

Atascadero

People and Place

Location

Atascadero is in San Luis Obispo County along U.S. Highway 101, approximately 218 miles north of Los Angeles and 215 miles south of San Francisco. It covers 26.7 square miles of land and 0.04 square miles of water. The geographic coordinates of Atascadero are lat 35°28'51"N, long 120°40'12"W.

Demographic Profile

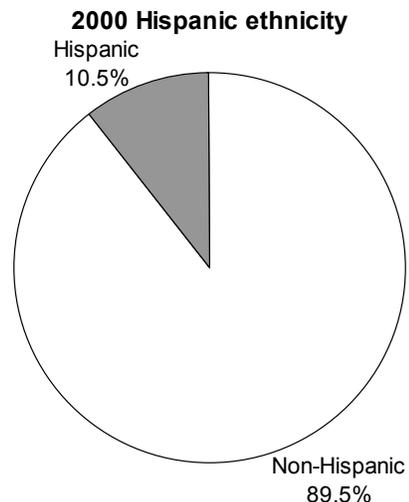
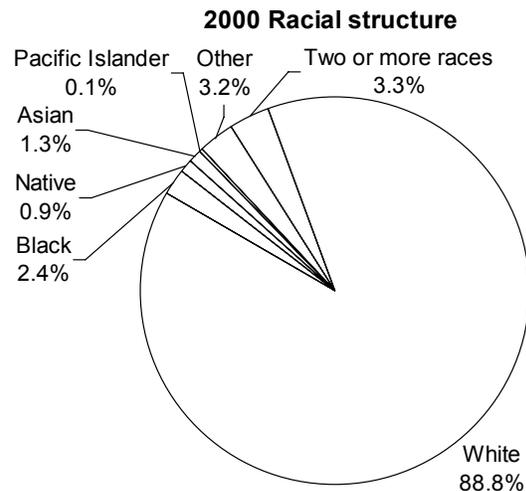
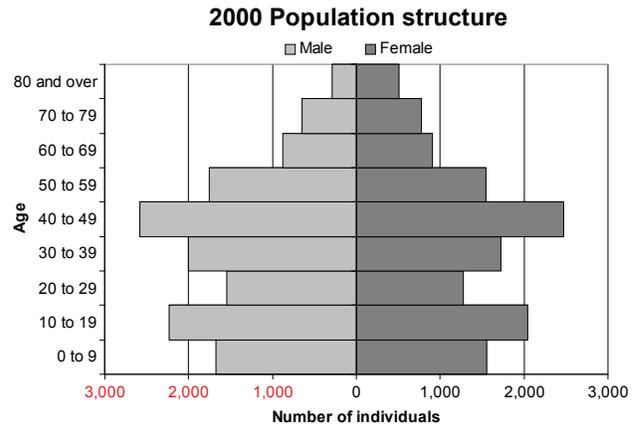
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Atascadero was 26,411, a 14.1% increase from 1990. The gender composition was 48.5% female and 51.5% male. The median age in 2000 was 38.2, slightly higher than the national median of 35.3. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 87.3% had a high school education or higher, 18.3% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 4.9% had a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively. The highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma or equivalency for 26.4% of the population.

The majority of the racial structure of Atascadero was white (88.8%), followed by people who identified with two or more races (3.3%), people who identified with some other race (3.2%), black (2.4%), Asian (1.3%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (0.9%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.1%). Ethnicity data indicate 10.5% identified as Hispanic. Less than five percent (4.4%) of the population was foreign-born, of which 38% were born in Mexico.

In 2000 81.2% of the population lived in family households.

History

The area surrounding Atascadero, a Spanish word indicating a place of plentiful water, was the heart of the Chumash Indian territory for centuries. Chumash hunters, fishermen, and foragers utilized local marine, coastal, and river resources. In unique redwood-planked boats, known as "tomols," they regularly transported resources from their offshore islands to the mainland. These mariners imported specialized stone blades and drills manufactured on the islands, plus marine resources such as shark, bonito, and halibut. Chumash fishermen used a variety of nets, traps, baskets, hooks, spears, and plant poisons to catch or stun fish and catch seals and sea otters. On the coast they collected abalone and mussels,



and the Chumash trade network passed raw marine materials such as fish, whale bones, and oils to the interior.

