



# Long Form Fishing Community Profile

## Pacific City, Oregon

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Marine Resources Program  
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**Cover Photo:**

*Dory on Shore*, Jim Blodget (2011)

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. What is a Long Form Fishing Community Profile (LFFCP)?**

The LFFCP is an in-depth look at the fishing communities of the Oregon Coast. It is intended to provide the fishing community's perspectives on issues such as communication within the community and between the community and resource managers, changes within the community over time, the importance of fishing to the community and the town, the community's perception of the future, and what characteristics describe the fishing community.

### **2. What is the purpose of this profile?**

The purpose of the LFFCP is to supplement the NOAA Short Form Profiles released in 2007. The LFFCP provides content to help interpret the information provided in these more commonly produced short form profiles. For example, the NOAA profiles may give information on the number of active fishing vessels and the change over time while the LFFCP will give the content (community's perspective) of the change in active fishing vessels.

### **3. Which profiles did Oregon State University produce?**

Oregon State University produced the first profiles for three Oregon coastal fishing communities: Garibaldi, Newport, and Port Orford.

### **4. How are the profiles produced by ODFW useful to the state?**

The LFFCPs are not focused on any one management issue and therefore provide general socio-cultural information on a fishing community. The information provided by the profiles can be used to understand the attitudes and perceptions of this stakeholder group and can be useful for understanding the possible response to regulation changes and agency communication methods.

### **5. What method was used to gather the information to develop this profile?**

Ethnographic interviewing was used to gather the information to develop each profile. Ethnographic interviewing is defined as the collection and recording of human cultures. For the profiles, the interviews were conducted in person, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by a researcher. The profiles were written from the community's perspective and reviewed by the community before being finalized. The recruitment method used to enlist community members in the interview process is referred to as the "Snowball Method". Like a snowball the interviews start with a small number of individuals and through recommendations the number of interviewees increases.

### **6. Does this method provide a representative sample of the fishing community?**

The Snowball Method allows the population to be defined by the survey participants and results in a broader definition of the fishing community. For example, by the end of the survey we've interviewed commercial, recreational, and charter fishermen (retired and active) but also spouses, crew, processors, dock workers, marine mechanics, restaurant owners, etc. The participants are asked "who else do you consider part of the fishing community in (geographic location) that we should speak with". Participants recommend a

person that they feel validly represents their community. We know we've reached a representative sample when the researcher begins to hear the same recommended names from community members. For example, by the last interviews we usually hear names of individuals already interviewed or those we are scheduled to interview. The profile is then written from the perspective of the community and is reviewed by the participants for accuracy.

**7. How is the information gathered analyzed and interpreted by ODFW?**

ODFW has each audio recorded interview professionally transcribed and then conducts a form of content analysis on each interview. Using eight criteria the researcher looks for patterns in answers. The content and quotes are chosen in response to the frequency of answers in the content analysis and the quotes are meant to represent common themes seen in the content analysis. The researcher then writes the profile from the fishing community's perspective and has the study participants review the profile for accuracy.

**8. What has the response of the fishing communities been to the profiles?**

ODFW has experienced very positive feedback from the communities profiled. The communities like the chance to discuss their perspectives and appreciate the agency asking. It has created better communication pathways and gives the agency a tool for building trust between the communities and the agency. The communities have also used the profiles in such forums as public meetings.

**9. Will the ODFW continue to develop profiles for other coastal fishing communities?**

The Marine Resources Program at ODFW plans to continue producing profiles for other Oregon fishing communities as part of ongoing monitoring efforts to support nearshore resource management.

**10. If I have further questions about the profiles or other social and economic work being done by the ODFW, Marine Resources Program, who should I contact?**

For more information please contact our main office in Newport, OR. The staff will be able to direct you to the appropriate person.

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## Profile Overview

This profile was created as a result of a collaborative research project conducted during 2010. The project was designed and implemented with the help of the commercial fishing community working in partnership with scientists from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Oregon State University (OSU).

