

# Point Baker

## People and Place

### Location

Located on the northern tip of Prince of Wales Island, Point Baker is 142 miles south of Juneau and 50 miles west of Wrangell. The area encompasses 1.0 square miles of land and 0.1 square miles of water.

### Demographic Profile

Point Baker is one of the very small communities scattered over the Southeast Alaskan landscape, hidden inside a cove or behind a cape or an island. In 2000 the village had 35 inhabitants. The community was overwhelmingly White (91.4%). About 2.9% of the population was Alaska Native or American Indian, and 5.7% were of two or more races. A total of 8.6% of the population recognized themselves as all or part Alaska Native or American Indian. All residents lived in households rather than group quarters. Some houses were vacant due to seasonal use at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census.

The gender ratio in Point Baker was relatively balanced, at 51.4% male and 48.6% female. The median age was 42.8 years, significantly older than the U.S. national average of 35.3 years.

In terms of educational attainment, 91.4% of residents had graduated from high school or gone on to further schooling at the time of the 2000 Census. About 8.6% of the population never completed 12th grade, and no one in the community had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.

### History

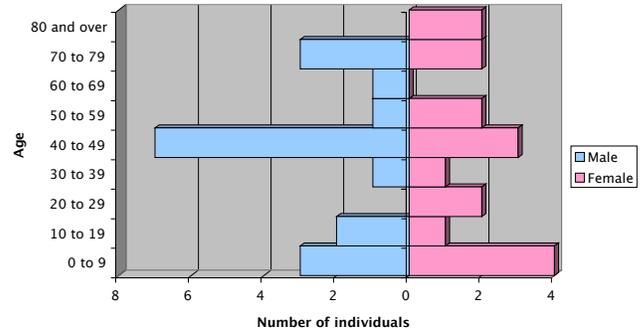
Point Baker is one of the oldest place-names of Euro-American origin in Alaska. It was named in 1793 by Captain George Vancouver while sailing near Prince of Wales Island, naming it after the Second Lieutenant on his ship "The Discovery."

Prince of Wales Island is in the middle of the transition area between Haida and Tlingit cultural areas. These two groups historically occupied the island making their living with an elaborate economic system including fishing, hunting, and harvesting practices as well as intricate trading networks.

These groups, especially the Haida (most numerous at the time), were connected fairly early to the 18th Century fur trade. The first settlers and missionaries that arrived to the area at the end of the 19th Century

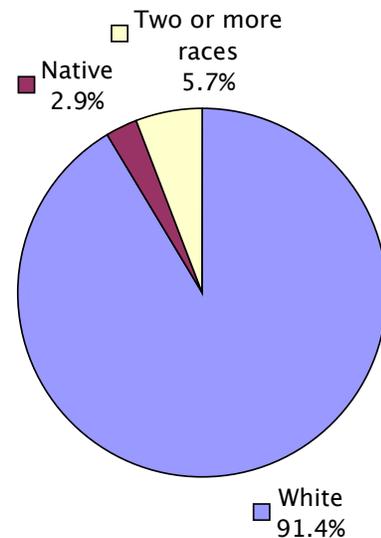
**2000 Population Structure  
Point Baker**

Data source: US Census



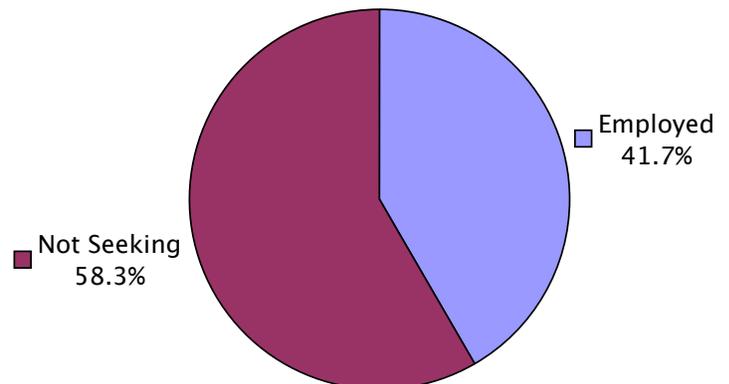
**2000 Racial Structure  
Point Baker**

Data source: US Census



**2000 Employment Structure  
Point Baker**

Data source: US Census



encountered an almost depopulated island devastated by smallpox and measles. Haida and Tlingit populations are still present in many communities on the Island.

Initially Point Baker was a non-permanent post exclusively related to the fishing industry. The first floating fish packer came to Point Baker in 1919, and fish buying continued until the 1930s. Dozens of tents, occupied by hand-trollers working in the area, were temporarily set up along its shore.