Although the Portuguese conquistador Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo first encountered the Chumash in 1542, it was not until 1772 that five Catholic missions were established within the Chumash Nation. After the secularization of the missions in 1833, the Chumash population fell into severe decline. In 1901 the U.S. government allocated 75 acres along Zanja de Cota Creek near Mission Santa Ynez to the surviving Chumash community. Today the Chumash have their own business council, a thriving bingo operation, and a federal housing program on their small reservation. Approximately 5,000 people identify themselves as Chumash Indians.¹

Franciscan friars founded the missions in the vicinity of Arroyo Grande. Between 1821 and 1848, California was under the jurisdiction of Mexico after it gained independence from Spain. Land grants were made to settlers in the area until California became a U.S. possession in 1848 and San Luis Obispo became one of California's original 27 counties. Many place names in the area reflect this heritage.²

Agriculture and quarrying in the area spurred rapid population growth in the late 1800s, facilitated by overland transport options available through the Southern Pacific Railroad. By the 1950s conveyors were installed on the waterfront for unloading sardine boats that accelerated the commercial development of the area's harbors in response to newly discovered fishing grounds offshore.³

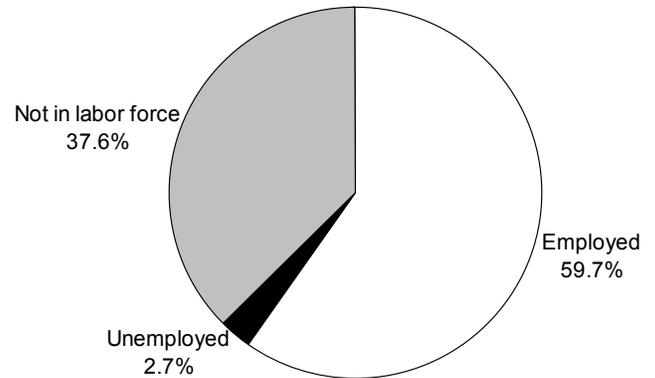
The settling of Atascadero began with Franciscan clergy who managed the 60,000-acre Rancho Asuncion until 1833, when the Mexican government secularized the mission lands. In 1913 plans were drawn up for the area and financed by a group of investors from across the country. Atascadero eventually incorporated in 1979.⁴ Tourism is an important part of its economy. The community boasts thousands of acres of vineyards, wineries, almond orchards, nearby lakes accessible to hikers, biking, parks, swimming, historical interests such as Hearst Castle, a zoo, and other outdoor activities.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 59.7% of Atascadero's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 2.7% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 4.3% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 37.6% were not in the labor force. The primary

2000 Employment structure



employment sectors were local, state, or federal government (26.0%), education, health, and social services (24.8%), retail trade (12.2%), and construction (9.9%). Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed 1%, but this percentage may be artificially low because many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

The California Employment Development Department lists Atascadero State Hospital as a major employer.⁵

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Atascadero's per capita income in 1999 was \$20,029, the median household income was \$48,725, and 9% lived below the poverty level. In 2000 there were 9,848 housing units in Atascadero, of which 96.8% were occupied and 3.2% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 65.6% were by owner and 34.4% were by renter.

Governance

Atascadero is a general law city with a council-manager form of government. The council has five members who are elected at large and serve four-year overlapping terms. The council elects the mayor to perform ceremonial duties and preside over meetings. The council also appoints the city manager, who is responsible for all administrative activities.⁶ Atascadero levies a 7.25% sales and use tax. San Luis Obispo County levies a 9.0% transient lodging tax rate, which earned \$4,229,463 for the 2001 fiscal year.⁷ See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fishermen and processors in California.

A California Department of Fish and Game Marine Region Field Office and a U.S. Coast Guard station are 30 miles away in Morro Bay. Meetings of the Pacific

Fishery Management Council are held in Foster City, approximately 211 miles away.

Facilities

Atascadero is accessible by a variety of transportation options. Amtrak passenger rail service is available at the Grover Beach station approximately 30 miles away. San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport is 18 miles away. The nearest major international airports are at Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The public school system has seven primary/middle schools and two high schools. There are also three private primary/middle schools and one private high school in Atascadero. The City of Atascadero Public Works Department provides wastewater services to about half the residents, the other half uses septic systems. The Atascadero Mutual Water Company operates the city's water systems and Pacific Gas and Electric supplies electricity to all of San Luis Obispo County. The Atascadero Police and Fire departments administer public safety. Three nearby hospitals provide health services to area residents. Twin Cities Community Hospital is about 6 miles away and two other hospitals are 16 miles away in San Luis Obispo. At least eight hotels and two bed and breakfasts are in Atascadero. The city has no marine facilities (i.e., harbor, docks, etc.).

