

Chinook

People and Place

Location

Chinook is in southwestern Washington on Baker Bay on the north shore of the Columbia River. Baker Bay, which covers an area about 15 square miles, is separated from the river by a low-lying sand bar known as Sand Island. Nearby Cape Disappointment forms the northern portion of the mouth of the Columbia River as it flows into the Pacific Ocean. Situated in Pacific County, Chinook encompasses 1.02 square miles of land. Chinook shares Baker Bay with the larger city of Ilwaco, 7 miles to the northwest. Astoria, Oregon, is 10 miles southeast on the opposite side of the Columbia. The nearest major cities are Seattle (72 miles northeast) and Portland, Oregon (100-miles southeast). Chinook's geographic coordinates are lat 46°16'23"N, long 123°56'39"W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Chinook's population was 457. The gender composition was 51% female and 49% male. The median age was 47.6, more than 12 years older than the national median of 35.3. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 74.6% had a high school education or higher, 19.1% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 10% had a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

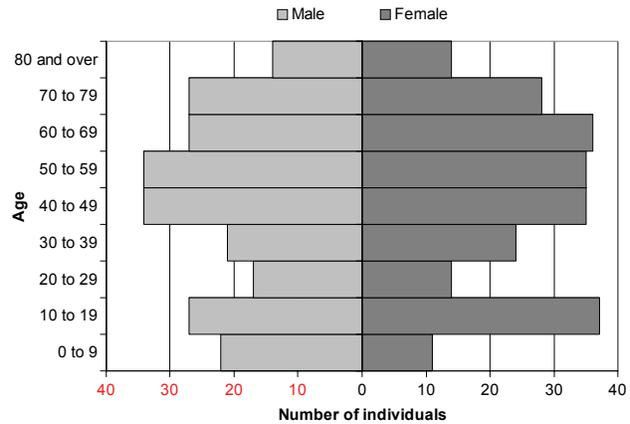
The majority of Chinook's racial structure was white (96.5%), followed by people who identified with two or more races (1.8%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.9%), Asian (0.7%), and people who identified with another race (0.2%). Ethnicity data indicate 2% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 5.3% were foreign born, with 77.3% of those from Canada and 22.7% from France.

In 2000 82.7% of the population lived in family households.

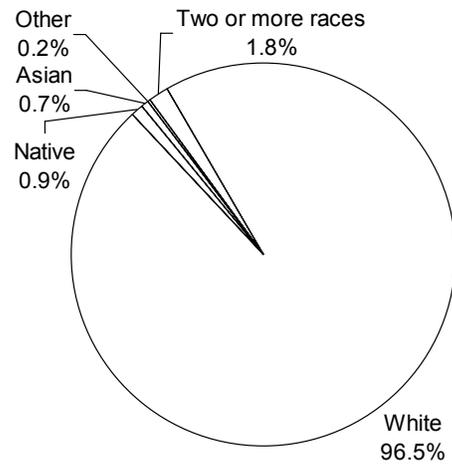
History

Chinook derives its name from native peoples inhabiting the area near the mouth of the Columbia River. The Chinook Indians were historically a group of linguistically related people whose territory included the lower Columbia River in Washington and Oregon west of The Dalles, Oregon.¹ They depended heavily on fishing and coastal resources and developed extensive trade networks within the region. The Lower Chinook,

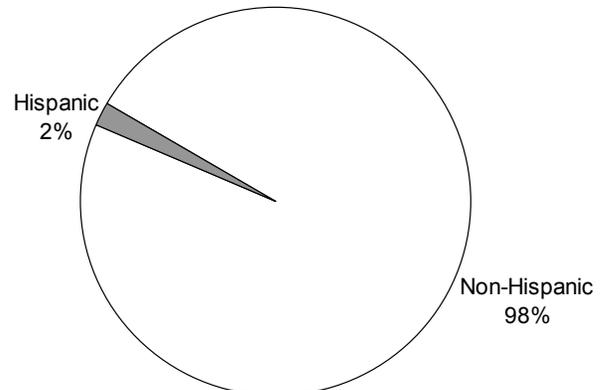
2000 Population structure



2000 Racial structure



2000 Hispanic ethnicity



who dominated the vicinity of today's community of Chinook, traded frequently with British and American companies and hosted Lewis and Clark in 1805 when the explorers neared the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and Clark estimated the local population of Chinook Indians at about 400 in 1805. Disease and rapid European settlement soon devastated the native population in the area.

