



## County population surging after years of stagnation

Migration is source of sharp population gains

By BRANDON CLINE  
*Chinook Observer*

PACIFIC COUNTY — The population is booming in our nestled corner of south-

west Washington, according to new data from the U.S. Census Bureau announced last month.

The Census Bureau released annual population

estimates for 2020 on May 4, showing that Pacific County has had one of the fastest growing populations in the state over the latter half of the 2010s, after experiencing a

slight decline in the first half of the decade.

While the figures are not official results from the 2020 Census, it's difficult to imagine that they will deviate much from the official Census

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## County grappling with new drug law

One plus: State is providing more treatment funding

By JEFF CLEMENS  
*For the Observer*

SOUTH BEND — Possession of illegal drugs is once again a criminal offense in Washington state, but it now comes with a catch. Agencies inside Pacific County are already working to figure out how to go about the new law while also complying with its new stipulations.

Gov. Jay Inslee signed the bill into law on May 13 after the Legislature scrambled to develop a solution to combat illegal drug possession after the State v. Blake decision by the Washington Supreme Court earlier this year.

State justices tossed out a long-standing felony drug possession law as unconstitutional because it discriminated against those who unintentionally possessed illegal drugs. The new statute changes a definition to specify that knowingly possessing drugs is against the law.

Under the new law, simple possession of illegal drugs will be a gross misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of up to 90 days in jail and up to a \$1,000 fine. However, the first two

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## WEEKEND TRAGEDY

### COAST GUARD SUSPENDS SEARCH FOR 14-YEAR-OLD SWEEP OFFSHORE



LUKE WHITTAKER

A woman watches from the surfline as a Coast Guard motor lifeboat searches offshore for a missing 14-year-old boy on Monday, May 31, in Long Beach. The search was officially suspended Tuesday morning.

By LUKE WHITTAKER  
*Chinook Observer*

LONG BEACH — The Coast Guard officially suspended its search for a missing 14-year-old boy, now presumed to have drowned after being swept offshore Monday afternoon, May 31, in Long Beach.

The beach was intensely crowded with holiday weekend vacationers enjoying summer-like weather. The tide was starting to rise at the time of the accident and surf conditions were moderate.

"We haven't closed the case but we've suspended the search pending further developments," said Coast Guard Sector Columbia River Lt. James Davis on Tuesday morning.

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LUKE WHITTAKER

A Coast Guard helicopter combs the surf in search of a 14-year-old boy swept offshore on Monday, May 31 in Long Beach.

## Old LBPD station becoming visitors, business services center

City, LBMA strike deal for use of downtown building

By BRANDON CLINE  
*Chinook Observer*

LONG BEACH — Before the new station for the Long Beach Police Department was even christened, the soon-to-be old station has already found a new tenant.

At a May 20 special meeting, the Long Beach City Council unanimously voted to approve a contract between the city and the Long Beach Merchants Association. The contract will see the city contribute \$20,000 annually toward LBMA operating the building as a visitors and merchants services center for the next three years.

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## IHS graduation edging closer to normal

Ceremony to be held at football field

*Chinook Observer*

ILWACO — Graduation at Ilwaco High School will look much different than last year's all-virtual affair, but it won't quite return to the pre-pandemic normal that feels like a distant memory.

The outdoor graduation ceremony for the IHS class of 2021 is set for Saturday,

**MORE PHOTOS**

High school senior photos: Pages A8-10

June 5, at 5:30 p.m. at Peterson Field. It's a BYOCU affair — bring your own chair and umbrella.

Each graduating stu-

dent in good standing will be allocated five tickets that they can distribute to family members for the ceremony, although requests for extra tickets were allowed. On the back of each ticket is a health attestation that each person is required to fill out in order to attend the ceremony.

Attendees are asked to

wear a mask during the ceremony, and to distance themselves from other family pods. With worries about the weather in mind, families are permitted to bring a pop-up tent if they so choose, as long as it is set up so it doesn't block others' view.

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LUKE WHITTAKER

Left to right: Ilwaco seniors Dylan Simonson, Keegan Kemmer, Abigail Knopski, Tianna Ramsey and Kylie Gray pose for a photo during a parade honoring the 2021 Ilwaco senior class.



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# Population

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results that are set to be released later this year. The bureau's annual estimate for the county in 2010 was off just 0.5% from the official Census results.

## Burst of growth after stagnation

Even while the state as a whole grew by 6.3% from 2010-15, Pacific County was one of just six counties to see its population decline — by 0.14%, from 20,919 in 2010 to 20,890 in 2015.