The idea for this collaborative project originated with existing profiles developed by scientists at OSU for other fishing communities along the Oregon Coast. ODFW found these profiles to be very informative and helpful during the marine reserves process and wanted to continue this work for other fishing communities. Pacific City was chosen and interviews with the fishing community were conducted by ODFW staff over the 2011 and 2012 winter season.

Each interview lasted between twenty minutes to one and a half hours and conducted by a single ODFW scientist. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed by this same ODFW scientist as well as a research assistant. Participants were chosen in two ways: 1) their name was given to ODFW by other members of the fishing community as someone we should interview, and 2) through the Marine Board registered vessel records as vessel owners from Pacific City. The goal of this profile was to represent the entire fishing community, whether recreational or commercial, and their associated family members.

This profile has eight sections and each section contains a summary of the perspectives and information provided through the interviews conducted in Pacific City. Some verbatim comments have been included to give more depth and color to the profile but no identities have been revealed. The eight sections laid out in this profile are:

- Importance of Fishing to the Community of Place
- Characteristics of Fishing Community Members and their Families
- Boundaries: Connection between the Fishing Community and the Community of Place
- Communication within the Fishing Community and between the Fishing Community and Others
- Perspectives on Management and Effects of Management
- Change in Fishing and Seafood: Economics and Fishing Effort
- Perceptions of the State of the Ocean and its Resources
- Perceptions of the Future

This profile has been reviewed by a sample of the interview participants for accuracy and clarity.

### Importance of Fishing to the Community of Place

Fishing is very important to the community in Pacific City, being described as “the fiber of the community.” This unique location offers the best of both ocean and river fishing. Most fishermen target salmon, various species of rockfish, lingcod, tuna, halibut and crab. Due to its accessibility to both styles of fishing, tourists and locals show their devotion by continuing fishing traditions that have gone on for more than 100 years. “In the old days, it was quite important because, well the farmers, that’s the way they made their supplemental income.” “It’s the only place in the world that uses the kind of boats and does the kind of fishing that is done here.” The fishing has shifted from mostly commercial to a more recreational style, however traditional methods are still practiced. Currently, there are only a few that still commercial fish for a living.

*“Now sport fishing, the summer months and the dory fishing keeps the interest in the community.”*

Pacific City is home of the Dory fleet. These hand made wooden boats continue to charge through the surf, launching right off the beach, without the use of a dock or harbor. The Dory Association is an important social aspect as well as a “watchdog” for the town in regards to politics and new legislative measures that could affect the

community of Pacific City. “I still have a dory and I dream that my son will use it someday.”

*“Pacific City is so hard to compare with other ports, and so we’re discounted for being less significant; and when you consider the uniqueness of it, we consider that we are more important.”*

### Characteristics of Fishing Community Members and their Families

One thing everyone can agree on is that the fishermen in Pacific City love to fish. “There’s the dory fisherman, the hard core old school guys that have been fishing their whole lives, and then there’s the in-betweeners that may have a dory or just fish the river when they can.” Most are middle-aged or older, and many are second home owners. “The typical fisherman is someone who was here fishing in the 70s and 80s. There are very few young people fishing these days.” Several of the residents are retired and many now have more leisure time. As previously mentioned, the fishing effort has shifted to mostly recreational. “The commercial industry is currently predominantly male, whereas the recreational side is said to be “a tremendous mix of families.”

*"Some of them are ski bums, they ski in the winter and dory fish in the summer. A lot of them are schoolteachers and this is supplemental income. Many put themselves through school with commercial fishing."*

Whether referring to the river or the ocean fisherman, the loyalty and community structure is evident in every person you meet in Pacific City. "The fishermen will get together and help each other out." "Everybody works together." "We take care of our families, our kids, our schools."

