

Gig Harbor, Washington

People and Place

Location

Gig Harbor covers 4.4 square miles of land in Pierce County and is situated on a small bay across the Tacoma Narrows Bridge from Tacoma, Washington. It is approximately 150 miles north of Portland, Oregon, and 45 driving miles southwest of Seattle, Washington. The geographic coordinates of Gig Harbor, Washington, are: 47° 19' 46" N, 122° 34' 44" W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Gig Harbor was 6465, a 99.8% increase from the 1990 census. In 2000 the gender structure was relatively evenly divided with slightly more females (54.4%) than males (45.5%). The median age was 44.6, slightly higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. According to the same data, 20.3% of the population was age 17 or under, 47.1% was between the ages of 22 and 59, and 23.0% was age 67 or older. For the population 18 years and over, 87.8% had a high school education or higher, 29.0% had attained a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 9.5% earned a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.9%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively. The highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma/equivalency for 23.2% of the population. In 2000, 76.2% of the population lived in family households.

The 2000 U.S. Census shows that the racial composition was predominantly White (94.2%), followed by Black or African American (1.1%) and Asian (1.5%). American Indian and Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander each constituted less than one percent of the population (0.6% and 0.2% respectively). Overall, 0.5% classified themselves as belonging to some other race and 1.8% of the population identified themselves with two or more races. A total of 3.0% identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino and 4.9% of the population was foreign-born. Of those, 21.5% were born in Canada, 16.8% were born in Malaysia, and 15.9% were born in Mexico.

History

People belonging to Puyallup, Nisqually, and Steilacoom Tribes, as well as smaller tribes, inhabit the Tacoma Basin and southern reaches of Puget Sound. Subsistence fishing has dwindled drastically since pre-contact though once was predominantly based on marine resources. The Treaty of Medicine Creek was signed between the tribes and the U.S. Government in 1854, approximately sixty years after Lt. Peter Puget lead the first recorded European tour of southern Puget Sound. The Treaty was to implement several social changes, including issues surrounding resource access and land ownership. The following year territorial wars broke out in response to a proposed Nisqually reservation and other issues with the treaty. Several tribal members were interned, while others became laborers.¹

Gig Harbor earned its name when, during an exploration of Puget Sound, the captain's gig (i.e., rowboat) and several longboats comprising a U.S. Exploring Expedition sought shelter there in 1841. By the late 1860s, settlers from Norway,

Sweden, and Croatia made up a burgeoning population based on the growing fishing industry. With the arrival of the transcontinental railroad to Tacoma in 1887, the area became an industrial hub. For the next hundred years, commercial fishing and related industries such as boat building dominated the local economy. The harbor and wharves were developed to serve a group of freight steamers known as the 'Mosquito Fleet.' In the early 1900s the lumber industry was also significant.

As the economy and population of the area thrived, regional transport networks connected Gig Harbor to nearby industrial centers. Steamboats arrived in the 1880s and by 1971 car ferries were available to transport automobiles between Gig harbor and Tacoma. The existing Narrows Bridge, which directly links Gig Harbor to Tacoma was opened in 1950, following an unsuccessful earlier attempt.² With easy access across the water, the community evolved into a suburban residential area but retains an important level of economic involvement with fishing industry.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 54.2% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 4.9% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Of the population over the age of 16, 43.0% were not in the labor force. Of the employed civilian population, 25.9% worked in 'Educational, health and social services', while 0.3% worked in 'Retail trade', 8.4% worked in 'Manufacturing', and 6.7% worked in 'Accommodation and food services.' A total of 15.9% 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 2.6% 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.

Gig Harbor's per capita income in 2000 was \$28,318 according to the 2000 U.S. Census, while the median household income was \$43,456 (1999 dollars). In 1999, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, 5.9% of the population was below the poverty level. In 2000 there were 3085 housing units in Gig Harbor, 93.4% of which were occupied, 6.6% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 58.9% were owner occupied and 41.1% were renter occupied. Almost half (44.3%) of the vacant housing units were 'For rent' and 22.9% 'For seasonal, recreational, or occasional' use.

Governance

Gig Harbor is a Code city with a Mayor-Council form of government. The City Council is comprised of a mayor and seven Council members. A City Administrator is appointed by the Mayor to administer day-to-day operations and to carry out Council policies. Gig Harbor levies an 8.4% sales and use tax and a variable lodging tax of 2-5%, depending upon the number of rooms in the establishment.

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.³ Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).⁴

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.”⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷

The nearest federal fisheries enforcement office is located in Seattle and is the Northwest Enforcement Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service. The closest regional office for state fisheries, the Coastal Office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is located 76 miles southwest in Montesano, Washington. Meetings of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and Pacific Fisheries Management Council have been held in both Seattle and Tacoma. Also located in Seattle are the headquarters of the 13th U.S. Coast Guard District and the District Office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Facilities

Gig Harbor is located off of Washington Highway 16, across the Tacoma Narrows Bridge which spans Puget Sound from Tacoma. Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, is approximately 33 miles away in Sea Tac, Washington. A full array of aviation support, manufacturing and business services is readily available.

Gig Harbor is served by the Peninsula School District, which comprises a total of 15 schools and 9200 students, with an annual growth rate between four to five percent. This district is considered one of the strongest and most innovative in the State of Washington.

