

Ilwaco

People and Place

Location

Ilwaco is on the Long Beach Peninsula in southwest Washington. Situated in Pacific County, the community encompasses 2.06 square miles of land and 0.31 square miles of water. The nearest major U.S. city is Portland, Oregon, a 110-mile drive southeast, while Seattle is a 170-mile drive northeast. Ilwaco's geographic coordinates are lat 46°18'33"N, long 124°02'31"W.

Demographic Profile

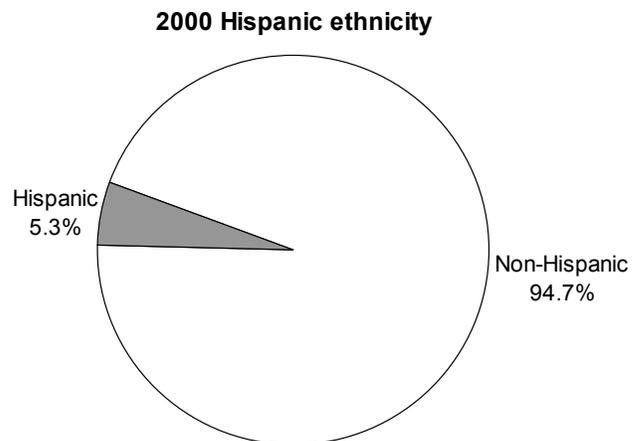
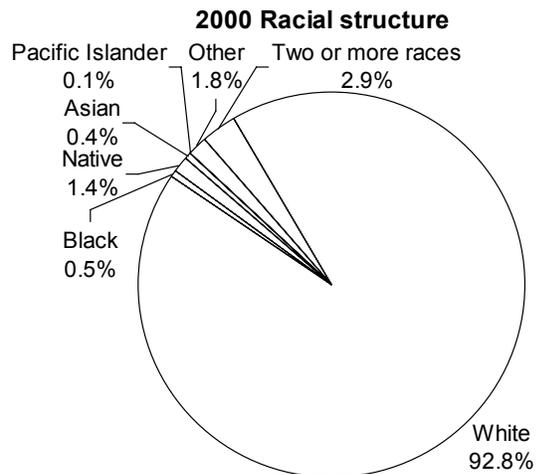
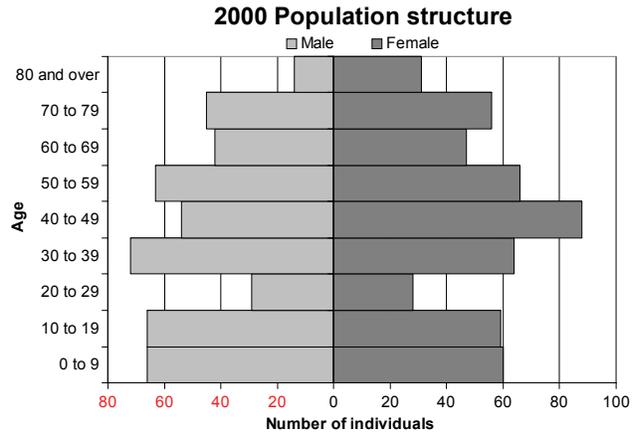
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Ilwaco's population was 950, with a population density of 461.5 people per square mile. The gender composition was 52.5% female and 47.5% male. The median age of 43 was higher than the national median of 35.3. Of the population 18 years and older, 81.1% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 19.3% had received at least a bachelor's degree, and 6.2% had attained a graduate degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The vast major of Ilwaco's racial structure recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was white (92.8%), followed by people who identified as two or more races (2.9%), people who identified as another race (1.8%), American Indian and Native Alaskan (1.4%), black (0.5%), Asian (0.4%), and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.1%). Ethnicity data indicate that 5.3% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 7.8% were foreign-born, with 38.2% from Mexico, 25% from Guatemala, and 9.2% from Germany.

In 2000 81.5% of Ilwaco's population lived in family households.