*"If you need firewood and your cold; you put the word out there and then all of a sudden wood shows up. Everybody takes care of each other here."*

There is also a lot of support within the community of Pacific City. Several interviewees stated how involved the entire community is. Whether it is providing groceries to families who are experiencing hard times, volunteering at local schools, or "playing mother to the fleet", the community displays a great deal of commitment to ensuring the survival of their residents.

In addition to the local population, there is a huge portion of people that that come to Pacific City to fish but reside elsewhere. The rivers and ocean fill with tourists during the

summer months, holiday weekends and whenever there are those "random nice weather days over the winter."

*"There are probably 400 boats that occasionally fish here and call their home port someplace else. It's a mix of salmon, rockfish and steelhead fishing."*

### Fishing Families

In the past, families had a lot more involvement in the fishing business. "Some days there would be four generations of our family out there. Granddad fishing, my dad fishing his boat, and me and one of my daughters would be in our dory." Historically, many of the fishermen were teachers, firemen, etc. People who could take the summers off would turn to commercial fishing to supplement their income. Many wives would participate in the fishing and others would stay on shore to "tend the hearth." Kids were involved in the business, and often aided in boat building and even the processing.

"My son fished with us for a year or two, and my daughter worked the fish companies to make her own money. My son purchased his own boat in 1971."

Families in the Pacific City fishing community have changed over the years. Less and less young people are getting into the fishing industry due to lack of income, and "the old diehard fishermen aren't there like they used to be." "It has all changed; you're just not going to see families fishing anymore because everybody went off and moved

out of the area and got jobs that paid a lot more than staying around here ever would.”

Economic hardship has also changed the dynamic of families in Pacific City. “There are a lot more single moms and dads here than there used to be. Disasters create a lot of divorces because there is no money.”

*“Many of the families went to commercial fishing back in the 1960s because it was some good money. Nowadays, there isn’t enough money to bring new people into it.”*

### **Boundaries: Connection between the Fishing Community and the Community of Place**

Pacific City fishermen often have to look outside their immediate community for supplies. The decline in the economy and the overall economic hardships has left Pacific City lacking business wise. “Infrastructure started compacting, and as that happened, we had to work harder and harder to get our product sold.” There is a boat ramp, the docks, one Shell station and a local market for groceries. “We have our local glassing shop that glasses the dories and he treats the inside of them.” There is no real boat repair. Aside for one local who does fiberglass-work, boat owners that need full repair on their vessels have to go to Portland, Tillamook or Salem. There still remain a couple of locally owned restaurants, a few coffee shops, and a pub or two. However a few of these businesses are only open in the busy summer season. In addition to the handful of social

outlets, there are also about 5 churches that provide the community with support, and the social contribution of the Dorymen’s Association.

There is at least one commercial processor that still resides and works out of Pacific City. This resident catches, processes, and even makes his own labels to distribute their product. “Most commercial operations are just sent off elsewhere.”

*“There are only two places in town that buy fish. One of them has a little fish market they sell to, and the other one just processes the fish and sells to the restaurants, taverns, and some to markets out of the area.”*



