

Naselle, Washington

People and Place

Location

Naselle is located in Southwestern Washington at 46°21'56"N and 123°48'34"W.¹ The community lies at the confluence of the Nassele River and its South Fork, midway between Willapa Bay to the north and the Columbia River to the south. The Naselle River flows northwest from the community and empties into Willapa Bay at Stanley Channel. The nearest major metropolitan area is Portland, Oregon, which lies approximately 105 miles to the southeast, and Seattle, Washington, is located 160 miles to the northeast. Naselle occupies a land area of 2.3 square miles.²

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Naselle had a population of 377. The community displayed a relatively even gender balance, with 48.8% male and 51.2% female residents. The median age for both sexes in Naselle was 44.1, almost 9 years older than the national median age of 35.3. The age structure of Naselle reveals an older population with only 9.2% of residents falling between the ages of 18 and 29, compared to 16.5% for the U.S. population overall.

The racial composition of Naselle was relatively homogenous in 2000. According to the U.S. Census, 92.3% of residents identified themselves as White, 2.1% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.5% as Asian, and 3.7% as Two or More Races. Only 0.5% of Naselle residents indicated Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity.

In addition, 77.6% of residents reported their ancestry on the 2000 U.S. Census. The top three First Ancestry categories reported in Naselle were Finnish (25.8%), German (7.8%), and Irish (6.1%). These data are consistent with historical sources that document the presence of a large and thriving ethnic community of Finish settlers in Naselle. Each year, these settlers stage a heritage festival to celebrate their role in Naselle's history. Of the total population of Naselle, 4.2% indicated on the census that they were foreign-born. Of these foreign-born residents, 33.3% were Canadian, 20% were Japanese, 20% were Northern European, 13.3% were Filipino, and 13.3% were Mexican.

Naselle's population in 2000 lived in 160 households, with 84.1% of residents living in family households. About 82.8% of Naselle residents 18 and over had a high school diploma/equivalency or higher, 15.1% had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, and 5% had completed a graduate or professional degree. The highest level of educational attainment for 34.4% of residents was a high school degree. Because Naselle was not recognized as a place on the 1990 U.S. Census, data indicating patterns of demographic evolution are not available.

History

The community of Naselle derives its name from the Nisal band of Chinook Indians who dominated the area prior to Euro-American settlement. The Chinook Indians were historically a group of linguistically related peoples whose territory included the lower Columbia River in Washington and Oregon and much of the area surrounding Willapa Bay.³ These native groups depended heavily on fishing and coastal resources and developed extensive trade networks within the region. In the local Chinook dialect, Nisal meant "protected sheltered, or hidden." White settlers entered the area in the early 1850s and experimented with several variations on the original native name before permanently adopting the contemporary spelling in 1920.⁴

Naselle is unique among Pacific County towns because of its large population of Finnish immigrants and their descendants. In its early history, the community became a popular destination for Finnish settlers who sought a forested landscape and employment similar to that in their native country. Many older residents continue to speak now-archaic dialects of Finnish and the community hosts a Finnish American Folk Festival that attracts more than 1200 visitors biennially.

Throughout its history, Naselle has remained a community rooted in three main industries: logging, farming, and fishing. Before the development of the local logging industry, many Finnish settlers worked in lumber mills in Astoria until they had earned enough to buy farmland in the vicinity of Naselle.⁵ These small farms are now the basis for a successful dairy industry in the region. Weyerhaeuser operated a mill in Naselle until 1980, and today, numerous smaller logging and construction companies are based in the area. Commercial and sport fishermen from Naselle have long been active in salmon gillnetting on Willapa Bay, and following the collapse of the local salmon industry, many Naselle fishermen now travel seasonally to Alaska. The Naselle Hatchery, which produces large numbers of Chinook and coho salmon for Willapa Bay, also makes the community central to the regional fishing industry. Until the construction of the Astoria-Megler Bridge in 1966, Naselle remained relatively isolated, with the Naselle and Columbia Rivers serving as main transportation corridors through the region. Today, many travelers headed for the Pacific Coast pass through Naselle, and the community attracts some tourists interested in its Finnish history and cultural heritage.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

