

## **Ilwaco, Washington**

### **People and Place**

#### *Location*

Ilwaco is located in Pacific County of Southwestern Washington at 46°18'33"N and 124°02'31"W. It is approximately 110 miles north of Portland, Oregon, and 170 miles south of Seattle, Washington. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the community encompasses a total area of 2.37 square miles, including 0.31 square miles of water and 2.06 square miles of land.

#### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Ilwaco had a total population of 950 people, with a population density of 461.5 people per square mile of land area. In 2000, the percentage of males was 47.5% to 52.5% females. The median age of the population in 2000 was 43, which was higher than the national median of 35.3 years for the same calendar year. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 81.1% of those eighteen and over earned the equivalent of a high school diploma or higher, 19.3% earned at least a bachelor's degree, and 6.2% earned a graduate degree.

The 2000 U.S. Census indicates 81.5% of Ilwaco's population lived in family households. The racial composition was 92.8% White, 5.3% Hispanic or Latino, 1.4% American Indian and Alaska native, 0.4% Asian, 1.5% Black or African American, and 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. A total of 3.0% of the population identified with two or more races and 0.8% with some other race. Approximately 7.8% of the population was foreign-born, with 38.2% from Mexico, followed by 25% from Guatemala, and 9.2% from Germany. Ancestries showed 12.4% of the population to be of German ancestry, 10.7% Finnish, and 4.5% United States.

#### *History*

The area of Ilwaco was first inhabited by Native American Indians, primarily the Chinook Indians. The town was named after a local Native American named Elowahka Jim. The first nonnative peoples to come to the area were the English, Spanish, and French explorers seeking a "River to the West" or the "Northwest Passage," connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Some of the earliest explorers included Captain James Cook around 1778, John Meares around 1788, Captain George Vancouver in 1792, Captain Robert Gray in 1792, and Meriwether Lewis and William Clark around 1805.<sup>1</sup>

Reports from the Lewis and Clark expedition drew interest in the area for Euro-American settlers. The first settlers from the east coast and midwest, including foreign settlers primarily from Scandinavia, were drawn to the area for the lumber, land, ocean, hunting, and fur resources.<sup>2</sup> John Jacob Astor traveled through the area and eventually established the Pacific Fur Company across the Columbia River from Ilwaco in Astoria in 1811. Missionaries were also drawn to surrounding areas in the 1830s.

By 1849 the Ilwaco area was founded by Dr. Elijah White. The settlement was called Pacific City and was envisioned to be a future port city at the mouth of the Columbia River. Pacific City had a county seat, post office, sawmill, and fine hotel.<sup>3</sup> The hotel was owned by J.D. Holman. By 1852, Pacific City was overtaken by the military when President Millard Fillmore ordered a military reservation to be developed, which is now referred to as Fort Canby. It took years for the military to build installations in the area, but the dreams for Pacific City vanished. J.D. Holman however, established a donation land claim which included beach areas and

eventually developed into a summer resort. The local, school built in 1853, was attributed to the Homan Family.

During the later parts of the century from approximately 1884 to 1910, the area was consumed by disputes over fishing ground rights, referred to as the gillnet wars. Gillnet and trap fishermen fought with a vengeance over these rights. In 1888, the Ilwaco Railroad and Navigation Company led by Lewis A. Loomis started the construction of a railroad, from Ilwaco to Nahcotta, at the Ilwaco wharf.<sup>4</sup> The rail served as transportation for mail, passenger business and freight, specifically sacks of oysters from Nahcotta. In 1900, when Loomis retired he sold the railroad to the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company; the railway functioned until 1930.

In 1889, the Ilwaco Beach Station, also known as the Klipsan Beach Life Saving Station, was established.<sup>5</sup> This station was one of 19 Life Saving Stations on the West Coast from the Golden Gate Bridge to Nome, Alaska. The location of this station was chosen due to the high numbers of shipwrecks in the area as the mouth of the Columbia River is known as the “Graveyard of the Pacific.” In 1915, the U.S. Coast Guard (USGC) was created, and the station became USCG Klipsan Station #309. While this station was eventually abandoned, the USCG still maintains a heavy presence in the area to this day.

Ilwaco and the closely surrounding area offer many tourism activities. Downtown Ilwaco hosts the Ilwaco Heritage Museum, various shopping opportunities including the Saturday Market at the harbor during the late spring and summer months, charter boats for fishing and sightseeing, restaurants, and accommodations. Within in a few miles of Ilwaco lies Fort Canby State Park, recently renamed Cape Disappointment State Park. The park offers camping, hiking, beaches, fishing, the Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, the North Head Lighthouse, and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. Festivals include the Annual Cranberrian Fair, the Wild Mushroom Festival, the Water Music Festival, Annual Loyalty Day Celebration, and the Blessing of the Fleet festivities.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, “health care and social assistance” was the top occupational field for the employed population 16 years and over (12.5%), followed by “retail trade” with 11.8%, and “educational services” with 10.8%. The “agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting” occupations represented 3.7% of the employed population. The unemployment rate was 6.2% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), slightly higher than the national average of 5.7%. The number employed was 56.5% higher than the national average of 50.5% and 39.7% were not in the labor force, higher than the national average of 36.1%. Approximately 27.8% of the labor force was employed by local, state, or federal governments, and 3.8% was employed by the armed forces.