Table 1. Services and Accessibility

Service	Accessibility
<b>Gear</b>	No real retail options left for fishing or boating gear, tools, or bait. Fishers must travel to Newport, Garibaldi, and sometimes Astoria to acquire needed supplies. Those recreational fishers traveling to Pacific City to fish can bring bait and gear with them but have no options to replace or supplement once in the town. Some “sporting good” needs can be purchased in Hebo which is relatively close or Newport.
<b>Fuel</b>	One Shell Service Station exists inside the town of Pacific City. The boats putting out at Pacific City can utilize this in-town fueling station. However some boats require ethanol free gas for their engines and must transport it from Tillamook back to Pacific City. In the past Pacific City had more than three fueling options for fishers.
<b>Ice</b>	Cubed or blocked ice is available at the grocery store but most commercial and recreational fishers require (or prefer) crushed ice. Crushed ice is sold to commercial fishers at the local fish market/pizzeria but recreational fishers have almost no options.
<b>Boat Repair</b>	One fiberglass shop exists in town and Dory boats are still manufactured locally, but no boat or motor repair shops remain. Any major repairs, or those owners and operators can’t do themselves; require a trip to Garibaldi, Newport, Portland, Salem, or Tillamook.
<b>Processors</b>	One or two small processor in town. Any larger commercial landings are sent off to processor out of Pacific City. The local processors sell directly to the local restaurants, pubs and markets. Many Dorymen will trailer their product to Lincoln City or Garibaldi and sell straight into these local markets and restaurants.
<b>Bookkeeping</b>	Bookkeeping is done primarily by vessel owners and operators during most of the year. Some send their books off to CPAs for tax purposes or other major accounting needs but these services are in towns like Portland and Salem.
<b>Legal Services</b>	Legal representation is found outside Pacific City in towns like Portland and Salem.
<b>Social Contacts</b>	There are a few restaurants, pubs, and coffee shops that operate either all year or during the busy summer months. The town does have approximately five churches which is where many residents interact and seek personal and community support. The Dorymen’s Association and Chamber of Commerce provide support to the fishing community and a way to organize, communicate and represent the community.

## Fishing Community Communication

### Communication within the fishing community

Communication within the Pacific City fishing community is mostly informal. Before the days of cell phones and internet, the communication was mostly done by CB radio “It used to be that you didn’t know people’s names, but you were on the radio and knew the boat names.” Word of mouth is also very strong. Fishermen talk down at the bridge, when the dories come in or at the local tavern. “There is still a lot of social communication between fishermen.” “We meet down at the beach and do a lot of ‘kicking sand’ as we call it.” As technology advances, so do the methods of communication. There are now chat rooms, websites and blogs that fishermen can choose to participate in.

The Dorymen’s Association is a very big component of communication for Pacific City. You don’t have to own a dory to participate in this organization. Sport fishermen, tourists and freshwater anglers are members of this organization. “There are people from places like Montana who choose to support our cause.” They have email capabilities of around 300 addresses and maintain a mailing list of over 490 individuals and organizations. “95% of all the communication with the fleet is through the Dorymen’s Association.” They are also responsible for organizing several community events such as Dory Days, scholarship opportunities and other charitable events.

### Communication with fisheries managers

Most all of the communication with fishery managers and government agencies is done by the Dorymen’s Association and the Chamber of Commerce. They meet two to three times a year and send out a newsletter to keep the community of Pacific City informed on issues such as potential marine reserves, wave energy, etc. Residents attend meetings and are constantly trying to stay up on current events that could affect their community.

Some citizens feel that management needs to be more effective in the ways they communicate with the community. “I’ve heard some of the bank fishermen complain that they wish the managers would be aware of what the situation is, what’s being caught and what isn’t. It seems that the biologists/managers are spread too thin.” “ODFW tends to not give you the full amount of time you need to prepare and sometimes makes changes at the spur of the moment.”

*“The Dorymen Association knows all the players and keeps an eye on most of the political stuff.”*

## Perceptions of the State of the Ocean and its Resources

The health of the ocean and productivity of the fisheries is definitely a question for debate in Pacific City. There is a separation between the perception of the fish stocks and the fisheries. “The fish are very healthy and abundant. The fisheries on the other hand, are not so healthy.” “Lingcod

seems to be good. “Good crab and mud clams.” Some of the residents agree that stocks are good and the only thing that seems to be affecting the fishing from year to year are the current cycles. “Even with crabbing-you get a couple of good years, a down year, and then a real crappy year where it takes all season to get a couple of limits of crab. It will flip around again.” One interviewee stated “it’s the best I’ve seen in 20 years!”

*“If it’s too warm, the bass stay way down and don’t come up and feed. In the last 2 years, it was like where are all the salmon...the silvers? It will change back around.”*

Unfortunately, not everyone in Pacific City shares such a positive outlook. Many reported a rather negative perception on the health of the fisheries; “it is a lot harder to catch fish than it used to be.” “We will have a day or two when we can get our limit, but the fish are not there in the numbers that I can remember.” Some residents claim that the lack of fish is due to the fact that hatcheries are not producing as much fish as they used to. “The reason they don’t give us a Coho fishery is because they don’t produce them anymore. Our hatchery production is down to nothing. All they have to do is produce more fish.”