The largest employer in the contemporary community of Naselle is the Naselle Youth Camp, a juvenile detention and rehabilitation facility built in 1966. The Youth Camp provides jobs for about 150 employees, many of whom are Naselle residents.⁶ Support services for sportfishermen passing through Naselle to fish Willapa Bay or the Naselle River also provide jobs and revenue for the community. The Washington State Business Records Database includes entries for several small logging and fisheries companies based in Naselle, some of which feature distinctive Finnish names. These include Monte Cristo Fisheries, Manke Seafoods, Blackheart Seafoods, Wirkkala Logging and Construction, Haataia Fishing, and Kipona Brothers Logging.⁷

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 49% of Naselle residents 16 and older were employed and another 51% did not participate in the labor force (were not actively seeking work). Naselle therefore displayed an 8.8% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), which exceeded the national unemployment rate of 5.7%.

Approximately 39.3% of the employed civilian population 16 years and over worked for the state or federal government in 2000. About 13.3% indicated that they worked in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, but this percentage may be artificially low given that many fishermen are self-employed and are not represented in these data. About 21.5% of residents were employed in education, health, and social services; 12.6% in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services; 10.4% in retail and wholesale trade, 8.9% in public administration; 6.7% in construction; and 3% in manufacturing. No Naselle residents 16 years or older were employed by the military in 2000.

According to the U.S. Census, the per capita income in Naselle was about \$17,714 in 1999, compared to a national per capita income of \$21,587. The median household income in

Naselle was about \$35,769, compared to a national median household income of \$41,994. Approximately 4.7% of residents were living below the poverty level in 1999, a value much lower than the national poverty level of about 12.4%.

There were 184 housing units in Naselle in 2000. Approximately 13% of these units were vacant at the time of the census, but 20.8% of these vacant units were intended for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. About 71.9% of occupied housing units were owner-occupied, compared to 66.2% ownership for occupied housing units in the U.S. overall.

Governance

Under Washington State law, an area cannot be incorporated as a city unless it houses a minimum of 1500 residents. Naselle is therefore classified as an unincorporated area governed by Pacific County. Naselle has neither a City Council nor its own separate municipal tax structure. Naselle residents elect county officials, whose offices are located in the County Seat of South Bend, approximately 31 miles north along US-101. Pacific County, which was organized in 1851, has a 7.8% sales tax and a 9.8% hotel/lodging tax.^{8,9}

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.¹⁰ Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).¹¹

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.”¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

Naselle lies within the jurisdiction of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council and is approximately 105 driving miles from Council meetings in Portland, 160 miles from Seattle, 737 miles from San Francisco, and 1186 miles from San Diego.¹⁵ The nearest U.S. Coast Guard Group and Air Station is located in Warrenton, Oregon (20 miles), and the Coast Guard operates the National Motor Lifeboat School (NMLB) in Ilwaco, Washington (22 miles).¹⁶ Naselle is under the jurisdiction of the NMFS Northwest Regional Office located in Seattle and the

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Southwest Regional Office in Vancouver, Washington (97 miles).

Facilities

Naselle lies along WA-401, which branches off from the Ocean Beach Highway (U.S.-101) and cuts inland directly across the southwestern portion of the state. The major international airport closest to Naselle is located in Portland, Oregon (105 miles). Astoria Regional Airport (10 miles) is the nearest airport facility certified for carrier operations, and the Port of Ilwaco Airport (7 miles) provides an unattended paved runway that is open to the public. There are a few small motels, campgrounds, and recreational vehicle parks located in the vicinity of Naselle, but neighboring communities of Ilwaco and Long Beach attract more overnight travelers.

