

Crescent City

People and Place

Location

Crescent City is in Del Norte County in northern California, approximately 330 miles south of Portland, Oregon, and 356 miles north of San Francisco. The community encompasses 1.8 square miles of land and 0.3 square mile of water. The geographic coordinates of Crescent City are lat 41°45'22"N, long 124°12'02"W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Crescent City had a population of 4,006 people. The gender distribution was 53.7% female and 46.3% male. The median age was 32, lower than the national median of 35.3. Approximately 41.2% were under the age of 25. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 71.1% had a high school education or higher, 11% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 3.1% had a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

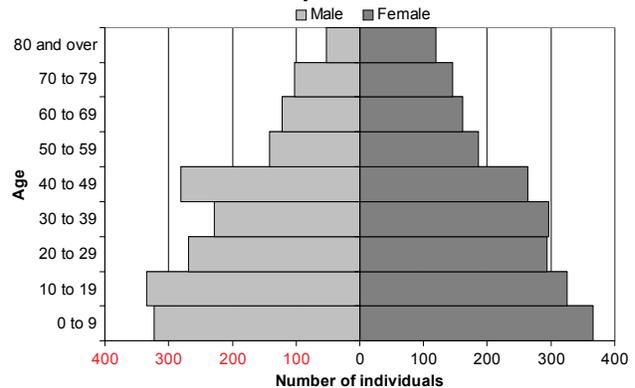
The majority of the racial composition of Crescent City was white (78.3%), followed by American Indian and Alaska Native (6.1%), individuals who identified with two or more races (6%), Asian (4.6%), individuals who identified with some other race (4.3%), black (0.5%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.1%). Ethnicity data indicate 11% identified as Hispanic. Approximately 8.2% of the population was foreign-born, of which 35% were from Mexico and 32% from Asia.

In 2000 75.1% of the population lived in family households.

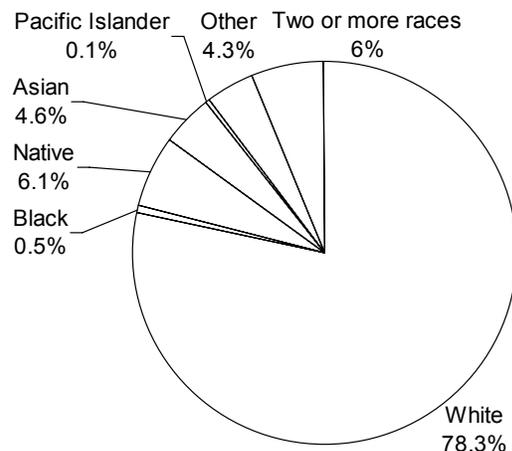
History

The redwood coast was home to American Indian tribes for thousands of years before the arrival of Euro-Americans. The Native people embodied distinct cultures and identities, including separate languages. They lived in villages along the coast and major rivers; each with a semi-independent political system with ties to one another through an intricate economic, social, and religious web.¹ In the Crescent City area, the main Tolowa villages at the time of European contact were at Battery Point (Ta'atun), Pebble Beach (Meslteltun), south of Point St. George (Tatintun), and north of Point St. George (Tawiatun).² The people utilized the surrounding resources to construct homes, hunt, and gather food. Primary food sources were deer, elk, fish,

