

Fort Bragg

People and Place

Location

Fort Bragg is in Mendocino County on northern California's Pacific Coast. The community is bordered on the north by Pudding Creek, which flows into the Pacific Ocean through a narrow inlet. Noyo Harbor is at the southern edge of the city. San Francisco is 172 miles to the south. Fort Bragg encompasses 2.73 square miles of land and 0.04 square miles of water. Its geographic coordinates are lat 39°26'45"N, long 123°48'19"W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Fort Bragg had a population of 7,026, an increase of 15.6% from 1990. The gender composition was 49.9% female and 50.1% male. The median age was 36.2. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 78.4% had a high school education or higher, 11.7% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 4.6% had a graduate or professional degree. These percentages fall below the national averages of 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively. A high school education was the highest attainment for 34.1%.

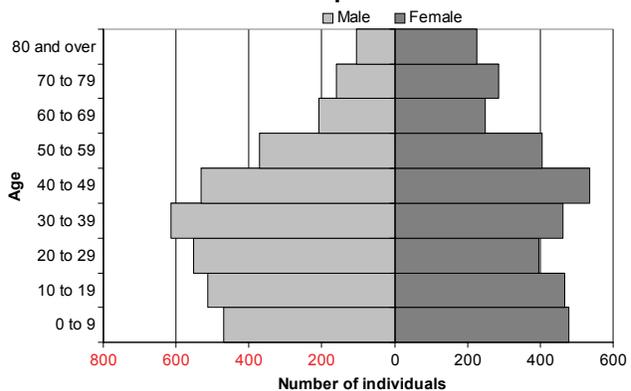
The majority of the racial structure of Fort Bragg was white (79.5%), followed by individuals who identified with some other race (12.1%), individuals who identified with two or more races (4.6%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1.9%), black (1%), Asian (0.9%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.1%). Ethnicity data indicate 22.7% identified as Hispanic. The community has experienced a significant change in its ethnic composition. In the decade since 1990, the percentage of inhabitants identifying as Hispanic increased by 65.7%. Approximately 13.5% of the population was foreign-born, of which 78.4% were from Mexico, 12.8% from Europe (UK, Ireland, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy, and Portugal), and 6% from Canada.

In 2000 74.7% of the population lived in family households.

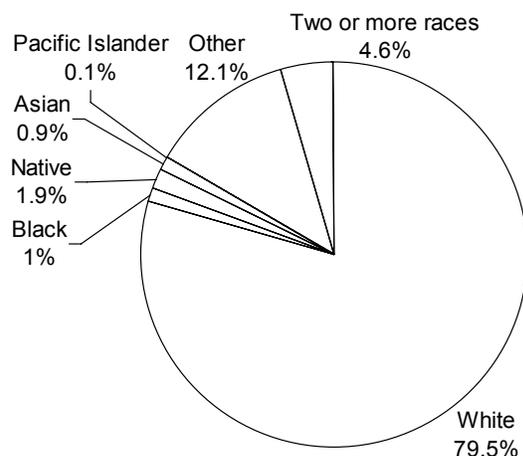
History

Pomo Indians originally inhabited Northern California with 72 independent tribes speaking seven related but distinct languages.¹ Pomo groups wove intricate baskets and fashioned beads from clamshells and magnesite that were used as a regional trade currency. The Pomo were hunter-gatherers, and coastal groups relied heavily on salmon, marine shellfish

