

# Westport, Washington

## People and Place

### *Location*

The City of Westport is located in Grays Harbor County at the mouth of Grays Harbor on the southernmost peninsula known as Point Chehalis, which means “sand” in the Salish language.<sup>1</sup> The area encompasses approximately 3.6 square miles of land and 0.6 square miles of surface water. Westport is located approximately 70 miles west of Olympia and 130 miles southwest of Seattle, at 46°53'25"N, 124°06'10"W.

### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Westport was 2137, a 12.9% increase from the population reported ten years earlier by the 1990 U.S. Census. In 2000 the percentage of males and females was 49.5% and 50.5% respectively. The racial composition of the population in 2000 was predominantly White (92.7%), followed by American Indian and Alaska Native (3.1%), Asian (0.9%), and Black or African American (0.3%). Only one person identified himself or herself as a Pacific Islander. Few individuals (0.5%) classified themselves as belonging to some other race and 2.4% with two or more races. A small percentage of the population (3%) recognized themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

In 2000 the median age of the population was 43.4, which was higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year. In 2000 22% of the population was under 18 years of age while 19.1% were 65 years of age or older. A small percentage (2.1%) of the population was foreign-born; of the foreign-born population over half (52%) were from Mexico. Approximately 74% of the population of Westport was living in family households in 2000. The 2000 U. S. Census reports that 68.3% of the population over 18 years of age had received a high school degree or higher, 9.5% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 4.6% received a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

### *History*

Prior to the arrival of the first Europeans, members of the Chehalis Tribe occupied Chehalis Point, the area now referred to as Westport. Other fishing camps and small settlements were used during various times of the year, but their main village was Chehalis Point, the sand spit on the south entrance to Grays Harbor. At one time, the village population numbered five thousand individuals. The diet of the Chehalis consisted primarily of fish, including several species of salmon, sturgeon, bottomfish, crab, and razor clams. Historically, members of the Quinault Nation and the nontreaty Indians of Shoalwater Bay, located to the north and south of Westport respectively, made their living partly by selling their surplus fishery resources to canneries,<sup>2</sup> some of which may have been based in Westport. In 1853, 90% of the Chehalis Tribe, including much of their culture, history, and heritage, was lost to the “big sick” epidemic, a disease characterized by extreme fevers.<sup>3</sup>

The Peterson family, the first Euro-American settlers to permanently establish residence on the Point, arrived in 1857. The Chehalis Indians “lived in peace with the Whites” who settled on the Point despite uprisings that were taking place in neighboring areas.<sup>4</sup> By the late 1870s the area was discovered to be a potential recreational area. Hotels were built, land was platted, and the harbor side was named Westport Beach. Because another town in Lewis County had already

claimed the name Chehalis City, Chehalis Point became known as Peterson's Point in the 1870s and in 1890 was renamed Westport.<sup>5</sup>

The first projects to help ships move safely in and out of the harbor occurred around the turn of the century. In 1897 a lifesaving station was opened and one year later Grays Harbor Lighthouse began its service. In 1896 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began construction on the South Jetty, which was completed in 1902. Commercial fishing started in the 1920s and the Westport dock was dedicated in 1929.<sup>6</sup> In 1935 a reparation project began on the jetty and in 1939 when it was completed the jetty extended two and a half miles into the sea.<sup>7</sup> After World War II the cove was dredged, breakwaters installed, more mooring facilities were built in the marina, and in 1955 charter fishing began. By 1961 one hundred and thirty-eight charter boats were fishing out of Westport. Over the next few seasons the number of registered charter vessels had reached two hundred and fifty; the number of commercial fishing boats increased as well during this time. Fishing began to decline with the Boldt decision in 1972, which gave American Indians the right to half of the fishery resources. Following the Boldt decision, "fishing seasons were shortened and two fish per day were legal catches for those lucky enough to find them."<sup>8</sup> The fishing industry in Westport diversified in order to keep up with changing legislation and decreased salmon harvests. Today, charter boats take locals and tourists' bottomfishing, whale watching, and bird watching. The commercial fishing fleet has also diversified; their catch now includes shrimp, Dungeness crab, tuna, and other species of fin and shellfish.<sup>9</sup>

Tourism has long been important to Westport's economy. Participants in the Westport Grayland Chamber of Commerce-sponsored Boat Basin Fishing Derby, typically held in July, can win cash merchandise and prizes for the largest bottomfish, salmon, halibut, or tuna. Other fishing-related events include Westport's Charter Association Fishing Derby in July and the Blessing of the Fleet on Memorial Day weekend. Additional marine-related events in Westport include: Rusty Scupper's Pirate Daze; Maritime Museum's Ole Fashion 4th of July Celebration; Brady's World Famous Oyster Feed; the Crab Races, Feed and Dance Derby; the Ocosta Oyster Feed; and the Annual Seafood Festival and Craft Show.<sup>10</sup>