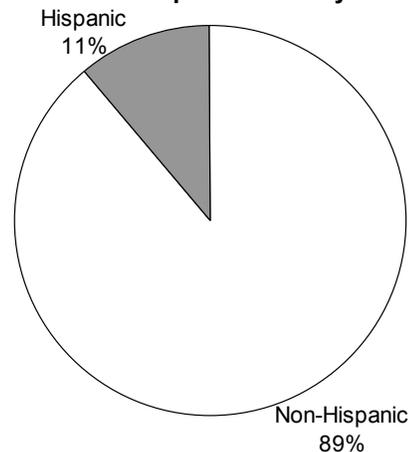
2000 Population structure



2000 Racial structure



2000 Hispanic ethnicity



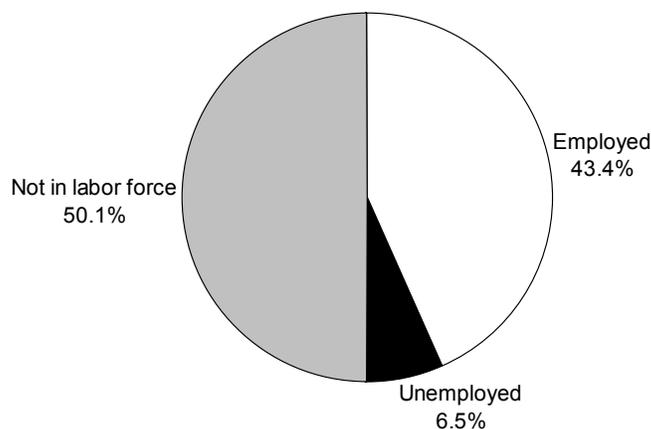
nuts, berries, and seeds. Homes were constructed of planks split from fallen Redwoods that were understood to be Spirit Beings, a divine race that existed before humans and taught them the proper way to live.^{3,4}

Thousands moved into the area when gold was discovered along the Trinity River in 1850 and in Myrtle Creek in 1853. Indians were moved off their lands and many were massacred if they resisted. The state government paid militia units made up of miners and homesteaders to remove “hostile” Indians from the area. While treaties were signed, they did not allocate reservations for tribes nor were they ratified because the California delegation believed the treaties left too much land in Indian hands. Reservations were only established by administrative decree. Camp Crescent City was established in 1856 during the Red Cap War, which led to the removal of the Yuroks and seven other tribes to the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation.⁵ While many of the unique aspects of the various tribes of the area have merged today, their languages remain distinct, including Tolowa, Karuk, Hoopa, and Yurok. Many Native people of the area continue to fight for their rights, a difficult challenge in the face of a lack of treaty guarantees and the absence of federal recognition.^{6,7}

Crescent City, named after its crescent-shaped beach, emerged in the 1850s during the gold rush and soon became the chief port of entry and supply center for Oregon miners and neighboring settlements in California. Agriculture, lumber, and fishing were the economic mainstays. Redwood trees provided the lumber settlers needed for shelter and survival. Commercial logging followed and soon timber became the largest manufacturing industry in the west. The first mill was established in Crescent City in 1853. Hobbs, Wall and Company had formed by 1871 and dominated the industry until 1939. The first road through the county was the Crescent City Plank Road. Built in 1858, it ran along the Smith River Canyon to the Illinois River in Oregon.^{8,9}

The twentieth century brought improved technologies in harvesting and transporting lumber. A railroad constructed in 1906 transported lumber from Smith River to Crescent City where it was loaded on ocean schooners. By 1910 the rapid disappearance of the redwood stands caused alarm to some residents, who established the Save the Redwoods League and California’s three redwood reserve state parks. Despite their efforts, logging continued and by the 1960s, nearly 90 percent of the original redwoods were gone. Redwood National Park was established in 1968.¹⁰ Commercial fishing also contributed to the area economy. A cannery was established in the 1860s near the mouth of the Smith River. When the timber industry

2000 Employment structure



went into decline in the mid-1900s, the fishing industry replaced it as the community’s main economic force.

Before the establishment of lighthouses, shipwrecks were a regular occurrence off the Crescent City coast. The most famous shipwreck was the *Brother Jonathan*, which hit an uncharted reef and sank with the loss of a large gold shipment; only 16 of the 215 passengers survived. Congress commissioned the Battery Point Lighthouse, at the north end of the Crescent City harbor, in 1855 that remained in service until 1965. Located 6 miles off the coast to the west of Crescent City, the Point St. George Lighthouse was in service from 1892 until 1975.¹¹

Crescent City suffered heavy damage from a tsunami in 1964, caused by an earthquake that struck Anchorage, Alaska, the largest recorded earthquake to hit North America. A series of five, 500 mile-per-hour tidal waves destroyed the downtown area, killed 11 people and damaged 150 businesses and homes.¹² The community rebuilt and today Crescent City has a thriving tourism industry that capitalizes on its location and easy access to recreational opportunities.