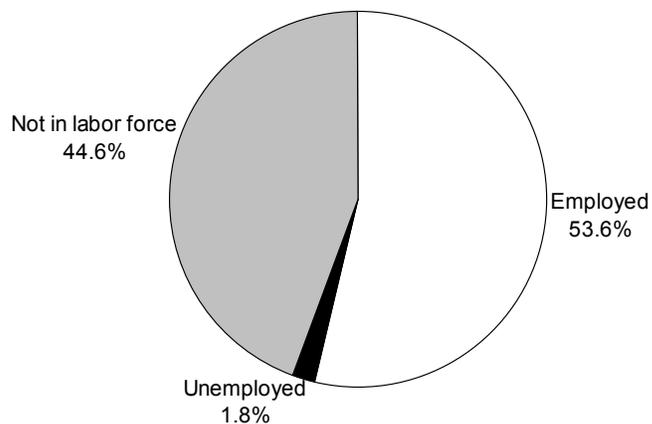
In the 1850s the town of Chinookville was established at the site of a long-standing Chinook Indian village on the Columbia River by nonnative settlers interested in the prospects for trade and fishing. Chinookville was the county seat of Pacific County from 1852 to 1854 and the county's first salmon cannery was established there in 1870. During the 1880s erosion along the Columbia River marked the beginning of the end for Chinookville as homes and businesses were destroyed in large numbers. The community soon became a ghost town and disappeared completely due to continued erosion during the nineteenth century.²

As Chinookville eroded into obscurity, the contemporary community of Chinook was established to the southwest along Baker Bay, a location that drew residents interested in the region's lucrative fishing industry. Land claims in the area were purchased in the 1860s, but the community did not flourish until the 1880s when the first fish traps were sunk in Baker Bay. According to legend the salmon fishing boom that followed temporarily made Chinook the richest town per capita in the United States.³ Many of the community's buildings and homes were built near the turn of the century with wealth derived from this initial boom. Baker Bay is also dotted with rotting pilings that are the remains of now-abandoned salmon traps from this earlier period.

Although salmon fishing no longer generates the wealth it once did, Chinook still relies heavily on fishing and community members clearly identify with the industry. Each June the community hosts the Chinook Sturgeon Derby and most local jobs are linked to fishing. The Port of Chinook, the smallest of three ports in the area, provides 300 boat slips and a crab processing plant operated by Bell Buoy Crab Company.

Chinook residents often struggle to maintain the economic viability of the local fishing industry as nearby towns compete to attract sport and commercial fishing revenue and related businesses. In 2003 the community faced a potential economic disaster when the Port of Chinook was designated as a low-use port for which dredging would no longer be provided.^{4,5} The port suffered from severe silt build up, such that fisherman could only access it at very high tides. Depths were as low as 4 feet in some areas. Local businesses and

2000 Employment structure



fishermen lobbied legislators to reverse the decision not to dredge, and eventually won support and funding within the U.S. Congress. In September 2004 about 80,000 cubic yards of material were removed from the Columbia River between Chinook and the head of Sand Island.

Chinook is also the site of a different sort of political struggle. The contemporary Chinook Nation, a tribal organization that represents individuals descended from the historic family of Chinook groups, maintains its primary office there. In 2001 the tribe was tentatively granted federal recognition after 20 years of appeals. The Bureau of Indian Affairs rescinded federal recognition in 2002 on the grounds that the tribe did not satisfy the mandated criteria for recognition. The tribe has appealed and, at the time of this writing, state and federal documents still noted that federal recognition is pending.^{6,7,8} Chinook tribal members argue federal recognition is needed to help restore and safeguard the traditional fishing and land rights needed to maintain native identities and sustain tribal members economically.⁹

Infrastructure

Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 53.6% of Chinook's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 1.8% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 3.3% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 44.6% were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1%. The top employment sectors were education, health, and social services (25.1%), retail trade (15.6%), construction (13.8%), and local, state, or federal governments (9.6%). Roughly 3.3% were employed by the military. Natural resource jobs

including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting employed 3.6%, but this percentage may be artificially low because many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in the data.