Others believe that the declining stocks are directly related to either commercial fishing, or people not taking care of the resource. “The numbers of fish are definitely, absolutely declining. You can’t rape a resource and expect it

to be there years down the road. In the old days, there were many, many people that believed that the fish were just endless out there!”

*“We used to have these bait balls out in the ocean, big as a room and you could see them all the time. I haven’t seen that in years.”*

### **Change in Fishing and Seafood: Fishing Effort and Economics**

Pacific City has changed a lot over the years. In addition to fishing, Pacific City also had a large economic reliance on timber, dairy farming and was originally a resort destination due to the kelp ore. “Back in the early days of Pacific City, people would come from all over to sit and soak up the medicinal properties of the kelp.” Due to its unique location of being between the ocean and the river, the small town soon became the target of recreation. “In the 1930s, they had boats filling up the Nestucca and fishermen were offloading their fish in the woods.” The ocean was harder for recreational users to access due to lack of developed roads. “In 1955, there were only about 15 boats on the beach because there wasn’t even a road to Cape Kiwanda.” The accessibility to Pacific City began to improve, and so did the fishing industry and economy.

*“In 1957, the road was built to the Cape and the first Dory Derby was held in 1959. The fishery mushroomed in the 60s, especially 1967. We were the second highest port on the Oregon coast for commercial Coho landings. There were five boat builders at that time, turning out boats every few hours.”*

The 1970s was a big decade for Pacific City. There were high numbers of fish being caught and plenty of services to accommodate the catches. "There were 3-4 fish buyers, a marina that offered gear and bait, several boat builders and a couple of sporting good stores." "We had semi-trucks coming in daily taking the Coho out." "In the 1970s, there were a lot of commercial boats and lots of services. The marina used to have fuel and gear." Both the ocean and the river angler were catching high numbers of fish. Dory fishermen reported being able to earn "\$25,000 to \$30,000 in less than three months, while fishing for about 12-13 hours a day."

*"Through 1977, we could go out and catch a boatload, anywhere from 80-240 fish! Sometimes there were over 500 boats on the beach!"*

1979 was reported as "the fatal year for Pacific City; the year when the season got shut off." "The 70s were hot, the 80s were pretty good and it has been going up and down since the 90s."

The economy also started to experience a decline. The cost of fuel went up, as well as licenses, fees and permits. Local business started to diminish, including all fish buyers, sporting good stores, and any facility to buy bait or gear. Advances in technology occurred, bringing on the use of electronics such as fish finders, GPS, and more advanced sport boats. These changes reduced the fishing effort, creating 'trip times' of 3-4 hours to get limits. "Technology has been

great for the fisherman, but bad for the fish."

## Perspectives on and the Effects of Management

It is often hard for fishery managers and fishermen to see 'eye to eye'. With stricter regulations, higher licensing fees, wave energy proposals, and a talk of a marine reserve going in near Pacific City, the residents have become more concerned by the potential impacts on their community.

*"We have a well managed fishery offshore and we just don't like to see more management from somebody that's not really involved with it."*

There have been several management decisions that directly affected the fishing industry and community. One of these is the hatcheries. "The hatcheries used to be amazing! They created a wonderful fishery along the coast." "Oregon made a decision to kind of get out of the big numbers of raising fish and that of course basically spelled the end to the fishery in Pacific City."

Another issue Oregon fishermen have to deal with is the cost and availability of licenses and permits. "I have just watched everybody working their a---s off to make a living in this industry, and they just always want more. We have been fighting for so long." In order to keep a commercial fishing license in the state of Oregon, permits must be renewed annually to remain valid for the next year. "Now

with all the catch restrictions, you can't catch enough fish to warrant paying for the license. It's a bad cycle." "The regulations and requirements led me out of the commercial fishing into sport fishing." "There are more people today making a living off the fisheries, but nobody is a fisherman." Management also took away the commercial season for salmon off the beach at Pacific City. "People who want to fish for salmon have to go further up the Columbia River."