Crescent City is surrounded by state and national parks and recreational opportunities. The Elk Creek Wildlife Area is adjacent to downtown, Tolowa Dunes State Park is just north of the city, and the Redwood National Park Headquarters and Visitor Information Center is in the city. The Smith River National Recreation Area and Redwood National Park are within a few miles of the city. Hiking, biking, bird watching, fishing, and whale watching are common activities. The Crescent City Harbor offers resources for whale watching cruises, surfing, wind surfing, fish derbies, and diving. Three community groups offer arts and cultural performances, exhibits, and educational programs: the Community Concert Association, Del Norte Association

for Cultural Awareness, and the Lighthouse Repertory Theatre.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 43.4% of Crescent City's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 6.5% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 13.1%, more than double the national average of 5.7% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 50.1% were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1%. The primary employment sectors were local, state, or federal government (35%), public administration (18.9%), health care and social assistance (15%), and accommodation and food services (13.4%). Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed 3.9%, but this percentage may be artificially low because many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in these data.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Crescent City's per capita income in 1999 was \$12,833, compared to the national average of \$21,587. The median household income in 1999 was \$20,133, less than half the national average (\$41,944). In 1999 34.6% lived below the poverty line. In 2000 Crescent City had 1,754 housing units, of which 90% were occupied and 10% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 32.8% were by owner and 67.2% were by renter. About 10.8% of the vacant units were due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Crescent City incorporated in 1854.¹³ The five-member council includes the mayor, the mayor pro tempore, and three members.¹⁴ The city also has a city manager and a city attorney. Residents pay a 7.25% sales tax and visitors pay a 10% transient lodging tax.^{15,16} See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fishermen and processors in California.

The California Department of Fish and Game maintains a small office in Crescent City in support of the Lake Earl Wildlife Area. The closest department field office is 86 miles away in Eureka. The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service office is in Newport, Oregon, 229 miles away. The nearest meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management Council are held 330 miles away in Portland. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Cutter Dorado is homeported at Crescent City, and is the northernmost unit of the USCG Group Humboldt Bay. The U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services has an office in Sacramento.

Facilities

Crescent City is accessible by air, sea, and road (U.S. Highway 101). The city is within the Del Norte County Unified School District that supports 16 schools, of which 3 are private and 13 are public, including 5 alternative schools that support various curriculums from kindergarten through twelfth grade. There are 2 high schools, 1 middle school, and 10 elementary schools (inclusive of alternative schools). The College of the Redwoods is the local community college and Humboldt State University in Arcata is the closest 4-year college.

Crescent City supplies water and wastewater services and Pacific Power provides electricity. The Crescent City Police Department administers public safety, and the California Highway Patrol has an office in Crescent City. Sutter Coast Hospital is in the city and Curry General Hospital is in Gold Beach, Oregon. There are approximately 17 hotels and motels in Crescent City, 1 resort, 2 bed and breakfast facilities, and a variety of national, state, county, and private campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks.

The Crescent City Harbor supports recreational and commercial fisheries, along with tourism. The harbor includes a yacht club, ice house, boatyard, tackle shops, dive shop, marine supply store, and other amenities. The Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program and sales of other local vessels have removed many of the larger rent-paying vessels from the port. The absence of this revenue stream has reportedly caused an increase in rent. A new port master plan aims to attract shops and other business.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

One processor operates in Crescent City, Caito Fisheries, which has several locations throughout California. The company processes various species and markets its products wholesale. The collapse of the rock cod fishery in the late 1990s, combined with poor shrimp seasons, may have contributed to the closure of many local area processors. Due to the lack of processors, the port's wastewater facility is underutilized. Some local fishermen participate in the live fish market, a low volume but high return operation, transporting catches to stores and restaurants in San Francisco. The live fish market may occur in other Californian communities, however data on this industry are not available.