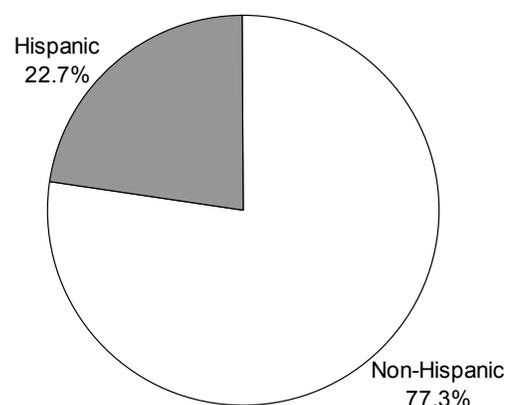
2000 Population structure



2000 Racial structure



2000 Hispanic ethnicity



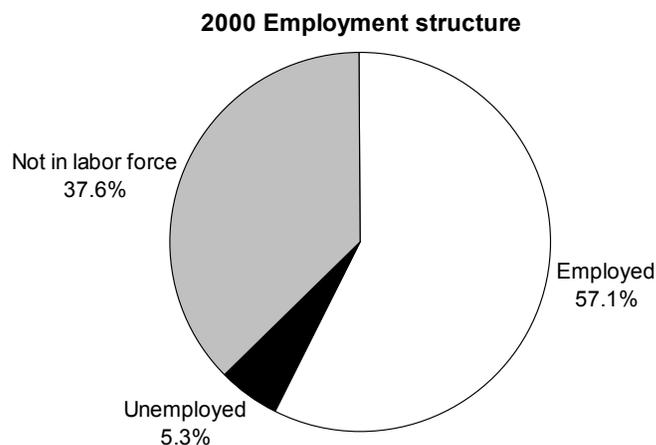
(especially sea mussels), and sea mammals (particularly Stellar sea lions, California sea lions, sea otters, Northern fur seals, and harbor seals).² Native hunters and fisherman developed complex technologies to harvest these resources, and community life often focused on rituals surrounding the first harvests of the season and cooperative fishing endeavors.

After Russian fur traders and Spanish missionaries established the first European settlements in the early 1800s, Indian populations were quickly decimated by disease and conflicts with incoming settlers. Military units were sent to remove Indians from ancestral lands. A commission of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) signed 18 treaties with California tribes between 1851 and 1852 that would have reserved about 8.5 million acres for native peoples, but because of the gold rush, none of the treaties were ratified by Congress.³ Instead, the BIA established a system of smaller reservations and “rancherias” in California. Survivors described their forced removal to these reservations as “death marches.”⁴

As part of California’s policy of removing Indians to smaller reservations, the Mendocino Indian Reservation was established in 1856 on 25,000 acres between the Ten Mile and Noyo rivers. Fort Bragg was founded in 1857 as a military outpost to “control and safeguard” native residents living on this reservation.⁵ The fort was named after Captain Braxton Bragg, a Mexican War veteran. The reservation and military outpost were abandoned in 1867 as disease, opportunities for work in other areas, and violent encounters with settlers and the military shrunk the Indian population from several thousand to about 280. The remaining Indians were relocated to the Round Valley Reservation in Covello and the land around the fort was sold to settlers.⁶

The disbandment of the fort did not signal the end of the Fort Bragg community, which quickly became a major player in the region’s timber industry.⁷ The same year the fort was established (1857); a local entrepreneur was granted a parcel of reservation land for a sawmill site on the Noyo River. More sawmills followed. Timber development in the area finally boomed in 1885, when Union Lumber Company built a larger operation, including plans for a city that could serve as a hub for shipping mill products and housing loggers and their families. Fort Bragg incorporated in 1889. Union Lumber built railroad lines and partnered with the National Steamship Company to export forest products and import manufactured goods.

Georgia-Pacific Corporation acquired the mill in 1972 and remained the region’s major employer until August 2002 when it closed the Fort Bragg facility. The closure signaled the end of an era for the community and the loss of several hundred jobs.⁸ Smaller mills in the



area soon followed suit. In 2003 the last sawmill in Fort Bragg, Mendocino Forest Products, closed after more than 50 years of operation, citing California’s regulatory system, a decrease in local logging, and the expense of importing logs from other states.⁹ The city is in the process of redeveloping the 430-acre Georgia-Pacific mill site. First phase work includes providing coastal access, constructing a coastal trail and park facilities, site remediation and wetlands restoration, and construction of an educational and research center.

Noyo Bay provides a natural harbor and access to ocean fisheries. In the 1920s fisherman began to land millions of pounds of salmon that were processed and marketed in Fort Bragg. Harvests continued until the mid-1990s.¹⁰ Despite the decline of salmon, fishing remains an important part of Fort Bragg’s economy and community identity. Many boat owners offer private charter services for tourists and sport fishermen. In addition to salmon, commercial and recreational fisherman take rockfish, abalone, crabs, and mussels.¹¹ The city has two fish processors, a liquid fish fertilizer processing plant, and numerous businesses associated with fishing and coastal tourism.

Several festivals point to the city’s dependence on fishing and logging. The largest is the World’s Largest Salmon Barbeque, held in early July since 1971.¹² The barbeque serves as a fundraiser for the salmon restoration. Fort Bragg also hosts a Whale Festival in March. The city’s Paul Bunyan Days, a Labor Day tradition for the past 60 years, celebrates the area’s participation in logging.¹³

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 57.1% of Fort Bragg’s potential labor force 16 years of age and older

were employed, 5.3% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 8.4% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 37.6% were not in the labor force. These data were derived prior to the closure of the Georgia Pacific sawmill, and this rate may have increased in recent years. Top employment sectors were arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (21.1%), with most jobs concentrated in accommodation and food services; education, health, and social services (20.1%); local, state, or federal government (14.4%); retail trade (10.9%); manufacturing (8.7%); and construction (7.2%). Natural resource jobs including agriculture, forestry, and fishing employed 8.3%, but this number may not accurately reflect self-employed fisherman, loggers, and other contractors.