Chinook continues to rely heavily on commercial fishing and tourism associated with sportfishing, coastal recreation, and nearby Fort Columbia State Park, now recognized as Lewis and Clark National Park. The Fort Columbia park was established at the site of a military installation built in 1896 to defend the mouth of the Columbia River. Bell Buoy Crab Company, with total annual sales of \$7 million on 2 million pounds of crab, is a major employer and the second largest crab processor in Washington. It is estimated the decision to dredge the Port of Chinook prevented the loss of 50 full-time and 100 seasonal jobs at the Bell Buoy Crab Company, 350 jobs associated with businesses that rely on the port, and \$2.9 million in direct economic impact from the average 10,000 annual boat trips into the port.¹⁰

Chinook's per capita income was \$17,198 in 1999, compared to the national per capita income of \$21,587. The median household income was \$30,417, compared to the national median household income of \$41,994. In 2000 18.2% lived below the poverty level, higher than the national average of 12.4%.

In 2000 there were 263 housing units in Chinook, of which 79.8% were occupied and 20.2% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 77.1% were by owner and 22.9% were by renter. Of the vacant units, 81.1% were due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

Chinook is an unincorporated area governed by Pacific County, which was organized in 1851. The county seat is South Bend, 44 miles north on U.S. Highway 101. Pacific County 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 nearest office of the National Marine Fisheries Service is in Seattle. The nearest district office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is in Portland. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are also held in Portland. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Southwest Regional Office is in Vancouver and the nearest U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Group and Air Station is in Warrenton, Oregon (13 miles south). The USCG also operates the National Motor Lifeboat School in Ilwaco.¹¹

Facilities

Chinook is accessible by land, sea, and air, and is located on U.S. Highway 101. Residents travel to Ilwaco or Long Beach (9 miles north) and to Astoria to access major retail stores and other amenities. The Port of Ilwaco Airport is an unattended paved runway that is open to the public. Portland International Airport is the nearest major airport. There are several campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks in Chinook, but the nearest hotels and motels are in Ilwaco and Long Beach.

Chinook is in the Ocean Beach School District, but there are no public schools in the community.¹² Students travel by bus to schools in Ilwaco and Long Beach. In addition to traditional elementary, middle, and high schools, the district also offers a small alternative high school in Long Beach. Pacific County's Public Utility District No. 2 supplies electricity. The Chinook Water District draws the water supply from a reservoir created by a 26-foot earthen dam on a portion of the Columbia River.¹³ Residents rely on septic systems because Chinook is not served by a sewer district. The Pacific County Sheriff's Office and the Pacific County Fire District No. 2, Chinook Valley (located in Chinook) administer public safety. Ocean Beach Hospital in Ilwaco, Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria, and Willapa Harbor Hospital in South Bend are the nearest medical facilities.

The Port of Chinook has 300 boat slips, a boat launch ramp, and a boat hoist, which can accommodate vessels from 16 to 60 feet long.¹⁴ The port also has a fueling facility and power and water hook-ups on some docks. The Port of Ilwaco supports a larger number of boats and is used more heavily.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Landings data for Chinook were recorded as part of the Ilwaco/Chinook Port Group, which includes the communities of Skamokawa and Ilwaco. Most vessels based in Chinook participate in West Coast fisheries. In 2000 338 vessels, including 40 personal vessels and 298 commercial vessels, delivered landings to Ilwaco. Reported landings in 2000 were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of 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 184.7 t/\$468,717/98; shrimp confidential/confidential/2; and other species 1,907.1 t/\$183,071/81.

See the Ilwaco community profile for additional information.

According to the Port of Chinook, it supports 35 commercial vessels and harbors 265 sport vessels during the fishing season. In 2003 more than 4,000 recreational vehicles used the port's boat ramp.¹⁵ Major commercial species landed at the port include crab, tuna, and salmon, but no landings data specific to this port are available.

Chinook residents owned 29 vessels in 2000 that participated in West Coast fisheries, including 14 that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Chinook residents that landed fish in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 12/3/0, groundfish 1/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 13/3/0, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/0/0, and other species 3/0/0.¹⁶

One Chinook resident held a federal groundfish fishery permit in 2000. The number of Chinook residents that held permits in each state fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 11/4/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 13/3/1, shellfish 6/0/NA, shrimp 0/2/0, and other species 3/0/0.¹⁷

Chinook fisherman involved in West Coast fisheries held 41 permits in 2000, including 39 state and 2 federal permits. The number of permits held by these community members in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 18/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 15/0/2, shellfish 0/0/NA, and other species 4/0/0.¹⁸

The Bell Buoy Crab Company operates a crab processing plant in Chinook, providing 50 full-time and 100 seasonal jobs.¹⁹ The company also receives tuna, but these fish are processed elsewhere.²⁰

Sportfishing

Two sportfishing license vendors operate in Chinook. In 2003 more than 4,000 recreational boaters used the ramp at the Port of Chinook and an estimated 295 sportfishing vessels use the port each fishing season.²¹ According to state records, no Chinook residents owned or operated charter boats in Washington in 2003 or 2004.

