

York County
Southern Maine Sub-region

5.8 Southern Maine

5.8.1. York County

York County, incorporated in 1636, is the southern gateway to Maine and the state's oldest county. It is Maine's most highly industrialized county, but it also depends to a great degree upon seasonal tourism. Its many beaches and coastal resort communities attract a sizable summer population. The Biddeford–Saco area is the commercial and industrial center of York County.¹

York County's 989 square miles held 164,587 people in 1990, with the 1998 estimate showing an increase to 175,165. Of the 164,587 individuals, 80,206 were male, 84,381 were female, most were white (162,307). About 54% of the population (88,542) are Mainers and only 6,121 (4%) were born outside the U.S.

Of the persons over 25 years old, 85,325 (52%) have a high school or better degree and 20,444 (12%) have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Only 1476 employed individuals over 16 identified themselves as working in "agriculture, forestry, and fisheries." One respondent indicated that York County has more in common with Portsmouth (New Hampshire) than it does with Portland (Maine). For example, many of the fishermen of the town on York unload their catch at the co-op in Portsmouth, another example of political boundaries not necessarily matching economic or social realities.

Median household income in 1989 was \$32,432; per capita income was \$14,131. Almost 49,000 households earned income, 16,000 receive social security and 10,000 had retirement income. The median value of owner-occupied housing was \$115,000 and the median year the structure was built was 1966.

The cities, Biddeford and Saco are the county's commercial and industrial center for textiles, shoes, and machinery. The county seat is in the town of Alfred. America's first chartered city was York, 1641.

Other towns include: Acton, Alfred, Arundel, Berwick, Buxton, Cornish, Dayton, Eliot, Hollis, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Kittery, Lebanon, Limington, Lyman, Newfield, North Berwick, Ogunquit, Old Orchard Beach, Parsonsfield, Sanford, Shapleigh, South Berwick, Waterboro, Wells, and York

Fisheries Dependency

Southern Maine ranks 6th on the occupational fisheries dependency scale developed by this project. York ranks 21st on the infrastructure differentiation and Kennebunkport ranks 15th. On the other hand, Kennebunkport is first on the gentrification scale, tying with Plymouth, MA and Portsmouth, NH. York is ranked 17th.

Apart from the state level fishermen's organizations (e.g., Maine Lobstermen's Association), the only local fishermen's organization in Southern Maine is the Biddeford Pool Fishermen's Association.

An organization that crosscuts the usual categorizations of individuals associated with the fishing industry is the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA) whose office is in Saco.² NAMA is a non-profit organization currently working to create partnerships among commercial fishermen,

¹ <http://www.supt.sad37.k12.me.us/Maine/Counties/York.htm>

² <http://www.namanet.org/>

scientists, universities, and the private sector on research and technology issues in fisheries. It is dedicated to reviving the Northwest Atlantic ecosystem by improving fisheries management.

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5.8.1.1. Kennebunkport and Cape Porpoise

Background

The idyllic coastline of southern Maine has maintained within its fabric of harbored communities and coastal inlets a small but vibrant fishery grown from history and protected by enlightened community tradition. For example, the sites of Kennebunkport and Cape Porpoise support small fleets of lobster fishermen and draggers with protected docks and moorings as well as bait and gear storage houses. One reason these small fleets can coexist with highly gentrified, but adaptively conservative communities, is the respect the community collectively holds for those already there—for those who have an established space and place in the mythos of the coast. Such changes as the introduction of fast food restaurants to replace home-grown family eateries, or the razing of centuries old domiciles to make way for tourist hotels and condominiums, is resisted. The retention of traditional values by residents gives sense and meaning to the quality of life that shapes the unique character of this Natural Resource Region.

The respect for the legacy of pioneers, founders and their descendents in this most gentrified of our New England coastal regions is seen in a magnificent bronze statue celebrating the fruits of the earth. The bronze, situated in Kennebunkport on a quaint grassy knoll near the water's edge, portrays a man and a woman bearing the natural resources – fish and the abundant harvest —of land and sea. By contrast, choice harbor spots nearby are filled with the modern day recreational vessels and their mooring paraphernalia. Nevertheless, as the casual visitor moves towards the mouth of the tidal inlet that shapes the land-water interface of Kennebunkport, gentrified shops, homes, and the recreational fishing world make way for a sturdy commercial dock space, a diesel station, and a lobster bait house filled with totes of herring.

Demography

Population

As a subdivision of York County, the 1990 census counted 3,406 residents, 1595 male and 1811 female.

Age Structure

According to the 1990 census, 623 were children (to 18 years), 146 were 18 to 21, 1880 were adults to 65 years and 757 (22 percent) were 65 or older.