History

The Ilwaco area was first inhabited by Native Americans, primarily the Chinook. The town was named after a local Native American, Elowahka Jim. English, Spanish, and French explorers seeking a "River to the West" or the "Northwest Passage" connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans were the first nonnatives to come to the area. Some of the earliest explorers included Captain James Cook around 1778, John Meares around 1788, Captain George Vancouver in 1792, Captain Robert Gray in 1792, and Meriwether Lewis and William Clark around 1805.¹



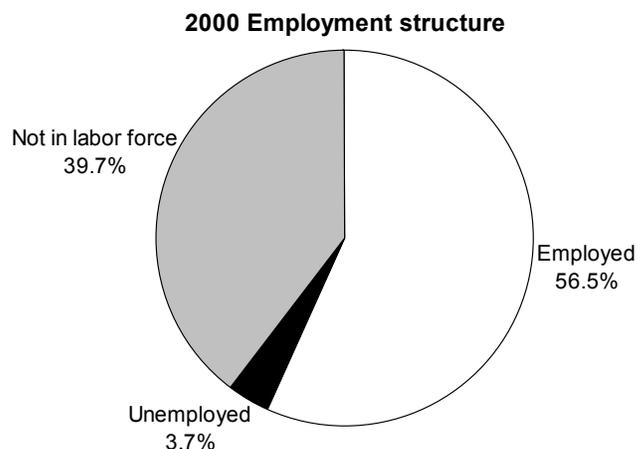
Reports from the Lewis and Clark expedition on the area drew interest from European American settlers. The first white settlers from the East Coast and Midwest, including foreign settlers primarily from Scandinavia, were drawn to the area for the lumber, land, ocean, hunting, and fur resources.² John Jacob Astor traveled through the area and eventually established the Pacific Fur Company across the Columbia River from Ilwaco in Astoria, Oregon, in 1811. Missionaries also were drawn to surrounding areas in the 1830s.

By 1849 Dr. Elijah White had founded a settlement in the Ilwaco area called Pacific City and it was envisioned to be a future port city at the mouth of the Columbia River. Pacific City had a county seat, post office, sawmill, and fine hotel, owned by J. D. Holman.³ Around 1852 the military overtook Pacific City after President Millard Fillmore ordered a military reservation to be developed. That site is now referred to as Cape Disappointment State Park. It took years for the military to build installations in the area, but the dreams for Pacific City vanished. Holman, however, established a donation land claim, including beach areas that eventually developed into a summer resort. The local school, built in 1853, was attributed to the Holman family.

During the later parts of the century from about 1884 to 1910, the area was consumed by disputes over fishing-ground rights, referred to as the gill-net wars. Gillnetters and trap fishermen fought with a vengeance over these rights. In 1888 the Ilwaco Railroad and Navigation Company, led by Lewis A. Loomis, started the construction of a railroad from Ilwaco to Nahcotta at the Ilwaco wharf.⁴ The rail served as transportation for mail and passenger business and freight, specifically sacks of oysters from Nahcotta. In 1900 Loomis retired and sold the railroad to the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company; the railway functioned until 1930.

In 1889 the Ilwaco Beach Station, also known as the Klipsan Beach Life Saving Station, was established.⁵ This station was one of 19 life saving stations on the West Coast from the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California, to Nome, Alaska. The location of this station was chosen due to the high numbers of shipwrecks in the area at the mouth of the Columbia River, which is also known as the “Graveyard of the Pacific.” In 1915 the U.S. Coast Guard (USGC) created USCG Klipsan Station #309. While this station was eventually abandoned, the USCG still maintains a strong presence in the area.

Ilwaco and the closely surrounding area offer many tourism activities. Downtown Ilwaco hosts the Ilwaco Heritage Museum, various shopping opportunities including the Saturday Market at the harbor during the



late spring and summer months, charter boats for fishing and sightseeing, restaurants, and accommodations. Within a few miles of Ilwaco lies Fort Canby State Park, recently renamed Cape Disappointment State Park. The park offers camping, hiking, beaches, fishing, the Cape Disappointment and North Head Lighthouses, and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. Festivals include the Annual Cranberrian Fair, the Wild Mushroom Festival, the Water Music Festival, Annual Loyalty Day Celebration, and the Blessing of the Fleet festivities.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 56.5% of Ilwaco’s potential workforce 16 years of age and older were employed, 3.7% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 6.2% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 39.7% were not in the labor force, slightly higher than the national average of 36.1%. The top employment sectors were local, state and federal governments (27.8%), health care and social assistance (12.5%), retail trade (11.8%), educational services (10.8%) and the military (3.8%). Natural resources jobs, including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed 3.7%, but this percentage may be artificially low given that many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

