

# El Sobrante

## People and Place

### Location

El Sobrante, located in Contra Costa County, is 21 miles northeast of San Francisco and 67 miles southwest of Sacramento. El Sobrante covers 3.1 square miles of land. Its geographic coordinates are lat 37°58'38"N, long 122°17'39"W.

### Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of El Sobrante was 12,260, a 24.4% increase from 1990. The gender composition was 51.5% female and 48.5% male. The median age was 37.6, slightly higher than the national median of 35.3. About 53.8% of the population was between the ages of 25 and 59. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 85.9% had a high school education or higher, 19.3% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 5.9% had a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The majority of the racial structure of El Sobrante was white (60.4%), followed by Asian (12.5%), black (12.2%), individuals who identified with two or more races (7.1%), people who identified with some other race (7%), American Indian and Alaskan Native (0.7%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.3%). Ethnicity data indicate 15.6% identified as Hispanic. Approximately 15.9% of the population was foreign-born population, of which 58.6% were born in Asia.

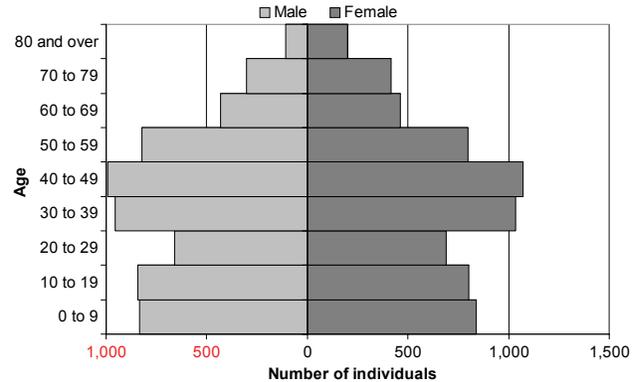
In 2000 83.8% of the population lived in family households.

### History

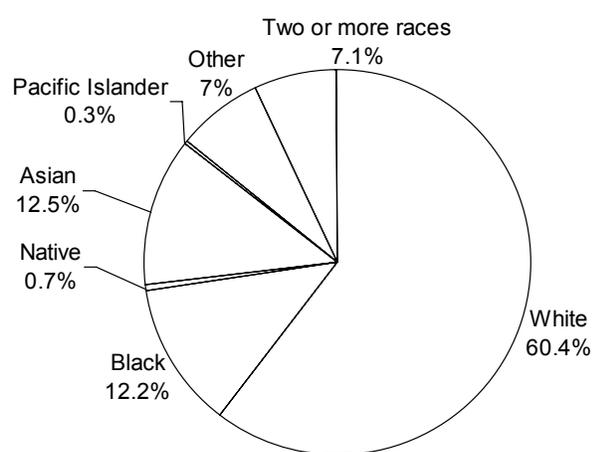
In 1769 Gaspar de Portola, a Spanish explorer, discovered San Francisco Bay while searching for Monterey Bay. Upon Portola's arrival, more than 10,000 Indians lived in central California's coastal areas between Big Sur and San Francisco Bay. This group of Indians consisted of approximately 40 tribal groups ranging in size from 100 to 250 members. When the Spanish arrived they referred to the tribal groups collectively as "costenos," meaning coastal people. The name was eventually changed to "Costanoan." Native Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area were referred to as Costanoans for years until descendants chose to call themselves Ohlones, meaning "the abalone people."<sup>1</sup>

The Ohlones living in the San Pablo Creek watershed were mostly Huchiun, a group that lived

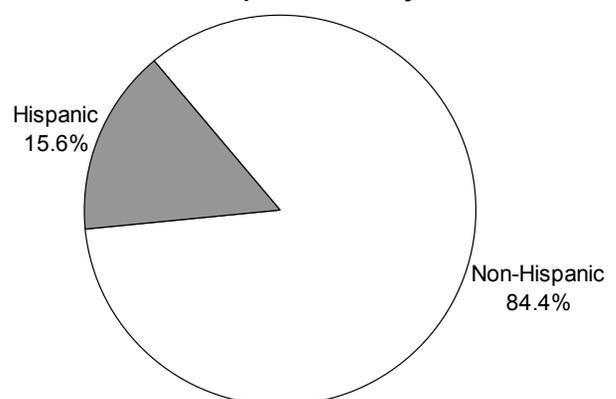
2000 Population structure



2000 Racial structure



2000 Hispanic ethnicity



roughly between Pinole and Oakland. They used the creek's waters to leach tannins from the acorns of coastal oaks, which they ground into a nourishing gruel. They also consumed salmon that spawned in the watershed. The Huchiun harvested tules, cat tails, willows, and sedges that they used to make baskets, fishing boats, and huts.<sup>2</sup> Shellfish were also important to the Ohlone, who gathered mussels, abalone, clams, oysters, and hornshell from the local tidelands.<sup>3</sup> The Ohlones also ventured short distances into the ocean in their reed boats to fish for mackerel, sardine, and other nearshore species.<sup>4</sup>