In the year prior to its closure, the Georgia-Pacific mill employed 125 workers earning \$6.4 million in wages.¹⁴ Several hundred additional jobs depended on the corporation's contracts with vendors and independent loggers. Another 59 lost their jobs when Mendocino Forest Products closed operation in 2003. Tourism and commercial fishing have become more significant employers. Lodging and hospitality services are also major employers and revenue generators for the city. Local officials hope the rapidly developing tourist industry will bolster and diversify the city's economy.¹⁵ Other major employers are the Fort Bragg Unified School District and the Mendocino Coast District Hospital.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Fort Bragg's per capita income in 1999 was \$15,832, compared to a national per capita income of \$21,587. The median household income was \$28,539. In 1999 40.9% lived below the poverty level, more than three times the national poverty level of 12.4%. In 2000 Fort Bragg had 3,051 housing units, of which 93.1% were occupied and 6.9% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 42.9% were by owner and 57.1% were by renter. Of the vacant units, 27% were due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Fort Bragg operates under a council-manager government.¹⁶ The council appoints a mayor, mayor pro tem, city manager, and members of the planning commission, and contracts for legal services. Residents pay a 7.25% sales tax and Mendocino County levies a 10% transient lodging (hotel) tax.^{17, 18} See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fishermen and processors in California.

Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management Council are held 172 miles away in San Francisco. The U.S. Coast Guard Station Noyo River, located on the south side of the city, has two 47-foot motor lifeboats and one 21-foot rigid-hull inflatable boat. The station's jurisdiction extends from Punta Gorda in the north to Gualala in the south, more than 100 miles.¹⁹ Fort Bragg is in Marine Region 7 of the California Department of Fish and Game, which has its headquarters 286 miles south in Monterey.²⁰ The nearest field offices of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services are in San Francisco.

Facilities

The Little River/Mendocino County Airport, an unmaintained airstrip, is 15 miles south of Fort Bragg. This facility supports private planes, air taxis, and some scenic whale watching flights. The nearest airport certified for air carrier flights is Sonoma County Airport in Santa Rosa (118 miles), and the nearest major airport is San Francisco International Airport.

The Fort Bragg Unified School District has two elementary schools, a middle school, a traditional high school, an alternative high school, an independent home study school, and an adult learning center. The Mendocino County Regional Occupational Program, which offers training in agricultural, computer sciences, and special education, is headquartered in Fort Bragg. The community also supports two parochial elementary and middle schools and a private preparatory school that offers grades 1 through 12. The College of the Redwoods Mendocino Coast campus, a two-year community college, is located in Fort Bragg.²¹

The Fort Bragg Public Works Department operates water and wastewater treatment plants.²² Natural gas is not available in the area. Pacific Gas and Electric provides electricity. The Fort Bragg Police Department administers law enforcement and public safety, and the Fort Bragg Fire Protection Authority operates a central fire station in the downtown area, as well as a second fire station and water storage facility on California Highway 20. The main health care facility in Fort Bragg is the Mendocino Coast District Hospital. Additional hospitals are located in Willits (35 miles), Garberville (66 miles), and Ukiah (58 miles).²³ At least 18 hotels, 11 bed and breakfast inns, 5 campgrounds, 4 RV parks, and 1 vacation rental business are located in the vicinity of Fort Bragg.²⁴ These cater mainly to a large number of tourists who vacation in the area.

Noyo Harbor, an all-weather commercial fishing port, is at the southern edge of Fort Bragg on the mouth of the Noyo River. Area marine facilities are located at

Noyo Harbor.^{25,26} Noyo Harbor is one of four main harbors between San Francisco and the Oregon border, and it supports a large commercial fishing fleet. The harbor features two public launch ramps, a 10,000 pound hoist with an 8-foot beam, and 265 berths for commercial vessels. These berths are generally fully occupied with a waiting list of about 20 vessels depending on the season. The harbor is maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers, which periodically dredges it. The harbor area has numerous support facilities, such as fuel, ice, restaurants, and lodging.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Commercial fishing is a primary component of Fort Bragg's economy. In 2000 283 vessels, all commercially registered, delivered landings to Noyo Harbor. In 2000 13 of Fort Bragg's 144 vessels in 2000 were trawlers that specialized in groundfish. In 2003, as part of the Groundfish Vessel Buyback Program that sought to reduce the number of boats participating in the groundfish fishery, the National Marine Fisheries Service bought the fishing rights and licenses for five of the 13 trawlers. The trawlers were then removed from any fishing activity.

