

Aberdeen

People and Place

Location

Aberdeen, known as the “Gateway to the Olympic Peninsula,” is on the southern shore of the Olympic Peninsula, where the Wishkah and Chehalis rivers converge. Situated in Grays Harbor County, the city encompasses 12.2 square miles of land and 1.6 square miles of water. The nearest major U.S. city is Seattle, a 109-mile drive to the northeast. Aberdeen’s geographic coordinates are lat 46°58’32”N, long 123°48’52”W.

Demographic Profile

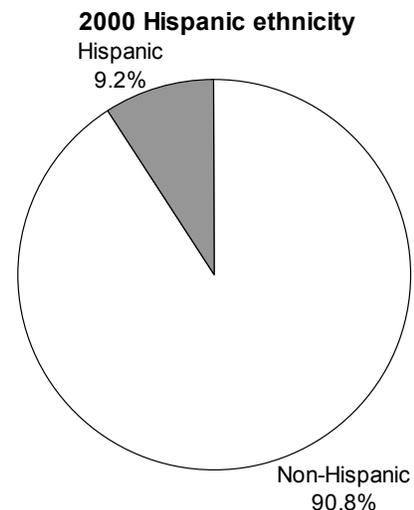
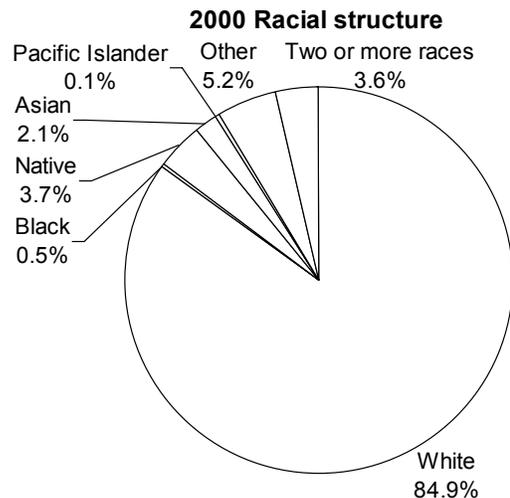
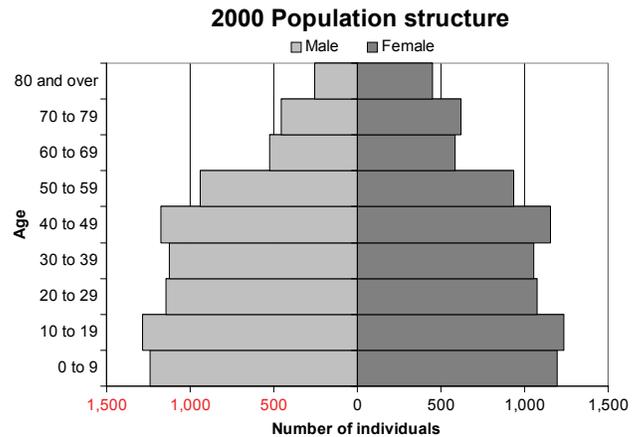
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Aberdeen’s population was 16,461 and has remained stable since the 1990 count of 16,565 residents. The gender composition was 50.5% female and 49.5% male. The median age of 34.9 was similar to the national median of 35.3. Aberdeen’s age structure demonstrated a significant population drop between the ages of 18 and 24, typical for a community without a major tertiary education provider. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 90.0% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 10.3% had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, and 2.6% had attained a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The vast majority of Aberdeen’s racial structure recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was white (84.9%), followed by people who identified with another race (5.2%), American Indian and Alaska Native (3.7%), people who identified with two or more races (3.6%), Asian (2.1%), black (0.5%), and Pacific Islander (0.1%). Ethnicity data indicate that 9.2% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 7% were foreign-born, with the majority from the Americas (outside of the United States) and Asia.

History

Coastal Salish-speaking Indians have inhabited this region since before European contact. The Lower Chehalis people inhabited the area of present-day Grays Harbor and relied heavily on marine resources, including fish, seals, clams, and other shellfish. They traded up and down well-established trade routes throughout the coastal Pacific Northwest.¹

Aberdeen obtained its name (which means “confluence of two rivers”) from early Scottish immigrants who settled in the area and named it in honor of Aberdeen, Scotland. The town grew up around a saw



mill that was established in 1884. Only a few decades earlier the area was a stopping-off point for miners headed to Canada. The few European American families that settled in Aberdeen during the early years were dependent on neighboring Chehalis Indians for resources and transport. By the first decade of the 1900s, a significant infrastructure had developed and dozens of lumber and shingle mills lined the harbor as the timber industry grew to dominate the economy of the settlement. With the construction of a salmon cannery at the mouth of the Wishkah River, fishing became the other economic leg supporting the town.²

The historical Aberdeen shipyard is home to the flagship of Washington State, the sailing vessel (SV) *Lady Washington*. Built in Aberdeen, it is an historic reproduction of the ship Captain Robert Gray sailed on his first northwest voyage. Gray was the first European American to discover Grays Harbor and the first American to circumnavigate the world. Grays Harbor Historical Seaport contains exhibits about shipbuilding and a replica of the SV *Columbia Rediviva* Gray commanded as he explored the Northwest coast and established the U.S. claim to the Oregon country in 1792. Today Aberdeen is a community that depends heavily on natural resource industries, including timber and fishing. Because of its location on U.S. Highway 101, Aberdeen also receives a great deal of traffic from tourists on their way to the scenic Olympic Peninsula.

