

Bristol County, Massachusetts
New Bedford / South Shore Sub-region

5.3. New Bedford/South Shore Sub-region

Bristol County

*Background*¹

Bristol County's New Bedford and Fairhaven, along with Portland, Maine are the premier fishing ports in the New England NRR. New Bedford's highly differentiated fishing infrastructure was developed early in its history and has continued to grow. Once largely devoted to the whaling industry, the city's maritime interests turned to the harvesting and processing of finfish and shellfish in the late 1800s. New Bedford/Fairhaven seems to have weathered the latest downturn in fisheries and is now thriving on the resurgence of the scallop industry. This economic boom has had a positive effect on the whole county.

The first recorded visit to what is now Bristol County by a European was that of adventurer and explorer Bartholomew Gosnold who landed in 1602 on Cape Cod, the Elizabeth Islands and the coast of Buzzard's Bay.² Fifty years later (1652) "thirty-six settlers join together and purchase a parcel of land — encompassing what is now New Bedford, Acushnet, Fairhaven, Dartmouth and Westport — from Massasoit, Grand Sachem of the Wampanoag, and his son Wamsutta. The entire area was named Dartmouth and incorporated in 1654."³

Dartmouth was almost destroyed during the King Phillip War (1675-6) when Metacomet fought Europeans in Massachusetts in response to thefts of Indian land, treaty violations and other mistreatment. Only a few outlying homes and the home of John Russell survived. However, the loss of the war by the Native Americans ended the Wampanoag Federation.

In 1699 the Society of Friends (Quakers) organized the first ecclesiastical body in old Dartmouth. A year later, the Russell family effectively founded New Bedford with land purchases along the Acushnet River and the overlooking heights, and with subsequent planning and development, in particular by Joseph Russell III.

Ten years before the Revolutionary War, Nantucket whaling merchant Joseph Rotch purchased ten acres of land from Joseph Russell III and moved his business to New Bedford. Bringing experience, capital and technological innovativeness, Rotch and his sons revolutionized whaling and put New Bedford on track to domination of the whaling industry.

Paul Cuffe, a Black Quaker and son of a freed slave and a Wampanoag Indian wife, and six others petitioned the Colonial government of Massachusetts for the right of Blacks to vote as taxpayers. This right was officially recognized in 1783. Organized Black Nationalist movements in the United States appear to have begun with Cuffe.

New Bedford was incorporated as a town in 1787 and a decade later (1796) a toll bridge connected New Bedford and Fairhaven. In 1847 New Bedford was incorporated as a city. Fairhaven was set off from New Bedford in 1812 incorporating Acushnet in her corporate limits.

¹ D. Hamilton Hurd. 1883. History of Bristol County. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co. is being scanned and made available at the web site: <http://genweb.net/~blackwell/ma/bristol/b000toc.html>

² <http://www.newbedford.com/chrono.html>

³ <http://www.newbedford.com/chrono.html>

The county seat of Bristol County, Massachusetts, is Taunton. The county population on July 1, 1999, was 520,258, an increase of 13,933 over the 1990 census.⁴

Cities and towns in Bristol County include:⁵

| | | |
|--------------------|--------|------|
| Acushnet | 10,111 | Town |
| Attleboro | 39,557 | City |
| Berkley | 5,395 | Town |
| Dartmouth | 28,503 | Town |
| Dighton | 5,937 | Town |
| Easton | 21,311 | Town |
| Fairhaven | 15,937 | Town |
| Fall River | 90,654 | City |
| Freetown | 8,834 | Town |
| Mansfield | 19,244 | Town |
| New Bedford | 96,353 | City |
| North Attleborough | 25,908 | Town |
| Norton | 16,097 | Town |
| Raynham | 10,789 | Town |
| Rehoboth | 9,601 | Town |
| Seekonk | 13,339 | Town |
| Somerset | 17,710 | Town |
| Swansea | 15,554 | Town |
| Taunton | 52,553 | City |
| Westport | 14,156 | Town |

Taunton is located 18 miles east of Providence RI between Fall River and Brockton along Highway 44/138 on the banks of the Taunton River near Assonet Bay. Taunton is a major manufacturing center. The population estimate for Taunton on July 1, 1998 was 52,553, an increase of 2,721 since 1990.

Dartmouth is a community nestled along the shores of Buzzards Bay. Fall River and Freetown are to the north, New Bedford to the east, Westport to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Dartmouth is approximately 60 miles south of Boston and 30 miles east of Providence. University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth is located here.

Fairhaven is located in Bristol County along Highway 6.⁶ Across the harbor from New Bedford, Fairhaven shares a similar heritage, having developed and prospered from the whaling ships that once lined its docks. Reminders of that era survive in such historic buildings as the Weston-Howland Museum or the public buildings donated by philanthropist Henry Huttleson Rogers.

New Bedford is 10 miles east of Fall River between Fairhaven and N. Dartmouth along Interstate 195 on the banks of the Acushnet River near Southeastern Massachusetts University. New Bedford, due to its position on Buzzards Bay, was once a great whaling port. Fishing and allied industries still contribute one-fifth of the city's income. A passenger ferry operates to Martha's Vineyard and leaves from Pier 3. The population estimate for July 1, 1998 was 96,353, a decrease of 3,569 since 1990.

Seekonk is located on the Rhode Island state line just east of Providence, NW of Fall River along Interstate 95 and highway 44.

Outside of Fall River and sharing the Massachusetts/Rhode Island border, Westport lies on Hwy 117 and is close to ocean beaches and the airport in New Bedford. In the late 1700's

⁴ <http://www.ohwy.com/ma/y/y25005.htm>

⁵ <http://www.capitolimpact.com/gw/mamun/25005.html>

⁶ <http://www.ohwy.com/ma/f/fairhave.htm>

Westport was a Quaker enclave. Paul Cuffe, whose efforts obtained blacks the right to vote in Massachusetts in 1783, spent most of his life in Westport.

He earned his fortune from whaling and trade in the Americas and Europe. He owned shares, over a period of time, in up to ten ships, and the financial support of the Friends and their doctrine figured in his success as a businessman. They captained some of his ships and believed that industry and frugality were pleasing in the sight of God. Cuffe's faith was a factor in his using a substantial portion of his wealth to help others, building a school when the community failed to do so and contributing to the raising of a new Friends meetinghouse in Westport.⁷

Fishing Dependency

Today, New Bedford, Fairhaven, Dartmouth and Westport are important to the fishing industry with New Bedford/Fairhaven as the leading "community" in the sub-region. Using the fisheries dependency indices we have established for this project, New Bedford ranks fifth, below three of the four sub-regions of Maine and below the Cape & Islands, in terms of employment dependency because of the availability of alternative employment in the diversified economy.

However, New Bedford is consistently numbered among the top ports in the U.S. for the value of its commercial fishery landings. In 1998 and 1999, New Bedford ranked second in the nation for value with 87.4 million pounds worth \$98.5 million in 1998 and 86.1 million pounds worth \$129.9 million in 1999. Sea scallops are dominant now, though scallops and yellowtail flounder were the high valued species some years ago.

The numbers of individuals involved in harvesting is debatable. The 1990 Equal Employment Opportunity file on Bristol County (Massachusetts) for "Farming, Forestry and Fishing Occupations (473-502) shows quite a different picture of fishing employment than does the general U.S. Census data cited in the individual port profiles. "Captains and other officers" numbered a total of 121 (106 white, 15 Hispanic). "Male fishers" numbered a total of 922 (17 Hispanic, 874 white, 10 Black, 8 Asian and 13 "other"). These numbers are more in line with what individual key respondents estimated. See <http://sasquatch.library.orst.edu/> See the individual community profiles for more information on dependency.

⁷ http://www.ai.mit.edu/~isbell/HFh/black/events_and_people/html/007.paul_cuffe.html

Community Profiles
Bristol County, Massachusetts
New Bedford / South Shore sub-region

5.3.1.1. New Bedford

Background

New Bedford gained renown as the whaling capital of the world in the 18th century. As late as 1857 there were 429 registered whaling vessels in New Bedford and only 271 vessels registered elsewhere in the U.S. Reminders of this heritage are graven in the whaling captains' elegant homes, the whaling museum, and various statues scattered about the historic district. The 1996 designation of New Bedford Historic District as the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park ensures that this history will not quickly be forgotten.⁸

With the discovery of petroleum products in 1859 that replaced the demand for sperm oil in oils and lamps, whaling lost its financial viability and declined rapidly. Nevertheless, in the 1890's, New Bedford was the fourth largest cargo terminal in the United States, with whale oil as the largest single volume item.

When the whaling industry declined, the city of New Bedford turned to textiles, an industry that had been recently transformed by technological innovations.⁹ Cotton fabrics, in particular, led to a boom in manufacturing in New Bedford. Between 1881 and 1915, 32 cotton manufacturing plants, employing 30,000 people were incorporated in New Bedford. By the 1920's this industry had begun to decline with the movement of manufacturers to the southeast United States. Drastic wage cuts in 1928 led to a bitter strike of 20,000 workers that lasted for six months.

New Bedford's maritime tradition again came to the fore. The port boasts a deep- water, sheltered harbor with depths of over 30 feet and, since 1966, a hurricane barrier. While the city has consistently made an effort to diversify its economy, the Chamber of Commerce said in 1997 that 60 percent of the city's economy was based on fishing. New Bedford generally ranks among the top ten ports in the nation for the value of its landed seafood. Through the 1980's scallops and yellowtail flounder, which were among two of the highest valued products landed in the U.S., dominated the landings in New Bedford. In 1998 87.4 million pounds of fish product was landed. The value of these landings was \$93.5 million dollars, second only to Dutch Harbor, Alaska.

Today, New Bedford's waterfront looks like an industrial port. Old textile mills mix with machine shops, fish processors, frozen fish warehouses, and commercial fishing docks to give the appearance of bustling industry. The variety of support industries including vessel maintenance and repair, sales of equipment and provisions such as food, ice, fuel, oils and many other products have a great impact on the economy of New Bedford, acknowledged by the City of New Bedford Harbor Development Commission.¹⁰

The waterfront is divided into three sections: The South Terminal has 25 to 30 acres of marine industrial land used primarily by fish processing plants. The 1200-foot bulkhead and

⁸ <http://www.newbedford.com/nbprojabs.html#histpark>

⁹ For interesting look at cotton manufacturing in Bristol County see <http://ccbitt.cs.umass.edu/lizzie/images/documents/L0041F03.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/ECONOMIC/ECONOMIC/Harbor.htm>

30 feet depths allow offloading of fish and seafood directly into the plants.¹¹ The Central Waterfront boasts the State Pier, the Steamship Pier, dockage for most of the fishing fleet as well as supply houses and marine support services. The State Pier's eight acres include 1800 feet of berthing space, 97,000 square feet of dry storage and 24,000 square feet of open storage. The North Terminal is a marine industrial area just north of the New Bedford-Fairhaven Bridge. Maritime Terminal and Frionor, a fish processing plant, occupy some of the land. North of Frionor is an area with 1200 feet of bulkhead for vessels unloading to processing plants. Two other parcels (about 36 acres) are being developed for marine-related and/or compatible mixed use.