Ilwaco’s per capita income in 1999 was \$16,138, compared to the national average of \$21,587 for the same year. The median household income in 1999 was \$29,632, lower than the national average was \$41,944. For whom poverty status was determined, 16.3% of the city’s population was living below the poverty line in 1999, slightly higher than the national average of 12.4%. In 2000, there were 524 housing units in Ilwaco, of which 79.4% were occupied and 20.6% were vacant. Of the occupied units 66.1% were owner occupied, while 33.9% were renter occupied. A measurable percentage of vacant units, 49.1%, were for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

## *Governance*

Ilwaco was originally incorporated in 1890.<sup>6</sup> The city has a Mayor and five Councilmen, a 5-member Planning Commission, City Planner, Clerk-Treasurer, Deputy Clerk, City Attorney, and Fire Chief. Pacific County, organized in 1851, has a 7.8% sales tax and a 9.8% hotel/lodging tax.<sup>7,8</sup>

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>9</sup> Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).<sup>10</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>11</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>12</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>13</sup>

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Region 6 (Coastal Washington) has offices approximately 72 miles north of Ilwaco in Montesano, and also maintains the Willapa Bay Field Station at Ocean Park approximately 13.5 miles north of Ilwaco.<sup>14</sup> The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service, Point Adams Research Station, is located in Hammond, Oregon, approximately 22.5 miles south. Ilwaco falls under the jurisdiction of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and is approximately 110 miles from the closest meeting location in Portland, Oregon. The USCG operates out of the Station Cape Disappointment, located in Ilwaco, operating under the USCG Group/Air Station Astoria.<sup>15</sup> The Cape Disappointment Station is the largest USCG search and rescue station on the Northwest Coast and also operates the USCG National Motor Lifeboat School. The closest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office lies in Portland, Oregon.

## *Facilities*

Ilwaco may be reached by Highway 101 and is also accessible via the air and sea. The Port of Ilwaco Airport is open to the public and is an unattended paved runway. Portland International Airport is located approximately 110 miles south in Portland, Oregon. The Ilwaco

Harbor supports recreational and commercial fisheries, along with tourism. As of June 2005, the harbor supports approximately 54 commercial fishing vessels, and approximately 610 pleasure craft, which include charter vessels.<sup>16</sup> The harbor includes a boatyard with hoist services, a fuel dock, boat launches, and guest moorage.<sup>17</sup>

The public school system in Ilwaco falls within the Ocean Beach School District and supports an elementary school and combined Junior/Senior High School. Ilwaco Junior/Senior High School supports the seventh through twelfth grades, and Hilltop Elementary supports fourth through sixth grades. Ilwaco proper does not have an elementary school for grades below fourth, but the neighboring Long Beach area, which also falls under the Ocean Beach School District, operates the Long Beach Elementary School which supports kindergarten through third grades. The three closest two-year colleges, all located within Washington, include Grays Harbor College in Aberdeen, Lower Columbia College in Longview, and Centralia College in Centralia. The three closest four-year colleges include Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington State University-Vancouver Campus, and the University of Washington-Tacoma Campus.

The City owns and operates water and sewer plants, while electric power is provided by the county Public Utility District.<sup>18</sup> Public safety is contracted through the City of Long Beach, 4 miles north of Ilwaco. The closest hospital is the Ocean Beach Hospital in the city proper, followed by Willapa Harbor Hospital in South Bend, Washington, and Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria, Oregon. There are multiple hotels, motels, resorts, and bed and breakfast facilities in Ilwaco and the nearby Long Beach community, as well as various state and private campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks.

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

In 2000, of the 338 vessels that delivered landings to Ilwaco, all were commercially registered. In the same year 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/2), crab (861.9 t/\$3,864,427/104), groundfish (2350.7 t/\$634,261/35), highly migratory species (1907.1 t/\$3,595,659/119), salmon (187.4 t/\$468,717/98), shrimp (confidential/confidential/2), and other species (47.5 t/\$183,071/81).