Naselle lies within the Naselle-Grays River Valley School District No. 155. Students living in the community attend Naselle Elementary School (K-6) and Naselle Junior Senior High Schools (7-12). The Washington Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) also operates a local juvenile rehabilitation facility, the Naselle Youth Camp School (9-10). This state-run facility provides traditional classes, vocational training, and work programs for its 150 residents. The Naselle School District and the DHSS facility serve Naselle and other small communities throughout southeastern Pacific County and part of Wahkiakum County.¹⁷

The community's water supply is provided by the Naselle Water District. Because the community has no municipal sewer district, residents rely on septic tanks. The Naselle Youth Camp School operates a small wastewater treatment facility, and electricity is provided by Public Utility District No. 2 of Pacific County, Washington. Law enforcement services are administered by the Pacific County Sheriff's Office. Fire safety services are provided by Pacific County Fire Department #4, which is located in Naselle. The closest major health care facilities are Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria, Oregon (17 miles), Ocean Beach Hospital in Ilwaco, Washington (22 miles), and Willapa Harbor Hospital in South Bend, Washington (31 miles).

The Naselle Ramp, a public boat launch located just outside of town, provides parking and space for small boats to enter the Naselle River, which flows north into Willapa Bay. The Naselle Hatchery, operated by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), is responsible for producing roughly half of the Chinook salmon and about one third of the coho salmon in Willapa Bay. This facility reportedly suffers from design flaws and lacks a weir to help collect returning fish, problems that have resulted in extremely poor return rates. Several interest groups are currently lobbying for additional funding to improve the hatchery, which is one of only three located on Willapa Bay tributaries. Another hatchery operated by the Naselle Youth Camp aquaculture program produces all of the rainbow trout for Pacific County's lakes.¹⁸

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Fishermen living in Naselle are primarily involved in the West Coast salmon and crab fisheries. Landings data for Naselle were recorded as part of the Willapa Bay Port Group which includes the nearby communities of Bay Center, Nahcotta, Tokeland, South Bend, and Raymond. Reported landings for this port group in 2000 were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic (confidential/confidential/1), crab (444.9 t/\$1,941,008/44), groundfish (4.6 t/\$3889/6), salmon (122.5 t/\$178,084/71), shellfish (26.8 t/\$73534/63), shrimp (399.9

t/\$397143/8), and other species (13.1 t/\$31,242/51). See the Tokeland, South Bend, and Raymond Community Profiles for additional information about these communities.

In 2000, Naselle fisherman involved in the West Coast fisheries owned a total of 15 vessels, including seven that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Naselle residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (2/1/0), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (5/6/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), and shrimp (NA/0/0).¹⁹

No individuals living in Naselle in 2000 held federal groundfish fishery permits. In 2000, recorded data indicates that the number of Naselle residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (0/1/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (11/3/1), shellfish (0/0/NA), and shrimp (1/0/0).²⁰

According to available data, 19 state permits were registered to Naselle residents in 2000. Recorded data indicates that the number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (3/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (13/0/2), shellfish (0/0/NA), and shrimp (1/0/0).²¹

The Naselle Hatchery produces coho and Chinook salmon that fuel the Willapa Bay gillnetting industry. In 2003, the hatchery released more than 3 million Chinook and roughly 550,000 coho smolts. These releases account for one half of the Chinook and one third of the coho production in Willapa Bay.²² The facility also released 50,000 steelhead. In past years, the hatchery has produced as many as 6.5 million young fish.²³

Sportfishing

The boat launch located near Naselle is relatively small, but the facility attracts some recreational fishermen interested in salmon and sturgeon fishing on the Naselle River or less busy routes into Willapa Bay. According to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, there is one sportfish license vendor operating in Naselle.

A small hatchery operated by the Naselle Youth Camp, a state-run rehabilitation center for juvenile offenders, produces all of the rainbow trout used to stock lakes in Pacific County. This hatchery is run by students in the school's aquaculture vocational program and produces an average of about 20,000 fish each year.²⁴

Catch Record Card Area 2-1 (Willapa Bay) is the closest Area to Naselle. The 2000-2001 sport salmon catch for this Area was 870, including 468 Chinook, 354 coho, and 48 jacks. Data for Area 2-1 is based on catch record cards. The total catch is down from 2137 salmon recorded in the 1999-2000 season. In 2000 the number of marine angler trips in the sport salmon fishery is not available. The 2000-2001 sport sturgeon catch was recorded at 96 fish.