Landings for Fort Bragg in 2000 were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of landings/number of vessels landing): crab 192.4 t/\$924,532/54; groundfish 1,933.3 t/\$2,975,551/135; highly migratory species 27.8 t/\$46,524/16; salmon 181 t/\$722,485/131; shrimp 23.5 t/\$256,778/11; and other species 992.3 t/\$1,939,483/84.

Fort Bragg residents owned 144 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, of which 76 participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Fort Bragg residents participating in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/1, crab 0/5/43, groundfish 0/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 0/6/60, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/0/7, and other species 0/0/1.²⁷

In 2000 23 Fort Bragg residents held 24 federal groundfish fishery permits. The number of residents holding permits in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/6, crab 4/4/48, groundfish 0/0/74, highly migratory species NA/0/3, other species 3/3/121, salmon 0/5/117, shellfish 0/0/NA, and shrimp 2/0/118.²⁸

Fort Bragg fisherman involved in West Coast fisheries held 627 permits in 2000, including 603 registered state permits. The number of permits held by these community members in each fishery by state (WA/

OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 0/0/15, crab 5/4/51, groundfish 0/0/90, highly migratory species NA/0/9, salmon 0/5/200, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 2/0/27, and other species 4/21/147.²⁹

Three fish processors are located in Fort Bragg. Caito Fisheries, the oldest fish processor in Noyo Harbor, has been family owned for four generations and annually processes millions of pounds of troll-caught Chinook salmon, albacore tuna, swordfish, Dungeness crab, sole, flounder, sand dabs, halibut, sablefish, thornyheads, rockfish, rose fish, lingcod, shark, skate, and octopus. The company markets its products wholesale.³⁰ Ocean Fresh Seafood Products, established in 1985 and a division of Marusan Enterprises Inc., processes fresh sea urchins predominately for the Japanese market and dominates sea urchin production in Northern California. Because sea urchin processing is labor intensive, the company employs numerous skilled workers.³¹ Sea Pal Company, established in 1977, produces liquid fish fertilizer by processing ocean fish harvested off the Northern California coast. The plant's feedstock is fish carcasses salvaged from other processing operations.³²

Sportfishing

Fort Bragg is popular with sport fishermen and Noyo Bay has several charter boat services that cater to salmon, rock cod fishing, and crabbing. Eight sport license vendors operate in Fort Bragg, of which five are charter boat companies and three are chain stores. Fort Bragg is part of the Fort Bragg-Eureka-Crescent City port complex. In 2000 this port complex received 49,983 sport fish landings from 11,574 anglers. The top three species landed were rockfish (81%), Chinook salmon (16%), and lingcod (2%).

Sportfishing businesses based in Fort Bragg in 2003 had 103 vessels and sportfishing licenses that permitted access to marine species. Of the 103 licenses, 56 were for salmon vessels, 26 for Dungeness crab vessels, 10 for John Doe salmon, 3 for commercial passenger fishing vessels, 3 for commercial salmon stamps, 3 for coonstripe shrimp vessels, and 2 for northern pink shrimp trawl vessels.

Subsistence

Specific information on subsistence fishing in Fort Bragg is not discussed in detail in this community profile 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 Fort Bragg fishermen owned three vessels that participated in North Pacific fisheries. Residents landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish confidential/confidential/1, Gulf of Alaska groundfish confidential/confidential/2, halibut confidential/confidential/2, and shellfish confidential/confidential/1.

In 2000 Fort Bragg residents held 18 permits (11 federal and 7 state), including 4 groundfish License Limitation Program permits, 3 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) BSAI groundfish permits, 2 CFEC halibut permits, and 7 CFEC shellfish permits. Under the individual fishing quota (IFQ) system for the Alaskan halibut and sablefish fisheries, Fort Bragg fishermen were allotted 3,216,683 halibut and 6,470,435 sablefish IFQ shares in 2000.