In the 1930s the area was opened to permanent settlement by the U.S. Forest Service. The first services, including stores and a post office, were installed in the early 1940s. In 1955, Point Baker was withdrawn from the Tongass National Forest. A floating dock was built by the State in 1961; larger docks replaced it in 1968. This fishing community is, like many of the small communities on the island, experiencing a decline in population.

## Infrastructure

### Current Economy

Point Baker is an extremely small community with little or no opportunities for a cash economy. Its almost exclusive productive activity is fishing. In 2000, 27 residents held commercial fishing permits. Most fishermen in the area operate hand troll gear, with small vessels and small operations. Subsistence activities or sport hunting and fishing complement the local economy as a food source, but also as an income source. The targeted species include deer, salmon, halibut, shrimp, and crab.

Approximately 41.7% of the total potential labor force was employed at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census. There was officially no unemployment, but 58.3% of residents age 16 years and older were not in the labor force (i.e. not working and not looking for work). The annual median per capita income in Point Baker was \$12,580 and the median household income was \$28,000. Only 4.9% of the population was reportedly living below the poverty level.

### Governance

Point Baker is an unincorporated village in an unorganized area. Although this is a mostly White community, the village belongs to the Sealaska Native Corporation. The inhabitants of Point Baker, in order to access state or federal offices, have to travel. The closest ADF&G offices are nearby in Craig or

Ketchikan. The nearest BCIS office is in Ketchikan. NMFS has its closest office in Petersburg.

### Facilities

The community of Point Baker is accessible by sea and air. Floatplanes, helicopters, barges, and skiffs serve the town. Although there is no airport or ferry service, a state-owned seaplane base and heliport serves chartered flights from Ketchikan. Point Baker is not connected with the Prince of Wales Island road system. The community has a dock and boat harbor. Barges deliver cargo from Wrangell.

Point Baker is a very small community with little or no facilities. It does not have a school or police department. Very basic health care is provided by the local EMS or the Prince of Wales Island Area EMS. There are no centralized systems of water distribution, sewage treatment, or power generation. Power is provided by individual generators.

## Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

Although this is a very small community there is significant involvement in the North Pacific fisheries. In 2000, 27 members of the community held 48 commercial fishing permits (27 fished). The village also had 8 owners of vessels working on federal fisheries, 22 owners of salmon fishing boats, and 18 residents registered as crewmen. The following section is a detailed overview of the commercial fishing permits held by Point Baker residents in 2000.

*Halibut:* There were 11 permits for halibut issued in Point Baker (9 fished). The permits included: six longline permits with statewide range for vessels under 60 feet in length (all were fished), three longline permits with statewide range for vessels over 60 feet (all were fished), one dinglebar troll permit with statewide range (not fished), and one mechanical jig with statewide range (not fished).

*Salmon:* The bulk of Point Baker's permits were in the salmon fisheries. The village had 34 permits (24 fished). The permits included: 17 statewide permits for hand trollers (6 fished), 11 statewide permits for power gurdy troll (11 fished), and 6 dinglebar permits for the southeast region (7 fished).

*Crab:* There was one permit to harvest Dungeness crab in the southeast with ring nets. The permit was not fished.

*Other Groundfish:* There were two statewide longline permits for miscellaneous saltwater finfish for vessels under 60 feet (none fished).

In Point Baker there were no processing facilities. Its small fleet delivered landings to other harbors in the area.

### **Sport Fishing**

In 2000, Point Baker issued 107 sport fishing license; 23 were purchased by Alaska residents. This small number of licenses does not preclude the possibility that the area could be visited by outsiders getting their permits here or elsewhere. Residents mostly rely on subsistence fishing. In 2002 the village also had six licensed businesses related to sport fishing as a tourist activity, three for freshwater guide businesses and three for saltwater guide businesses.

### **Subsistence Fishing**

Subsistence activities are very important to Point Baker residents. In 1996, 100% of local households used some type of subsistence resources. In that year,

100% of households used subsistence salmon, 100% used non-salmon fish (herring, smelt, cod, flounder, greenling, halibut, perch, rockfish, sablefish, sole, char, and trout), and 100% used marine invertebrates. Residents harvested 288.6 lbs of subsistence resources per capita in 1996, with a daily per capita harvest of 0.8 lbs. The subsistence harvest was comprised of salmon (28.6%), non-salmon fish (30.7%), land mammals (16.4%), marine invertebrates (20.1%), and vegetation (4.2%).

In 1999 Point Baker had four Alaska salmon household subsistence permits accounting for slightly more than 150 fish (mostly pink salmon). In addition, the residents of this community (rural residents or members of an Alaska Native tribe) who hold a valid Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificate (SHARC) issued by NMFS, are eligible to harvest subsistence halibut. These allocations are based on recognized customary and traditional uses of halibut. Regulations to implement subsistence halibut fishing were published in the Federal Register in April 2003 and became effective May 2003.