In addition to the fishing fleet, the Port of New Bedford each month attracts one or two refrigerated ships averaging 400-500 feet, bringing in 300-400 tons of fruit or frozen fish per trip. About every six weeks, the Portuguese-American Export Line's *Pauline Marie* brings Portuguese specialties to and from Portugal and its islands. The Cape Verdean Warehouse operates the vessel *Jenny* that makes about 10 trips annual to and from Cape Verde Islands.¹² Daily trips to Cuttyhunk Island, 16 miles south of New Bedford's port, are made by the *Alert* and *M/V Schamonchi* makes one to four daily trips to Martha's Vineyard in season.

While diversifying its economy, New Bedford is anticipating growth in tourism through projects capitalizing on its maritime heritage. One project is the New Bedford Aquarium that is currently raising funds to establish an impressive aquarium/oceanarium on the waterfront site of the Comm/Electric Company. High tech, virtual reality and interactive exhibits are planned that will play on New Bedford's history as a whaling and fishing port. New Bedford Whaling National Park also draws attention to both aspects of New Bedford's historical economy.

New Bedford's harbor planning process involved representatives from the fish-processing sector, harvesting sector and cold storage sector. The group agreed that tourism and recreational fishing should be further developed and that downtown should be more welcoming. They also recognized the need to achieve a balanced waterfront.

Fishing Dependency

In the indices based on infrastructure differentiation, New Bedford ranks first, tied with Portland (Maine) and just ahead of Gloucester (Massachusetts). This high ranking correlates with the value of its landings. New Bedford is consistently numbered among the top ports in the U.S. for the value of its commercial fishery landings. In 1998 and 1999, New Bedford ranked second in the nation for value with 87.4 million pounds worth \$98.5 million in 1998 and 86.1 million pounds worth \$129.9 million in 1999. Sea scallops are dominant now, though scallops and yellowtail flounder were the high valued species some years ago.

The port profile also describes a community that is characterized by its involvement in the fishing industry. Some efforts to diversify the economy, so that it is not wholly dependent on the fishing industry, are nevertheless related to the cultural capital and social capital associated with the industry. Furthermore, New Bedford provides critical services for the fishing industry in the NRR, services that some small communities are dependent upon.

*Governance*¹³

New Bedford, incorporated as a city in 1847, has a Mayor and City Council. Of the 38,025 registered voters, 62.9% (23,913) are Democrats; 7.9% (3,021) are Republicans and 29.2% (11,091) are unenrolled.

¹¹ Information from the City of New Bedford Harbor Development Commission. See <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/ECONOMIC/ECONOMIC/Harbor.htm>

¹² <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/ECONOMIC/ECONOMIC/Harbor.htm>

¹³ <http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/profile/205.HTM#DEMOGRAPHICS>

*Demography*¹⁴

Population

Approximately 97,000 people in 39,000 households lived in New Bedford in 1996. The 1990 census counted 99,922 people with 53,091 females to 46,831 males.

Age Structure

The 15 to 44 age group formed 43.8% of the population (43,760) according to the 1990 census. The 45-64 and the 65 and over categories each formed about 17.5 % of the population and the under 15 category was about 20%.

Education

According to the 1990 census, 51.7 percent of the population graduated from high school and 9.1 percent has a Bachelor's degree or higher. The total number of students in the 1991-92 school year was 17,285; in 1994-95, the number had dropped to 14,499. The average teacher salary is 12 percent below the state average.

Among the fishermen, the majority of immigrants did not finish high school; many are not fluent in English.¹⁵ Even among those who were born in the U.S., many dropped out of school before high school graduation. A few people have gone on to college and later returned to fishing.

Housing

Of the 38,788 occupied housing units, 43.8% are owner occupied, 56.2% renter occupied. The owner vacancy rate is 1.6%; rental vacancy rate is 6.7%.

The median value of owner occupied housing was \$115,900 and 57 percent of the housing was built in 1939 or earlier. Both the numbers of home sales and the median sales prices began to descend in 1990, from \$105,000 in 1990 to \$95,000 in 1991. Then sales increased, but the prices continued to fall to \$85,000 in 1993 and 1994.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

According to the 1990 census, 84,286 people (84.4%) were white; 6,653 (6.7%) were Hispanic; and 3,492 (3.5%) were black. Small numbers of American Indians, Eskimos or Aleuts and Asians or Pacific Islanders were identified (.4% each) and 4,727 (4.7%) were categorized as "other."

New Bedford has the largest percentage Portuguese population in the United States. The dragger fleet is predominantly Portuguese. One respondent estimated that "80 to 90 percent of the dragger fishermen were born in Portugal or the Islands (Azores) and are from a fishing background." Until recently New Bedford was considered the Cape Verdean capital of the U.S.

Respondents noted that the fishing industry also has participants from Norway, Sweden, Poland, Newfoundland (Canada), Cambodia and Vietnam. Fish processing plants' employees are from Mexico, Guatemala, Dominica Republic and Columbia (Mayans).

Economic Context

Income

The median household income in 1990 was \$22,647 and per capita income was \$10,923, both considerably below the state average. Of the 97,908 people for whom status was determined, 16,430 (16.8%) were below the poverty level, in contrast to the state's 8.9 percent.

¹⁴ <http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/profile/205.HTM#DEMOGRAPHICS>

¹⁵ From key respondent interviews.

Seventy-five percent (28,949) of all households showed earned income. Thirty-five percent of households receive social security and 17% receive retirement income.

Employment

The 1990 census found 40,185 employed individuals and 12.2 percent unemployed (6.7% statewide).

In 1993, the largest single employer was Acushnet Rubber Company, employing 1,600 people to make such products as windshield wipers, seals, blades for copy machines, "o" rings, golf ball cores, and inline skate wheels. In 1999, the company was hiring new employees.

In 1993, textiles remained a viable industry with Cliftex Corporation employing 1,400 people and Calish Clothing Corporation 750 people. Aerovox, Inc. employed 800 people in the city making electronic components, such as various capacitors and filters. Polaroid employed 465 in 1993. AT & T, New England Plastics Corporation, The Standard Times and the YMCA also employ New Bedford residents.

Retail establishments employed about 5,053 people.

Agriculture, forestry and fisheries employed 1,248 though only 144 households claim income from farm self-employment. Transportation and communication employs 2,171. Many of those jobs are directly associated with fishing or fish processing plants.

Besides fishing, a variety of other jobs are associated with use of the port. For example, jobs are associated with the cargo vessels that bring in primarily fruit and frozen fish, Portuguese specialties, and Cape Verdean cargo. One vessel makes a daily trip to Cuttyhunk Island (16 miles south) and another makes one to four trips seasonally to Martha's Vineyard.¹⁶

Massachusetts's fishermen are often eligible for unemployment compensation. Boat owners pay 7.9 percent of their earnings for the unemployment fund.

From the 1990 U.S. Census:¹⁷

INDUSTRY

Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (000-039)... | 1248 |
| Mining (040-059)... | 23 |
| Construction (060-099)... | 2440 |
| Manufacturing, nondurable goods (100-229)... | 6143 |
| Manufacturing, durable goods (230-399)... | 5014 |
| Transportation (400-439)... | 1345 |
| Communications and other public utilities (440-499)... | 826 |
| Wholesale trade (500-579)... | 1746 |
| Retail trade (580-699)... | 6835 |
| Finance, insurance, and real estate (700-720)... | 1649 |
| Business and repair services (721-760)... | 1257 |
| Personal services (761-799)... | 1064 |
| Entertainment and recreation services (800-811)... | 270 |
| Professional and related services (812-899): | |
| Health services (812-840)... | 3370 |
| Educational services (842-860)... | 2813 |
| Other professional and related services (841, 861-899)... | 2184 |
| Public administration (900-939)... | 1958 |

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ <http://venus.census.gov/cdrom/lookup/>

OCCUPATION

Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Managerial and professional specialty occupations (000-202): | |
| Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations (000-042)... | 2809 |
| Professional specialty occupations (043-202)... | 4014 |
| Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations (203-402): | |
| Technicians and related support occupations (203-242)... | 1087 |
| Sales occupations (243-302)... | 3682 |
| Administrative support occupations, including clerical (303-402)... | 6178 |
| Service occupations (403-472): | |
| Private household occupations (403-412)... | 56 |
| Protective service occupations (413-432)... | 1033 |
| Service occupations, except protective and household (433-472)... | 5105 |
| Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations (473-502)... | 1033 |
| Precision production, craft, and repair occupations (503-702)... | 4801 |
| Operators, fabricators, and laborers (703-902): | |
| Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors (703-802)... | 6719 |
| Transportation and material moving occupations (803-863)... | 1354 |
| Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers (864-902)... | 2314 |

A 1999 report found that the “core seafood industry, comprising harvesting vessels and dealer/processors, contributes nearly \$609 million in sales and 2,600 jobs, 90 percent and 70 percent of the respective sales and jobs harborwide.”¹⁸ Related services and sales “account for an additional \$44 million in sales and about 500 jobs in the local area economy” . . . “Other important waterfront area businesses now contribute an estimated \$18 million in sales and nearly 600 jobs.”¹⁹

Transportation and access

New Bedford has a municipal airport, major highways (including Interstate Route 195 and State routes 24 and 140), rail (Conrail for freight service) and bus service, in addition to its port facilities.

A ferry service runs daily between Cuttyhunk and New Bedford. Increased service to Martha’s Vineyard has recently been approved.

*Hospitals, Libraries, Museums*²⁰

St. Luke’s Hospital serves New Bedford. There are also 11 long-term care facilities, and four rest homes.

New Bedford Free Public Library was the “second free public library in the nation established by the city of New Bedford in 1852. The library houses a fine collection of historical and genealogical materials as well as one of the largest collection of whaling log books in the world. Lining the impressive marble staircases is a collection of historical plaques and photographs.”²¹

The library also has a Portuguese branch, Casa da Saudade, with a librarian whose spouse is a fisherman. The librarians obtained a grant to improve their collection of books on fishing topics in Portuguese.

