ferndale's pioneer heritage, the Hovander farmhouse, barn, and other buildings on the property have been restored and are open to the public.

As the land near Ferndale was cleared of timber, agricultural production increased. A bridge across the Nooksack River was built in the 1930s. Farming continued to be important to Ferndale as other industries developed. In the 1960s, Interstate 5 was built along the West Coast, passing right along the northeastern edge of Ferndale. In 2003 Ferndale's downtown received a major makeover that included putting overhead electrical wires underground and widening the bridge over the river.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

Ferndale refers to itself as "farm country"<sup>3</sup> and has an important agricultural base in and around the town. Future Farmers of America and the Dairy Princess contest are regular features of life in the small town. Ferndale produces 65% of raspberries grown in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> In addition to farming, oil and gas is an important industry. ARCO, BP Cherry Point Refinery, and Conoco Phillips Ferndale Refinery are all major employers in Whatcom County, and are located in Ferndale. Alcoa Intalco, an aluminum producer, is also a major employer in the community.

Ferndale has an important outdoor recreation industry. It is close to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and the Mount Baker National Recreation Area, which include opportunities for skiing, snowboarding, hiking, rafting, and camping. To

the west, the beaches of Birch Bay offer clamming, swimming, and boating. Recreational fishing is available in both salt water, and in freshwater at the Lake Terrell Wildlife Refuge, five miles west of Ferndale. Duck hunting and bird watching are also popular in the Refuge.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed only 131 or 4% of 3758 persons in the employed civilian population 16 years of age and over. This count usually does not include those who are self-employed in these industries. The main employment sectors were “education, health and social services,” with 20% of the workforce, and “manufacturing,” also with 20%. Approximately 12% of the employed civilian workforce over 16 worked in local, state and city government. Alcoa Intalco, with 935 employees, appears to be the largest private employer.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census data for the City of Ferndale, 62% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 5% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). A total of 34% of the population over 16 years of age were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1% for the same year. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that in 1999 the income of 13.2% of the population was below the poverty level. The median household income in 1999 was \$36,375 and the per capita income was \$15,982.

In 2000 there were a total of 3292 housing units in Ferndale, 95.6% of which were occupied. Of the occupied housing units, 65.6% were owned and 34.4% were rented. Of the vacant housing units, only 5.5% were for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

### *Governance*

The City of Ferndale is organized as a Mayor-Council form of government. The Mayor has responsibility for exercising general supervision over the administrative affairs of the City, the responsibility for the appointment and removal of personnel, and the execution of the laws and policies as adopted by the City Council. The City Council has seven members with staggered terms. Whatcom County, including Ferndale, levies an 8.2% sales tax and a 2% hotel/motel 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 part-time for commercial fishing purposes 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 approximately \$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 100 miles south in Seattle. The nearest North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting also takes place in Seattle. There is a Department of Fish and Wildlife office located about 93 miles south in Mill Creek, Washington. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is located in Seattle. The U.S. Coast Guard Station (USCG) located six miles south in Bellingham was established in 1947 and provides six vessels. The USCG Bellingham Station's area of responsibility includes the San Juan Islands north to the Canadian border and south to Admiralty Inlet. They work in close partnership with the Canadian Coast Guard and are occasionally involved in international search and rescue and law enforcement operations.

### *Facilities*

Ferndale is accessible by ground, sea, and air. Located on the Interstate 5 corridor, Ferndale is situated between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia. The main highways running east-west are Interstate 90, 100 miles south in Seattle and Canadian National 1, approximately 43 miles north in Vancouver. Washington State Route 20, the North Cascades Highway, also runs eastward, but is closed in the winter. Amtrak's Cascade Corridor Service, 15 miles away at the Bellingham/Fairhaven Station, provides rail transport between Vancouver, B.C. and Eugene, Oregon, and continues further south along the West Coast. The nearest local airport is in Bellingham, seven miles to the southeast. There is also a municipal airport in Blaine, 14 miles northwest. Additional nearby airports include Vancouver International Airport in British Columbia and SeaTac International Airport in SeaTac, Washington. Being inland, Ferndale does not have any marine facilities. These are located on nearby Lummi and Bellingham Bay.

The Ferndale School District provides six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. There are no private schools in Ferndale, but there are 12 private schools in the nearby Bellingham area. There are several universities in nearby Bellingham including Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and the Northwest Indian College.

