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Main page
Content
Random article
Current events
About Wikipedia
Contact us
Donate

Contribute
Help
Learn to edit
Community portal
Recent changes
Upload file

Tools
What links here
Related changes
Special pages
Permanent link
Page information
Cite this page
Wikidata item

Print/export
Download as PDF
Printable version

In other projects
Wikimedia Commons

Languages
Deutsch
Español
Français
Limburgs
Nederlands
Plattdüütsch
Türkçe
العربية
中文

33 more

Edit links

Article
Talk

Read
Edit
View history
Search Wikipedia
Q

Lake County, Oregon

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Coordinates: 42°7′N 120°39′W

Lake County is one of the **36 counties** in the **U.S. state of Oregon**. As of the **2010 census**, the population was **7,895**.^[1] Its county seat is **Lakeview**.^{[2][3]} The county is named after the many lakes found within its boundaries,^[4] including **Lake Abert**, **Summer Lake**, **Hart Lake**, and **Goose Lake**.

Lake County is in the high desert region known as the **Oregon Outback**, on the northwestern edge of the **Great Basin**. The county is generally divided between the communities around **Lakeview** and **Paisley** to the south and the communities around **Christmas Valley**, **Fort Rock**, and **Silver Lake** to the north.

Its economy consists largely of agriculture and natural resource management and extraction. It is home to many large cattle ranches, hay farms, and timber holdings (both public and private), as well as several frontier towns and early 20th-century homesteads. Although lumber was once a primary economic driver in Lake County, today only one mill remains, at Lakeview.

Contents [hide]
1 History
1.1 Pre-Columbian
1.2 Modern
2 Geography
2.1 Watersheds
2.2 Lakes
2.3 Adjacent counties
2.4 National protected areas
3 Demographics
3.1 2000 census
3.2 2010 census
4 Communities
4.1 Cities
4.2 Census-designated places
4.3 Unincorporated communities
5 Politics
6 Economy
7 Arts and culture
7.1 Museums and other points of interest
8 Media
8.1 Newspapers
9 Infrastructure
9.1 Major highways
9.2 Passenger and freight railways
10 See also
11 Notes
12 External links
13 References

History [edit]

Pre-Columbian [edit]

Pre-Clovis era coprolites found in the Paisley Caves in northern Lake County in 2007 have been radiocarbon dated to 14,300 calendar years before present. DNA extracted from these human remains bears certain genetic markers found only in Native American populations.^[5] Luther Cressman found prehistoric artifacts in the Fort Rock Caves of northern Lake County in 1938, including basketsry, stone tools,^[6] and a cache of woven sagebrush bark sandals which have been dated to more than 10,000 years ago.^[7]

Modern [edit]

European traders, explorers and military expeditions arrived in the region during the early part of the 19th century. Peter Skene Ogden led Hudson's Bay Company trappers to **Goose Lake** in 1827. In 1832, the Hudson Bay trappers under John Work were in the **Goose Lake Valley** and their journals mentioned **Hunter's Hot Springs**. Work's expedition visited **Warner Lakes** and **Lake Abert** and camped at **Crooked Creek** in the **Chandler Park** area. There they documented eating wild plums, which still grow in the area. They also reported being attacked by Indians.^[8] In 1838, Colonel J. J. Abert, a U.S. engineer, prepared a map that includes Warner Lakes and other natural features using information from the Hudson Bay trappers. In 1843, John C. Fremont led a party which named **Christmas (Hart) Lake**.^[9]

Lake County once hosted significant populations of *Basque*^[9] and *Irish sheepherders*.^[10] Disputes over grazing rights, exacerbated by the introduction of wheat farming, led to the eruption of range wars between *cattle ranchers* and sheep herders. At least one band of masked rifle-armed cattlemen killed sheep in the northern part of the county and in Deschutes County during the early 20th century and they came to be known as "sheepshooters". According to the Oregon History Project, 2,300 sheep were killed in a single night in April 1904 in Lake County.^[11]

Lake County grew with the arrival of homesteaders, but the dry climate made for challenging development.