¹⁸ FXM Associates; Seafood Datasearch; Heaney Edelstein. 1999. New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan. Technical Memorandum: Expanded Economic Analysis. Prepared for the Harbor Master Plan Committee.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ <http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/profile/205.HTM#DEMOGRAPHICS>

²¹ <http://www.rixsan.com/nbvisit/attract/nblibrary.htm>

New Bedford Whaling Museum recently completed assembly of a 66-foot rare male blue whale skeleton. In addition, the museum's *Lagoda* is thought to be the largest ship model in the world. America's last coastal steamship, SS Nobska, was donated to the museum and is being restored with the support of the New England Steamship Foundation. The museum is said to have the most comprehensive collection of whaling artifacts in the world; extensive collections of paintings, prints, drawings, furniture, and original photographs and negatives and a research library that emphasizes local, maritime, and whaling history.²²

"The Seamen's Bethel was immortalized as the 'Whaleman's Chapel' by Herman Melville in his classic novel *Moby Dick*. Built between 1831 and 1832, the Bethel continues to this day as a house of prayer and standing memorial to those New Bedford whalers, and now fishermen, who have lost their lives at sea."²³

The Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum is the only historic whaling merchant's home on the East Coast that is open to the public.²⁴ The home is a 1834 Greek revival mansion designed by Richard Upjohn, founder of the American Institute of Architects. Only three families lived in the mansion throughout its history. The museum gets its name from the three families: William Rotch, Jr., a prominent whaling merchant, built the mansion and lived there until 1850. Edward Coffin Jones, a whaling merchant moved in in 1850. His daughter Amelia, a philanthropist, continued living in the mansion until 1935. Mark M. Duff, businessman lived in the house until 1981. In 1985, it was bought by WHALE and incorporated as a museum.

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park was designated in November 1999.²⁵ The park's 20 acres include the 14 block National Landmark Waterfront Historic District. In addition, the National Landmark Schooner *Ernestina*, the area south of the State Pier known as Waterfront Park, the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum, the Wharfinger Building on Piers 3 and 4 and the Bourne Counting House on Merrill's Wharf are incorporated into the park. The primary theme will focus on New Bedford's role as the 19th century capital of the world's whaling industry. The park will celebrate New Bedford's cultural diversity including Native Americans' role in the development of whaling; immigration of the Portuguese and Cape Verdeans; the influence of Quakers in the community; the Abolitionist Movement and Underground Railroad, as well as the connections with Japan and Alaska. There is now a "formal link between New Bedford's Park and the North Slope Borough Cultural Center in Barrow, Alaska."

Funds are being raised and plans made to develop a New Bedford Aquarium. Waterfront property formerly used by the Comm/Electric Company is the likely site. High tech, virtual reality and interactive exhibits are planned for the aquarium/oceanarium that will focus on New Bedford's history as a whaling and fishing port.²⁶

The U.S. Custom House, built between 1834 and 1836, continues to serve its original mission. "It is the oldest continuously operating Custom house in the nation. Where whaling masters registered their ships and cargo more than a hundred years ago, today's commercial fishing and cargo ships continue to log duties and tariffs. The building is still home to the New Bedford office of the U.S. Custom Service as well as offices of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Park Service. The first Post Office in New Bedford was originally located here."²⁷

²² <http://www.whalingmuseum.org/>

²³ <http://www.rixsan.com/nbvisit/attract/bethel1.htm>

²⁴ <http://www.rixsan.com/nbvisit/attract/rjdhouse.htm>

²⁵ <http://www.newbedford.com/nbprojabs.html#histpark>

²⁶ <http://www.newbedfordaquarium.org/News0624991.htm>

²⁷ <http://www.rixsan.com/nbvisit/attract/uscustom.htm>

Fisheries profile

When fishermen caught sea scallops in their otter trawls before the 1930's, they would save them for local consumption, as there was little market for them.²⁸ New Bedford buyer and processor, Linus Eldridge, eventually developed a demand for scallops by selling them in New York at the Fulton Fish Market. As demand grew, the fishermen developed dredges and New Bedford became the major scallop port in the U.S. For fifteen years, from 1950 to 1965, scallop landings hovered around 10,000 metric tons, about 70 percent of all scallop landings in the U.S. By the mid-60's however landings began to drop and vessels switched to groundfish. Only 43 scallop vessels remained in 1971.

When the scallop industry was developing, the majority of the vessel owners and crew were Norwegian. Initially, they moved to New Bedford from Brooklyn, later they were joined by immigrants from Karmoy (near Bergen), Norway.²⁹

Along with scallops, groundfish are the fleet's primary target species. Of all major groundfishing ports in the eastern United States, the wider community of New Bedford has the most developed infrastructure for fishing and ranks as the top port in New England for total landings and value of landings.

Using the dependency ratios, New Bedford ranks 5th overall. This may be misleading since the ranking is skewed by the diversity of other labor sectors that contribute to the ratio. For example, Downeast Maine, with fewer actual numbers in fishing and less regional infrastructure, ranks higher in regional dependency (Rank of 1st), due in part to a lack of economic diversity. Between five and eight percent of the people in the New Bedford SMSA—far higher when we include members of their families—receives its livelihood primarily from fishing. Even a conservative estimate, assuming two other individuals supported by each fisherman and fishing-related worker employed places the proportion of the population dependent on fishing between 11 and 18 percent.

New Bedford has the most total capital invested in the fishing industry. It ranks at the top of the infrastructure scale with Portland and Chatham, and has the largest fleet of any port. There are a total of 1,131 crew manning 265 vessels. Of these, 82 are scallopers and 183 draggers.³⁰

The groundfish fleet boats have 88 days to fish for cod, flounders (winter, fluke, dabs, yellowtail), haddock, pollock, and hake. Most of the groundfish boats try to diversify, catching fish not bound by the groundfish regulations. Some vessels travel south seeking fluke or squid. Others look for baitfish such as small skates to sell to the lobster fishermen.

Prior to Amendment 5 (to the Multispecies FMP), the Portuguese and American groundfish fishermen targeted different species and organized their trips differently. The Portuguese tended to target yellowtail flounder, making 10-day trips with 5-day layovers. The Americans tended to fish the hard bottom, catching cod and flounders in the channel, making 5-day trips with 2-day layovers.

There has not been a market for "soft" fish such as whiting in New Bedford, but in the search for diversity some vessels are going for whiting and squid. If they catch a significant amount, however, they may land in Rhode Island where the prices tend to be higher for those species. Herring boats occasionally come into New Bedford, but are not home-based in New Bedford. Crab is a bycatch for the lobster boats. New Bedford vessels catch swordfish and tuna. Dogfish has a decent market in New Bedford because there are 3

²⁸ Georgianna, Daniel, Alan Cass and Peter Amaral. 1999. *The Cost of Fishing for Sea Scallops in Northeastern United States*. North Dartmouth: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ FXM Associates; Seafood Datasearch; Heaney Edelstein. 1999. *New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan*. Technical Memorandum: Expanded Economic Analysis. Prepared for the Harbor Master Plan Committee.

dogfish processing plants in the city.³¹ Monkfish is very important to both the scallop vessels and draggers. A few lobster boats switched over to gillnetting for monkfish as well. It was promoted as an “alternative” fishery to seek when vessels were out of their days-at-sea allocation.

Niche fisheries include clam digging (hard shell), a summer conch fishery, and a pot fishery for scup and sea bass.

Commercial fishing and fishing-related employment

Harvesting structure

New Bedford was the leading port in fishing employment in Massachusetts in 1997.³² Approximately 250 fishing vessels (trip boats) operate out of New Bedford Harbor. Of these, close to 100 are scallop vessels, typically with 7 member crews.³³ The majority of the rest are groundfish boats with an average crew size of 4. In addition there are some dayboats that go lobstering or clamming. Transient boats land in New Bedford from time to time.

In 1998, 48 out of 183 draggers (26 percent) were over 80 feet in length, 5 of these were over 100 feet. There were also 49 scallopers over 80 feet, and of these six were over 100 feet.

Estimates of the numbers of fishermen ranged from 1,800 to 3,000 for the area. Crew sizes on scallop and groundfish vessels have diminished in the past few years, partly due to regulations (e.g., scallop boats are restricted to 7 crewmembers). To accommodate family members or long-term crewmembers, some captains and boat owners have adopted crew rotation schedules, a variant of job sharing, instead of laying off crew. Shore-side services or related employment is thought by some respondents to be at least 4,000. Consultants in a 1999 harbor planning process identified 2,600 jobs and \$609 million in sales directly attributable to the core seafood industry. Another 500 jobs were indirectly related, as was about \$44 million in sales.³⁴

Ninety-five scallopers and groundfish boats that carried 448 crewmembers left fishing between 1994 and 2000. Of these, 26 vessels were in the Federal government’s buyback program, 26 were sold out of the fishery, 16 were scrapped, four had permit violations/sanctions and 23 either burned or sank.³⁵

The majority of groundfish boats are owner-operated, or perhaps more accurately, family-operated. Sometimes, a corporation is formed among two or three people to own two or three vessels, each one taking one of the boats to operate themselves or by their sons, cousins, brothers. There are several scallop boat owners who own small fleets of 5 to 7 vessels.

There is a contingent of vessel owners within the New Bedford fishery that are not themselves fishermen. These individuals set some of the rules that govern labor relations throughout New Bedford, negotiating vessel shares and hiring practices. Union representatives reported that payment systems and crew-captain relations vary widely from vessel to vessel. In the late 1980s, boat owners who fell into this category numbered 32;

³¹ Recent regulations that eliminate dogfish as a target species will severely affect portions of the New Bedford fleet and the processing plants.

³² Georgianna, Daniel. 2000. *The Massachusetts Marine Economy*. Dartmouth, MA: University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute.

³³ Respondents estimated 100 scallop boats, but Georgianna et al. counted 77. The 1997 federal permit files list 162 vessels with New Bedford “hcity,” 74 vessels with Fairhaven as “hcity,” and 12 vessels with Fall River as “hcity.” One respondent noted that there are 290 fulltime scallop boats on the East Coast (South Carolina to Maine).

³⁴ FXM Associates; Seafood Database; Heaney Edelstein. 1999. *New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan. Technical Memorandum: Expanded Economic Analysis*. Prepared for the Harbor Master Plan Committee.

³⁵ Data collected and prepared by Rodney Avila (dated 11/8/00).

typically, these owners owned anywhere from one or two to six or seven vessels. During the strike of 1986 the union argued for a 42%-58% split of the proceeds, with 42% going to the owners and owners desired a 49%-51% split. A decade after the strike, the split on union vessels was 46%-54%, with the owners receiving 46%.

Processing structure

In addition to boat owners, captains, and crew, the full New Bedford/ Fairhaven fleet generates business for around 75 seafood processors and wholesale fish dealers and 200 other shoreside industries. Together, these businesses provide employment for around 6,000 to 8,000 additional workers.

