

South Bend, Washington

People and Place

Location

South Bend is located in southwestern Washington at 46°39'48"N and 123°48'12"W.¹ The community lies at a pronounced southward bend in the Willapa River, which flows northwest into Willapa Bay. South Bend is nearly equidistant from the major metropolitan areas of Seattle, Washington, located approximately 129 miles to the northeast, and Portland, Oregon, located 141 miles to the southeast. South Bend occupies a land area of 1.81 square miles and a water area of 0.38 square miles.²

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, South Bend had a population of 1807 in 2000. The community displayed a slightly uneven gender balance, with 48.7% male and 51.3% female residents. The median age for both sexes in South Bend was 39.4, about 5 years older than the national median age of 35.3. The racial composition of South Bend in 2000 was slightly more diverse than that of Pacific County overall. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 83.5% of residents identified themselves as White, 4.9% as Asian, 3.7% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.2% as Black or African American, and 0.2% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. A total of 3.8% of the population identified with some other race, and 3.8% as two or more races. About 9.2% of South Bend residents indicated that they were of Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity. Larger Asian, Hispanic, and American Indian populations in particular set South Bend apart from other local communities. In 2000, only 2.1% of the population of Pacific County identified as Asian, 5% as Hispanic or Latino, 2.4% as American Indian or Native Alaskan, and 90.5% as White.

Of the total population of South Bend, 9.7% indicated on the 2000 U.S. Census that they were foreign-born. Of these foreign-born residents, 48% were from Mexico, 2.9% from El Salvador, 17% from Laos, 6.3% from Cambodia, 3.2% from Thailand, 5.1% from Europe (United Kingdom and Germany), and 11.4% from Canada. Many immigrant and minority residents may be attracted to South Bend because of numerous employment opportunities in local oyster processors and canneries and the growing local industry in non-timber forest resources (greens harvested in forests for use in decorative bouquets and other products).³ Neighboring Raymond also houses substantial Hispanic and Laotian communities.⁴

South Bend's population in 2000 lived in 702 households, with 81.2% of residents living in family households. About 73.6% of South Bend residents 18 and over had a high school diploma/equivalency or higher, 13.0% had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, and 5.5% had completed a graduate or professional degree. The highest level of educational attainment for 35.7% of residents was a high school degree.

The population of South Bend at the time of the 1990 U.S. Census was about 1551, revealing a gross population increase of 16.5% over the last decade. The racial composition of South Bend also changed radically in the time between censuses. In 1990, only 1.7% of the South Bend population identified as Hispanic or Latino. By 2000, the area's Hispanic population had experienced a net increase of 441%. The city's Asian population, while still significantly large, experienced a net decrease of 51% between censuses. The city's American Indian population remained stable over time.

History

South Bend is named after its location on a prominent bend in the Willapa River, which flows along the western edge of the community.⁵ North Pacific County has historically been home to native peoples from the Chehalis, Chinook, and Willapa language groups.⁶ The area near South Bend was inhabited predominately by the Chinook, whose overall territory included the region bordering the mouth of the Columbia River in Washington and Oregon and the greater part of the area surrounding Willapa Bay.⁷ Native groups depended heavily on fishing and coastal resources and developed extensive trade networks within the region. They harvested native oyster species in Willapa Bay and fished for salmon and sturgeon in the Columbia, the Willapa, and other area rivers. Starting in the 1850s, native populations throughout the region were devastated by introduced diseases and conflicts with White settlers. However, a substantial native community still resides in the South Bend area. Some people of native descent living in or near South Bend have membership in the Quinault or Shoalwater Bay tribes, both of which have small reservations to the north, and others are members of the Chinook Nation, which is currently seeking federal recognition.

The contemporary community of South Bend originated in 1869 when two entrepreneurs established a lumber mill and wharf at the site, drawing mill workers and homesteaders to the area. Starting in 1889, South Bend's ideal location on a navigable river in the heart of timber country and rumors that it might become the westernmost terminus for the Northern Pacific Railway fueled a short-lived economic boom. Between 1889 and 1895, the local population grew from 150 to 3500. Local property values skyrocketed and speculators marketed South Bend as the "Baltimore of the West" and the "San Francisco of the Northwest."⁸ During this boom, the community also became a regional political force. Following an election dispute in 1893, South Bend residents removed all of the records from the county courthouse in Oysterville (a neighboring community on Willapa Bay) and formally established South Bend as the new County Seat, a role that it still plays today. However, boom times in South Bend were short-lived. A railroad line to Chehalis was completed in 1893 but was never connected to Yakima, ending South Bend's chances of becoming a major commercial outlet for visitors and businesses from eastern Washington.⁹ Because civic leaders had given all of the community's waterfront lots to the railroad, nearby Raymond arose as a more attractive site for industrial development, and this neighboring community began to compete with South Bend for resources and residents.

