

Fox Island

People and Place

Location

Fox Island is in the south Puget Sound region, north of McNeil Island and west of Tacoma. Situated in Pierce County, Fox Island encompasses 5.2 square miles of land and 1.2 square miles of water. The nearest major U.S. city is Seattle, a 50-mile drive northeast. Fox Island's geographic coordinates are lat 47°15'06"N, long 122°37'40"W.

Demographic Profile

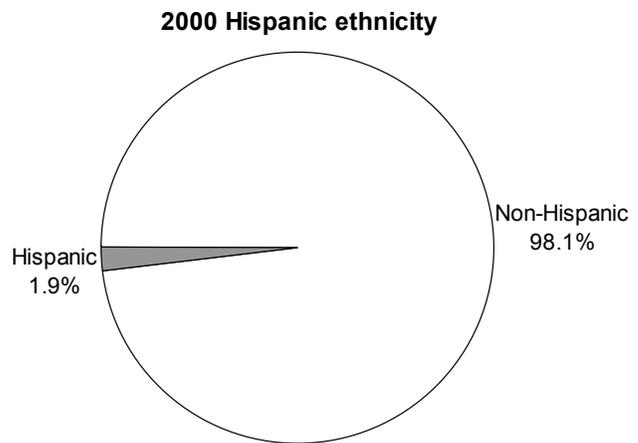
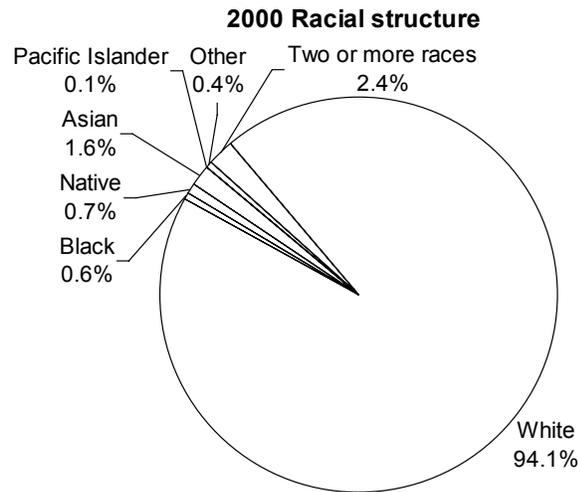
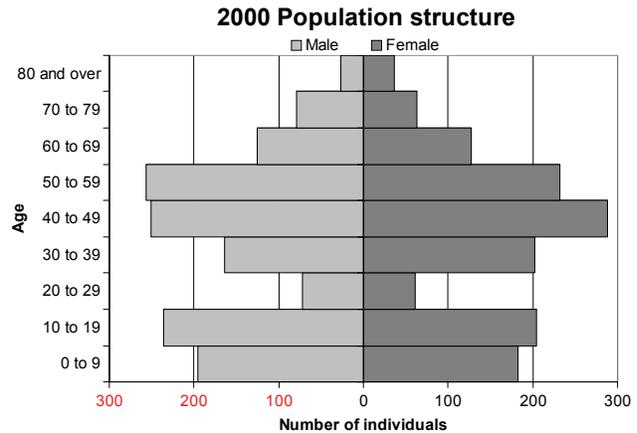
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Fox Island's population was 2,803, an increase of approximately 39% from 2,017 in 1990. The gender composition was 50.2% male and 49.8% female. The median age of 41.5 years was significantly higher than the national median age of 35.3. Of the population age 18 years and older, 93.8% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 38.1% had received a bachelor's degree or higher, and 14% had attained a graduate or professional degree. All categories were higher than the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The vast majority of Fox Island's racial structure recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was white (94.1%), followed by people who identified as two or more races (2.4%), Asian (1.6%), American Indian and Alaska Native (0.7%), black (0.6%), people who identified as another race (0.4%), and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.1%). Ethnicity data indicate that 1.9% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 0.9% were foreign-born, with all from European countries. The highest percentage of those reporting ancestry were German (20%), followed by English (12.1%), Norwegian (10.9%), and Irish (9.7%).