The above figures, of course, include only those individuals employed directly in fishing and fishing-related industries; missing from these numbers are the health providers, real estate companies, banks, insurance agencies, and small business people who rely on the families of fishing industry employees for a percentage of their business. Even without considering these individuals, between five and eight percent of the people in New Bedford derive their income primarily from the fishing industry. Even a conservative estimate, assuming two other individuals supported by each fisherman and fishing-related worker, places the proportion of the population dependent on fishing somewhere between 11% and 18%.

The majority of the processing sector of New Bedford follows the pattern typical of New England in which "individual dealer/processors have remained relatively small in scale to avoid the risks of overcapitalization (too high fixed costs, or underutilized production capacity) in the face of variable raw material supplies."³⁶ While this is considered an appropriate business strategy given the "erratic volumes" available for processing, the small scale does leave the individual processors "vulnerable to price and volume sensitivity of major buyers which, in turn, has contributed to the competitiveness between dealer/processors throughout New England."³⁷

As groundfish landings fell in the 1990's, shortages of raw material for fresh fish processing increased prices and "substantial new investment in both equipment and training was necessary to conform to new health regulations. Prices at the retail level, however, did not rise as much; competition from substitutes such as chicken severely limited price increases for fishery products."³⁸

To stay in business, firms "intensified buying within New England to maintain their share of dwindling landings. They went farther afield from their home port to establish new buying relationships."³⁹ For example, when New Bedford boats caught fluke and steamed to Virginia, North and South Carolina or Georgia to unload, sometimes one of the local fish processors would be down there to buy it and then they'd truck it up to Massachusetts for processing.⁴⁰ According to one report, this is less common now. "New Bedford processors, who used to truck whole fish into the city from other ports, now process only the fish that is landed locally."⁴¹ However, some consultants predicted in 1999 that in the following five to eight years the processing/wholesale sector would continue to diversify by sourcing fish from

³⁶ Francis X. Mahady. 1983. "The Coordinated Marketing of New England Seafood: Opportunities and Constraints." Report prepared for The National Marine Fisheries Service and The New England Fishing Steering Committee.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Daniel Georgianna. 2000. *The Massachusetts Marine Economy*. Dartmouth, MA: University of Massachusetts Center for Policy Analysis.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Key respondent interview.

⁴¹ Daniel Georgianna. 2000. *The Massachusetts Marine Economy*. Dartmouth, MA: University of Massachusetts Center for Policy Analysis.

other regions.⁴² The processors who are bringing in frozen fish, “refreshing it,” cutting, processing and selling it to supermarkets, are expanding.⁴³

In addition to finfish processing, surf clams and scallop plants are part of the processing sector of New Bedford. In 2000, three dogfish plants were facing the future with trepidation since imminent dogfish regulations were to allow only minimal catch of dogfish (as bycatch rather than targeted species).

A small freezing/processing plant

We’ve been in business six years, specializing in monkfish. The average daily volume is 25,000 pounds. We buy monkfish, gutted at sea, and skate from 13 vessels. We sell livers, tails, medallions and fillets to Japan, South Korea and France. We also freeze lobster, scallops, shrimp and cod. September–Lent is the period of highest volume. Twelve are employed year around, five on the payroll, seven through a temporary agency. Most are New Bedford residents; half are Guatemalan, the other half Portuguese. They are paid \$7-\$12 depending on their productivity. Jobs include skinning, cutter, trimmer, packer, trucker and floor manager. Now that monkfish regulations are effectively shutting down the fishery, we don’t know whether we’ll be able to continue in business.⁴⁴

Frozen fish processing firms are quite different from their fresh fish counterparts. Frozen fish plants generally rely on imported, frozen blocks of fish that are processed into battered and breaded frozen portions. From 1997 to 1998, imports of frozen cod and scallops were up 50 percent, with Alaska as the primary source. New Bedford companies are among the largest buyers of Alaskan cod and flatfish. FXM estimated that about 15 million pounds of Alaskan cod and flatfish were brought into New Bedford for processing in 1997. On a total weight basis, about 25 percent of all fish processed in New Bedford in 1997 was imported. The best estimates by FXM were that harvesting employment would remain steady while processing and wholesale employment would grow between 5 and 25 percent per year. The shift in human capital would come from new immigrants and the shifting of labor into the fishing industry.

“Frionor, a Norwegian-owned company, was established in the 1950’s to sell Norwegian cod. Containers of frozen blocks were landed in Mobile, Alabama, and the product sold and transported to such companies as Mrs. Paul’s, Van de Camp, etc. Eventually, the company started processing some of the product, creating fish sticks and other frozen products. In the 1970’s, the company left its Quonset hut origins in Alabama, moved to New Bedford and started to expand. Now millions of pounds of frozen fish products are sold throughout the food service industry. Frionor sells to such chains as Long John Silvers and Arby’s, as well as to schools, prisons, and health care institutions. “You can find our product anywhere.” The principal product is value added, breaded product, with unique shapes, sizes and coating systems. Frionor also brings cod directly in from Norway, which is sold “as is” in cello pack and also salmon which is sold smoked and regular.”

“The frozen products are usually white fish including cod, haddock, whiting, and pollock. “We can no longer source all our product from Norway, so we also get product from Canada and Iceland. But our main mission is to use as much product as possible from Norway. The salmon we use is farm-raised from Norway. Pollock is from American Seafoods, our sister company in Alaska. Whiting is from South America. We don’t buy any fish from New Bedford or New England.”⁴⁵

⁴² FXM Associates; Seafood Datasearch; Heaney Edelstein. 1999. New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan. Technical Memorandum: Expanded Economic Analysis. Prepared for the Harbor Master Plan Committee.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Key respondent interview.

⁴⁵ Key respondent interview.

While the frozen fish sector of the industry, with its “borrowed” biophysical capital, does not directly support the harvesting sector of New Bedford, or the New England NRR, some of the sector’s inputs do derive from local suppliers. Packaging, dry ice, equipment maintenance and labor are some of the inputs often purchased locally. Trucking and some supplies associated with batter and breading may be purchased regionally or nationally. As with some of the communities that have been found by this research to be “essential providers,” it may be that the frozen fish sector of the industry plays an unrecognized role in assuring the viability of secondary industries that in turn contribute to the success of the fresh fish sectors.

Some of the larger frozen fish processing plants such as Frionor and Gorton’s (in Gloucester) are unionized. This usually translates to higher wages and a more stable work force. In the case of Frionor in New Bedford, the 130-person work force still retains a large percentage of Portuguese permanent employees. In contrast, some of the non-unionized firms rely on a handful of salaried employees and contract labor for working the line. The unionized companies thus have a greater impact on the local economies through workers’ expenditures and taxes than via raw product purchase.

Wholesalers and Other Support Services

Francis X. Mahady, in his 1983 report “The Coordinated Marketing of New England Seafood: Opportunities and Constraints” referred to wholesalers and other support services as the “distribution functions.” These are all functions “required to move seafood product from the producing sectors to the point at which it is available for direct sale to consumers.” The activities of “brokers, wholesalers, shippers, retailers, and food servicers” are included.

Brokers/Traders buy and sell fish all over the world. Most are small companies (under ten employees), but they handle large volumes of sales and imports. Furthermore, they contract for frozen warehouse space. “Their presence in the industry helps the other companies have alternative sources of product.”⁴⁶

Lumpers, who unload the fish, are fewer in number now than when the landings were large, but “the well-known ones, the hard workers, and the ones that don’t steal your fish have no problem getting jobs.” It is a part-time job now, though.

Vessel maintenance and repair facilities, equipment manufacturers and retailers and other provisioners (food, ice, fuel, oil, etc.) of the fishing fleet are also important employers. There are between 6 and 10 marine suppliers, three or four major ice suppliers, and at least four diesel fuel suppliers. In addition, the auction, dealers, 50 processing plants, and 12 trucking firms provide significant fishing-related employment.

During a major fisherman’s strike of 1985-86, newspaper coverage focused on the plights of fishery-related businesses within the first two weeks of the strike, suggesting the effects of reduced fishing are felt immediately and deeply along the waterfront. A single vessel’s trip supplies were listed as including, “40 dozen eggs, 20 steaks, 20 pounds of bacon, 10 gallons of orange juice, 18 gallons of milk, and 37 loaves of bread” (Sunday-Times, January 5, 1986: A1). A company supplying 45 vessels lost a quarter of a million dollars before the strike was 10 days old and laid off 22 employees. Besides food suppliers, other businesses affected immediately were welders, restaurants, ice companies, fish wholesalers and processors, and dock workers.

⁴⁶ FXM Associates; Seafood Datasearch; Heaney Edelstein. 1999. New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan. Technical Memorandum: Expanded Economic Analysis. Prepared for the Harbor Master Plan Committee.

The current downturn in fisheries had had similar effects through the support sector. According to one: *“Well, what has happened is I have a welder that does most of my work, and he’s an individual -- once in a while he’ll have a helper, but most of the time this guy works for himself by himself. When money gets tight with me, I can weld myself and I can work on the boat. So that saves me a couple of hundred dollars, but it also takes a couple hundred out of his pocket. So a lot of things that you used to pay someone to do, we do ourselves. It’s a ripple effect; as soon as you don’t have the money to pay for your services, you stop getting them. And with the more time that the boat now has to stay ashore, if I’m going to be home for a week, I can spend one day or two working on the boat.”*

New Bedford’s boatowners tend to rely on Settlement Houses to “keep the books” and properly distribute their vessel earnings. Their responsibility includes paying the crew, paying suppliers, paying taxes, etc.⁴⁷

There is a maritime freezer company, an ice company, fuel and freight companies, boxes and other packaging manufacturers, truck rentals and temporary agencies in New Bedford—all of whom supply the fishing industry at times.

The Whaling City Display Auction is private with no public oversight. It was until recently unique in its use of computers and long-distance anonymous bidding, though the Gloucester auction is currently developing an online system. Although the display auction is said to be an improvement over the prior auction that harvesters complained was “rigged,” the owners of today’s auction are fish buyers and thus competitors of the other buyers. There is a perception of “unfairness” expressed by both the harvesters and buyers interviewed. Nevertheless, the auction has attracted a wider range of fish buyers who seek a diversity of fish species, so hake, catfish, cusk, mud skate wings, halibut, fluke, mackerel, red fish and bluefish have all found buyers.⁴⁸

The New Bedford Whaling City Seafood Display Scallop Auction opened April 2, 2001 and sold its first 1,000 pounds of fresh scallops that week. Auction owner, Richard Canastra, says while that’s merely the beginning, educating the local scallop fleet has become a top priority to ensure the success of his venture.