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

At least one seafood processor operated in Atascadero in 2000. Specific information (estimated pounds of product/value of product) is confidential. Landings data for Atascadero were recorded as part of the Other San Luis Obispo County Ports port group, which includes the communities of Arroyo Grande, Baywood Park, Cambria, Cayucos, Grover City, Nipomo, Oceano, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo, San Miguel, San Simeon, and Shell Beach.

Reported landings for this port group in 2000 were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of landings/number of vessels landing): groundfish 9 t/\$110,441/40 and other species <1 t/\$88/6. See the Arroyo Grande community profile for additional information.

Atascadero residents owned 14 commercial vessels in 2000, including eight vessels that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Atascadero residents in 2000 that participated in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 0/1/1, groundfish 0/0/NA, highly migratory species

NA/0/NA, salmon 0/2/7, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/2/6, and other species 1/0/0.⁸

In 2000 four Atascadero residents held four federal groundfish fishery permits. The number of Atascadero residents holding permits in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 0/1/1, groundfish 0/0/4, highly migratory species NA/0/4, salmon 0/2/9, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 1/1/6, and other species 1/0/9.⁹

In 2000 residents held at least 58 commercial fishing permits, including 54 registered state permits. The number of state permits held by residents in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 0/1/1, groundfish 0/0/5, highly migratory species NA/0/4, salmon 0/2/16, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 1/2/8, and other species 1/0/13.¹⁰

Sportfishing

A number of charter vessels operate in San Luis Obispo County targeting albacore tuna, rock cod, salmon, and other species. Many also offer seasonal whale watching tours. In 2002 at least 14 charter businesses served sport fishermen and tourists in Atascadero. The community is home to one sportfishing license agent. In 2000 vendors in San Luis Obispo County sold 43,399 resident sportfishing licenses, 40 nonresident sportfishing licenses, 52 sport salmon punch cards, and 30 abalone report cards. In the port group consisting of Avila Beach and Morro Bay, 12 commercial passenger fishing vessels served 17,759 anglers in 2000. These vessels reported 123,441 landings composed of more than a dozen species. Rockfish (unspecified) and Albacore tuna accounted for 93.9% and 4.6% of the landings respectively.

Subsistence

Local tribal and nontribal residents may engage in subsistence fishing in the Atascadero area. However, specific information on subsistence fishing is not discussed in detail in this community profile due to the lack of available data. The California Department of Fish and Game uses the term "recreational" for fishermen who do not earn revenue from their catch, but fish for pleasure or to provide food for personal consumption. Information on subsistence fishing in California is captured to some degree in the above sportfishing data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 Atascadero residents owned two vessels that participated in North Pacific fisheries. These vessels made landings in the North Pacific salmon fishery, but

specific information (landings in metric tons/value of landings) is confidential.

Two community members held state permits for Alaska fisheries and one held a federal permit for North Pacific fisheries. In 2000 Atascadero residents held three commercial fishing permits for North Pacific fisheries, of which two were Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) salmon permits.

Five Atascadero residents held crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

Sportfishing

Atascadero residents purchased 38 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

Notes

1. Houghton Mifflin Company. No date. Encyclopedia of North American Indians: Chumash. Online at <http://www.rain.org/org/eagle/chumash1.htm> [accessed 8 February 2007].

2. The County of San Luis Obispo Online. 2005. About the county. Online at http://www.co.slo.ca.us/SLOCo_InterPortal.nsf/SLOCo_AboutCounty.htm?OpenPage&charset=windows-1252 [accessed 8 February 2007].

3. History in San Luis Obispo County. 2004. Timeline. Online at <http://www.historyinslocounty.com/index.htm> [accessed 8 February 2007].

4. Atascadero Chamber of Commerce. 2005. Historic Atascadero. Online at <http://www.atascaderochamber.org/history.asp> [accessed 8 February 2007].

5. State of California. No date. Labor market information: Major employers in San Luis Obispo County. Online at <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/databrowsing/?PAGEID=4&SUBID=131> [accessed 8 February 2007].

6. City of Atascadero. No date. City of Atascadero: Home. Online at <http://www.atascadero.org/> [accessed 8 February 2007].

7. State of California. 2004. California counties transient lodging tax revenue. Online at <http://www.sco.ca.gov/ard/local/locrep/adhoc/county/0001cotranslodgtax.pdf> [accessed 8 February 2007].

8. NA refers to data that were not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.

9. See note 8.

10. See note 8.