History

The 1838 George Wilkes Expedition, the first government-sponsored maritime expedition, consisted of six sailing vessels that began their expedition in Norfolk, Virginia. Wilkes named many islands, straits, and passages after his crew, including Fox Island after Lt. John L. Fox, the assistant surgeon on the expedition.¹ The island is also known as Rosario on current British Admiralty charts. It is believed that local Native Americans historically referred to the island as "Batil Merman."²

Between 1855 and 1856, Fox Island briefly served as an internment camp, keeping friendly Indians away



from warring factions of other Puget Sound groups. In 1889 the Miller pioneer family traveled to the island and became the first European American settlers.

The Millers were religious and formed what later became the United Church of Christ. Today the old chapel is community property; located directly on the waterfront, the church is a popular spot for weddings.³ The 1910 Fox Island Census reported the island's population at 233 persons belonging to 66 families.⁴

Tanglewood, the island next to Fox Island, once served as an Indian burial ground. Burials took place in canoes hung in trees, allowing birds to eat the remains; the bodies were later buried underground. Farming, particularly of strawberries, became a common activity among the island's early European American settlers. Two toll bridges, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the Fox Island Bridge, built in 1954, provided access to Fox Island. Nichols School served island residents until 1961, when students began to travel by bus to nearby Artondale Elementary. Today the island is home to one commercial enterprise, Fox Island Trading Post and Deli, and a post office.⁵

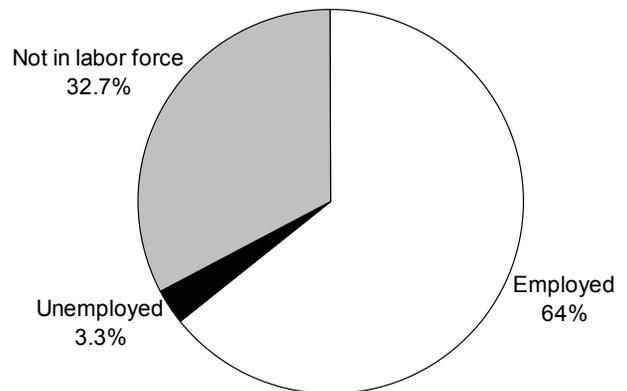
Infrastructure

Current Economy

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 64% of Fox Island's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 3.3% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 4.9% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 32.7% were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1%. The top employment sectors were educational, health, and social services (24.3%), local, state, and federal governments (22.3%), professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (14.2%), finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing (9.7%), manufacturing (8.1%), and retail trade (7.6%). Natural resources jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed 0.4%, but this percentage may be artificially low given that many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

The Fox Island Laboratory, conducting acoustic and performance measurements for the U.S. Navy and others for more than 40 years, operates in Carr Inlet. The facility's mission is to "provide a unique, shallow water, protected, ocean environment facility which operates and maintains an M241 barge, shore facilities, personnel and resources required to support research, development, testing and evaluation or military and commercial projects."⁶

2000 Employment structure



According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in 1999 was \$32,533 and the median household income was \$69,135. In 1999 3.2% lived below the poverty level, compared to the national average of 12.4%. In 2000 there were 1,150 housing units, with 91.7% owner occupied and 8.3% renter occupied. The housing unit vacancy rate was 8.9%.

Governance

The unincorporated community of Fox Island is governed by the legislative branch of Pierce County. The legislative branch is made up of seven elected county council members including: a chairman, vice chairman, executive pro tempore, and four additional members. Pierce County levies an 8.2% sales and use tax in its unincorporated areas. There is a 2–5% lodging tax in effect on Fox Island, dependent upon the number of rooms or spaces in the establishment. 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 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services District Office are in Seattle. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are held in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The nearest Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Regional Office is 82 miles southwest in Montesano. The 13th U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) District headquarters are in Seattle. There is a USCG office that serves as a Port Security Unit in Tacoma (18 miles northeast).

Facilities

Fox Island is accessible by ground and sea. It is reachable via the Tacoma Narrows Bridge on Washington Highway 16 and the Fox Island Bridge. The

Tacoma-Seattle International Airport is the nearest major facility. The Tacoma Narrow Airport, with one 5,000-foot paved runway, is a public-use facility in Gig Harbor (8 miles north).

Fox Island is in the Peninsula School District; however there are no schools on Fox Island. Students are bussed to elementary, middle, and high school in Gig Harbor. Peninsula Light administers electricity services. The Fox Island Mutual Water Association supplies water. There are no sewer services on the island; local residents use septic systems.⁷ The Pierce County Sheriff's Office and the volunteer-staffed Fox Island Fire Station administer public safety. Tacoma General Hospital and Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Tacoma and Saint Claire Hospital in Lakewood are the nearest medical centers.