Lake County was created from Jackson and Wasco Counties on October 24, 1874, by the State Legislature. It then included the present Klamath County and all of the present Lake County except **Warner Valley**. In 1882, land was assigned to create Klamath county, and in 1885 the Warner area from Grant County was added. Linkville, now Klamath Falls, was the first county seat.^[12]

M. Bullard gave 20 acres (80,000 m²) as the Lakeview towmsite. By the 1875 election, a town had been started and an election moved the county seat to Lakeview. Because of poor transportation connections with the rest of Oregon, the early economic orientation of Lake County was toward *California*: both the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Francisco Examiner* arrived in Lakeview daily, often *before The Oregonian*. During the 1840s and 1850s the county was part of the military courier route between **The Dalles** on the **Columbia River** and the Presidio in **San Francisco**.

The county acquired a railroad connection in the 1890s. That railroad spur, the **Nevada–California–Oregon Railway** line running from Lakeview to **Reno, Nevada**, emphasized the isolation of the county from the rest of Oregon.^[13] A devastating fire in 1900 destroyed much of Lakeview, including 75 businesses.^[8]

During the summer of 1912, two wildfires burned large areas of Lake County. Both fires were the result of lightning strikes. The Lava Fire burned over 21,500 acres (87 km²) of public rangeland and scrub forest in and around lava beds north of Fort Rock. The **Barry Point Fire** burned 92,977 acres (376.26 km²) of public and private forest land along the California border.^{[14][15]}

Geography [edit]

According to the U.S. **Census Bureau**, the county has a total area of 8,358 square miles (21,650 km²), of which 8,139 square miles (21,080 km²) is land and 219 square miles (570 km²) (2.6%) is water.^[16] It is the third-largest county in Oregon.

The county ranges in elevation from 4,130 to 8,446 feet (1,259 to 2,574 m).^[17] The highest point in Lake County is **Crane Mountain**. The mountain is located 6 miles (9.7 km) north of the California border. Lake County has six other peaks with elevations above 8,000 feet (2,400 m), all located in the southern half of the county. **Hager Mountain** is the highest peak in the northern part of the county.^{[18][19][9]}

The area includes **alkali lakes**, high desert scrub, and forests of **Western Juniper**, **Ponderosa Pine**, and **Lodgepole Pine** in the hills and mountains. There are also several unusual geologic features and good areas for rockhounding and geological touring.

Lost Forest **Natural Area** is a protected relic forest closely associated with the **Christmas Valley Sand Dunes** in northeastern Lake County. **Fossil Lake** is an area nearby where many fossils of prehistoric animals have been identified. **Glass Buttes** is an obsidian complex in the extreme northeast corner of the county. **Crack in the Ground**, northeast of **Christmas Valley** is a long fissure with ice in its floor year round. **Big Hole**, **Hole-in-the-Ground**, and **Fort Rock** are ancient **maar** craters in the northwestern part of the county.

Watersheds [edit]

These twelve watersheds occur in whole or in part within Lake County:^[21]

- Beaver-South Fork watershed
- Goose Lake watershed
- Guano watershed
- Lake Abert watershed
- Little Deschutes
- Lost River watershed
- Crooked River, South Fork
- Silver watershed
- Sprague
- Summer Lake watershed
- Warner Lakes watershed
- Williamson

Lakes [edit]

Named lakes wholly or partly in Lake County include:

- Abert Lake
- Alkali Lake^[22]
- Duncan Reservoir
- Thompson Reservoir
- Ana Reservoir
- Campbell Lake
- Crump Lake
- Deadhorse Lake
- Dog Lake^{[23][4]}
- Drews Reservoir
- Goose Lake
- Hart Lake^[25]
- Heart Lake ^[26]
- Silver Lake
- Summer Lake

- Warner Lakes (Pelican, Crump, Hart, Anderson, Swamp, Mugwump, Flagstaff, Upper Campbell, Lower Campbell, Stone Corral, Turpin, and Bluepoint).^{[27][28][29][30][1]}

Adjacent counties [edit]

- Deschutes County (north)
 - Harney County (east)
 - Washoe County, Nevada (south)
 - Modoc County, California (south)
 - Klamath County (west)
- National protected areas** [edit]
- Deschutes National Forest (part)
 - Fremont National Forest (part)
 - Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge
 - Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (part)

Demographics [edit]

2000 census [edit]

As of the census^[37] of 2000, there were 7,422 people, 3,084 households, and 2,152 families residing in the county. The population density was 1 person per square mile (0/km²). There were 3,999 housing units at an average density of 0 per square mile (0/km²). The racial makeup of the county was 90.97% white, 0.13% Black or African American, 2.37% Native American, 0.71% Asian, 0.13% Pacific Islander, 3.19% from other races, and 2.48% from two or more races. 5.44% of the population were Hispanic or Latino of any race. 14.1% were of Irish, 14.0% United States or American, 13.8% German and 11.8% English ancestry. 95.9% spoke English and 3.6% Spanish as their first language.