In addition to the costs, several community members expressed their frustrations with the rules and requirements. "I can't go out unless I have a federal observer on my vessel. They usually have to come out of Salem or Newport, and they need a day's notice if I think I am going fishing. If the ocean looks rough, I won't call 'em. If the ocean calms down, I lose income."

*"Nowadays, in order to be a fisherman, you also have to be a politician."*

This particular profile didn't focus on specific topics such as the marine reserves or wave energy proposals; however many of the residents have very real concerns and opinions. Some are in full support of the marine reserve and feel that management needs to intervene to protect the resources. "Our fisheries are a very important resource and needs to be managed. If you let the fishermen manage it, it would be who catches the last fish." Others feel as if management practices are unfair and are not there to protect the fishermen.

"They're putting in the marine reserves and they have no scientific basis that they are a good tool for management; it's all political." "We always felt as fishermen that if you go out fishing, you're guilty of breaking the law." Some residents voiced that they are in support of the marine reserves for the Oregon coast, "but not off a beach like this where fishermen are."

Another concern for the residents of Pacific City is the issue of wave energy. Pacific City has been chosen as a potential site for the installation of wave energy devices. "They don't have enough evidence that these wave energy buoys won't harm our fish." "I am scared that once they start running electricity through our oceans, we are going to lose all our fish." In addition to possible resource and environmental damage, citizens of Pacific City also voiced their concerns about losing their "scenic beauty", the tourism industry and "overall way of life."

*"People keep telling us if we bring in wave energy parks and marine reserves, it will create more jobs. We already have jobs; you just have to let us do them. All we have is our natural resources."*

## **Perceptions of the Future**

### Imagined future

When the community members of Pacific City were asked to describe their town in 5 years from now, the responses varied across the board. Many voiced their concerns about additional regulations, fees and

restrictions, saying that “It is too hard to make a living anymore; and the entire fishing industry is going to die out if there isn’t a change.” Others feel it will look very similar to how it does now, and “it needs to be maintained and preserved so we do not lose what we have.”

Many feel that Pacific City has already hit rock bottom, and change is inevitable. Most agree that even if there were to be significant change to their community, it would not be sufficient to bring back commercial fishing. “People will still live and work here, but not the kind of people we used to have.” “Economics has really taken care of it for us for some time and I think the next five years are going to be just as quiet.”

Several people have a more optimistic view. “I think that our city will still grow and our incomes will go up because it’s a nice community.” “We are making moves in the right direction as far as lowering limits and stuff.”

*“I am an eternal optimist. The pendulum is going to have to swing back in our favor. It can’t get much worse.”*

### Desired future

The common response for the desired future in Pacific City is to bring back revenue; however the means to generate revenue varies among the interviewees. Many think that if the hatcheries come back, so will the revenue. “We need to generate more fish so the recreational fishermen come

back.” “Eventually they are going to have to bring the hatcheries back—we’re not going to have a choice.” “I would hurry up and get the Coho fishery going again.” Other ways of bringing back revenue include gaining access to a marina and “more marine-related services.”

Numerous people in the fishing industry hope that the regulations “slack up.” “My imagined future and desired future are the same story—just faster. Managers and people enforcing the regulations are going to have to believe the science and understand that there is a way to fish sustainably without damaging the stocks.” On the other hand, the idea of slot limits was also proposed. “I would like to see slot limits for salmon, halibut and really anything that swims. It will help protect the fisheries.”

Other desired futures for Pacific City include more provisions for parking, a transit to and from the Cape, dredging of the rivers and a safer beach, including official entrance/exit for vehicles, vessels, surfers, shore based fishers, etc.



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