In 1841 Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado gave the name El Sobrante (meaning "the leftover" in Spanish) to an irregular-shaped tract of land on the fringes of four ranchos. The term El Sobrante today refers to the El Sobrante Valley, part of which is unincorporated and under the jurisdiction of Contra Costa County. Other areas of El Sobrante have been annexed by neighboring Richmond. Today the town is bordered by San Pablo Bay on the west, Richmond on the southwest, and Pinole on the north.

El Sobrante, like other communities in the area, was affected by the building boom following World War II. Over the past 40 years, El Sobrante has changed from a small rural town to a mostly developed residential suburb. El Sobrante also is the site of the Sikh Center of the San Francisco Bay Area, one of the most important shrines of the Sikh community in North America.

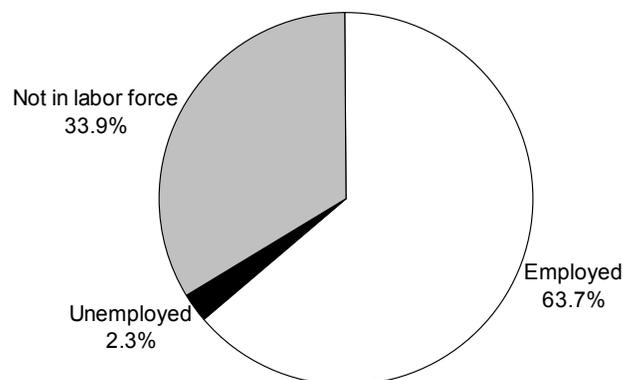
## Infrastructure

### Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 63.7% of El Sobrante's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 2.3% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 3.5% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 33.9% was not in the labor force. The primary employment sectors were management, professional, and related occupations (32.9%), sales and office occupations (27.7%), production, transportation, and material moving occupations (14.2%), and local, state, or federal governments (13.6%). Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining employed 0.3%, but this percentage may be artificially low because many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

In 2002 the top five employers in Contra Costa County were Bio-Rad Laboratories, Bookside Hospital, Chevron USA Inc., Color Spot Nurseries, and Contra Costa Community College.<sup>5</sup> Standard Oil and Shell/Valero oil refineries are in nearby Richmond and Martinez respectively.

**2000 Employment structure**



According to the 2000 U.S. Census, El Sobrante's median household income in 1999 was \$48,272, the per capita income was \$24,525, and 9.5% lived below the poverty level. In 2000 El Sobrante had 4,803 housing units, of which 97.4% were occupied and 2.6% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 63.7% were by owner and 36.3% were by renter. Nearly one-tenth (9.4%) of the vacant units were due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

### Governance

El Sobrante is a U.S. Census Designated Place and the town is run by its municipal advisory council. Residents pay a 8.25% sale and use tax on regular purchases and visitors pay a 10% transient lodging tax.<sup>6,7</sup> See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fishermen and processor in California.

The National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Southwest Fisheries Science Center has laboratories located 86 miles south in Santa Cruz and a NMFS regional office is 409 miles south in Long Beach. The California Department of Fish and Game's Marine Region has an office located 42 miles south in Belmont. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office is 21 miles south in San Francisco and the Pacific Fishery Management Council holds meetings 41 miles south in Foster City. The El Sobrante coastal area is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Marine Safety Office San Francisco Bay, one of the largest and busiest marine safety units in the USCG.

### Facilities

El Sobrante is accessible by ground and air. The major road connecting El Sobrante to neighboring cities is Interstate Highway 80 northeast to Sacramento and south to San Francisco. The San Francisco International

Airport is 25 miles south of El Sobrante. The Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District Bus provides transportation throughout the area, and the Contra Costa Commute Alternative Network provides additional options for El Sobrante commuters.