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 37.2% of the employed civilian population 16 years of age and over was employed within the local, state, or federal government. The majority of Westport's employed civilian population 16 years of age and over (25.2%) was employed in "management, professional and related occupations." Slightly less (21.4%) were employed in "sales and office occupations." Westport's economy also relies on commercial and charter fishing, shellfish harvesting, seafood processing, tourism, and wood processing. Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed 10.8% of the population in 2000. The Weyerhaeuser Company, located in Aberdeen, is Grays Harbor County's largest employer, employing and contracting over 2000 workers.<sup>11</sup> More recently, boat building has also become an important part of Westport's economic base.<sup>12</sup> The Westport Shipyard, founded in 1964, specializes in fiberglass hulled yachts and small craft. The Shipyard employs over 350 people.<sup>13</sup>

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 50.3% of the potential labor force was employed and there was a 4.1% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). A seemingly high 45.5% of the population over 16 years of age was not in the labor force as compared to the national average of 36.1%. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that in 1999

the income of 14.3% of the population was below the poverty level. The median household income in 1999 was \$32,037 and the per capita income was \$17,362. In 2000 there were 1358 housing units in Westport. The percentages of occupied housing units that were owner versus renter occupied were 65% and 35% respectively. About 27.6% of the housing units were vacant, of which 49.3% were vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

### *Governance*

Incorporated on 26 June 1914, the City of Westport is one of four municipalities in Grays Harbor County.<sup>14</sup> The Mayor and five Council members are elected officials. Grays Harbor County, including Westport, levies an 8.3% sales tax and a 3% 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>15</sup> Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).<sup>16</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>17</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>18</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>19</sup>

There is a National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Office located approximately 130 miles to the northeast in Seattle. Seattle is also home to North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. There is a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) office located about 30 miles west in Montesano, Washington. A U.S. Coast Guard Station (USCG) is located in Westport at the entrance to Grays Harbor, guarding Grays Harbor bar, one of the most hazardous bars in the Pacific Northwest. The USCG station at Westport has four vessels and is responsible for marine safety between Queets River and Ocean Park and from Preacher’s Slough to 50 nautical miles offshore.

### *Facilities*

Westport is accessible by ground, sea, and air. The main roads connecting Westport to neighboring communities include state highway 105 east to Aberdeen and 105 south to Raymond. During the spring and summer months, a passenger-only ferry capable of holding 95 passengers operates between Westport and Ocean Shores to the north. The nearest airport certified for carrier operations is 54 miles south in Astoria, Oregon. Westport Airport, available for public use, has one runway and is located immediately adjacent to the harbor, one mile north of Westport. Sea-Tac International Airport, 120 miles to the northwest in Sea Tac, is the closest airport offering international service.

Students in Westport attend the Ocosta School District, offering an elementary school and a junior/senior high school. The nearest colleges with over 2000 students are South Puget Sound Community College and Evergreen State College, both located approximately 80 miles east in Olympia. Grays Harbor Public Utility District is the primary electricity supplier for the city. The City of Westport's Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Department provide city residents and businesses with sewer and water services. Public safety in Westport is administered by the Westport Police Department. Westport supports a local medical center, the Beach Clinic Inc., but the nearest hospital is Grays Harbor Community Hospital, situated 21 miles west in Aberdeen. The tourism industry in Westport is fairly developed with approximately 34 motels in the city.

There are several community-oriented businesses located in Westport, including the Westport/South Beach Historical Society's Maritime Museum, Westport/South Beach Senior House, the Westport Timberland Library, and several places of worship. Located in the Marina District of Westport, the Maritime Museum serves to entertain and educate adults and children on the history of the area, including local efforts in whaling, fishing, and cranberry growing. The University of Washington School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences also has a staging facility in Westport, from which research is conducted on the Willapa Bay estuary. There are several non-profit organizations based in Westport that focus on fishery-related issues, including Friends of Grays Harbor, a volunteer citizen's group made up of crabbers, fishermen, oyster growers, and citizens, dedicated to fostering and promoting the economic, biological, and social uniqueness of a healthy Grays Harbor estuary.<sup>20</sup> One Westport community resident, a member of an Astoria, Oregon, based non-profit, serves as a fishing community liaison, who advises the Coast Guard and fishing family members in times of crisis.<sup>21</sup>

According to Westport Marina, their facility is the largest coastal marina in the Pacific Northwest and is home to Washington State's largest charter fishing fleet.<sup>22</sup> With a 650-vessel moorage capacity (for vessels up to 200-feet in length) the Marina offers boat manufacturing and repair services, refrigerated shoreside processing facilities, and vessel supplies. Westport also has two retail stores specializing in marine and fishery supplies.