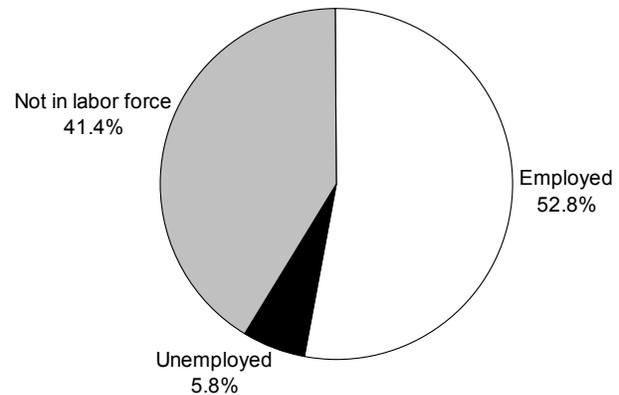
Infrastructure

Current Economy

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 52.8% of Aberdeen's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 5.8% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 9.9% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 41.4% were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1%. The largest employment sectors were sales and office occupations (25.4%), management, professional, and related occupations (21.9%), and local, state, and federal governments (15%).

Aberdeen's economy also relies on commercial and charter fishing, shellfish harvesting, seafood processing, tourism, and wood processing. Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining employed 7% of the population 16 years of age and older in 2000, but this percentage may be artificially low given that many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data. The Weyerhaeuser Company mill in Aberdeen is Grays Harbor County's largest employer, employing and contracting more than 2,000 workers.³

2000 Employment structure



According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in 1999 was \$16,092 and the median household income was \$30,683. In 1999 22.2% lived below the poverty line, much higher than the national average of 12.4%. In 2000 there were 7,536 housing units in Aberdeen, with 58.4% owner occupied and 41.6% renter occupied. The housing unit vacancy rate was 13.5%, with 3.5% vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Incorporated in 1890, the City of Aberdeen is one of four municipalities in Grays Harbor County.⁴ The city operates under a mayor-council form of government, with a mayor and a 12-member city council. Grays Harbor County levies an 8.3% sales tax and a 3% lodging tax. See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fisherman and processors in Washington.

The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Office and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services District Office are in Seattle. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are routinely held in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The nearest Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Regional Office is 11 miles east in Montesano. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Station Grays Harbor is in Westport (22 miles west) at the entrance to Grays Harbor and oversees Grays Harbor bar, one of the most hazardous in the Pacific Northwest. The USCG station 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

Aberdeen is accessible by land, sea, and air. U.S. Highway 12 (east-west) connects Aberdeen to the

Interstate 5 corridor (north-south). U.S. Highway 101 (north-south), which circumscribes the Olympic Peninsula, runs through Aberdeen. The Grays Harbor County Airport, available for public use, has one runway and is located immediately adjacent to the harbor, 1 mile north of Aberdeen. The Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, located 88 miles to the northeast, is the closest airport offering international service.

Aberdeen School District No. 5 has six public elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools, plus one school that offers instruction to students grades K–12.⁵ There is also one private elementary school and one two-year accredited college. Grays Harbor Public Utility District administers electricity for city residents. The City of Aberdeen's Sewer Plant and Water Department provides residents and businesses with sewer and water services. The Aberdeen Police Department, with assistance from the Grays Harbor County Sheriff's Department, provides public safety. The Aberdeen Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency services. Grays Harbor Community Hospital in Aberdeen offers major medical services. The tourism industry in Aberdeen is well developed with more than 10 hotels and motels located within the city.

Aberdeen's waterfront facilities are part of the Port of Grays Harbor complex. This facility is the largest coastal marina in the Pacific Northwest and is home to Washington State's largest charter fishing fleet.⁶ With a 650 vessel moorage capacity (for vessels up to 200 feet), the Westport Marina offers boat manufacturing and repair services, refrigerated shoreside processing facilities, and vessel supplies.

There are several nonprofit organizations based in Aberdeen 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.⁷

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

There were at least two fish processors operating in Aberdeen in 2000, Associated Seafoods Company and Brady's Oysters Inc.

Of the 44 unique vessels that delivered landings to the Port of Grays Harbor in 2000, 37 were commercial vessels and the remaining were for tribal commercial, personal use, and aquaculture. Landings data for Aberdeen were recorded as part of the Grays Harbor Port

Group that includes the nearby communities of Bay City, Oakville, and Hoquiam. 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/2; crab 186.5 t/\$925,167/18; salmon 1.6 t/\$4,340/4; and shellfish confidential/confidential/1.