It was one of just two counties with a population greater than 11,000 to shed residents over that span, along with, perhaps unsurprisingly, Grays Harbor County (-2.4%). Both counties were hit hard by the Great Recession, and Pacific County had only recently seen its unemployment rate return to pre-Recession levels.

The period of stagnation in the county's population can be traced back to the mid-1990s. After growing by 10.9% from 1990 to 1996, to an estimated 20,933 people, it took until 2017, 21 years, for Pacific County's population to grow by another 500 people.

The local trend reversed in a dramatic way over the next five years, according to the estimates. As the state's population grew by 7.3% from 2015-20, Pacific County's grew by 10% — from 20,890 in 2015 to 22,984 in 2020.

It was one of just four counties to see its population grow by double digits over the five-year period, along with Kittitas (14.1%), Wahkiakum (12.8%) and Mason (11.8%) counties. The county's population has grown every year since 2015, including by 2.1% from 2019 to 2020.

After all four of the county's cities saw their population shrink in the first half of the decade by anywhere from 1.3 to 2.1%, all four rebounded sharply over the next five years. Long Beach saw the largest gains, with its population rising 11.4% to an estimated 1,520 people. Ilwaco followed with a 9.8% increase to 1,006 people, and Raymond and South Bend grew by 7.6 and 7.3%, respectively.

But the largest gains over the entire decade belonged to Pacific County's unincorporated communities, which make up about 68% of the county's total population as of 2020. A large number of those residents, if not an outright majority, reside on the northern half of the peninsula in Ocean Park, Klipsan Beach, Surfside, Nahcotta and Oyster-ville, as well as Seaview.

From 2010-15, the population of the county's unincorporated communities actually grew — albeit by just 0.6% — while the four cities saw theirs decline. Over the past five years, the unincorporated population grew by 10.7%, for a total of 15,670 last year.

# Migration source of gains

The county's population grew in the last decade despite deaths far outpacing births. From 2010-20, there were an estimated 1,343 more people who died than were born in Pacific County, a figure that actually grew more lopsided in the latter half of the decade.

The reason for the surge of growth that the county saw at the end of the decade was due almost solely to a flood of domestic migration. From 2015-20, 2,994 people moved into Pacific County from another Washington county or one of the other 49 states, after just 502 people moved here at the beginning of the decade.

International migration has also ticked up in the last several years, up nearly five-fold from the first half to the last half of the 2010s. In all, 3,400 people moved into Pacific County over the 10-year period, more than offsetting the county's internal struggle at keeping its growth rate above water.

The consensus among economists is that population growth is a net-positive for communities, and can provide more job opportunities and economic growth, increased property values for homeowners and higher tax revenues for the county and its cities to support essential services.

But the migration of thousands of people into the area over a span of just a few years, many of whom are likely retirees and moving into what they hope is their last home, has pushed the county's housing inventory to the limit and made it more difficult for working people and families to become homeowners.

As Pacific County's population grew by 9.9% from 2010-20, the Census Bureau estimates that the number of housing units in the county grew by just 6.2% over that same span, from 15,545 to 16,515. It's unknown how many new residents moved into what were previously their second-homes, which may have already been built prior to 2010.

And as a May 19 *Observer* story detailed, there were only 32 active homes listed for sale throughout the entire county in April, leaving just a three-week supply. April's median selling price — meaning half sold for more and half for less — of \$278,252 for Pacific County homes that were sold that month is up a staggering 46.5% from April 2020. Only wealthy San Juan County had a sharper year-over-year price increase among 17 Western Washington counties.

It remains to be seen whether the pandemic put any kind of a dent in the flow of people moving to the county, as the Census Bureau's 2020 estimates were for April of that year. But if the rapid pace of the housing market over the past year is any indication, it may be more accurate to wonder if the pandemic further accelerated the trend.

# Tragedy

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The Coast Guard first received a 911 call at 2:03 p.m. Monday afternoon for the teenager, last seen by a friend wearing a red cap, grey shirt and black trunks. The Coast Guard responded with search support from air, water and land involving two helicopters, a 47-foot motor lifeboat and support from Long Beach Volunteer Fire Department, which dispatched trucks to patrol the beach, with assistance from Washington State Parks and local Long Beach Police.

Coast Guard spotters scoured the surf with binoculars while the motor lifeboat and helicopter systematically searched up and down the peninsula from Beards Hollow to north of Long Beach for several hours.

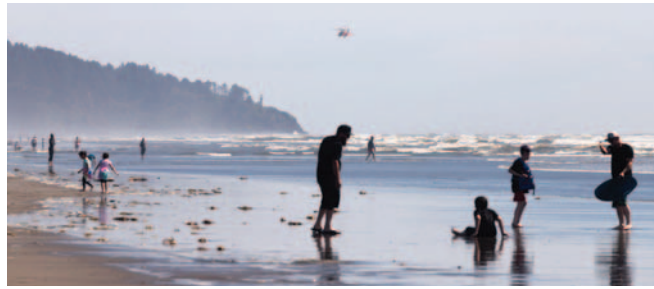
The search concluded around 10 p.m., when low fuel required a return to base.