Cascade Natural Gas in Bellingham services Ferndale and the primary electricity provider for the city is Puget Sound Energy. The City of Ferndale Department of Public Works provides water and sewer services to the community; drinking water comes from the Nooksack River, from which Ferndale takes a million gallons a day. A small portion of the town's residents draw drinking water from groundwater by individual wells or the Ferndale Mobile Village water system. Public safety in Ferndale is provided by the City

of Ferndale Police Department. The Department consists of sixteen officers and three civilian employees. The nearest hospital is St. Joseph's Hospital, located in Bellingham, which provides a full range of inpatient and outpatient services. There is one hotel located in Ferndale.

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

There were zero unique vessels that delivered landings to Ferndale in 2000. In the same year there were also zero seafood processors operating in Ferndale. In 2000 Ferndale residents owned 25 vessels. In 2000 community members owned 18 vessels that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. Recorded data indicates that the number of vessels owned by Ferndale residents participating in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) in 2000 was: coastal pelagic (1/0/1), crab (8/0/0), groundfish (5/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (12/0/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/0/0), and other species (4/0/0).<sup>10</sup>

Two Ferndale residents held a total of two Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permits over the course of the year in 2000. In the same year, recorded data indicates that the number of Ferndale residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (1/0/0), crab (10/0/0), groundfish (2/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (25/0/0), and shellfish (0/0/NA).<sup>11</sup>

According to available data, 77 state and federal permits were registered to Ferndale 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 (2/0/14), crab (21/0/0), groundfish (8/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (30/0/0), and shellfish (0/0/NA).<sup>12</sup>

Ferndale is near both Lummi and Nooksack tribal fisheries. Information about Lummi fisheries can be found in the Blaine and Bellingham Community Profiles. The Nooksack Tribe manages tribal fisheries for salmon, crab, shrimp, sea cucumber, and sea urchin. The Nooksack Natural Resources Department distributes salmon carcasses in the Nooksack River in an effort to restore nutrients to the water and rehabilitate declining salmon runs.

### *Sportfishing*

In 2000 there were no registered charter fishing operators in Ferndale. In Ferndale in 2003 there were 1851 sportfishing license transactions valuing \$29,388. In 2005, there was one license dealer in the city registered with the Washington Department of Fish and Game. In Catch Record Card Area 7 (San Juan Islands) the 2000 sport salmon catch, based on catch record cards, was 7178, including: 4495 Chinook, 2644 coho, 21 chum, and 18 sockeye. In 2000 there were approximately 30,627 marine angler trips in the sport salmon fishery. In the same year a total of 5897 bottomfish were caught by boat-based anglers Area 7. The recreational harvest of clams (lbs) and oysters (#) for the same area in 2000 was estimated to be 115,273 and 0 respectively; harvest occurred over an estimated 19,752 user trips.

### *Subsistence*

Local tribes (e.g., Lummi, Nooksack) fish in the lower Nooksack River in a ceremonial and subsistence fishery that is timed to minimize the potential catch of ESA listed Chinook salmon. 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, Ferndale residents owned 26 unique 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): Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish (0/0/0), other finfish (confidential/confidential/1), Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish (confidential/confidential/1), halibut (confidential/confidential/2), herring (confidential/confidential/3), salmon (1001mt/\$882,210/19), and shellfish (0/0/0).

In 2000 54 Ferndale residents served as crewmembers in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year 27 community residents held registered state permits and 5 held registered federal permits.

A total of 50 state and federal permits were registered to individuals in Ferndale in 2000. In 2000 residents of Ferndale held 3 crab, 0 groundfish, and 0 scallop License Limitation Program permits. In the same year, Ferndale residents held 1 crab, 0 other, 2 GOA groundfish, 6 BSAI groundfish, 5 halibut, 9 herring, 21 salmon, 1 shellfish, and 0 scallop Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. The halibut individual fishing quota shares for people residing in the community were 86,876. There were no sablefish quota shares owned by residents of Ferndale.

### *Sportfishing*

A total of 113 Alaska sportfishing licenses were sold to Ferndale community members in 2000. In the same year there were no sportfishing businesses in Ferndale that participated in Alaskan fisheries.

---

<sup>1</sup> WA GenWeb. No date. Geographic Background of Whatcom County, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~wawhatco/geog.htm> (access date - March 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Blaine Journal. 1889. "Whatcom County Settlements." Excerpted on Whatcom County Short Town Histories [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~wawhatco/towns.htm> (access date - March 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Ferndale.net. 2002. Ferndale Farms, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.ferndale.net/mod.php?mod=userpage&menu=1103&page\\_id=24](http://www.ferndale.net/mod.php?mod=userpage&menu=1103&page_id=24) (access date - June 2005)

<sup>4</sup> Ferndale.net. 2002. Welcome to Ferndale Washington, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ferndale.net/index.php?menu=1> (access date - March 2005).

<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> '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>11</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>12</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.