Aberdeen residents owned 55 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, including 31 vessels that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Aberdeen residents that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 2/0/0, crab 21/0/0, groundfish 6/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 24/10/2, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/1/0, and other species 8/0/0.⁸

Seven Aberdeen residents held six federally managed groundfish fishery permits in 2000. The number of Aberdeen residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 19/0/0, groundfish 1/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 33/9/0, shellfish 4/0/2, shrimp 7/1/0, and other species 3/0/0.⁹

Available data indicate that 115 state and six federal permits were registered to Aberdeen residents in 2000. The number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 32/0/0, groundfish 3/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 52/8/3, shellfish 4/1/NA, shrimp 8/0/0, and other species 4/0/0.¹⁰

Though several tribes along the West Coast participate in commercial fishing, little data exist on tribal commercial fishing in the Aberdeen area. Pacific Coast treaty Indians includes the Hoh Tribe, the Makah Nation, the Quileute Tribe, and the Quinault Indian Nation. The closest treaty Indian nation to Aberdeen is the Quinault, with a tribal center located approximately 45 miles north in Taholah in Grays Harbor County. According to the Boldt Decision,¹¹ the Quinault's usual and customary fishing area includes the Clearwater, Queets, Quinault, Raft, Moclips, and Copalis rivers, and Salmon and Joe creeks. Ocean fisheries are utilized in the waters adjacent to their territory, between Destruction Island and Point Chehalis.¹² The closest nontreaty Indian tribe is the Shoalwater Bay Tribe, located 32 miles south in Tokeland on the north end of Willapa Bay. To help pay for tribal natural resource management programs, tribes collect taxes from tribal members who sell fish and shellfish. The Shoalwater Bay Tribe and the Quinault Indian Nation most likely compete for similar fishery resources as nontribal fishermen fishing out of Aberdeen.

Sportfishing

Sport fishermen in Aberdeen are involved in the West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. In 2000 five salmonid charter fishing operators serviced sport fishermen and tourists. Four Aberdeen residents operated three charter vessels in Aberdeen and one in Long Beach. One Long Beach resident operated a vessel out of Aberdeen. There are four licensed agents selling fishing permits in Aberdeen. In 2003 there were 12,108 sportfishing license transactions valued at \$181,398 in Aberdeen.

In Catch Record Card Area 2-2 (Grays Harbor) the 2000–2001 sport catch, based on catch record cards, was 2,736 fish including 842 Chinook salmon, 1,554 coho salmon, and 349 jack salmon (immature males). In the same year 105 sturgeons were caught in the coastal river systems.

Subsistence

Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities are fundamental to the way of life of some coastal community members. Today members of the Quinault Indian Nation, the Shoalwater Bay Tribe, and other nontribal subsistence fishermen obtain fishery resources from the waters surrounding Aberdeen. 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

Aberdeen residents owned 17 vessels in 2000 that were involved in North Pacific fisheries. 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): crab confidential/confidential/1, Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish confidential/confidential/1, Gulf of Alaska groundfish confidential/confidential/3, halibut confidential/confidential/1, herring confidential/confidential/1, salmon 243 t/\$415,660/11, shellfish confidential/confidential/1, and other finfish confidential/confidential/2.

In 2000 25 residents held 40 registered permits, including 25 state permits and 15 federal permits (note: it is possible for individuals to hold more than one permit at a time). Community members held three groundfish North Pacific License Limitation Program permits. Residents also held 1 crab, 4 BSAI groundfish, 1 halibut, 2 herring, 13 salmon, and 9 shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. Residents held

130,519 halibut and 377,352 sablefish individual fishing quota shares in 2000.

In 2000 43 Aberdeen residents held crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

Aberdeen community members purchased 109 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000. No Aberdeen sportfishing businesses participated in the Alaskan fisheries in 2000.

Notes

1. Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis. No date. The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis. Online at <http://www.chehalis-tribe.org/> [accessed 30 January 2007].
2. Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce. No date. City of Aberdeen. Online at <http://www.graysharbor.org/cities/aberdeen.php> [accessed 30 January 2007].
3. Grays Harbor Economic Development Council. No date. Grays Harbor County manufacturing. Online at <http://www.ghedc.com/ghmanuf.html> [accessed 30 January 2007].
4. City of Aberdeen. 2004. Home. Online at <http://www.ci.Aberdeen.wa.us/index.htm> [accessed 30 January 2007].
5. National Center for Education Statistics. No date. Search for schools, colleges, and libraries. Online at <http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/> [accessed 30 January 2007].
6. Port of Grays Harbor. No date. Westport Marina. Online at <http://www.portofgraysharbor.com/westport/index.html> [accessed 30 January 2007].
7. Friends of Grays Harbor. No date. Home. Online at <http://www.fogharbor.org/index.html> [accessed 30 January 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.
11. Center for Columbia River History. No date. Boldt Decision. Online at <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/legal/boldt.htm> [accessed 30 January 2007].
12. Pacific Fishery Management Council. 2004. Groundfish bycatch programmatic DEIS. Online at <http://www.pccouncil.org/groundfish/gfbdpeis/apdx.pdf> [accessed 30 January 2007].