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. Today, members of the Chinook Tribe and other nontribal subsistence fishermen may obtain fishery resources from waters near Naselle, particularly from the Naselle River, nearby tributaries, and Willapa Bay, however 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

Fourteen vessels owned by Naselle residents participated in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. 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), herring (confidential/confidential/1), Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish (confidential/confidential/1), halibut (confidential/confidential/1), herring (384.8 t/78,700/6), and salmon (243.8 t/\$372,240/7).

In 2000, three Naselle residents worked as crewmembers on vessels in the North Pacific. In the same year, fishermen from Naselle held 17 North Pacific permits total, with three individuals holding federal permits and ten individuals holding state permits. These Naselle residents held 2 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) halibut permits, 8 CFEC herring permits, and 6 CFEC salmon permits. Under the individual fishing quota system for the Alaskan halibut and sablefish fisheries, Naselle fishermen were allotted 84,954 halibut quota shares and no sablefish shares in 2000.

Sportfishing

According to state records, Naselle residents purchased a total of 15 sportfishing licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

¹ Unites States Geological Survey. 2004. Geographic Names Information System, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnis/web_query.gnis_web_query_formH](http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnis/web_query.gnis_web_query_formH) (access date - June 2004).

² United States Census. 2000. American Fact Finder, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) (access date - July 2004).

³ University of Oregon Department of Linguistics. 2004. Chinook Tribes, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/oregon/chtribes.html](http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/oregon/chtribes.html) (access date - June 2004).

⁴ Tacoma Public Library. 2004. Washington State Place Names Index, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://search.tpl.lib.wa.us/wanames](http://search.tpl.lib.wa.us/wanames) (access date - June 2004).

⁵ Paulu, Tom. 2002. From Start to Finnish. The Daily News, Longview, WA, 20 July.

⁶ Paulu, Tom. 2002. From Start to Finnish. The Daily News, Longview, WA, 20 July.

⁷ Washington State Department of Revenue. 2004. Washington State Business Records Database, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://prd.dor.wa.gov](http://prd.dor.wa.gov) (access date - August 2004).

⁸ Washington State Department of Revenue. 2004. Local Sales & Use Tax Rates and Changes, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://dor.wa.gov/Docs/forms/ExcsTx/LocSalUseTx/LocalSlsUseFlyer_Quarterly.pdf](http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/forms/ExcsTx/LocSalUseTx/LocalSlsUseFlyer_Quarterly.pdf) (access date - July 2004).

⁹ Washington State Department of Revenue. 2003. Lodging Tax Rates by Location, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://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 - July 2004).

¹⁰ 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).

¹¹ 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).

¹² 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).

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- ¹³ 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).
- ¹⁴ 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).
- ¹⁵ Mapquest. 2004. Driving Directions, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com)H (access date - July 2004).
- ¹⁶ United States Coast Guard. 2004. Pacific Northwest Unit List, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.uscg.mil/d13/ipa/pacific_northwest_unit_alpha.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/d13/ipa/pacific_northwest_unit_alpha.htm)H (access date - July 2004).
- ¹⁷ Naselle-Grays River Valley School District. 2004. Home Page, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.naselle.wednet.edu/default.html](http://www.naselle.wednet.edu/default.html)H (access date - August 2004).
- ¹⁸ Drake, Patrick. 2004. Partnerships May Save Hatchery from Closure. The Daily Astorian, 6 April.
- ¹⁹ '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.
- ²⁰ '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.
- ²¹ '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.
- ²² Drake, Patrick. 2004. Partnerships May Save Hatchery from Closure. The Daily Astorian, 6 April.
- ²³ Apalategui, Eric. 2004. Lawmakers Ensure One More Year for Hatchery. The Daily News, Longview, WA, 10 April.
- ²⁴ Drake, Patrick. 2004. Partnerships May Save Hatchery from Closure. The Daily Astorian, 6 April.