The Fox Island Community and Recreation Association (FICRA), established in 1970, serves "to promote matters pertaining to the health and safety of Fox Island residents, to promote the welfare and development of Fox Island, and to provide recreation and social activities of a non-profit nature as a public service to the residents of the island."⁸ A FICRA community crime prevention committee has been developed to respond to the rise in crime and FICRA Crime Watch, a citizen's patrol and neighborhood watch, is in effect. In addition FICRA has developed a warning system, consisting of raised orange flags on Fox Island Bridge that alerts community members when crimes have occurred.⁹

There is one bed and breakfast on the Island, Beachside Bed & Breakfast; additional lodging is available in Tacoma and Gig Harbor. A public dock is located near Fox Island Bridge.¹⁰ The Fox Island Yacht Club on Cedrona Bay has various membership activities including the Commodores Ball and pancake breakfasts.¹¹

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Recorded data indicates that there were zero landings delivered to Fox Island in 2000. There were also no known fish or shellfish processors operating in the community. In 2000 five vessels were owned by Fox Island residents, including three vessels that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Fox Island residents in 2000 participating in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 2/0/0, groundfish 0/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon (2/0/0), shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/0/0, and other species 1/0/0.¹²

Recorded data indicate that in 2000 the number of Fox Island residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 1/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 2/0/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, and other species 1/0/0.¹³

Fox Island residents held five state permits in 2000. The number of permits held by Fox Island community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 2/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 2/0/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, and other species 1/0/0.¹⁴

Sportfishing

The 2000 sport catch, based on catch record cards, in Catch Record Card Area 13 (South Puget Sound, all waters south of Tacoma Narrows Bridge) was 5,131 fish, including 1,649 Chinook salmon, 2,226 coho salmon, and 1,256 chum salmon. Marine anglers made 26,089 trips in the sport salmon fishery. Boat-based anglers caught 8,025 bottomfish in Area 13 in 2000. Recreational use and harvest of clams (pounds) and oysters (number) in Area 13 was estimated at 30,147 and 65,007 respectively; harvest occurred over approximately 7,065 user trips. Fox Point Fishing Pier in the community is available to anglers.

Subsistence

Tribal and nontribal community members may be engaged in subsistence fishing. Subsistence fishing is not discussed in detail in this community profile due to the lack of available data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 Fox Island residents owned three vessels that were involved in North Pacific fisheries. 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): other finfish confidential/confidential/1, Gulf of Alaska groundfish confidential/confidential/2, halibut confidential/confidential/2, and salmon confidential/confidential/1.

Fox Island residents held 10 permits in 2000, including 5 individuals who held federal permits and 1 individual who held a state permit (note: it is possible for individuals to hold more than one permit at a time). Residents held three groundfish License Limitation Program permits in 2000. Residents held two Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands groundfish, one halibut, one herring, and one salmon Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permit. Community members held

1,051,635 halibut and 82,610 sablefish individual fishing quota shares.

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

Sportfishing

In 2000 Fox Island residents purchased 57 Alaska sportfishing licenses.

Notes

1. D. M. Buerge. 1987. The Wilkes expedition in the Pacific Northwest. Columbia Magazine 1(1):17, Online at <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/wshs/columbia/articles/0187-a1.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
2. Tacoma Public Library. 2005. Washington place names, Fox Island. Online at <http://search.tpl.lib.wa.us/wanames/placfull.asp?1-8665> [accessed 31 January 2007].
3. Field notes, Fox Island Historical Society, Fox Island, WA, 21 January 2005.
4. FoxIsland.net. 2003. 1910 census. Online at <http://www.foxisland.net/1910Census.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
5. See note 3.
6. Fox Island Laboratory. No date. Our mission. Online at <http://www.dt.navy.mil/detpuget/frameset.html> [accessed 31 January 2007].
7. See note 3.
8. FoxIsland.net. 2004. FICRA. Online at <http://www.foxisland.net/ficra.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
9. FoxIsland.net. 2004. FICRA crime watch. Online at http://www.foxisland.net/crime_watch.asp [accessed 31 January 2007].
10. See note 3.
11. FoxIsland.net. 2004. Organizations. Online at <http://www.foxisland.net/organizations.asp> [accessed 31 January 2007].
12. NA refers to data that were not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of the fishery in 2000.
13. See note 12.
14. See note 12.