In 2000 eight Fort Bragg residents held crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

Fort Bragg fishermen purchased 26 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

Notes

1. B. Ortiz. Houghton Mifflin encyclopedia of North American Indians: Pomo. Online at http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na_030100_pomo.htm [accessed July 2004].
2. C. Smith. 1999. California's native people, the northwest region: Subsistence. Online at http://www.cabrillo.edu/~crsmith/anth6_nwcoast_subsis.html [accessed 16 February 2007].
3. P. Giese. 1997. Native American Indian: Art, culture, education, history, science-Pomo people: Brief history. Online at <http://kstrom.net/isk/art/basket/pomohist.html> [accessed 16 February 2007].
4. J. Elliot. 1995. The Dark Legacy of Nome Cult. Albion Monitor, 2 September. Online at <http://www.monitor.net/monitor/9-2-95/history.html> [accessed 16 February 2007].
5. H. Hart. 1965. Historic California posts: Fort Bragg. Online at <http://www.militarymuseum.org/FtBragg.html> [accessed 16 February 2007].
6. See note 5.
7. City of Fort Bragg, CA. 2000. Fort Bragg history. Online at <http://ci.fort-bragg.ca.us/history.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].
8. M. Callahan. 2002. G-P to shut down Fort Bragg sawmill. Santa Rosa Press Democrat. June 8: A1.
9. D. Bischel. 2003. Press release for June 3rd: Last sawmill in Fort Bragg to close after 50 years of operation. Online at <http://www.foresthealth.org/June3PR.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].
10. Klamath Resource Information System (KRIS). 2003. The Noyo River basin: A brief overview. Online at <http://www.krisweb.com/krisnoyo/krisdb/html/krisweb/noyooverview.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].

11. City of Fort Bragg, CA. 1999. Fort Bragg area fishing. Online at <http://ci.fort-bragg.ca.us/fish.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].
12. Klamath Resource Information System (KRIS). 2003. Fort Bragg's worlds largest salmon barbeque. Online at http://www.krisweb.com/biblio/ncc_stma_maahs_1999_salmonbbq99.htm [accessed 16 February 2007].
13. No Author. 2004. Paul Bunyan Days. Online at <http://paulbunyandays.com> [accessed 16 February 2007].
14. M. Callahan. 2002. Fort Bragg at a crossroads. Santa Rosa Press Democrat, June 23. Online at <http://www.pressdemocrat.com> [accessed 16 February 2007].
15. B. Norberg. 2004. Fort Bragg's new identity. Santa Rosa Press Democrat. January 4: E1.
16. City of Fort Bragg, CA. 1999. Fort Bragg city council. Online at <http://ci.fort-bragg.ca.us/council.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].
17. 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 16 February 2007].
18. 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/county/0001cotranslodgtax.pdf> [accessed 16 February 2007].
19. High Beam Research. 2005. Greetings from station Noyo River. Online at <http://www.highbeam.com/library/docfreeprint.asp?docid=1G1:131780572&ctrlInfo=Round19%3AMode19b%3ADocFree%3APrint&print=yes> [accessed 16 February 2007].
20. California Department of Fish and Game. 2003. Marine Region 7. Online at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/> [accessed 16 February 2007].
21. City of Fort Bragg, CA. 1999. Fort Bragg schools. Online at <http://ci.fort-bragg.ca.us/schools.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].
22. City of Fort Bragg, CA. 1999. Fort Bragg city services. Online at <http://ci.fort-bragg.ca.us/services.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].
23. City of Fort Bragg, CA. 1999. Fort Bragg city facilities. Online at <http://ci.fort-bragg.ca.us/fbfacil.htm> [accessed 16 February 2007].
24. City of Fort Bragg, CA. 2004. Lodging and campgrounds in Fort Bragg, CA. Online at <http://www.fortbragg.com/lodging.html> [accessed 16 February 2007].
25. Grand Jury of Mendocino County. 2001. 2000-2001 final report: The Noyo Harbor district. Online at <http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/grandjury/00-01/10-NoyoHarborDistrict.pdf> [accessed 16 February 2007].
26. Mendocino Council of Governments. 2003. III. Modal alternatives system: Maritime system element. Online at <http://www.mendocinocog.org/pdf/MaritimeSystemElement.pdf> [accessed July 2004].
27. 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.
28. See note 27.
29. See note 27.
30. Caito Fisheries. No date. Caito Fisheries home page. Online at <http://www.caitofisheries.com/> [accessed 16 February 2007].
31. Ocean Fresh Seafood Products. No date. Ocean Fresh home page. Online at <http://www.mcn.org/a/of/> [accessed 16 February 2007].
32. Sea Pal Company. 2000. Sea Pal home page. Online at <http://www.seapal.com> [accessed 16 February 2007].