"We searched into the night," Davis said. "We did almost eight hours with both helicopters and a motor lifeboat. In total, we had around 17 asset hours searching for the individual."



LUKE WHITTAKER

Long Beach Volunteer Fire Department dispatched trucks to patrol the beach, with assistance from Washington State Parks and local Long Beach Police.



LUKE WHITTAKER

Beachgoers play along the surf as the Coast Guard searches above Beards Hollow for a teenager swept offshore on Monday, May 31, in Long Beach.

As of noon Tuesday, authorities had not released the boy's name or details about his family.

"Suspending search efforts is always an extremely difficult and heart-wrenching decision, especially when involving children," said

Capt. Nathan Coulter, 13th Coast Guard District, chief of incident management. "This was a real tragedy, and our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of the young man involved. A huge thanks to the many women and men who assisted in planning and carrying out this search effort, including among others, the Coast Guard, Pacific County, Washington Park Rangers, and good Samaritans. As is often the case, these public servants answered the call instinctively and without delay to come to the aid of others."

# Graduation

Continued from Page A1

The ceremony will also be streamed online again. More information can be found at [tinyurl.com/56yyz3hf](http://tinyurl.com/56yyz3hf).

Another thing that has continued on from last year's festivities was Monday's reverse senior parade at the Port of Ilwaco. Seniors lined the streets at the port, while parents, school staff and community members drove by, honking their horns and waving out their windows to celebrate the class of 2021.

The Ocean Beach Alternative School is also hosting its graduation ceremony this week, and is set for Friday at 5 p.m. The ceremony will take place at Veteran's Field in Long Beach, with attendees also asked to bring their own chair.

Veteran's Field will also play host to senior scholarship night on Thursday,



LUKE WHITTAKER

Ilwaco senior Hannah Baze receives well-wishes from a passerby during a parade honoring the 2021 senior class at the Port of Ilwaco on Monday, May 31.

which is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. Last year, students received well over \$100,000 in scholarships to help them continue their education, whether it be at a university, community college or trade school.

Coverage of the week's events will be included in next week's *Observer* issue.

Naselle's graduation is set for June 12 from 4 to 5 p.m.

# LEGAL NOTICES

**NOTICE OF ABANDONED VEHICLE SALE**  
To the highest bidder, pursuant to RCW 46.55.130:  
**SALE TO BE HELD AT 11:30 A.M. June 9, 2021.**  
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2003 Toyota Tacoma, Lic#YUO7992  
1994 Ford E250, Lic#NBT580

Vehicle Inspection, Day of Sale: 8:30 am to 11:30 am  
HILL AUTOBODY AND TOWING INC., 25901 Hwy. 103,  
PO Box 462, Ocean Park, WA 98640. (360) 665-4447

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Legal 148-21

**Olympic Area Agency on Aging (O3A)** seeks a Pacific County Representative to serve on its Advisory Council (AC) board. O3A coordinates aging & long-term care services for seniors & adults with disabilities in Clallam/Jefferson/Grays Harbor/Pacific. AC members participate in legislative advocacy for funding and programs, review O3A program allocations, etc.

**Contact** Ingrid Henden, 360-379-5064, [ingrid.henden@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:ingrid.henden@dshs.wa.gov) for more info and application. Meetings held on 3rd Tuesday of each month via Zoom or in Shelton if in-person; mileage reimbursed & lunch included for in-person meetings.

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- 3) In person at our Raymond office, 216 N. 2nd Street. Mon.-Fri. 7 am-5:30 pm, Sat. 9 am-4:30 pm
- 4) In person at our Seaview Facility, 2750 Pacific Way 4th Wednesdays, 10 am-1 pm / 4th Thursdays, 12 pm-3 pm 1st Wednesdays, 10 am-1 pm / 1st Thursdays, 12 pm-3 pm
- 5) Call the office for more options.

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**There are 3 ways to access the survey:**

- Go to our website - [www.03a.org](http://www.03a.org) -and click on the "Area Plan Survey" link on the home page to open and complete the survey.
- Call 1-866-720-4863 to give your responses by telephone to a staff person during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. most days).
- Call 1-866-720-4863 to request a paper copy by mail OR a link to the survey which uses the SurveyMonkey tool) by email.

Your responses are anonymous (but you can voluntarily provide your name and phone number or email if you want O3A staff to contact you about services that might be available to you).

**WE THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**