The closest Catch Record Card areas to Chinook are Area 1 (Ilwaco) and 1A (Ilwaco–Buoy 10). The 2000–2001 sport catch was 27,889 (1) and 16,335 (1A). Area 1/1A includes Chinook salmon (1,630 in 2000 and 2,972 in 2001) and coho salmon (26,259 and 13,363). Marine anglers made approximately 16,243 and 42,061 trips in areas 1 and 1A respectively in the sport salmon fishery. Sport fishermen caught 106 steelhead in Area 1 (Columbia River–Leadbetter Point). In 2000 the coastal

bottomfish catch was 8,388 for Area 1 (Ilwaco) and 631 for the Ilwaco Jetty.

Subsistence

Members of the Chinook Nation are heavily involved in subsistence fishing, but because the tribe does not have federal recognition, members have no formal fishing rights within the region. In the past military intervention has been used to stop Native fishermen from using traditional fishing grounds without permits. No specific data on native subsistence fishing is available because of its controversial nature, but tribal members maintain fishing remains central to their identities and livelihood. The restoration of traditional fishing rights is one of the major forces behind continuing efforts to establish federal recognition.²²

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

Thirteen vessels based in Chinook participated in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. Residents landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of landings/number of vessel landings): other finfish confidential/confidential/1, herring confidential/confidential/3, and salmon 238.3 t/\$357,610/11.

Chinook fishermen held 17 North Pacific permits. Six held federal permits and 13 held state permits, including 3 groundfish License Limitation Program permits, 3 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) herring and 11 CFEC salmon permits. Under Alaska's individual fishing quota system, Chinook fishermen were allotted 1,390,684 halibut shares and 1,208,136 sablefish shares.

In 2000 Chinook residents held 16 crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries.

Sportfishing

Chinook residents purchased 10 sportfishing licenses for Alaska fisheries in 2000.

Notes

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2. Tacoma Public Library. 2004. Washington place names. Online at <http://search.tpl.lib.wa.us/wanames> [accessed 7 February 2007].

3. Chinook Observer. 2004. Chinook, kingdom of salmon. Chinook Observer, Long Beach, WA. 22 March 2004. Online at <http://www.chinookobserver.info/Main.asp?SectionID=21&SubSectionID=88&ArticleID=5774> [accessed 7 February 2007].

4. U.S. House of Representatives. 2003. Baird secures \$3 million for channel deepening and dredging of Columbia River. Online at http://www.house.gov/apps/list/speech/wa03_baird/spec061804.html [accessed 7 February 2007].
5. U.S. Senate. 2004. Murray honored for saving hundreds of jobs in the southwestern Washington. Online at <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=219861> [accessed 7 February 2007].
6. Washington State Governor's Office of Indian Affairs. 2004. Washington State tribal directory. Online at <http://www.goia.wa.gov/Tribal-Information/Map.htm> [accessed 7 February 2007].
7. I. Gunn. 2001. U.S. recognizes Chinook Tribe. BBC News Online. 4 January 2001. Online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1099968.stm> [accessed 7 February 2007].
8. L. Paskus. 2002. Chinook Tribe loses recognition. High Country News 43(15), 19 August 2002. Online at http://www.hcn.org/servlets/hcn.Article?article_id=11350 [accessed 7 February 2007].
9. University of Idaho. 2004. Recognition and U.S. Relations. Online at <http://13.ed.uidaho.edu/ShowOneObject.asp?SiteID=68&ObjectID=697> [accessed 7 February 2007].
10. See note 6.
11. U.S. Coast Guard. 2004. Pacific Northwest unit list. Online at <http://www.uscg.mil/d13/default.htm> [accessed 7 February 2007].
12. Ocean Beach School District. 2003. Location of OSBD/schools. Online at <http://www.ocean.k12.wa.us/location.htm> [accessed 7 February 2007].
13. Washington State Department of Ecology. 2004. Chinook water supply dam failure. Online at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/dams/chinook.html> [accessed 7 February 2007].
14. Economic Development Council of Pacific County. 2004. Transportation. Online at <http://www.pacificcdc.org/transportation.htm> [accessed 7 February 2007].
15. Field notes, Port of Chinook, Chinook, WA, September 2004.
16. 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.
17. See note 16.
18. See note 16.
19. See note 6.
20. See note 15.
21. See note 15.
22. See note 9.