Species and Seasonality

May is when the fish are most vulnerable since they are aggregated for spawning. “The month of May should be closed. Period. Nobody should be allowed to go fishing in May. Period. I [could] catch a lot of fish the month of May. I don’t make a lot of money. All I do is kill a lot of fish for little money, and that’s not my game. I don’t fish the month of May. I’m using my days to make money.”

Herring is starting to come in, but the only boat that lands herring so far is actually from Woods Hole. The market for soft fish is not very good in New Bedford, so boats landing whiting, for example, are apt to land in Rhode Island where they are likely to obtain a higher price. “My son had about 300 pounds of whiting, 300 pounds of squid and 300 pounds of bloodfish so he landed in Rhode Island. He averaged over a dollar a pound for all the fish. The guy fishing next door had about the same amount of fish and came into New Bedford. I think they gave him forty cents.”

There was a good market for dogfish in New Bedford where there were three processors before regulations essentially closed the fishery in 2000 after a one-year “exit fishery” in 1999.

Landed species:

⁴⁷ For an interesting look at settlement houses, see Kaplan, Ilene. 1999. “Suspicion, growth and co-management in the commercial fishing industry: the financial settlers of New Bedford” in *Marine Policy* 23:3:227-241.

⁴⁸ New Bedford Seafood Coalition, 1996.

Groundfish—cod, various flounders, fluke, dabs, winter flounder, yellowtail, haddock (sometimes), pollock (some), hake, grey sole, occasional halibut
 Small mesh—whiting, squid, occasionally some shrimp
 Pelagics—herring
 Crustaceans—lobsters, crab as bycatch
 HMS—swordfish, tuna
 Other—scup, quahogs, softshell clams, dogfish, skate, monkfish, conch, mussels, tilefish (bluefish, sea bass and striped bass are recreational fish species). Periwinkles are gathered for personal use.

Other

Aquaculture is still at the start-up stage, but the Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center is based at UMASS Dartmouth and can be a useful source of information and other resources. One former textile mill harbors a talapia growing facility. Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School has a small aquaculture facility that provides talapia for the food service courses. One processor, who had relied on groundfish, then monkfish, is now growing summer flounder.

Employment

A number of former fishermen are now running tugboats, driving tractor-trailers, and a few are going into other fields. Some of these were boat-owners, some crew. A few travel as far as Philadelphia to work on tugboats. Their families remain in New Bedford and the men stay in Pennsylvania for a couple of weeks, return home for a week and then go back to work. “They’ll go on a two-week trip; it’s like a fishing trip for them.”

Older former fishermen are also obtaining training, then jobs, in plumbing, air conditioning and heating. Others are general contractors or put up fencing. Language facility hampers the transition for middle-aged or older Portuguese fishermen since most had no need to learn English prior to the cutbacks.

The labor force statistics show that the numbers of “operators, fabricators and laborers” (10,387) rival those in the “technical, sales and administrative” category (10,947). This diversity of job opportunities explains why the New Bedford sub-region ranks 5th in fishing dependency according to employment statistics even though it is first in fishing infrastructure. The Census figures also severely underestimate the numbers of fishermen since the figures represent only the fishermen in New Bedford city limits, not all the fishermen in the area who fish out of New Bedford.

Unlike some other ports, reproducing the fishery in New Bedford is relatively easy due to the availability of immigrant labor in the Portuguese community. Other immigrants, from Eastern Europe, Ireland, and Latin America, provide the processing sector with human capital.

Recreational fishing and employment

In 1999 there were approximately 950 slips on the harbor, 85 percent visitor based. According to FXM Associates, marina operators agreed that an additional 200 slips could be filled.⁴⁹

There are four marinas on the New Bedford side of the harbor. Opened in June 1993, Pope’s Island Marina is a public facility with 198 slips and such amenities as laundry facilities, pump out station, shower rooms, electricity, and a conference room. It is located within the hurricane barrier in the upper harbor east of the New Bedford/Fairhaven Bridge.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/ECONOMIC/ECONOMIC/Harbor.htm>

A few owners of fishing boats in the 45 to 50 foot range have obtained licenses for summer party boat fishing. Tuna is a popular object for recreational fishing as are striped bass.

Cultural role of fishing

Cultural events

An annual "Blessing of the Fleet" takes place in June. Only a small percentage of the commercial fleet participates in the parade of vessels, but those that do, decorate their boats and invite friends and family aboard to celebrate.

"Summerfest," a waterfront festival that is usually held in conjunction with the "Blessing of the Fleet," draws about 100,000 participants. Featured whaleboat races link historical tradition with the modern celebration.

Ethnicity in the fisheries

Most important in the groundfishing industry are the Portuguese, who come from the mainland and island territories of Portugal, including Cape Verde and the Azores. They arrived in several waves through the 19th and 20th centuries and have established an ethnic enclave in which knowledge of English is no more a necessity than it is among Cubans in Miami or Puerto Ricans in Spanish Harlem.⁵¹ Strong ties to Portuguese villages still exist, making the community transnational in the textbook sense of the word, comprised of "processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement."⁵² Among the New Bedford Portuguese, these social relations are based first on family and second on village or region of origin. One boat-owner who was closely integrated into the Portuguese community of New Bedford, in response to a question about her nationality, said, *"Well, I consider myself Portuguese. My mother was born American, first generation; I'm second generation. I'm first generation through my father. I'm Portuguese; I'm not American, I'm Portuguese."*

The strength of the Portuguese community, similar to the Italian community in Gloucester and the Norwegians in New Bedford/Fairhaven, was noted by Doeringer, Moss, and Terkla in their mid-1980s study of New England's fishing economy (1986). Portuguese fishermen adjust to changes in fishery conditions in part by relying on social capital, which Doeringer, et al. called "family capital," and in part from their membership in a community that spans two and sometimes more than two nations. While Sicilian fishermen of Gloucester came without a mechanism to go back, or concern about maintaining social capital with their country of origin, Portuguese fishermen of New Bedford remain linked to their communities of origin as an adaptive buffer to poor economic conditions in the fishery. Crewmembers that lose their jobs, boat captains that lose their boats, or other businesses, may retrench by returning to Portugal.

"He says with this crisis he might return to Portugal, because there's nothing for him to get him attached here. He says his English is worse, because when you arrive in New Bedford, you lose your English because everybody speaks Portuguese."

Others may come as seasonal workers, not intending to remain, and take their earnings back home where they reunite with their extended families. They also maintain, to a greater degree, a cultural barrier of linguistic isolation between themselves and the greater New Bedford community. *"All day they are dealing with Portuguese people, so they never really have to learn the language. So because of that, they never learn the language, because they deal with Portuguese people, they go to stores and they speak Portuguese, they go to the doctor's and they speak Portuguese. So because everything is handed to them in Portuguese, they never really have to go and learn English."* Linking up with Portuguese fishermen requires an "in" through families, friends and kin, making social and economic research on this sector challenging.

⁵¹ Baganha 1991

⁵² Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1995: 7

Religion

Interesting by contrast with religious festivals held by Sicilian-Americans in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the religious festivals sponsored by the Portuguese-Americans in New Bedford are not linked with the fishing industry in any obvious way. For example, “the annual ‘Feast of the Blessed Sacrament’ was founded in 1915 by four Madeiran immigrant men who wanted to recreate the religious festivals that were so common in the villages of their home island. This traditional mid-summer gathering for family and friends around the world has become the Largest Portuguese Feast in the World and largest ethnic festival in New England!”⁵³

Kinship & family

It is more common to find family members fishing together on groundfish vessels than on scallop vessels. This could have to do with differences in occupational goals among the Portuguese versus those of the Norwegians who dominated in the scallop industry. However, some vessel owners simply explained that scalloping is so labor-intensive that the crews tend to be young men who work for the decent income for a few years, then move on to other jobs, sometimes in the fishing industry, sometimes not. Also, in 1980s when crewmembers were making unusually large sums of money scalloping, boat-owners complained that they had difficulty recruiting crews that had no substance-abuse problems.

When the impacts of Amendment 5 and 7 to Multispecies Fishery Management Plan began to be felt, the average number of crewmembers on each dragger dropped from seven to four or five. However, on some boats, while only four were crew on each fishing trip, five people shared the four-person crew sites, rotating one in and out on each trip. One of the disadvantages of the smaller crews, however, is that each man has to work harder. This is particularly noticeable in the labor-intensive scallop fishery. Scallop boats formerly had an average of 11 crewmembers, but now are restricted to seven.

Because of their close ties to fishing communities in the Azores and Cape Verde, crew recruitment has an international dimension among the Portuguese. While this practice allows the fleet to expand during times of economic growth, the reverse is less common. That is, new immigrants and their families can become entrenched in the Portuguese community of New Bedford relatively quickly. Although most fishermen state that they will deal with the current crisis by returning to Portugal, others point out barriers to this response:

“A lot of the [Portuguese] men think the same way I do, but their wives don’t want to leave their children. Their children get married here and have children— grandchildren —and they don’t want to leave.”

Fishing related organizations and their roles in the community and fishery

Commercial fishing associations:

The owner of a settlement house started the Fishermen’s Survival Fund. Each of the vessels that joined paid \$200-300 per month. A lawyer was hired and eventually NMFS agreed to a cooperative research effort that led to a limited opening of scallop beds in areas closed as part of the Multispecies FMP.

New Bedford Fishermen’s Union and the New Bedford Seafood Producers, a boat-owners association, had active members from the scallop industry for many years.

New Bedford Seafood Council, funded by a percentage of the scallop catch with the agreement of the Union and NB Seafood Producers, promoted scallops through a festival, recipes, food columns in the media and succeeded in creating a demand for the scallops as a delicacy.

⁵³ <http://www.portugueseifeast.com/>

New Bedford Seafood Coalition's activities include providing technical advice to government and industry, monitoring regulatory developments, communicating with the media about fishing issues, and networking with other fishing organizations throughout New England.

Offshore Mariner's Association, which represented both scallopers and draggers, disbanded in 1999, an indication of the general decline in fishing social capital. However, their long-term octogenarian executive director still attends fishery management meetings when they are held locally.

An estimated 600 captains and crew were represented by the Seafarers' International Union during the 1986 strike. Ten years later they were representing about 350 fishermen, or around 42% fewer. Weakening of unions is occurring throughout New Bedford, in fishing-related industries as well as on the vessels and in the ailing textile mills. A fuel barge operator's wife succinctly described the common union-busting practice of closing a union shop and reopening it with a new name and without a union, saying, *"His [her husband's] place of employment used to be called one thing on a Friday under a union contract; the following Monday they opened up with another name without a union contract, a cut in pay, loss of a pension plan, loss of medical benefits, loss of four weeks' vacation, loss of sick days... The union that the old place used to be represented by was notified and this was over a year ago and nothing has been done by them."*

New Bedford unions, historically, provided pension funds for fishermen, negotiated share systems with boat owners, and regulated labor relations on board vessels as well as governed crew recruitment, retention, and hiring and firing policies.