Although South Bend never became the "Planned City of the Future" that investors had tried diligently to create, the community has persisted due to its role in municipal governance and its substantial roots in the regional timber, fishing, and aquaculture industries.¹⁰ During World War I, the army established facilities for logging spruce in the Willapa Bay area, reviving the local timber industry. Today, Weyerhaeuser and other smaller lumber companies continue to log on private land in the vicinity of South Bend. During a site visit in 2004, the city's historic downtown "lumber exchange" building sat empty. Although the city may no longer be a hub for the timber trade, the industry remains locally important.

A downtown monument to the Ladies of the Oyster Industry and the Fishermen of Willapa Bay commemorates the importance of these two industries to the community. At low tide, half of Willapa Bay becomes exposed, creating 40,000 intertidal acres that provide ideal habitat for oysters.¹¹ In the late nineteenth century, settlers throughout the Willapa Bay area began harvesting these native oysters (*Ostrea lurida*), which they shipped to lucrative markets in California. When native oyster populations declined significantly in the late 1800s, Willapa Bay residents established oyster farms in an attempt to revive the industry. In 1891, the Washington

State Legislature allowed oyster growers to purchase or lease areas of the Bay that they had been farming, creating the system of private ownership that structures the Willapa Bay oyster industry today. Attempts to farm native oysters were not highly successful, but the industry was revitalized in the early 1900s when farmers began raising larger oysters native to the eastern United States (*Crassostrea virginica*) and again in the late 1920s with the introduction of the Pacific oyster (*Crassostrea gigas*), a native of Japan. Today, South Bend hosts a processor operated by Hilton's Coast Seafoods, a vertically integrated company with operations in Washington, California, and Hawaii, and oyster aquaculture is a critical source of jobs and revenue for the community. Signs marking the contemporary entrance to South Bend announce that it is the "Oyster Capital of the World."

Commercial fishing has also been an important activity for residents of South Bend. Before the use of fixed gear was banned on the Washington side of the Columbia River in 1934, local fishermen relied heavily on fish traps, seines, and fishwheels to harvest salmon on the Columbia and Willapa Rivers, but the dominant form of fishing in the vicinity has traditionally been gillnetting. Local gillnetters are organized into cooperative drift associations and unions that distribute fishing rights and structure social and political life within the profession, and a sign near the boat launch just outside of South Bend informs recreational boaters on how to avoid gillnets.¹² Following the decline of salmon populations in the area, many local fishermen participate at least seasonally in West Coast and North Pacific fisheries. Shrimp, crab, and razor clams are also popular commercial species in South Bend, and Dungeness Development Associates operates a major processing facility for crab, shrimp, canned fish, and caviar. Over the years, sportfishing has also increased in importance in the area, and many boaters use the launch just outside of town.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

South Bend's economy depends heavily on the oyster aquaculture industry and offices and services associated with the community's role as County Seat. Major employers include the Pacific County government, Coast Seafoods Company (an oyster processing facility), the South Bend School District, and the Willapa Harbor Hospital.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 47.9% of South Bend residents 16 and older were employed and another 46.5% did not participate in the labor force (were not actively seeking work). South Bend displayed an 11.8% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), which greatly exceeded the national unemployment rate of 5.7%. Approximately 21.1% of the employed civilian population 16 years and over worked for the state or federal government in 2000. About 8% 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 underrepresented in these data.

In 2000, South Bend residents worked in a variety of industries. About 21.6% of South Bend residents were employed in education, health, and social services; 18.3% in manufacturing; 9.1% in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services; 8.1% in professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services; 7.7% in retail trade; and 6.2% in construction. No South Bend residents 16 years or older were employed by the military in 2000.

According to the U.S. Census, the per capita income in South Bend was about \$14,776 in 1999, compared to a national per capita income of \$21,587 for the same year. The median

household income in South Bend was about \$29,211 in 1999, compared to a national median household income of \$41,994. Approximately 18.3% of residents were living below the poverty level in 1999, a value well in excess of the national poverty level of about 12.4%.

There were 815 housing units in South Bend in 2000. Approximately 13.9% of these units were vacant at the time of the census, and 18.6% of these vacant units were intended for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. About 66.7% of occupied housing units were owner-occupied, compared to 66.2% ownership for occupied housing units in the U.S. overall.

Governance

South Bend is the County Seat of Pacific County and one of only four incorporated cities within the county's jurisdiction. A mayor and a five-member City Council govern the City of South Bend. Pacific County Government consists of a 3-member Board of County Commissioners, a Department of General Administration, a County Auditor, an Assessor, and a County Clerk, all of whom have offices in South Bend. A 7.8% sales tax and a 9.8% hotel/lodging tax apply in South Bend.^{13,14}

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.¹⁵ Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).¹⁶

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."¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

South Bend lies within the jurisdiction of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council and is approximately 129 driving miles from Council meetings in Seattle, 141 miles from Portland, 775 miles from San Francisco, and 1225 miles from San Diego.²⁰ The nearest U.S. Coast Guard Group and Air Station is located in Warrenton (51 miles), Oregon, and the Coast Guard operates the National Motor Lifeboat School (NMLB) in Ilwaco (41 miles), Washington.²¹ South Bend 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 (132 miles), Washington.