Education

Of the 2558 persons 25 years and older in 1989, 154 had not graduated from high school, 673 had high school diplomas, 702 had some college, 587 had a Bachelor's degree and 442 had a graduate or professional degree.

Housing

In 1989 there were 1508 households and 2244 housing units. The median year the structures were built was 1959 and their median value was \$162,500. Of the 1419 occupied housing units, 1209 were owner-occupied and 210 were rented.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

The vast majority of residents in 1989 were white, 14 were American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut and 21 were "other."

Economic Context

Income

The median household income was \$34,837 and the per capita income was \$22,347.

Employment**INDUSTRY in Kennebunkport (County subdivision)³**

Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over

Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (000-039).	30
Mining (040-059)...	0
Construction (060-099)...	102
Manufacturing, nondurable goods (100-229)...	17
Manufacturing, durable goods (230-399)...	159
Transportation (400-439)...	52
Communications and other public utilities (440-499)...	38
Wholesale trade (500-579)...	59
Retail trade (580-699)...	388
Finance, insurance, and real estate (700-720)...	66
Business and repair services (721-760)...	28
Personal services (761-799)...	66
Entertainment and recreation services (800-811)...	38
Professional and related services (812-899):	
Health services (812-840)...	133
Educational services (842-860)...	259
Other professional and related services (841, 861-899)...	156
Public administration (900-939)...	39

OCCUPATION

Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over

Managerial and professional specialty occupations (000-202):	
Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations (000-042).	215
Professional specialty occupations (043-202)...	357
Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations (203-402):	
Technicians and related support occupations (203-242)...	65
Sales occupations (243-302)...	206
Administrative support occupations, including clerical (303-402)...	205
Service occupations (403-472):	
Private household occupations (403-412)...	7
Protective service occupations (413-432)...	42
Service occupations, except protective and household (433-472).	203
Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations (473-502)...	30
Precision production, craft, and repair occupations (503-702)...	133
Operators, fabricators, and laborers (703-902):	
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors (703-802)...	21
Transportation and material moving occupations (803-863)...	68
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers (864-902)...	78

Transportation and Access

Kennebunkport is about 4 miles along Route 9A/35 from the town of Kennebunk that is on State Route 1. Kennebunk is also two miles from the Maine Turnpike (Route 95), approximately 27 miles south of Portland.

³ <http://venus.census.gov/cdrom/lookup/980446471>

Fisheries Profile

Community

Kennebunkport fulfills the definition of a fishing community on the basis of central place theory. Fish are legally sold ex-vessel to a dealer, processor or the public; fishing support services are provided; there are public facilities providing dockage; fishing people satisfy their daily and weekly social and/or economic needs here, and some fishermen and their representatives participate in fisheries resource management.

Commercial fishing and fisheries-related employment

Harvesting structure

Spread here and there in the mouth of the inlet are moored some thirty (30) lobster vessels, two urchin dive boats, and two stern draggers – the totality of the Kennebunkport fleet. These vessels are operated by approximately forty (40) fishermen, most of who are “satisfied with their work”, and only a few of whom are “from away.” When not lobstering full time (in late fall and winter), local lobster fishermen apply their skills to the preservation of historic homes and businesses through carpentry, painting, and electrical work. These added occupational roles reaffirm their place and space in the community, and appreciation is reflected in the town upkeep of the commercial docking space.

Cape Porpoise, just north of Kennebunkport and around the corner from the most gentrified spot in New England – the house of former President George H.W. Bush, is cut by a long inlet, at the head of which a lobster and seafood market sits, and at the mouth a seafood restaurant. A fleet of 24 vessels is ensconced on a considerable dock area with a harbor master office, a storage and bait house, and diesel station. While fifty (50) households are estimated to be supported by fishing in Kennebunkport, Cape Porpoise is believed to have at least double the number of houses (100) supported by fishing.

A key respondent estimated that besides the 150 households directly dependent on fishing, there are at least another 300 households in the area that are indirectly dependent, ranging from owners of retail businesses to those who buy seafood for the dinner table.

Marketing structure

Local fishermen thrive on an abundance of lobsters and a good market. The whole lobster catch is often absorbed by one lobster/seafood dealer whose operation sits near the mouth of the inlet and directly across the road from the commercial dock and bait house. This fish and seafood dealer has been around over fifty years. To meet the demands of an expanding regional and international market, the dealer networks up and down the Maine coast and south into Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It is a family-run operation, employing six individuals full-time and another six part-time during the busy summer season. Although they buy from almost all lobster boats, they have ten regular boats that are their primary suppliers.