Shore Support represents the fishing industry in fisheries management realms, provides emergency referrals to fishing families, and hosts a cable television program that focuses on issues important to the industry.

Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership is a statewide umbrella organization that ties together the variety of separate fisheries associations in Massachusetts. Their first president was the Executive Director of the New Bedford Seafood Coalition. Their goal is to identify and resolve issues that are important to all fisheries groups regardless of species sought or gear used. As one of their first tasks, the group successfully undertook the development of a health care program for fishermen and their families. They are attempting to expand the program to New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and eventually, to Maine. In addition, the group was a strong proponent of extending the moratorium on oil exploration on the Canadian side of Georges Bank.

Other associations:

American Dogfish Association
American Scallop Association
The Scallop Group

Fishermen's Wives associations:

In the early 1960s, a fishermen's wives' organization actively promoted seafood and served as a support group for their members. The fishermen's wives also became mentors to a group of Gloucester women who then formed the still active Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association. The New Bedford organization fell apart as a consequence of a divisive fishermen's strike that affected owners, captains and crew and their wives.

The Offshore Mariners' Wives Association organized the "Blessing of the Fleet" each year for many years. In the 1980's, respondents reported, there was a large fishermen's mass, a parade of boats sporting elaborate decorations, many relatives and friends crowded on board and lots of food. For the last 10 years, only a handful of women have been active members in the association and only a few commercial vessels participate in the parade of boats.

Social clubs

Many of the Portuguese fishermen belong to the Fishermen's Club. In addition, a Cape Verde Cultural Center and an Immigrant Assistance Center provide some limited services to the Portuguese. The Assistance Center provides translation services in particular, while the Cape Verde center promotes Portuguese cultural education within the public schools, attempting to enhance the status of Portuguese among school children and instill pride in Portuguese youth. As noted above, many second generation Portuguese have been so thoroughly enculturated in Portuguese language and culture that they do not consider themselves Americans. The enclave has fostered several Portuguese restaurants, taverns, food stores, and other businesses that cater solely or primarily to other Portuguese. Other clubs include:

- Monte Pio Luzo Americano Corp
- New Cape Verdean Band Club
- Portuguese American Athletic Club
- Portuguese American Social Club
- Portuguese Continental Union
- Portuguese Sports Club
- Young Cape Verdeans Athletic Club

The Norwegians formed a more tightly knit ethnic enclave in the past than today. Their community in New Bedford/Fairhaven drew most of its original membership from a single island in Norway (Karmøy Island), and was built around fishing. Early fishermen, arriving around the turn of the century, established the New Bedford Fish Supply, which still operates and which used to support newly arrived fishermen by providing them credit (without interest) and outfitting their boats. This practice ended during the 1960s, when immigration from Northern Europe became more regulated, particularly after the 1965 Immigration Act. Unlike the Portuguese, the most recent Norwegian generation has fewer concrete ties to Norway and does not express the allegiance we so often associate with immigrant populations. The Norwegians have established a church, which, along with an organization called the Friends of Norway, still serves as the cultural heart of the community, although there are no obviously Norwegian clubs listed in the telephone directory.

Fishing-related programs and services*Extension programs*

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth's SMAST (formerly CMAST) Center for Marine Science and Technology is now the School for Marine Science and Technology

Training institutes

The Greater New Bedford Fishermen Families Assistance Center provides a host of services to fishing families ranging from referrals to social services, language classes, computer classes, and other retraining opportunities. English and a high school diploma or GED are prerequisites for retraining.

Health & safety

United States Coast Guard has a Marine Safety Field Office in New Bedford (part of the Providence Rhode Island Unit) that leases the south side and half the east side of the bulkheads of the State Pier.

Perceptions of the Fishing Community⁵⁴

Importance of fishing to the community

All respondents consider fishing “important” to “very important” to Greater New Bedford, both culturally and economically. One respondent suggested that those outside the industry might consider it only “somewhat important” because not everyone realizes how much economic activity stems from the fishing industry. But another respondent noted that the industry in New Bedford is vertically integrated, so its influence is leveraged.

It would be interesting to research what impacts the strike in 1985 had on sectors outside of fishing. Even now, with very low unemployment figures in the state, New Bedford has a high rate, 17 to 21 percent, which some respondents blamed on cutbacks in the fishing industry.

Boundaries

Fairhaven is very closely linked to New Bedford, particularly among scallopers. Dartmouth, Mattapoisett and Westport are bordering towns where members of the fishing community may reside, go shopping, or visit friends. Mattapoisett has a handful of lobster boats (about 5), Westport has about 20 lobster boats and two or three gillnet boats.⁵⁵

Some of New Bedford’s Portuguese immigrants live in a Portuguese neighborhood with restaurants, stores, all services owned and/or managed by Portuguese. When they first arrived, many thought they would return to the Portuguese mainland or the Azores upon retirement. However, as time has passed, many have raised families here, their grandchildren have been born here, their friends are here, and they have lost the desire to go back to live in Portugal.

Typical contacts are:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Sell Fish | New Bedford |
| Offload Fish | New Bedford |
| Buy Fishing Gear | New Bedford/Fairhaven |
| Buy Ice | New Bedford/Fairhaven |
| Buy Fuel/ Oil | New Bedford |
| Haul out Boat Repairs | Fairhaven |
| Book Keeping | New Bedford |
| Banking | New Bedford |
| Shopping | Dartmouth (mall)/Taunton |
| Go to Church | Fairhaven/Dartmouth/New Bedford |
| Got to School | Fairhaven/Dartmouth/New Bedford |
| Go for Health Care | New Bedford |
| Go for Childcare | Fairhaven |
| Go for Retraining | New Bedford ⁵⁶ |
| Visit Relatives | Fairhaven/Dartmouth/New Bedford |
| Visit Friends | Fairhaven/Dartmouth/New Bedford |
| Go for Vacation | Most go south to Aruba or Florida or to Portugal |
| Go for Recreation | All New England |
| Socialize | New Bedford, downtown |

⁵⁴ Based on key informant interviews

⁵⁵ Westport is discussed in greater detail below (following the section on Fairhaven).

⁵⁶ One respondent noted that to qualify for retraining you need to speak English and have a high school diploma or GED. That immediately disqualifies the bulk of the Portuguese fleet.

Communication Issues

Federal legislators are well respected and actively supportive of the fishing industry. Communication with federal managers was usually evaluated as poor or fair. "For it to be good, you've got to work together. It's gotta be a two-way street." However, when the Management Council was specified, a few respondents noted that the representatives to the Council from New Bedford were very good about sharing information, communication with them was evaluated as "excellent." But, the federal process was evaluated as "very poor." "They're just looking at me and it's like I'm transparent. They have another agenda, and they're just doing this because they have to. . . They know what they want to do, but they have to go through certain steps, certain channels, to get there." Another simply said, "it's a dictatorship."

A few of the state level legislators make an effort to find out what is going on in the industry and communication with those is rated as excellent or good. There is not much interaction or communication with local representatives.

Assessments

Fishermen and scientists "strongly disagree" on assessments according to our respondents. One respondent asked to differentiate between scientists who work for NMFS and "real scientists." The former received a minus-four (several steps below "strongly disagree") and the latter, a "strongly agree." "They argue with the real scientists, I have no respect for them." "Just say 'no' to NOAA." "They have to predict doom and gloom for their jobs."

Local management practices

There were no local practices specifically for management. However, in the early 1990s, a diverse group of fishermen from New Bedford and Pt. Judith (Rhode Island) agreed on specific rotating closed areas that would have kept the same amount of bottom closed, but would have rotated over the year so that different ports would have had easier access to grounds at different times. The Council did not institute these when they were proposed, but the same areas the fishermen had agreed upon as needing protection are the areas that were eventually closed under Amendment 7.

A group of 10 people, fishermen and processors from New Bedford, Rhode Island, Plymouth, Gloucester representing scallopers, dragners and dayboats developed a plan and brought it to the Council. "Nothing happened."

The union rules for scallop boats had 10-day or 10,000 pounds, whichever was reached first, limits on fishing trips. In addition, there were layover requirements. These rules were for safety since scalloping is very labor-intensive, particularly when the scallops are shucked at sea. The heavy gear combined with fatigue and burnout can lead to serious accidents. Nevertheless, the union rules did have a conservation benefit according to some respondents.

Economic change

Not all respondents agreed on their evaluations of economic conditions. Ten years ago, the economic condition of the industry was on average considered good or very good, though perhaps starting to decline with owners taking a "larger piece of the pie." Overfishing was possible since there were no restrictions on days and some boats would fish back to back, simply changing crews. Five years ago, on average it was fair to poor. In 1994 their stocks were down, there was little or no enforcement and there were boats running drugs disguised as fishing vessels. In the late 1990's things started to improve once the "buybacks kicked in and pressure eased." Today, conditions have improved for some, but not all. Most fishermen are hanging on, but not getting ahead and many boats are

neglected. The future was predicted as poor or excellent, depending on whether the respondent was an optimist or pessimist.

One respondent said (in 1998) that in the center of New Bedford “stores are boarded up, restaurants near the piers are closed, corner stores, gear suppliers, Portuguese goods are gone, and any non-essential store is gone.”

The uncertainty is what is most difficult in contemplating the future.

The individual's economic position varied with whether or not the respondent was a boat owner or crewmember. The standard of living of crewmembers has gone down in the last 5 years. Both boat owners and crewmembers that had owned property mentioned that they had to sell or downsize. One boat owner noted that no raises or Christmas bonuses were given out in 1998 and that their 50 percent donation to health care for crew had been discontinued. Another respondent noted that the buyback programs put five people out of work, but all the money went to the owners.

Changes in fishing effort

Fishermen are starting to be more selective in their fishing effort. “People are using their days to benefit them instead of going out and working, and working, and working.” Some are using computers to help them keep track of not only what grounds are most productive, but also what quantities they landed and prices they obtained over the course of the year. With limited DAS, fishermen are trying to optimize their incomes, reducing costs by fishing as close to port as they can or fishing where they know they are likely to find fish. Unlike in the past, rarely are days spent simply exploring in a search for productive grounds.

Some of the older fishermen find it difficult to adapt. “They feel like everyone is against them. Changing your method of fishing or your quality, icing them up the right way, cutting and bleeding the fish. . .they realized that the fish buyers weren't paying any more than they used to, and they would do all this extra expense and work, and basically the prices were the same, so that was the end of that.”