Facilities

South Bend lies along U.S. Highway 101, which runs the length of the Pacific Coast from Seattle, Washington, to Los Angeles, California. The major international airport closest to South Bend is located in Seattle (129 miles). Astoria Regional Airport (46 miles) is the nearest airport facility certified for carrier operations, and the Willapa Harbor Airport in Raymond (5 miles), Washington, provides a paved runway that is open to the public.

The community lies within the South Bend School District 118.²² The District offers an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school, all of which are located in South Bend. Public Utility District No. 2 of Pacific County, Washington provides electricity to South Bend residents. The Willapa Valley Water District provides the community's water supply and sewer services. Law enforcement services are administered by the South Bend Police Department and the Pacific County Sheriff's Office. The South Bend Fire Department and the South Bend Volunteer Fire Department provide fire safety services. The closest major health care facility is the Willapa Harbor Hospital, located in South Bend. There are a few small motels, campgrounds, and recreational vehicle parks located in the vicinity of South Bend, but no major chain hotels.

Boating facilities in South Bend include a boat launch just south of the community on U.S. 101 and a deteriorating dock on the Willapa River that runs the length of downtown. During a site visit in September 2004, a few boats were moored at the dock near downtown South Bend, but some sections of the walkway leading to these boats had been closed due to pronounced erosion along the riverbanks and rotting boards. Commercial fishermen based in South Bend may also utilize the Port of Willapa Harbor in neighboring Raymond (5 miles). The Port of Willapa features a 600-foot high dock wharf, 750 feet of floats, electricity, fresh water, moorage space for smaller boats, and a 5000-pound capacity dock crane.²³

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000, a total of 276 unique vessels, including 209 commercial, 18 tribal commercial, 6 aquaculture, and 43 personal vessels, delivered landings in Willapa Bay. Landings data for South Bend were recorded as part of the Willapa Bay Port Group, which includes the nearby communities of Bay Center, Nahcotta, Naselle, Tokeland, 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), and shrimp (399.9 t/\$397143/8), and other species (13.1 t/\$31,242/51). See the Naselle, Tokeland, and Raymond Community Profiles for additional information about these communities.

South Bend residents owned 21 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, including nine vessels that participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by South Bend residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (2/0/0), groundfish (1/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (6/2/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/0/0), and other species (2/0/0).²⁴

Two individuals living in South Bend held two federal groundfish fishery permits in 2000. In the same year, the number of South Bend residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (6/1/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (13/1/0), shellfish (8/0/NA), shrimp (3/4/2), and other species (1/0/1).²⁵

South Bend residents held a total of 40 permits in 2000. According to available data, 38 state permits were registered to South Bend 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 (7/1/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (15/1/0), shellfish (8/0/NA), shrimp (3/4/0), and other species (1/0/0).²⁶

There are two main seafood processing plants located in South Bend. Hilton's Coast Seafoods Company operates a large oyster-processing plant in South Bend and has also purchased smaller processors in neighboring communities on Willapa Bay. The Coast Seafoods plant in South Bend can reportedly process up to a half million oysters per shift.²⁷ Dungeness Development Associates is also headquartered in South Bend, where the company processes Dungeness crab, shrimp (fresh, frozen, and canned), canned fish (smoked and in natural juices), and salmon caviar (ikura quality and Russian style).²⁸

Sportfishing

A number of South Bend residents engage in sportfishing or operate sportfishing businesses in Willapa Bay and along the nearby Pacific Coast. According to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, there are no sportfishing license vendors operating in South Bend. In 2003 and 2004, no South Bend residents owned or operated charter boats in Washington State.

Catch Record Card Area 2-1 (Willapa Bay) is the closest Marine Area to South Bend. 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 South Bend, particularly from the Willapa 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

Six vessels owned by South Bend residents participated in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. In the same year community members landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): groundfish (confidential/confidential/2), halibut (confidential/confidential/2), and salmon (confidential/confidential/3).

In 2000, a total of 14 South Bend residents worked as crewmembers on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year, fishermen from South Bend held 14 North Pacific

permits total, with six individuals holding federal permits and six individuals holding state permits. These South Bend residents held 3 groundfish License Limitation Program (LLP) permits, 2 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish permits, 1 CFEC halibut permits, 3 CFEC salmon permits, and 1 CFEC shellfish permit. South Bend fishermen held 67,439 halibut individual fishing quota shares in 2000.

Sportfishing

According to state records, South Bend residents purchased a total of four sportfishing licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

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