Ilwaco residents owned 21 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, including 17 that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Ilwaco residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (1/0/0), crab (13/9/1), groundfish (3/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (11/13/2), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/2/0), and other species (8/0/0).<sup>19</sup>

In 2000, a total of two federal groundfish fishery permits were held by two community members. Recorded data indicates that the number of Ilwaco residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (1/0/0), crab (8/0/1), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (5/13/4), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (1/2/0), and other species (4/0/0).<sup>20</sup>

According to the available data, 48 permits were registered to Ilwaco residents, of which 46 were registered state permits, and 2 were federal permits. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (1/0/0), crab (12/0/1), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (5/13/6), shellfish (0/0/NA), shrimp (1/2/0), and other species (5/0/0).<sup>21</sup>

There is currently only one processor in Ilwaco, Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company. Jessie's has been in business in Ilwaco for over 40 years. They process various species including but not limited to shrimp, crab, salmon, whiting, sardine, bottomfish, and tuna. Jessie's distributes worldwide, and its efforts are primarily in wholesale distribution with a smaller retail effort. In 2005 Jessie's employed approximately 150 people.<sup>22</sup>

### *Sportfishing*

Sport fishermen in Ilwaco are involved in both West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. In 2000 approximately 14 salmonid charter fishing operators serviced sportfishermen and tourists. There is one licensed agent selling fishing permits in Ilwaco. In 2003 there were 1580 sportfishing license transactions valuing \$24,978. In Catch Record Card Area 1 (Ilwaco-Ocean) and Area 1A (Ilwaco-Buoy 10) the 2000 sport salmon catch was 27,889 and 16,335 respectively. This data includes (1/1A): (1,630/2,972) Chinook and (26,259/13,363) coho, based on creel survey estimates. In 2000 there were approximately 16,243/42,061 (1/1A) marine angler trips in the sport salmon fishery for a total of 58,304 across both Ilwaco Areas. In the same year, a total of 106 steelhead were caught by sportfishermen in Area 1, Columbia River to Leadbetter Point. In 2000 the coastal bottomfish catch for Area 1, Ilwaco/Ilwaco Jetty, was 8,388/631 respectively. The pacific halibut catch for Areas 1-2 (Ilwaco-Westport-Ocean Shores) was 2341.

### *Subsistence*

Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities are fundamental to the way of life of some coastal community members. Both tribal and nontribal individuals participate in subsistence fishing, obtaining fishery resources from the waters surrounding Ilwaco. 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, there were five vessels owned by Ilwaco 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): other finfish (confidential/confidential/1) and salmon (98.5 t/\$178,940/5).

Twelve residents worked as crewmembers on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries. Ilwaco residents held six permits, with two individuals holding a federal permit and four individuals holding a state permit. Residents held 1 groundfish License Limitation program (LLP) permit, 5 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) salmon permits, and 11,787 sablefish individual fishing quota shares.

### *Sportfishing*

Fishermen based in Ilwaco purchased five sportfishing licenses for Alaskan fisheries in 2000.

---

<sup>1</sup> Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia. 2005. Washington (State), [Online]. Available: URL: <http://encarta.msn.com@1997-2005>. Microsoft Corporation. All Rights Reserved. (access date - June 2005).

<sup>2</sup> City of Ilwaco. 2005. City of Ilwaco, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ilwacowashington.com/pages/history.html> (access date - June 2005).

- 
- <sup>3</sup> Pacific County Historical Society. 2001. The Sou'wester Vol. 36(2) Summer, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.pacificcohistory.org/sw2001\\_2.htm](http://www.pacificcohistory.org/sw2001_2.htm) (access date - June 2005).
- <sup>4</sup> Chinook Observer. 2004. Seaview and Clamshell Railroad. [Online]. Available URL: Seaview and Clamshell Railroad (access date - June 2005).
- <sup>5</sup> Pacific County Historical Society. 2001. The Sou'wester Vol. 36(3) Fall, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.pacificcohistory.org/sw2001\\_3.htm](http://www.pacificcohistory.org/sw2001_3.htm) (access date - June 2005).
- <sup>6</sup> Pacific County. 2005. [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.co.pacific.wa.us/map%20and%20cities/ilwaco.htm> (access date - May 2005).
- <sup>7</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2004. Local Sales & Use Tax Rates and Changes, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/forms/Excstx/LocSalUseTx/LocalSltsUseFlyer\\_Quarterly.pdf](http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/forms/Excstx/LocSalUseTx/LocalSltsUseFlyer_Quarterly.pdf) (access date - May 2005).
- <sup>8</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2003. Lodging Tax Rates by Location, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://dor.wa.gov/docs/forms/excstx/locsalusetx/lodgingrates\\_03\\_a.pdf](http://dor.wa.gov/docs/forms/excstx/locsalusetx/lodgingrates_03_a.pdf) (access date - May 2005).
- <sup>9</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>10</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>11</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>12</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>13</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>14</sup> Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2005. WDFW, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/> (access date - May 2005).
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Coast Guard. 2005. U.S. Coast Guard, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.uscg.mil/d13/units/gruastoria/cd.htm> (access date - May 2005).
- <sup>16</sup> Wiegadt, Cindy. Port of Ilwaco. 2005. Pers. commun. 6 June 2005.
- <sup>17</sup> Port of Ilwaco. 2005. Port of Ilwaco, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.portofilwaco.com/index.htm> (access date - June 2005).
- <sup>18</sup> City of Ilwaco, Washington. 2005. City of Ilwaco, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ilwacowashington.com/index.html> (access date - June 2005).
- <sup>19</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>20</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>21</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>22</sup> Marchand, Pierre. Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company. Pers. commun. 20 June 2005.