

## **Fox Island, Washington**

### **People and Place**

#### *Location*

Fox Island is located in the Puget Sound area of Washington State, north of McNeil Island and across from the City of Tacoma. Situated in Pierce County, Fox Island is located about 50 miles southwest of the City of Seattle. Fox Island, located at 47°15'06"N and 122°37'40"W, encompasses approximately 5.2 square miles of land and 1.2 square miles of water.

#### *Demographic Profile*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census Fox Island had a population of 2803 with a gender composition of 50.2% male and 49.8% female. Between 1990 and 2000 the population of Fox Island increased by about 39%, up from 2017 persons in 1990. In 2000 the racial composition of Fox Island was predominantly White (94.1%), followed by Asian (1.6%), American Indian and Alaska Native (0.7%), Black (0.6%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (0.1%). Less than one percent (0.4%) identified with some other race and 2.4% with two or more races. Approximately 1.9% of residents identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Slightly less than ten percent (0.9%) of the population was foreign-born; all foreign-born citizens originated in Europe. The highest percentage of those reporting ancestry in the 2000 U.S. Census were Germans (20%), followed by English (12.1%), Norwegians (10.9%), and Irish (9.7%).

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the median age in Fox Island was 41.5, significantly higher than the national median age of 35.3. Of the population age 18 years and over, 93.8% had graduated from high school or continued on to higher education, 38.1% had received a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 14% had received a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.9%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

#### *History*

The 1838 George Wilkes Expedition, the first government-sponsored maritime expedition, consisted of six sailing vessels that began their expedition in Norfolk, Virginia. George Wilkes named many Islands, Straits, and Passages after his crew, including Fox Island, after Lt. John L. Fox, the assistant surgeon on the Expedition.<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>2</sup>

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 Euro-American settlers. The Millers were religious peoples 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.<sup>3</sup> The 1910 Fox Island Census reported the Island's population at 233 persons, belonging to 66 families.<sup>4</sup>

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 early Euro-American settlers of the Island. Two toll bridges, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the Fox Island Bridge, built in 1954, provided access to Fox Island. The Nichols school served Island residents until 1961, when students began to travel by buss to nearby Artondale Elementary. Today the Island is home to one commercial enterprise, Fox Island Trading Post and Deli, and a Post Office.<sup>5</sup>

## **Infrastructure**

### *Current Economy*

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 64% of the potential labor force in Fox Island was employed and there was an unemployment rate of 4.9% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). Approximately 32.7% of the population age 16 years and over was not in the labor force at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, compared to the national average of 36.1%.

The 2000 U.S. Census reports that about 0.4% of employed Fox Island residents worked in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; however this number most likely does not reflect all those involved in fishing. The top employment industries for employed residents at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census were educational, health, and social services (24.3%); 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%). Approximately 22.3% of employed residents worked within the local, state, or federal government.

The Fox Island Laboratory (FIL), conducting acoustic and performance measurements for the U.S. Navy and others for over 40 years, is in operation 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."<sup>6</sup>

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income on Fox Island in 1999 was \$32,533 and the median household income was \$69,135. The 2000 U.S. Census reports that in 1999 the income of 3.2% of the population was below the poverty level. In 2000 there were a total of 1150 housing units in the community, of which 91.1% were occupied and 8.9% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 91.7% were owner occupied and 8.3% were renter occupied.

### *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 Council members including: a Chair, Vice Chair, 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.

Several taxes directly impact commercial and recreational fishermen. Commercial fishermen operating in Washington waters are subject to the Business and Occupation (B&O) tax under the "extraction" classification (0.48%); those fishing outside of Washington waters but selling fish within Washington are subject to the tax under either

the “wholesaling” or “retailing” classifications (0.48% and 0.47% respectively), unless the fish are sold in interstate or foreign commerce.<sup>7</sup> Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).<sup>8</sup>

Washington State levies a Food, Fish, and Shellfish Tax, paid by the first commercial processor of food fish or shellfish, including: Chinook, coho, and chum salmon or eggs (5.62%); sockeye and pink salmon or eggs (3.37%); oysters (0.09%); sea urchins/cucumbers (4.92%); and shellfish and other food fish or eggs (2.25%). Tuna, mackerel, and jackfish are exempt from this tax. Additionally, there is an Enhanced Food Fish Tax, which applies to the “first possession of enhanced food fish by an owner in Washington State” and is based on the “value of the enhanced food fish at the point of landing.”<sup>9</sup> The rate of the tax depends upon the species of fish or shellfish.

Vessels used for commercial fishing purposes part-time are subject to an annual Washington State Watercraft Excise Tax levied at 0.5% of the fair market value of the boat. Vessels used for commercial fishing purposes full-time are subject to personal property taxes at the base rate levied by the state. Washington also levies a 10% excise tax on fishing equipment, a three percent tax on electric motors and sonar fish finders, and import duties on tackle and pleasure boats to fund sportfish restoration programs.<sup>10</sup> Washington State levies a tax of \$0.28 per gallon on motor vehicle fuel. Since most of this tax is used to maintain terrestrial roadways, Washington boaters are entitled to a refund of about \$0.17 per gallon. The difference includes state sales tax and a penny per gallon contribution to a Coastal Protection Fund. Most diesel fuel sold at docks has already had this tax removed.<sup>11</sup>

The nearest federal fisheries enforcement office is located about 50 miles away in Seattle and is the Northwest Enforcement Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service. The closest regional office for state fisheries, the North Puget Sound Region Office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is located 71 miles northeast in Mill Creek. There is a U.S. Coast Guard office located 18 miles east in Tacoma; the office serves as a U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Unit. The headquarters of the 13th U.S. Coast Guard District are located in the City of Seattle. The nearest North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings take place in Seattle and Tacoma respectively. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) District Office, serving the Western Washington area, is located in Seattle.

