

# COUNTY PROFILE

**County Commissioners:** Tony Hyde, Rita Bernhard, Joe Corsiglia  
**Assessor:** Sue Poling; **County Clerk:** Betty Huser; **County Sheriff:** Phil Derby;  
**County Surveyor:** Jerry Keenon.

The county seat for Columbia County is located in St Helens. The county was established in 1854. The county is composed of 647 square miles. The average temperature ranges from a low of 39 degrees to a high of 68.4. The population is estimated at 46,220. The primary industries are agriculture, lumber, fishing and tourism.

Columbia County is bordered on the east by the Columbia River, on the south by Multnomah County and Washington County, and on the west by Clatsop County. The southern County line is approximately 30 minutes from downtown Portland, the largest metropolitan area in Oregon. The western County line is approximately 50 minutes from the Pacific Coast. The County's northern and eastern boundaries are outlined by 62 miles of Columbia River shoreline. Columbia County enjoys the longest stretch of the Columbia River in the State of Oregon. The Columbia River is a major route of ocean-going vessels and is a popular fishing ground, as well as a popular boating and windsurfing river.

Facts regarding the early history of Columbia County are few. It is known that a New England trading vessel, the *Columbia Redivia*, commanded by Captain Robert Gray arrived in the summer of 1792 with the first Euro-Americans to see the County's timbered shoreline. In 1805, the explorers Lewis and Clark traveled and camped along the County's Columbia River shoreline.

Columbia and Multnomah counties were carved out of Washington County in 1854. Columbia County came into existence on January 16, 1854 by an act of the legislature of the territorial government (Multnomah County was created on December 22, 1854). However, until 1857 Clatskanie was part of Clatsop County. In 1857 a 12-mile strip, including Clatskanie, was taken from Clatsop County and added to Columbia County. The county's historical past is tied to commercial fishing, water transportation and timber. Industrialization has accelerated in recent years but timber, dairy and horticulture remain important.

Natural gas fields have been identified and are producing in the Mist/Birkenfeld area of Vernonia. The County offers three marine parks in Oregon: Sand Island on the Columbia River, J.J. Collins Memorial Marine Park on the Multnomah Channel and Dibblee Island