

Social Snapshot Update, 2014.

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In 2005 Salmon For All published A Social Snapshot of the Columbia River Gillnet Fishery by Irene Martin, a study done to place the Columbia River gillnet fishery in its social context. The study found that over two thirds of licensed Columbia River gillnetters live in four lower river counties: Wahkiakum, Pacific and Grays Harbor in Washington, and Clatsop County in Oregon. The remainder lives along the river or in scattered locales throughout the two states and Alaska. A Columbia River commercial fishing business depends upon a Columbia River gillnet permit, plus a portfolio of other permits from several states, including Oregon and Washington shrimp, crab, razor clam, troll and numerous Alaska permits. The money from these other endeavors returns to the Columbia River region with the fishermen residing in the region.

This update provides the most current information available regarding social and community issues identified in the original study, which were related to high poverty rates. Since 2005, the date of the study, all four counties have exhibited an increase in poverty rates, and all are below the 2012 U.S. median household income, the latest figure available, as well as state median household income. For example, Clatsop County's median household income averaged \$44,330 from 2008-2012, while the Oregon state median household income during that same time period was \$50,036. Clatsop County's percentage of people below poverty level was 15.8% for the same period, while Oregon's was 15.5%. Per capita income averaged \$25, 257 for the 2008-2012 period, with the state per capita income average being \$26,702.

During that same period, the Washington Median Household Income 2008-2012 average was \$59,374, with the per capita income being \$30,661. For that same period the county breakdown is as follows:

- Grays Harbor County: Household income \$42,440; per capita income was \$21,897
- Pacific County: Household income \$40,873; per capita income was \$23,895
- Wahkiakum County: Household income\$45,335; per capita income was \$25,060

The Washington percentage of persons below poverty level, 2008-2012, was 12.9%

- Grays Harbor County: 18.6%
- Pacific County: 18.1%
- Wahkiakum County: 16.0%

In Washington, growth has been seen in the numbers of children participating in the basic food program, with the percentage rising from 22% statewide in 2008 to 35% in 2012. In Grays Harbor County that number is at 49% for 2012, Pacific County is at 47% and Wahkiakum at 45%. The numbers of children under the age of 18 in poverty is now 18.5% of the Washington

State population, but in Grays Harbor County it is 29.8%; in Pacific County it is 28.9% and in Wahkiakum County it is 24.0% of the population. Indicators show that the percentage of children served in the three counties by Children's Case Management, for issues such as child abuse and other family-related issues are all above the state average. Information for Clatsop County as of the end of 2010 shows 24.6% of the children in the county in poverty, compared to the state rate of 21%. 49% of public school children were eligible for free or reduced cost lunches. Further, "youths in Clatsop County are more likely to abuse both marijuana and prescription drugs, compared to their Oregon counterparts... This elevated rate in the county for 11th graders has been consistent since at least 2002." (p. 5, Clatsop County Community Assessment, 2013).

Unemployment rates remain high in the three Washington counties, continuing a long-term trend. In 2013 the Washington state rate was 7.0%, but Grays Harbor, Pacific and Wahkiakum Counties came in at 11.8%, 10.7% and 12.9% respectively. Clatsop County was the only county among the four that showed an improvement in this area, with an unemployment rate of 7.4% in Feb. 2013, while the state rate was 8.4%.

The mortality rate in Clatsop County in 2012 was 9.9 per thousand population, with the state death rate being 8.4. Mortality rates in the three Washington counties are all above state average, with all three counties ranking in the bottom eight counties regarding death rates. Wahkiakum and Pacific Counties had 7.8 deaths per thousand population, while Grays Harbor came in highest in the state with 8.6 deaths per thousand.

Of note since the 2005 study was done is the increase in food banks and in the amount of food provided to clients. Wahkiakum County has increased its food banks from two to three since the 2005 Study, and is looking at adding a fourth, to be located in the western part of the county which is underserved. Nine food banks are currently listed for Pacific County, with 17 in Grays Harbor county. [information from website of the Coastal Community Action program, accessed June 10, 2014]. Nine food pantries are currently listed for Clatsop County by Clatsop Community Action, which also stated that "Clatsop County has continued to experience a large increase in demand for all social services, particularly for housing and emergency food requests... Our food distribution... increased by about 50% over the past four years. We distributed over a million pounds of product through our Regional Food Bank last year." www.ccaservices.org accessed July 8, 2014.

The gradual worsening of a number of significant community health indicators over the years since the 2005 study may be attributed to numerous factors, including the Great Recession and the overall economic health of the nation. However, given that all four of these counties share a significant economic mainstay, the salmon fishery, examination of what has gone on in the salmon fishery should also be mentioned. A tentative conclusion for consideration should include proposed and actualized initiatives over the past 3-5 years in Oregon to ban commercial salmon fishing in the Columbia River, along with the implementation of a new Columbia River fisheries policy in both states that effectively reduces the access to fish and the numbers of fish

available for in-river commercial harvest. These major stressors on the local population have not been formally studied, but have certainly increased stress, reduced income and employment in the commercial fishing sector, and contributed to the continued increase in negative social statistics. Further, the vaunted economic benefits from the expanded sport fishery that justified these measures are not accruing in these four counties in any kind of measurable way to improve the negative social statistics that are occurring.

Sources

Sources consulted include the U.S. Census for 2010; Clatsop County Dept. of Public Health, Local Public Health Authority Annual Plan, 2013-2014, Astoria, Clatsop County Dept. of Public Health, 2014; Children First for Oregon website (www.cffo.org), Oregon Vital Statistics County Data, www.public.health.oregon.gov; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cde.gov); Kids Count Data Center (datacenter.kidscount.org); Clatsop County website http://co.clatsop.or.us/assets/dept_10/pdf/clatsop%20assessment%202013.pdf