There were 3,084 households, out of which 29.00% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 58.60% were married couples living together, 7.50% had a female householder with no husband present, and 30.20% were non-families. 26.20% of all households were made up of individuals, and 11.10% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.39 and the average family size was 2.84.

In the county, the population was spread out, with 24.90% under the age of 18, 5.10% from 18 to 24, 24.30% from 25 to 44, 28.10% from 45 to 64, and 17.70% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 43 years. For every 100 females there were 100.50 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 98.30 males.

The median income for a household in the county was \$29,506, and the median income for a family was \$36,182. Males had a median income of \$29,454 versus \$23,475 for females. The **per capita income** for the county was \$16,136. About 13.40% of families and 16.10% of the population were below the **poverty line**, including 20.40% of those under age 18 and 9.50% of those age 65 or over.

2010 census [edit]

As of the 2010 United States Census, there were 7,895 people, 3,378 households, and 2,148 families residing in the county.^[38] The population density was 1.0 inhabitant per square mile (0.39/km²). There were 4,439 housing units at an average density of 0.5 per square mile (0.19/km²).^[38] The racial makeup of the county was 90.3% white, 2.1% American Indian, 0.7% Asian, 0.5% black or African American, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 3.1% from other races, and 3.3% from two or more races. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin made up 6.9% of the population.^[39] In terms of ancestry, 27.9% were German, 19.3% were Irish, 19.2% were English, and 5.1% were American.^[40]

Of the 3,378 households, 24.5% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 52.1% were married couples living together, 7.4% had a female householder with no husband present, 36.4% were non-families, and 31.3% of all households were made up of individuals. The average household size was 2.20 and the average family size was 2.73. The median age was 47.4 years.^[38]

The median income for a household in the county was \$41,105 and the median income for a family was \$47,188. Males had a median income of \$39,435 versus \$26,000 for females. The per capita income for the county was \$22,586. About 13.1% of families and 17.5% of the population were below the **poverty line**, including 27.4% of those under age 18 and 5.8% of those age 65 or over.^[41]

Communities [edit]

Cities [edit]

- Lakeview (county seat)
- Paisley

Census-designated places [edit]

- New Pine Creek
- Plush
- Silver Lake

Unincorporated communities [edit]

- Adel
- Christmas Valley
- Five Corners
- Fort Rock
- New Pine Creek
- Plush
- Quartz Mountain
- Silver Lake
- Summer Lake
- Valley Falls
- West Side

Politics [edit]

Though Lake County is located in central Oregon, politically it falls in line with the eastern side of the state. The majority of registered voters who are part of a political party in Lake County, as well as most counties in eastern Oregon, are members of the **Republican Party**.^[42] In the 2008 presidential election, 71.53% of Lake County voters voted for Republican John McCain, while 25.95% voted for Democrat Barack Obama and 1.53% of voters either voted for a Third Party candidate or wrote in a candidate.^[43] These numbers show a small shift towards the Democratic candidate when compared to the 2004 presidential election, in which 77.8% of Lake County voters voted for George W. Bush, while 20.5% voted for John Kerry, and 1.7% of voters either voted for a Third Party candidate or wrote in a candidate.^[44]



Presidential elections results [show]

Economy [edit]

The economy in Lake County is reliant on lumber, agriculture, natural resource extraction, health care, a prison^[45] and government. The area is also trying to promote itself for the many outdoor recreational and natureseeing opportunities offered.^[47]

Lake County includes numerous cattle ranches. Irrigation has also promoted some agriculture based upon the raising of livestock and the growing of hay and grain despite the low rainfall and a short growing season.

Lumber and wood products are taken from the **Fremont National Forest**, **Bureau of Land Management** properties and private landholdings. The **Collins Companies** operates the last remaining mill in the area, the Lakeview sawmill, and is also a large landowner in the region.^[48] Over 78% of the land in Lake County is owned and managed by the federal and state government.^[17]

The Lakeview area of Lake County also includes a *perlite mine*^[49] and once included uranium mining, with processing to *yellowcake* being completed at the **Lakeview Mining Company plant**.^[50] The mines and mill required remediation.^[51] Several exploratory wells were dug for oil, but without success.^[*citation needed*]

A railroad line ships timber products and perlite to **Beverly North**'s rail hub in **Alurac, California**. At one time the railway was the only County owned and operated rail line in the county.^[*citation needed*]

Government employment for the national forest and the regional **Bureau of Land Management** headquarters provides many of the higher salary jobs in an economy that otherwise would have to rely on seasonal agricultural, tourism and lumber jobs. The Bureau of Land Management is landowner of 49% of the lands within the county.