The Washington Water Service Company, the City of Gig Harbor Water Department, and the Rainier View Water Company provide water to Gig Harbor residents. Electrical service is administered by Peninsula Light Company and gas service is provided through Puget Sound Energy. Public safety in the community is administered by the Gig Harbor Police Department. Traffic congestion near the designated site of St. Anthony Hospital in Gig Harbor has delayed its construction⁸; currently Gig Harbor residents travel to the nearby communities of Tacoma and Lakewood for 24-hour

emergency medical care at Western State Hospital and Saint Clare Hospital respectively. Several medical centers are based in Gig Harbor offering same-day appointments.

Despite the absence of port facilities within Gig Harbor itself, the City is closely tied to the Port of Tacoma, the West Coast's second largest port after Long Beach, CA (see Long Beach, CA Community Profile). Burlington Northern and Union Pacific provide rail service to the Port of Tacoma. The City of Tacoma operates the Beltline Railway that services industries in the Port area. Eight small marinas in Gig Harbor supply a variety of services including: boat leasing, boat repair, surface ramp, pump out station, boat equipment and sales, and charters.

Several festivals and other marine-related organizations are based in Gig Harbor. The Maritime Gig Festival runs for the first full weekend of June and is organized by the Gig Harbor Peninsula Area Chamber of Commerce, partnered with the City of Gig Harbor and the Gig Harbor Peninsula Historical Society and Museum. Gig Harbor has a local Fisherman's Civic Club as well as several recreational associations. Gig Harbor is home to 14 bed and breakfast accommodations, three inns, and two family motels.⁹

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 there were no landings made in Gig Harbor. In the same year, 30 commercial vessels were owned by Gig Harbor residents, 23 of which participated in the federal groundfish fishery. The following were the number of vessels owned by Gig Harbor residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA): coastal pelagic (4/1/6), crab (3/0/0), groundfish (1/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (15/2/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and other species (3/0/0).¹⁰

In 2000, one federal groundfish permit was held by a community member. In the same year, the number of Gig Harbor residents holding permits in the given fisheries was as follows, by state (WA/OR/CA): coastal pelagic (7/1/9), groundfish (1/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (36/2/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (6/0/2).¹¹

According to available data, there were at least 87 commercial fishing permits registered to Gig Harbor residents in 2000. Of those, 86 were registered state permits. The following were the number of state permits, in 2000, held by Gig Harbor residents in the given fishery by state (WA/OR/CA): coastal pelagic (14/1/17), groundfish (3/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (40/2/0), shellfish (0/0/NA), and other species (7/0/2).¹²

There was at least one seafood processor operating in Gig Harbor in 2000, primarily producing herring products. Specific data (estimated pounds of product/value of product) is confidential.

Sportfishing

There are two licensed vendors selling sportfishing permits in Gig Harbor. In 2003 Gig Harbor vendors made 6329 sportfishing license transactions totaling just over \$110,257. The annual sport salmon catch in Washington State's Catch Record Card Area 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) was 14,212 during the 2000-2001 license year. Based on catch card data, during 72,194 marine angler trips sportfishermen took 8108 Chinook, 6054 coho, and 50 chum salmon. In the same year, six steelhead were caught in Area 11.

The sport bottomfish catch for the same area, during the 2000-2001 license year, totaled 2,611.

Subsistence

Subsistence harvest for marine species may exist in the Gig Harbor area. However, the extent of subsistence harvesting is difficult to quantify due to a scarcity of data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 there were 63 vessels owned by Gig Harbor residents that participated 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/3), Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish (confidential/confidential/2), other finfish (confidential/confidential/3), Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish (1166 t/\$1,513,830/6), halibut (187 t/\$1,070,680/4), herring (220 t/\$127,330/4), and salmon (2845 t/\$2,105,660/33).

Seventy-three Gig Harbor residents served as crewmembers on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. In the same year, 49 community residents held state permits for Alaska fisheries and 27 Gig Harbor residents held federal permits for North Pacific fisheries.

A total of 89 commercial fishing permits for North Pacific fisheries were held by Gig Harbor residents in 2000. In the same year residents held 2,129,377 halibut and 4,274,178 sablefish Individual Fishing Quota shares. In 2000 residents of Gig Harbor held the following numbers of Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits in the given fisheries: crab (5), GOA groundfish (2), BSAI groundfish (12), halibut (5), herring (6), salmon (38), and shellfish (5). In addition there were three crab License Limitation Program (LLP) permits and eight groundfish LLP permits held by Gig Harbor residents in 2000.

Sportfishing

While the majority of sportfishermen around Gig Harbor target Puget Sound and West Coast fisheries, 453 Gig Harbor residents purchased Alaskan sportfishing licenses in 2000.

¹ The Steilacoom Tribe. No Date. Recent History, [Online]. Available: URL: http://members.shaw.ca/nyjack/steilacoom/recent_history.htm (access date - March 2005).

² Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce. No Date. History and Museum, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.gigharborchamber.com/history2.html> (access date - February 2005).

³ 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).

⁴ 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).

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- ⁵ 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).
- ⁶ 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).
- ⁷ 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).
- ⁸ Franciscan Health System. 2005. News About St. Anthony Hospital, [Online]. Available: URL: <https://www.fhshealth.org/SAH/default.asp> (access date - October 2005).
- ⁹ Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce. 2005. Accommodations, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.gigharborchamber.com/accommodations.html> (access date - October 2005).
- 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 '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.
- ¹² '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.