### *Facilities*

Fox Island is accessible by ground and sea. It is reachable via the Tacoma Narrows Bridge on State Route 16, and the Fox Island Bridge. Fox Island is located approximately 40 miles north of the Sea-Tac International Airport in Sea Tac, Washington. The closest public use airport is located about 4 miles east in Tacoma, the Tacoma Narrows Airport.

Students on Fox Island are bussed to Artondale Elementary, 4 miles away in Artondale.<sup>12</sup> Water services are provided by the Fox Island Mutual Water Association. There are no sewer services on the island; local residents use septic systems and electricity services provided by Peninsula Light.<sup>13</sup> Pierce County administers police services through the Pierce County Sheriff’s Office; the Peninsula Detachment is located in Gig Harbor. Fire services are provided by the volunteer-staffed Fox Island Fire Station. There are no hospitals or medical centers located in the community; Western State

Hospital located 8 miles east in Tacoma and St. Clare Hospital situated 10 miles away in Lakewood are the nearest medical services for Fox Island residents.

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.”<sup>14</sup> 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 are 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.<sup>15</sup>

There is one Bed and Breakfast in operation on the Island, Beachside Bed & Breakfast; additional lodging is available in the nearby communities of Tacoma and Gig Harbor. A public dock is located near Fox Island Bridge.<sup>16</sup> The Fox Island Yacht Club is located in the community on Cedrona Bay and has various membership activities including the Commodores Ball and pancake breakfasts.<sup>17</sup>

## **Involvement in West Coast Fisheries**

### *Commercial Fishing*

Recorded data indicates that there were zero landings delivered to Fox Island in 2000. In the same year there were also no known processors operating in the community. In 2000 a total of five vessels were owned by Fox Island residents; residents owned three vessels that participated in the federal groundfish fishery. According to recorded data 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).<sup>18</sup>

Recorded data indicates 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).<sup>19</sup>

A total of five state permits were registered to Fox Island residents in 2000. In the same year recorded data indicates that 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).<sup>20</sup>

### *Sportfishing*

The 2000 sport salmon catch, based on catch record cards, in Catch Record Card Area 13 (South Puget Sound, all waters south of Tacoma Narrows Bridge) was 5131 fish, including: 1649 Chinook, 2226 coho, and 1256 chum. In the same year approximately 26,089 marine angler trips occurred in the sport salmon fishery. In Area 13 a total of 8025 bottomfish were caught by boat-based anglers in 2000. The 2000 recreational use and harvest of clams (lbs) and oysters (#) in Area 13 is estimated at 30,147 and 65,007 respectively; harvest occurred over approximately 7065 user trips. Fox Point Fishing Pier is located in the community and available for 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. In the same year community members landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represents 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).

Five Fox Island residents held crewmember licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000. In the same year five individual residents held federal commercial fishing permits and one resident held a state permit.

A total of 10 permits were held by Fox Island residents in 2000. In the same year residents held 1,051,635 halibut and 82,610 sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) shares. Three groundfish License Limitation Program (LLP) permits were held by community members in 2000. Residents held 2 Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands groundfish, 1 halibut, 1 herring, and 1 salmon Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits.

### *Sportfishing*

In 2000 57 Alaskan sportfishing licenses were purchased by Fox Island residents.

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<sup>1</sup> Buerge, David M. 1987. The Wilkes Expedition in the Pacific Northwest. Columbia Magazine 1(1), [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.washingtonhistory.org/wshs/columbia/articles/0187-a1.htm> (access date - December 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Tacoma Public Library. 2005. Washington Place Names, Fox Island, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://search.tpl.lib.wa.us/wanames/placfulld.asp?1-8665> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Marie Weis, President of Fox Island Historical Society, Fox Island, WA. Pers. commun., 21 January 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Fox Island.net. 2003. 1910 Census [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.foxisland.net/1910Census.htm> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Marie Weis, President of Fox Island Historical Society, Fox Island, WA. Pers. commun., 21 January 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Fox Island Laboratory. No Date. Fox Island Laboratory, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.dt.navy.mil/detpuget/frameset.html> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2004. Commercial fishing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/Industry/Fish/default.aspx> (access date - July 2004).

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<sup>8</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2002. Information on Washington's Tax Structure: Fish Taxes, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/industry/fish/default.aspx> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Washington State Department of Revenue. 2001. Commercial Fishing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/Industry/Fish/default.aspx#enhanced> (access date – July 2004).

<sup>10</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures. 2004. Environment, Energy, and Transportation Program: Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/esnr/FISHHUNTWILD.htm> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Washington State Department of Licensing. 2003. Fuel Tax Frequently Asked Questions, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.dol.wa.gov/vs/ft-faq.htm> (access date - July 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Marie Weis, President of Fox Island Historical Society, Fox Island, WA. Pers. commun., 21 January 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Marie Weis, President of Fox Island Historical Society, Fox Island, WA. Pers. commun., 21 January 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Fox Island.net. 2004. FICRA, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.foxisland.net/ficra.htm> (access date - January 2005).

<sup>15</sup> FoxIsland.net. 2004. FICRA Crime Watch, [Online]. Available: URL: [http://www.foxisland.net/crime\\_watch.asp](http://www.foxisland.net/crime_watch.asp) (access date - January 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Marie Weis, President of Fox Island Historical Society, Fox Island, WA. Pers. commun., 21 January 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Fox Island.net. 2004. Organizations, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.foxisland.net/organizations.asp> (access date - December 2004).

<sup>18</sup> “NA” refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of the fishery in 2000.

<sup>19</sup> “NA” refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of the fishery in 2000.

<sup>20</sup> “NA” refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of the fishery in 2000.