However, some entrepreneurial fishermen continue to try to find new niche markets where their catch will be more highly valued. Fishermen that used to concentrate on groundfish are fishing for squid, whiting, and monkfish. The monkfish fishermen “take very good care of the fish. . . they'll get very good prices.” Some lobster boats use gillnets for monkfish. At least one boat goes for skates to be sold for bait.

Ten years ago, New Bedford was a “yellowtail port.” The majority of the fish landed were either yellowtails or scallops. Today, boats are catching a wider variety of species, though with the recent (limited) reopening of scallop closed areas, the scallop landings are up.

When Georges Bank was closed, many of the fishermen went south to fish for fluke. In fact, they often caught it just off Massachusetts, but had to steam 20-30 hours to unload in Virginia, North and South Carolina or Georgia. Sometimes one of the local fish processors would be down there to buy it and then they'd truck it up to Massachusetts.

The replacement of Eastern-rigged vessels (side-trawlers) with stern trawlers and the development of electronics were cited as two of the most significant changes in the industry in the last generation. “Electronics have made it so easy. Before, you gotta look at a book or remember. Now you've got it on a screen.”

Effects of Recent Management

Days at Sea are generally considered the regulation with the most impact on both scallopers and groundfishermen. During the two-year period in which interviews for this research were conducted, however, there were some changes in opinions about the effects

of regulations. Early in the study, the majority of harvesters were extremely anxious about the limitations. Two years later, when some vessels had left the industry and prices for fish were high, some finfish harvesters admitted that they were making more money than they had before the restrictions. The scallopers also were surviving due to the limited opening of the previously closed areas that had grown rich in scallops.

Positive: Closed areas are more effective than the days-at-sea regulations. Days-at-sea regulations do not work as well in reality as they do on paper because fishermen are figuring out how to make every day more productive, e.g., by tracking when they are most likely to catch fish. If they are smart, they are also tracking when they are likely to receive the best prices. [One respondent noted that May should be closed to fishing because that is when they are spawning and most vulnerable.]

Gear restrictions are generally viewed as beneficial since they limit the numbers of juveniles caught. A social benefit of the DAS regulations is that crewmembers have more time at home.

Negative: Vessel quotas were criticized for their impact on discard rates. For example, jumbo fluke brings in \$2.80 per pound in contrast to smaller fish that might be sold for \$.80 per pound. "If you are limited to 1000 pounds, why would anyone bring in anything but jumbos?"

When boats were sold in the buy-back program, some of the owners did not let their crew know until the last possible minute. Some of the crew had to travel to Rhode Island, New Jersey and Virginia to find sites. They make a few back-to-back trips then come home for a visit. New Bedford crews tend to be more experienced than many crews in the South, so they tend to find positions easily. One respondent noted that some companies in the South bought boats before identifying captains, so they have to struggle to find experienced captains or managers of their fleets.

One respondent mentioned a fisherman who lost his home, his wife and children. He grew so despondent that he tried to commit suicide. He had started saving for a boat at 16 years old, it was supposed to support his family and serve as his retirement fund. "It didn't happen."

In general, respondents are afraid that both alcohol and physical abuse have increased ashore. However, drug and alcohol abuse are less of a problem on the boats than they were 10 or 12 years ago because boat-owners and captains can be selective about their crews (since they carry fewer men now).

Characteristics of local fishermen

A good fisherman has "his own little grounds where he does good...because they know when the fish are gonna be in the outside holes, when the fish are going to be ...They know when to start looking for the signs. Some of the other fishermen just go out in the blind and they don't have a clue what's going on." You also have to have stamina, the willingness to put up with the elements and put the work in. Furthermore, you must keep on top of your gear, your electronics and your nets. "Everything changes from trip to trip. Your wires stretch, your twine shrinks up, everything changes."

Good fishermen are "independent, creative, love the ocean, are team players and fluid with the environment."

"I think fishermen now are starting to get educated and I think you're gonna see more responsible fishermen . . . We have to get rid of the old mentality of filling the boat up."

The dragger fleet is predominantly Portuguese. One respondent estimated that "90 percent of the dragger fishermen were born in Portugal or the Islands (Azores) and are from a fishing

background.” Records of 1,800 fishermen registered with the Seafarers Union in the mid-1990’s indicated that 80 percent were Portuguese.

The average age of fishermen in the dragger fleet is thought to be 40-45. “What are they going to do? They didn’t have to learn English. Their crews were Portuguese, their buyers were Portuguese, their radios are Portuguese, everything. ‘Oh, there will be a bill? My wife will go over it.’ The wives speak English. They have to go to the schools and deal with the children, the teachers and the doctors, so the women end up learning English.”

Non-Portuguese fishermen also have language difficulties. There are Cambodians, Vietnamese, Poles and Norwegians on the boats.

Job satisfaction

Fishing itself is valued as a job, “fishermen live to fish...it’s a new adventure every time you leave, you never know what’s going to happen. It’s not like going to work in a plant and every day is the same thing, day after day...you never know if you’re going to make a paycheck...if you’re gonna break down. It’s just something you face, and there’s an excitement to that...Fishermen don’t want to leave [fishing], they’re hanging on tooth and nail to stay in.”

“The majority of them have a passion for their job and for the sea. Although you often hear them say, ‘gee, I wish I could find a job working ashore,” they’re not happy when they do that. I have found that some of the people who have left fishing have gone back after trying jobs in factories, for example.”

Some crewmembers that were suddenly left without a site when the owner decided to sell his vessel in the buyout left New Bedford for sites on vessels out of Rhode Island, New Jersey and Virginia. They fish a couple of back-to-back trips then come home for a visit. New Bedford fishermen are experienced and usually can find work on boats further south.

However, the regulations and anxiety about whether or not they will survive financially has made some fishermen dissatisfied with their jobs. Their sense of independence and ability to plan is threatened by the ever-increasing restrictions.

Safety

Fishing in general is safer now that the Coast Guard regulations have “teeth.” Mandatory survival suits, life rafts and EPIRGs contribute to the improved safety.

Nevertheless, some respondents pointed out that boats are fishing short-handed which can be dangerous (fatigue-related accidents) and some fishermen are staying out even when the weather suddenly turns bad so they don’t lose steaming time and thus waste a DAS.

Fishing families

In the Portuguese community, fishing is “in their blood. Since they were children, they were working on their father’s boats. That’s how I started. Before I was able to go fishing my father, when he got back, he would stretch the nets out and I would fill the needles with twine. As I was growing, he would teach me and would give me gear work to do when I got home from school. When I made my first trip fishing, I knew how to mend nets before I even left this harbor. My brother was the same way. That’s how my father brought us up and that’s how his father brought him up. Same thing with my boys.”

Spouses in the Portuguese fishing families tended not to work until incomes started dropping. “In the late 1970’s none of the wives worked, men did not believe wives could or should work.” Even as late as 1993, maybe twenty to twenty-five percent of the women worked. By 1998, probably 75 percent were working.

Relations between Portuguese crewmen and Portuguese boat owners reflect one dimension of the Portuguese community that has been observed particularly among peoples who compete over what they perceive as scarce resources. While the New Bedford Portuguese tend to be extremely closed to outsiders and densely knit in terms of community rituals, kinship ties, and so forth, several sources of friction exist within the community, making it difficult for them to organize or engage in effective political activity. Interviews with the wives of Portuguese fishermen referred many times to problems of families envying one another and constantly competing to own nicer cars, houses, clothes, and so forth: *"You cannot get the wives involved, they just don't want to. They'd rather sit in the cafe and talk about this one's daughter and that one's son -- anything but worry about their own financial future."*

A Norwegian fisherman's wife noted that, although the Norwegian community presents a very organized appearance, there are strong undercurrents of greed and envy working against effective unification. This woman added that it was better to conduct business outside the family, without infusing one's business activity with a strong ethnic component, suggesting that with family ties also came patriarchal and authoritarian relations.

During times of economic plenty, when everyone's vessel shares were increasing, sharing and cooperation is easy. With economic downturns, when sharing and cooperation are more necessary and more difficult, envy and gossip are a natural response, but divisive both for families and the community.

Today, women from fishing families have gone into real estate, taken jobs in the court system; one started a halfway house for girls. Others have gone through retraining programs and become nurses, home health aides, hotel workers, hairdressers, waitresses, secretaries and accountants.

Spouses in scallop fishing families follow the general societal trends, not necessarily associated with the downturns in fishing: some working, some not as dictated by education and interest with an increase in two-income families over time.

The majority of respondents said that they hoped their children would not go into fishing, despite their own love of the occupation and way of life, because of the difficulties associated with the constantly changing regulations and the lack of financial security.

Community Profiles
Bristol County, MA
New Bedford/South Shore sub-region

5.3.1.2. Fairhaven⁵⁷

Background

Sharing a harbor with New Bedford, but dwarfed in size and population by its neighbor, Fairhaven is subsumed under the same rubric in any discussion of the fishing industry in the area. Most often, if Fairhaven is noted at all, it is as New Bedford/Fairhaven. Nevertheless, Fairhaven has a distinctive history and retains its own niche in the fishing industry.

In the mid-18th century, Fairhaven's economy began to focus on such maritime pursuits as shipbuilding, whaling and foreign trade rather than relying solely on agriculture. Incorporated as a town in 1812, by 1838, Fairhaven was the second largest whaling port in the country. Forty-six vessels and 1,324 men brought in \$600,000 worth of whale products annually. In the late 1870's Fairhaven was connected to New Bedford by a street railway and thus became a suburb of the city.

When whaling declined, Fairhaven turned to other industries. In 1903, the American Tack Company's plant in Fairhaven was said to be the largest and best tack mill in the world. Oil millionaire, Henry Rogers, donated a multitude of public buildings designed by architect Charles Brigham including Fairhaven's town hall, library, a church and school. In recent years, a prominent fishing family of Fairhaven has renovated several buildings dating from the mid-1800s.

Maritime pursuits are still important to Fairhaven. While New Bedford is the site of the most active unloading and processing facilities for the fishing fleet, Fairhaven has retained two active boat yards and marine railways where vessels can be hauled-out for repair. Other support services such as fishing gear and ice suppliers, one processor and a well-respected settlement house remain in the town. Fairhaven also has five marinas, one of which is state-owned, that cater to recreational boating and fishing.

Governance

A board of Selectmen and representative town meeting led the town's government. Of the 9,187 registered voters in 1994, 39.7% were Democrats, 7.7% Republican and 52.5% were unenrolled.

Demography

Population

In 1990, Fairhaven had 16,132 residents, 7,650 male and 8,482 female.

Age Structure

Forty-two percent of the population was in the 15 to 44 years old category, 20.2% in the 45-64 years old category, 19% were over 65 and 18% were under 15 years old.

