

Economy – Fishing & Tourism

The beginnings of the fishing industry can be traced to the 1870's when rail links to Sonoma County made trade in fresh fish with San Francisco possible. It was not until World War I, however, that commercial fishing developed in earnest. Salmon fishing soon became the mainstay of the local economy and the center of community life. The fishing fleet grew to some 300 boats by the early '80s and the value of the catch reached more than \$15 million. Perhaps its finest moment came in 1985 with the opening of Spud Point Marina, an \$8 million state of the art facility.



Since that peak, the salmon fishing industry took a turn for the worse. The two years of record catches ended in 1989, and disastrous years for the salmon fishery followed as California plunged into a prolonged drought. This, together with human alteration and damage to the streams and rivers where salmon spawn took its toll on the fish population. This turn of events sent many a fisherman looking for other employment while those that remained looked for short term relief and long term solutions.

Finally, in the spring of 1995 the prospects began to look good again. Near record rainfalls the previous winter and near perfect ocean climactic conditions brought the salmon back to the northern California waters in great numbers. Despite the good news, the experience of the last few years has tempered the optimism with caution. The health of the fishing industry is too fragile to take for granted.

Salmon fishing aside, the fishing industry is an important part of Bodega Bay economy, with crab, rockfish and sole fisheries of major importance. More recently a sea urchin industry has developed to serve the Japanese market where the spiny creature's roe is considered a delicacy.

Tourism

The 16 miles of coastline north of Bodega Bay that comprise the Sonoma Coast State Beach is one of the most popular coast drives in the state park system. It attracted an estimated 2.5 million visitors in 1992, nearly all of them on weekends, or so it seems.

Bodega Bay's popularity as a vacation destination has increased dramatically over the past decade. In the 1980s a building boom increased the number of motel rooms by 150%. Today, Bodega Bay has approximately 242 motel and lodge units, 120 vacation home rentals and 340 campground spaces. Lodging receipts were \$9,809,778 in 1998/99.

Employment

Major Employers	# of Employees
The Tides Wharf	150 (peak season)
Inn at the Tides	80 (peak season)
UC Marine Lab	125 (peak)
Bodega Harbour	62
Bodega Bay Lodge	65
US Coast Guard Station	25

Source: Phone survey 10/99

Income source Percent of population by category 1990 Census

	Bodega Bay	Sonoma County
Executive and managerial	26%	13%
Professional specialty	15	15
Technicians	3	4
Sales	14	13
Clerical and administrative	18	15
Service occupations	4	13
Agricultural (includes fishing)	7	4
Manufacturing	14	24

**May 2002:
Bodega Bay was ranked #222
in *Worth Magazines's* list of the
250 richest towns in America for 2000-2001.**