Tourism is a growing industry because of the county's many attractions which include **Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge**, **Hunter's Hot Springs**, **Goose Lake**, **Warner Canyon**, **hanggliding**^[52] and areas for rock hunting.

Lake County is home to the Lakeview Hospital, and other regional health care facilities. It's also the location for The Warner Creek Correctional Facility opened in 2015 and it is a 400-bed minimum security state prison. The prison employs an average of 110 health care professionals and is located on a site comprising 91 acres (370,000 m²). The facility itself occupies less than 15 acres (61,000 m²) and utilizes approximately 117,000 sq ft (10,900 m²), of building space which includes areas for inmate housing, work and education programs, health services, food services, religious services, physical plant, warehouse and storage, vehicle maintenance, a laundry facility, recreational activities, administration and various other functions. A unique feature of the prison is its use of natural geothermal sources deep inside the Earth. The geothermally heated water is pumped up through a well and piped into a heat exchange unit where the heat is then transferred to the prison's water-loop system. Once the heat has been transferred and the water has cooled, the water is re-injected back into the ground.^[53] Two prisoners briefly escaped in 2008.^[54]

Arts and culture [edit]

Museums and other points of interest [edit]

North Lake County includes many geological sites including the **Fort Rock**, a crater marked by wave activity in what was once an ice age lake bed, and the Fort Rock Homestead Village Museum. It's also a site where *camel bones* and *Native American artifacts* have been uncovered. The "world's oldest shoes" were found here in 1938, changing the dates range scientists believed that humans inhabited the far west from 4,000 years ago.^[55]

Several subsequent discoveries of even older sandals in the northern Great Basin confirmed the importance of archaeologist Luther Cressman's work. For this find, and for other research that broke down standing theories about the nature of the prehistoric Northwest, Cressman became known as the father of Oregonianology.^[56] His other sites in North Lake include the Lost Forest, Crack-in-the-ground, and Hole-in-the-ground^[56]

Oregon *sunstones* are found north of **Plush**.^[57] Sunstone is Oregon's state gemstone. **Glass Buttes** are high desert mountains in northeastern Lake County named for the large deposits of obsidian found on their slopes. This is a favorite collecting area for **rockhounds**.^{[58][9]}

Other areas of interest include, **Abert Lake** and **Abert Run**, **Goose Lake**, **Hunter's Hot Springs** and its **Old Perpetual Geyser**, **Schminck Memorial Reservoir** and **Lake County Museum**.^[60] Lake County Round-Up Museum, Schminck Museum, **Warner Canyon** ski area, Gearhart Mountain Wildlife Reserve, **Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge**, **Summer Lake Hot Springs**, sunstones (Oregon's state gemstone) near **Plush**, **Warner Wetlands**.^{[61][62]} **Summer Lake Wildlife Area**^[63] and sections of the **Fremont–Winema National Forests**.

The **Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge** includes **big-horn sheep**, **pronghorn**, **sage grouse**, predatory birds and the **Fremont Birds**. The ***Lake County Examiner*** is located in Lakeview and has been published continuously since the late 19th century.^[64]

Media [edit]

Newspapers [edit]

- Desert Whispers*
- Lake County Examiner*
- The Community Breeze*

Infrastructure [edit]

Major highways [edit]

- Oregon Route 31
- Oregon Route 140
- U.S. Route 395

Passenger and freight railways [edit]

- Lake County Railroad

See also [edit]

• National Register of Historic Places listings in Lake County, Oregon

Notes [edit]

a. ^ The leading "other" candidate, *Progressive Theodore Roosevelt*, received 286 votes, while Socialist *Eugene Debs* received 108 votes, and Prohibition candidate *Eugene Chafin* received 13 votes.

External links [edit]

- Information on Lake County from the *Blue Book*
- Irish Sheepherders of Lake County Oregon
- Jervie H. Eastman, Lakeview, Oregon Roundup and Parade, 1938. University of California Davis, Department of Special Collections.—Slent 16 mm color movie.

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