The per capita income in 1999 was \$16,138 and the median household income was \$29,632. In 1999 16.3% lived below the poverty line, slightly higher than the national average of 12.4%. In 2000 there were 524 housing units in Ilwaco, with 66.1% owner occupied and 33.9% renter occupied. The housing unit vacancy rate was 20.6%, with 49.1% due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Incorporated in 1890, Ilwaco is a code city under Washington State law.⁶ It has a mayor-city council form of government, with a mayor, a five-member city council, city planner, clerk-treasurer, deputy clerk, city attorney, a five-member planning commission, and fire chief.⁷ Pacific County, organized in 1851, has a 7.8% sales tax and a 9.8% 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 National Marine Fisheries Service, Point Adams Research Station, is located in Hammond, Oregon, approximately 22 miles south. The nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services District Office and the nearest meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are in Portland. The nearest Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Regional Office is 72 miles north in Montesano, and the WDFW maintains the Willapa Bay Field Station at Ocean Park, approximately 13 miles north.⁸ The USCG Station Cape Disappointment in Ilwaco is the largest USCG search and rescue station on the northwest coast. The station is under the USCG Group/Air Station Astoria⁹ and it operates the USCG National Motor Lifeboat School.

Facilities

Ilwaco is accessible by land, air, and sea. The community is on U.S. Highway 101 (north-south). The Port of Ilwaco Airport is open to the public and has an unattended paved runway. Portland International Airport is the nearest major airport. The Ilwaco Harbor supports recreational and commercial fisheries, along with tourism. As of June 2005 the harbor supported approximately 54 commercial fishing vessels and 610 pleasure craft, which includes charter vessels.¹⁰ The harbor includes a boatyard with hoist services, a fuel dock, boat launches, and guest moorage.¹¹

Ilwaco is in the Ocean Beach School District. Ilwaco Junior-Senior High School is for grades 7–12. Hilltop Elementary School in Ilwaco is for grades 4–6. Ilwaco children in grades below fourth attend school in neighboring Long Beach (3 miles north). Lower Columbia College in Longview (67 miles east), Grays Harbor College in Aberdeen (70 miles northeast), and Centralia College in Centralia (114 miles northeast) are the three closest two-year colleges in Washington. Evergreen State College in Olympia (110 miles northeast) is the closest four-year college.

Pacific County's Public Utility District administers electricity service in Ilwaco. The city owns and operates

water and sewer plants.¹² The City of Long Beach Police Department and the Ilwaco Volunteer Fire Department administer public safety. Ocean Beach Hospital is in Ilwaco. Other medical facilities nearby are the Willapa Harbor Hospital in South Bend (41 miles north) and Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria, Oregon (17 miles south). There are multiple hotels, motels, resorts, and bed and breakfast facilities in Ilwaco and the nearby Long Beach community, as well as various state and private campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

The 338 vessels that delivered landings to Ilwaco in 2000 all were commercially registered. Landings in the community 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 861.9 t/\$3,864,427/104; groundfish 2,350.7 t/\$634,261/35; highly migratory species 1,907.1 t/\$3,595,659/119; salmon 187.4 t/\$468,717/98; shrimp confidential/confidential/2; and other species 47.5 t/\$183,071/81.