In 2000 200 vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Crescent City. Landings in the community were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of landings/number of vessels landing): coastal pelagic 3.7 t/\$6,341/6; crab 1,408 t/\$6,107,840/137; groundfish 3,955 t/\$2,469,443/118; highly migratory species 309 t/\$700,660/38; salmon 120.3 t/\$461,247/74; shrimp 1,296 t/\$1,429,924/55; and other species 3.7 t/\$7,250/25.

Crescent city residents owned 108 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, of which 16 participated in the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program and 74 participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Crescent City residents in 2000 that participated in each fisheries by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 0/8/90, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 0/24/48, shellfish NA/1/NA, and shrimp NA/15/29.¹⁷

Following the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program, the remaining druggers principally land flat fish plus small monthly catch allowances of rock cod. Several small boats fish near shore for rock cod under an open access catch allowance, primarily during summer months. During the winter, the boats fish crab, limited by their size as to the number of pots they can carry. Due to rock cod restrictions, boats that typically switched between catching rock cod and crab have lost this flexibility.

In 2000 19 residents held 21 federal groundfish permits. The number of Crescent City residents holding permits in each fisheries by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/3, crab 1/6/98, groundfish 0/0/43, highly migratory species NA/1/7, salmon 0/21/77, shellfish 0/1/NA, shrimp 4/11/40, and other species 0/0/50.¹⁸

In 2000 468 permits were registered to Crescent City residents, including 447 registered state permits and 21 federal permits. The number of permits held by community members in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/4, crab 3/7/105, groundfish 0/0/52, highly migratory species NA/1/0, salmon 0/22/124, shrimp 8/14/55, and other species 0/0/52.¹⁹

Sportfishing

Crescent City is in the Fort Bragg, Eureka, and Crescent City Port Complex. It reported 49,983 commercial passenger fishing vessel landings in 2000 made by 11,574 anglers. The species landed were unspecified rockfish, Chinook salmon, lingcod, cabezon, unspecified flatfishes, and albacore tuna.

Subsistence

Specific information on subsistence fishing in Crescent City is not discussed in detail 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 in California is captured to some degree in the sportfishing data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 a Crescent City resident owned one vessel that participated in North Pacific fisheries. Crescent City residents held two permits in 2000, including one federal groundfish License Limitation Program permit, and one Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission salmon permit. Six residents held crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

Crescent City fishermen purchased 52 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

Notes

1. National Park Service. No date. American Indians. Online at <http://www.nps.gov/redw/historyculture/area-history.htm> [accessed 13 February 2007].

2. Office of Historic Preservation. No date. Del Norte: Landmarks: County listing. Online at http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=21416 [accessed 13 February 2007].

3. See note 1.

4. Crescent City-Del Norte County Chamber of Commerce. 2004. Our history. Online at http://www.northerncalifornia.net/our_history.cfm [accessed 13 February 2007].

5. The California Military Museum. No date. Historic California posts: Camp Crescent City. Online at <http://www.militarymuseum.org/CpCrescentCity.html> [accessed 13 February 2007].

6. See note 1.

7. See note 1.

8. National Park Service. No date. American Indians today. Online at http://www.nps.gov/redw/area_log.htm [accessed 13 February 2007].

9. See note 4.

10. See note 1.

11. See note 4.

12. Lighthouse Friends.com. 2003. Battery Point (Crescent City) Lighthouse, CA. Online at <http://www.lighthousefriends.com/light.asp?ID=58> [accessed 13 February 2007].

13. Municipal Code for Crescent City. General provisions, Title 1. 2005. Online at <http://municipalcodes.lexisnexis.com/codes/crescentcity/> [accessed 13 February 2007].

14. City of Crescent City. 2005. No title. Online at <http://www.crescentcity.org/citycouncil.htm> [accessed 13 February 2007].

15. 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 13 February 2007].

16. California State Board of Equalization. 2001. California counties transient lodging tax revenue, rate and date for the fiscal year 2000-01. Online at <http://www.sco.ca.gov/ard/local/locrep/adhoc/country/0001cotranslodgtax.pdf> [accessed 13 February 2007].

17. 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.

18. See note 17.

19. See note 17.