Net pens for rearing Humptulips River coho are located in the Westport Marina and operated jointly by WDFW, Ocosta High School, the Kiwanis Club, and the Port of Westport. The net pens are positioned inside boat slips at the marina and when the salmon return to spawn, anglers can be found crowding the Westport Boat Basin. Brady's Oysters, a family owned and operated business spanning four generations, grows oysters on Suspended Culture, a unique method developed by Brady Engvall in the early 1970s to keep the oysters out of the mud. Brady's grows their oysters in the Elk River Estuary in the South Bay of Grays Harbor.<sup>23</sup>

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

Of the 894 unique vessels that delivered landings to Westport in 2000, 298 were commercial vessels, 75 were tribal commercial vessels, 73 were for personal use, and one for aquaculture. 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 (631 t/\$100,067/9), crab (2446 t/\$12,035,331/210), groundfish (8305 t/\$2,436,247/74), highly migratory species (1101 t/\$2,062,081/73), salmon (68 t/\$189,609/69), shellfish (5 t/\$20,201/18), shrimp (1370 t/\$1,322,023/33), and other species (32 t/\$110,428/44).

Westport residents owned 179 vessels in 2000, 58 of which participated in the Federally Managed Groundfish fishery. Community members owned two vessels that participated in the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Westport residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (4/0/0), crab (50/2/1), groundfish (12/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (42/19/3), shellfish (NA/1/NA), shrimp (NA/6/1), and other species (21/0/0).<sup>24</sup>

Ten Westport residents held a total of ten Federally Managed Groundfish fishery permits in 2000. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number of Westport residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic (3/0/0), crab (45/3/1), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (32/17/6), shellfish (12/1/NA), shrimp (20/6/2), and other species (8/0/2).<sup>25</sup>

According to available data, 203 state and federal permits were registered to Westport 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: coastal pelagic (4/0/0), crab (70/6/1), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (45/0/9), shellfish (12/0/NA), shrimp (22/10/3), and other species (9/0/2).<sup>26</sup>

The commercial anchovy fishery in Washington operates out of Ilwaco and Westport with seasonal gear restrictions. Within coastal waters, anchovy harvest is allowed year round and may be caught using lampara and purse seines. Anchovy catches from Westport are taken predominantly from Grays Harbors although some of the landings are made from the nearshore coastal area.<sup>27</sup> Westport residents are also involved in the West Coast sardine fishery. In 2000, 10.7 million pounds of sardines, a prolific coastal pelagic species, were landed in Washington State. The majority of the catch (approximately 80%) was landed in Ilwaco however processors in Westport purchased the majority of the remaining catch.

There were at least three seafood processors operating in Westport in 2000: Washington Crab Producers (WCP), Inc., Ocean Gold Seafoods Inc. (formerly Merino's Seafood Inc.), and Westport Seafood Exchange (WSE), Inc. In the same year these processors employed approximately 154 individuals. Processed products include: Dungeness crab, pacific hake, shrimp, and anchovies. The estimated total weight and value of their processed products in 2000 is confidential. WCP was owned and operated as a cooperative until Pacific Seafood Group acquired the company in 1993. Known for their catching and selling of bait anchovies, WSE facilitates dockside unloading of live product to wholesalers and distributors. WSE's additional services include a 120-ton ice storage capacity, a 170-foot moorage dock, a large gear storage yard, and free bait lockers.<sup>28</sup> Other business involved in seafood retail include Brady's Oysters seafood farm and market and D&M Live Crab.

Several tribes along the west participate in commercial fishing, however scant data exists on tribal commercial fishing in the Westport area. Pacific Coast treaty Indian tribes include the Hoh, Makah, and Quileute Indian Tribes, and the Quinault Indian Nation. The closest treaty Indian nation to Westport is the Quinault, whose tribal center is located approximately 70 miles

north in Taholah, Washington, in Grays Harbor County. According to the Boldt Decision,<sup>29</sup> the Quinault's usual and accustomed fishing area includes the following rivers and streams: Clearwater, Queets, Salmon, Quinault, Raft, Moclips, Copalis, and Joe Creek. Ocean fisheries are utilized in the waters adjacent to their territory, between Destruction Island and Point Chehalis.<sup>30</sup> The closest nontreaty Indian tribe is the Shoalwater Bay Tribe, located 30 miles south in Tokeland, on the north end of Willipa Bay in Pacific County. Tribes collect taxes from tribal members who sell fish and shellfish to help pay for tribal natural resource management programs. The nearby tribes of Shoalwater Bay and the Quinault Indian Nation most likely compete for similar fishery resources as nontribal fishermen fishing out of Westport.