El Sobrante has several elementary, middle, and alternative schools, and one high school. The nearest college, Contra Costa College, has an enrollment of more than 3,000 and is 3 miles southwest in San Pablo. El Sobrante is about 5 miles from San Pablo Bay. East Bay Municipal Utility District provides water and wastewater services to El Sobrante residents. Pacific Gas and Electric supplies electricity and natural gas. The Contra Costa Sheriff's Office administers public safety. The nearest medical facility is the Doctor's Medical Center 9 miles southwest in San Pablo. Other local facilities include a public library, several parks, and the May Valley Community Center. El Sobrante has no port facilities, however, the ports of Oakland and San Francisco are 15 and 20 miles south respectively.

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### **Commercial Fishing**

Landing data for El Sobrante were recorded as part of the Other San Francisco Bay and San Mateo County Ports group which includes the nearby communities of Alamo, Albany, Alviso, Antioch, Antioch Bridge, Benicia, Bird Landing, Brentwood, Burlingame, Campbell, China Camp, Collinsville, Concord, Crockett, Daly City, Danville, El Cerrito, Emeryville, Fairfield, Farallone Island, Fremont, Glen Cove, Hayward, Lafayette, Livermore, Los Altos, Los Gatos, Martinez, Martins Beach, McNears Point, Moss Beach, Mountain View, Napa, Newark, Oakley, Palo Alto, Pacifica, Pedro, Pescadero, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Pleasanton, Pigeon Point, Point Montara, Point San Pedro, Port Costa, Poster City, Redwood City, Rio Vista, Rockaway Beach, Rodeo, San Bruno, San Carlos, San Jose, San Leandro, San Mateo, San Francisco area, South San Francisco, Suisun City, Sunnyvale, Vacaville, Vallejo, Walnut Creek, and Yountville.

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): coastal pelagic confidential/confidential/1; crab confidential/confidential/1; groundfish 1 t/\$2,112/5; salmon confidential/confidential/3; shrimp 438 t/\$245,851/5; and other species 8 t/\$16,380/12. No fish processors operated in El Sobrante. See the San Francisco community profile for more information regarding processors in the San

Francisco Bay area and the San Jose and Lafayette community profiles for additional information.

El Sobrante residents owned four vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, including two that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by El Sobrante residents that participated in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 0/0/1, groundfish 0/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 0/0/4, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/0/1, and other species 0/0/1.<sup>8</sup>

In 2000 the number of El Sobrante residents holding permits in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/1, crab 0/0/2, groundfish 0/0/2, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 0/0/15, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 0/0/1, and other species 0/0/4.<sup>9</sup>

In 2000 38 state permits were registered to El Sobrante residents. The number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/2, crab 0/0/2, groundfish 0/0/2, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 0/0/26, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 0/0/2, and other species 0/0/4.<sup>10</sup>

### **Sportfishing**

El Sobrante residents are involved in sportfishing in West Coast and North Pacific fisheries. Two sportfishing license agents are located in El Sobrante, which had two licensed commercial passenger fishing vessels in 2002 and 2003.

### **Subsistence**

Specific information on subsistence fishing in El Sobrante 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 is captured to some degree in the sportfishing data.

## **Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries**

### **Commercial Fishing**

In 2000 El Sobrante residents owned three vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries.

### **Sportfishing**

El Sobrante residents purchased 20 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

## Notes

1. National Park Service. No date. An “unvanishing” history. Online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/seac/sfprehis.htm> [accessed 15 February 2007].
2. San Pablo Watershed Neighbors Education and Restoration Society. No date. A history of the watershed. Online at <http://www.aoinstitute.org/spawners/history.html> [accessed 15 February 2007].
3. Santa Cruz Public Libraries. 1991. An overview of Ohlone culture. Online at <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/spanish/ohlone.shtml> [accessed 15 February 2007].
4. A. McEvoy. 1986. The fisherman's problem: Ecology and law in the California fisheries 1850-1980. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 368 p.
5. California Employment Development Department. 2002. Major employers in Contra Costa County. Online at <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/aspdotnet/databrowsing/empMain.aspx?menuChoice=emp> [accessed 15 February 2007].
6. California State Board of Equalization. 2004. California city and county sales and use tax rates. Online at <http://www.boe.ca.gov/pdf/pub71.pdf> [accessed 17 February 2007].
7. California State Board of Equalization. 2001. California counties transient lodging tax revenue, rate and date for the fiscal year 2000-2001. Online at <http://www.sco.ca.gov/ard/local/locprep/adhoc/county/0001cotranslodgtax.pdf> [accessed 15 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.