Overall, there are two marketers in Kennebunkport, four in nearby Kennebunk, and one in Cape Porpoise. The competition is described as “friendly,” though competition over the “boat price” and product (described as a ‘bidding war’) can be especially intense in the summer months. There are four wholesale trucks that deliver regionally. In addition, product is shipped out of Portland or Boston by FedEx.

There’s a seemingly insatiable local demand for summer lobsters for the tourist trade. In addition, there are markets for boxed lobsters in France and restaurant across the US through chains such as Red Lobster.

When the local supply of lobsters cannot meet the demand, phone calls are made to a network of “friends” (other retailers) to fill the demand. Seafood networking – utilizing social, human and economic capital to fill the demand for biophysical capital (the lobster) — is a significant marker to define the regional character of contemporary New England fisheries. This networking defines fisheries in New England as regional, rather than community, phenomena, and as stated

elsewhere in this report, we propose that understanding networks of regional support and interaction via total capital flows is critical to successful management of the fisheries and their interfaced fishing populations.

Species, Seasonality

The height of the lobster season is in April to June but full-time fishing continues until about November 1st.

While few locals catch groundfish in southern Maine, two draggers still ply nearby waters out of Kennebunkport, but have suffered losses from restrictive inshore regulations and a general decline in local fish stocks. Earlier years saw a dozen gillnetters from Kennebunkport and Cape Porpoise catching a variety of fish. Fish caught, past and present, include cod, herring, flounder, haddock, yellowtail, dabs, mackerel, whiting, pollock, hake and shrimp. Others include dogfish, skate, sea urchin, monkfish, bluefish, and tuna.

Cape Porpoise is home to highliner tuna fishermen. They've been renowned in the tuna fleet for a long time. Some people switch to rod and reel to fish other local species after lobstering. There are two boats that also fish for sea urchins.

Perceptions of the Fishing Community⁴

Importance of fishing to the community

Despite the significance of tourism and the gentrified lifestyle (with Kennebunkport scoring at the top of the gentrification scale), key respondents in the fisheries perceived fishing as being "very important":

"This has always been a fishing village...people could get seafood from other places, but fishing is a part of the culture here, and so they get their seafood here"

Boundaries

Community contacts are linked to the patterns of fishing, and to the closed nature of the fishing enclaves that make up the coast. Kennebunk was noted as the community that people had the most contact with. Other community contacts were as follows:

Activity	Location
Sell Fish	Draggers in Portland, others to dealers in town
Offload Fish	Locally
Buy Fishing Gear	Portland or Portsmouth
Buy Ice	Locally
Buy Fuel/ Oil	Locally
Haul out Boat Repairs	Locally
Book Keeping	Locally
Banking	Locally
Shopping	Biddeford/Kennebunk
Go to Church	Locally
Got to School	K-6 locally; 7-12 Kennebunk
Go for Health Care	Out of town
Go for Childcare	Locally
Go for Retraining	Out of town
Visit Relatives	Out of town
Visit Friends	In town

⁴ Based on key informant interviews

Go for Vacation	Florida, Arizona, White Mountains
Go for Recreation	To beach
Socialize	In town

Communication Issues

No specific regulations were noted by key respondents as having had a significant impact on recent fishing conditions. There is optimism with improving groundfish catches that local stocks are on the rebound, and that communication with management is overall a success. On a one to five scale, communication with local fishery managers was rated as “good” (3), with state managers as “very good” (4), and with regional federal managers as “good” (3). The overall mood is one of optimism that the fishery will sustain itself, and that management has done an overall good job in allowing the fishery of this region to continue to thrive.

Assessments

There is clearly a disagreement with the assessment of stock conditions between fishermen and scientists. Key respondents indicated that the groups “strongly disagree” on the conditions of stocks, and that fishermen see the ecosystem and supported fisheries as in good shape. In contrast, the scientists are too rigid in interpreting conditions as being in a state of collapse through overfishing. Part of the optimism comes from fishermen who see diversity as the key to survival. However some are concerned about the potential impact of regulations on the entry of young people into the industry:

“One option is to diversify, and NMFS has proposed putting in hand line regulations for fishing. We do need regulations – limiting licenses and closing areas - but keeping things diverse is necessary...we must put regulations in place in such as way that younger people will have a chance to get into it.”

Economic Change

Ten years ago the economic condition of the industry was considered “average” (3 out of 5), and five year ago “average” (3), but today is rated as “good” (4), with a mark of “excellent” (5) given to the fishery five years from now—riding on the caveat of better management through limitations on traps and licenses.

Today, increased prices for quality fishery products has meant more money coming in, and improved the standard of living of those in the local fishery.

The population of fishermen is stable, although small, and the perception of several key respondents is that the fisheries here have been and will continue to be successful.

Fishing families

Although spouses of fishermen are working outside the home today, this is not significantly different from conditions five years ago.