### *Sportfishing*

Sportfishermen in Westport are involved in both West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. In 2000 approximately 14 salmonid charter fishing operators serviced sport fishermen and tourists. At least 23 salmonid charter fishing business operated in Westport in 2003. There is one licensed agent selling fishing permits in Westport. In 2003 there were 5525 sportfishing license transactions in Westport valuing \$61,021. In Catch Record Card Area 2 (Westport-Ocean Shores) the 2000-2001 sport salmon catch, based on creel survey estimates was 34,636, including 6254 Chinook and 28,382 coho. In 2000 there were approximately 19,895 marine angler trips in the sport salmon fishery. In the same year eight steelhead were caught by sportfishermen in Area 2. In 2000 the coastal bottomfish catch for the same area was 152,675 and the pacific halibut catch for Areas 1-2 (Ilwaco-Westport-Ocean Shores) was 2341. Due to the downturn in the salmon fishery, bottomfishing and whale watching are now replacing salmon fishing, previously the most popular charter trip. In the spring, whale-watching trips leave from Westport to view the California Grey whales as they journey from Baja, Mexico, to their northern feeding grounds in the Bering and Chukchi seas.<sup>31</sup>

### *Subsistence*

Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities are fundamental to the way of life of some coastal community members. Today, members of the Quinault Nation, the Shoalwater Bay tribe, and other nontribal subsistence fishermen obtain fishery resources from the waters surrounding Westport. While tribal and nontribal individuals participate in subsistence fishing, tribal catches are reserved for tribal use only. 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, Westport residents owned 10 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): finfish (confidential/confidential/1) and salmon (238 t/\$225,180/6).

In 2000 a total of 56 Westport residents served as crewmembers in North Pacific fisheries. In the same year 12 community residents held registered state permits and seven held registered federal permits.

A total of 21 state and federal permits were registered to individuals in Westport in 2000. In the same year residents of Westport held one crab and six groundfish License Limitation Program permits. In 2000 Westport residents held 1 crab, 1 Bering Sea Aleutian Islands

groundfish, 1 Gulf of Alaska groundfish, 2 herring, 7 salmon, and 2 shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. Westport residents held 77,433 halibut individual fishing quota shares in the same year.

### *Sportfishing*

While the majority of the charter boats generally target West Coast fisheries, Westport community members purchased thirty-six Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000. There were no sportfishing businesses in Westport that participated in Alaskan fisheries in 2000.

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<sup>2</sup> The Shoalwater Bay Tribe. No date. The Shoalwater Bay: Tribal History, [Online]. Available: URL:

<http://www.spipa.org/shoalwaterbay.htm> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>3</sup> McCausland, R. 1998. Washington's Westport. The Donning Company Publishers, Virginia Beach, VA. 192 p.

<sup>4</sup> McCausland, R. 1998. Washington's Westport. The Donning Company Publishers, Virginia Beach, VA. 192 p.

<sup>5</sup> The Chehalis River Council. 2004. Selective chronology of the Chehalis Basin, [Online]. Available: URL:

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<sup>6</sup> Buccaneer Tours and Charters. 2003. History of the Grays Harbor area, [Online]. Available: URL:

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<sup>7</sup> McCausland, R. 1998. Washington's Westport. The Donning Company Publishers, Virginia Beach, VA. 192 p.

<sup>8</sup> McCausland, R. 1998. Washington's Westport. The Donning Company Publishers, Virginia Beach, VA. 192 p.

<sup>9</sup> McCausland, R. 1998. Washington's Westport. The Donning Company Publishers, Virginia Beach, VA. 192 p.

<sup>10</sup> Aue, B. 2004. South Beach Bulletin, 2004-2005: Visitors guide.

<sup>11</sup> Grays Harbor Economic Development Council. No date. Grays Harbor County manufacturing, [Online].

Available: URL: <http://www.ghedc.com/ghmanuf.html> (access date - June 2004).

<sup>12</sup> City of Westport. 2004. Home, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ci.westport.wa.us/index.htm> (access date - June 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Grays Harbor Economic Development Council. 2003. Grays Harbor County workforce, [Online]. Available:

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<sup>14</sup> City of Westport. 2004. Home, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ci.westport.wa.us/index.htm> (access date - June 2004).

<sup>15</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>16</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2002. Information on Washington's Tax Structure: Fish Taxes,

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<sup>17</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>18</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures. 2004. Environment, Energy, and Transportation Program: Fishing,

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<sup>19</sup> Washington State Department of Licensing. 2003. Fuel Tax Frequently Asked Questions, [Online]. Available:

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<sup>20</sup> Friends of Grays Harbor. No date. Home, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.fogharbor.org/index.html> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Women's Coalition for Pacific Fisheries (WCPF). 2001. WCPF Committees, [Online]. Available: URL:

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- <sup>24</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>25</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>26</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.
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