Ilwaco residents owned 21 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, including 17 that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Ilwaco residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 1/0/0, crab 13/9/1, groundfish 3/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 11/13/2, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/2/0, and other species 8/0/0.¹³

Ilwaco residents held two federal groundfish fishery permits in 2000. The number of residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 1/0/0, crab 8/0/1, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 5/13/4, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 1/2/0, and other species 4/0/0.¹⁴

Ilwaco resident held 46 registered state permits and 2 federal permits in 2000. The number of permits held by these community members in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 1/0/0, crab 12/0/1, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 5/13/6, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 1/2/0, and other species 5/0/0.¹⁵

There is currently only one processor in Ilwaco, Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company. Jessie's has been in business in Ilwaco for more than 40 years. The company processes various species including but not limited to shrimp, crab, salmon, whiting, sardines, bottomfish, and tuna. Jessie's distributes worldwide, and its efforts are primarily in wholesale distribution accompanied by a

small retail effort. In 2005 Jessie's employed approximately 150 people.¹⁶

Sportfishing

Sport fishermen in Ilwaco are involved in West Coast and Alaskan fisheries. In 2000 14 salmonid charter fishing operators serviced sport fishermen and tourists. There was one licensed agent selling fishing permits in Ilwaco. In 2003 there were 1,580 sportfishing license transactions valued at \$24,978.

In Catch Record Card Area 1 (Ilwaco–ocean) the 2000 sport catch, based on creel survey estimates, was 27,889 fish and in Area 1A (Ilwaco–Buoy 10) it was 16,335 fish. This data include (1/1A) 1,630/2,972 Chinook salmon and 26,259/13,363 coho salmon. Marine anglers made (1/1A) 16,243/42,061 trips in the sport salmon fishery for a total of 58,304 in both areas. In Area 1, Columbia River to Leadbetter Point, fishermen caught 106 steelhead. In 2000 the coastal bottomfish catch for Area 1 (Ilwaco–Ilwaco Jetty) was 8,388/631 fish. The Pacific halibut catch for Area 1 and Area 2 (Ilwaco–Westport–Ocean Shores) was 2,341.

Subsistence

Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities are fundamental to the way of life of some coastal community members. Both tribal and nontribal individuals participate in subsistence fishing, obtaining fishery resources from the waters surrounding Ilwaco. 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 Ilwaco residents owned five vessels that participated 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 and salmon 98.5 t/ \$178,940/5.

Ilwaco residents held six federal and state commercial fishing permits, with two individuals who held a federal permit and four who held a state permit (note: it is possible for individuals to hold more than one permit at a time). Residents held one groundfish License Limitation program permit and five Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission salmon permits. Ilwaco residents held 11,787 sablefish individual fishing quota shares.

Ilwaco residents held 12 crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

Sportfishing

Ilwaco residents purchased five sportfishing licenses for Alaskan fisheries in 2000.

Notes

1. Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia. 2005. Washington (state). Online at [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572009_10/Washington_\(state\).html#s85](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572009_10/Washington_(state).html#s85) [accessed 31 January 2007].
2. City of Ilwaco. 2005. Now & then. Online at <http://www.ilwacowashington.com/pages/history.html> [accessed 31 January 2007].
3. B. Bailey. 2001. Notes on early Pacific County. The Sou'wester, Pacific County Historical Society, South Bend, WA. Vol. 36, No. 2. Online at http://www.pacificcohistory.org/sw2001_2.htm#5 [accessed 31 January 2007].
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5. L. Weathers. 2001. The lifesavers of Klipsan. The Sou'wester, Pacific County Historical Society, South Bend, WA. Vol. 36, No. 3. Online at http://www.pacificcohistory.org/sw2001_3.htm [accessed 31 January 2007].
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7. Pacific County. 2005. City of Ilwaco, Washington. Online at <http://www.co.pacific.wa.us/map%20and%20cities/ilwaco.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
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9. U.S. Coast Guard. 2005. Online at <http://www.uscg.mil/d13/units/gruastoria/cd.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
10. Field notes, Port of Ilwaco, WA. 6 June 2005.
11. Port of Ilwaco. 2005. Online at <http://www.portofilwaco.com/index.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].
12. City of Ilwaco. 2005. Welcome to Ilwaco. Online at <http://www.ilwacowashington.com/index.html> [accessed 31 January 2007].
13. 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.
14. See note 13.
15. See note 13.
16. Field notes, Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Company, Ilwaco, WA. 20 June 2005.