Education

According to the 1990 Census, 68.9% are high school graduates or higher; 12.9% have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Average teacher salary in Fairhaven was \$35,759 in 1993,

⁵⁷ The historical and statistical information that follows is largely drawn from a web page found at <http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/profile/094.htm>

Information for that page was submitted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts Department of Revenue and various individuals.

below the statewide average of \$39,023, but slightly above that of Greater New Bedford's average of \$34,410.

Household Composition

Of the 6,359 households, 70.1% (4,457) live in owner occupied residents with a median value of \$121,900. The 29.1% who rent pay (median contract rent) \$383. The majority live in single family homes (72.4%).

Median sales prices of homes fell from \$108,000 in 1990 to \$95,00 in 1991 and 1992. After slipping to \$90,000 in 1993, prices rose to \$104,000 in 1994.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

The vast majority of residents in 1990 were white (15,656 residents or 97%). Blacks and Asians each made up .5% of the population (around 79 individuals) and Hispanics .8%. Twenty-four people (.1%) were listed as American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut and 160 people (1%) were listed as "other."

Economic Context

Income

The median household income was significantly higher than New Bedford's at \$30,097 (81.5% of the state average) in 1989. Its per capita income was \$13,114 (76.1% of the state average). Of the 15,825 persons for whom status was determined, 1,032 (6.5%) were below poverty level.

Of the 6,359 households identified in the 1990 census, 81% (5138) showed earned income. Twenty percent (1,283) of the households received retirement income in 1990, and 37% (2,343) received social security.

Employment

The 1990 census noted 7,540 employed individuals, 620 unemployed. Fairhaven's unemployment rate was 7.6%, somewhat higher than the statewide unemployment rate of 6.7%.

Titleist/Foot Joy Golf Company is considered the largest employer with 300 employees. Wal-Mart employs 300 full time; K-Mart, Shaw's and A&P supermarkets each employ 100 people full-time. D.N Kelly and Sons, Inc., a well-respected boat yard with \$8,000,000 in gross receipts, also employs 100.⁵⁸

About 117 retail establishments employ about 1,576 people.

Agriculture employs about 219 residents, though only 33 households claimed income from farm self-employment.

Transportation

Route 6 and Interstate Route 195 are Fairhaven's major highways. New Bedford, Fall River and Providence are within a reasonable distance of Fairhaven, providing residents with easy access to transportation facilities.

Hospitals, Museums

There are no hospitals in Fairhaven, though there are three long-term care facilities and two rest homes.

⁵⁸ FXM Associates; Seafood Datasearch; Heaney Edelstein. 1999. New Bedford/Fairhaven Harbor Plan. Technical Memorandum: Expanded Economic Analysis. Prepared for the Harbor Master Plan Committee.

The Museum of Fairhaven History “is housed in the Academy Building, a former school built in 1798 and formally opened in 1800. The exhibits include a nautical display, military room, period room, 18th century schoolroom, and special exhibits.”⁵⁹

Fisheries Profile

Because of its close link with New Bedford, informants could not easily separate the fisheries into aspects strictly associated with Fairhaven. Scallop fishing is a multi-million dollar business that spills out beyond the formal city limits of New Bedford and town boundaries of Fairhaven.

While Fairhaven does not boast the same numbers or variety of fishing industry infrastructure as New Bedford, it does supply a necessary service to the fleet, i.e., repair facilities. A marine contractor, supplier of marine equipment, four provisioners of marine supplies and a marine surveyor provide a nucleus of other services to the fleet. Given that a recent report estimated that the average annual repair and maintenance costs of a 70 foot scalloper is \$65,000, if the majority of the Fairhaven and New Bedford based scallopers take care of their repair and maintenance in Fairhaven, the town benefits by anywhere from \$4,550,000 to \$6,500,000.⁶⁰ Overhead and loan payments are another \$100,000 per vessel, some of that approximately \$7,000,000 to \$10,000,000 is spent in Fairhaven. In addition, returns to those vessel owners and/or crew who reside in Fairhaven are often spent in the town.

Informants noted, however, that contraction of the fleet with limits on days-at-sea and closed areas have affected some services. Diesel fuel is no longer available from a Fairhaven-based company; rather barges from New Bedford bring fuel to Fairhaven. Two bars that cater to primarily to fishermen are facing possible closure. But it was not the downturn in the fishing industry, but a personal injury lawsuit against a local manufacturer of “the best winches” that forced that company to reduce their business to supplies rather than manufacturing.

Commercial fishing and fisheries-related employment

The distinction between New Bedford and Fairhaven blurs when counting fishing vessels, crew and the various industry support services. While it is not uncommon for observers to remark that scallop vessels are owned by Norwegians who live and tie-up their boats in Fairhaven, while draggers are owned by Portuguese who live and tie-up their boats in New Bedford, the truth is less rigid. One informant who has worked on fishing vessels and in shore-side services for over 40 years argued that one must look at not only New Bedford and Fairhaven, but the adjoining communities of Dartmouth, Mattapoisett, and Ahusnet to locate both fishermen and fishing industry. He counts 5000 fishermen, including lobster fishermen, clam diggers and trip boats. Another long-time resident estimated that there are five hundred to seven hundred scallop fishermen on 100 boats in Fairhaven/New Bedford and more than 700 fishing-dependent families.⁶¹

In addition, Fairhaven boats one boat yard that employs 100 people, one processor and a welder.

Harvesting sector

Most of the Fairhaven vessels unload in New Bedford. Scallop vessels predominate, though 8 to 10 vessels seek quahogs and 6 to 8 are lobster boats. Mussels are also harvested. The majority of the vessels are in the 15 to 10 year old range and are steel, 85 to 105 feet in length. A half-dozen vessels are wooden. The fleet is about half what it was before the groundfish and scallop amendments were implemented.

⁵⁹ <http://www.rixsan.com/nbvisit/atract/fairhist.htm>

⁶⁰ Georgianna, Daniel, Alan Cass and Peter Amaral. 1999. The Cost of Fishing for Sea Scallops in Northeastern United States. North Dartmouth, MA: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Cooperative Marine Education and Research Program, NMFS Contract No. NA67FE0420.

⁶¹ Most of the key informants rounded the number of scallopers to 100, but Georgianna et al found 70 large scallopers, 5 medium and 2 small in New Bedford/Fairhaven.

Some fishermen/owners own several boats that share crews in order to have more DAS. One for example, has two crews working on three boats in order to keep them working 180 days.

Perceptions of the Fishing Community⁶²

Importance of fishing to the community

All key informants agreed that fishing is “very important” to Fairhaven.

Boundaries

Off-loading and selling fish is generally confined to New Bedford while hauling out for vessel repair is usually in Fairhaven. Most other community contacts queried were answered as “both.” That is, Fairhaven residents in the fishing industry consider both Fairhaven and New Bedford as their “community.”

Typical contacts are:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Sell Fish | New Bedford |
| Offload Fish | New Bedford |
| Buy Fishing Gear | New Bedford/Fairhaven |
| Buy Ice | New Bedford/Fairhaven |
| Buy Fuel/ Oil | New Bedford |
| Haul out Boat Repairs | Fairhaven |
| Book Keeping | New Bedford/Fairhaven |
| Banking | Fairhaven/New Bedford |
| Shopping | Dartmouth (mall)/Taunton |
| Go to Church | Fairhaven (where live) |
| Got to School | Fairhaven (where live) |
| Go for Health Care | New Bedford |
| Go for Childcare | Fairhaven |
| Go for Retraining | New Bedford ⁶³ |
| Visit Relatives | Fairhaven /New Bedford |
| Visit Friends | Fairhaven/Dartmouth/New Bedford |
| Go for Vacation | Most owners go to Florida, crews stay locally (few can afford) |
| Go for Recreation | All New England |
| Socialize | New Bedford, downtown. Portuguese have clubs. Less drinking now. |

Communication Issues

While Fairhaven and New Bedford informants complimented their federal legislators, few were content with their communication with federal level managers. “Poor” communication was cited and such comments as “it’s a dictatorship,” “Just say no to NOAA” and “they have to predict doom and gloom for their jobs” were made.

⁶² Based on key informant interviews

⁶³ One respondent noted that to qualify for retraining you need to speak English and have a high school diploma or GED. That immediately disqualifies the bulk of the Portuguese fleet. Another said, “it’s a joke. How are you going to retrain a 40-year old to go from \$40,000 or so to \$15,000?”

Assessments

Informants uniformly agreed that scientists and fishermen strongly disagree on the assessment of the stock conditions of scallops.

Local management practices

Several informants noted that when the union was strong, its work rules had the effect of fisheries management, since they regulated the number of days a vessel could work and how long it had to be tied up upon its return from a trip.

Respondents noted that the latent permits threaten the future of fishing. "Take care of the dead licenses," one urged.

Economic Change

According to a couple of Fairhaven key informants: Ten years ago (1989), the scallop industry was in excellent economic condition. New, safer boats were built, mortgages were based on \$1 million gross stock. Five years ago, the industry was in good condition. Though there were cuts in days-at-sea, the cuts were not yet severe. Today, the economic condition is poor to fair. Until the closed areas were opened (though with limits on quantities and numbers of vessels), the gross stock of most vessels was half what it was five years ago. Some will survive. Five years from now, "depends on the government." The resources are there, whether fishermen will be allowed to bring them in is the question.

In the meantime, there is less money available, so repairs are put off, possibly compromising safety of the vessels. With fewer vessels hauling out annually, some of the competition (among railways) is less, so the suppliers and railways are able to charge more.

One benefit of changes is that the lower number of allowable crew (7) has rid the industry of most "druggies." "In the late '80's, early '90's, kids (crew) made more money than they knew what to do with." Crewmembers now tend to be family oriented and they don't have the large paychecks to "blow" anymore. The lower number of crewmembers also means that the crew receives a larger share than they otherwise would, "it's what has saved the crews." Unfortunately, as the gross stock has diminished, vessel owners have tended to drop health insurance coverage for their crew.

Effects of recent management

Early interviews reflected anger and frustration with regulations that kept scallopers outside of closed areas that were intended to protect and commence the rebuilding of groundfish stocks. Scallop fishermen were convinced that the scallops were so deep in the closed areas that the upper levels were suffocating the lower levels. The catches of poachers were sufficient to give credence to the rumors of rebuilt scallop stocks. With the support and organizational skills of one of the settlement houses, scallopers formed the Fishermen's Survival Fund, hired a lawyer, and eventually came to an agreement with NMFS to conduct cooperative research on the closed areas. This project led to partial openings of the closed areas to scallopers. It also made the scallopers aware of the benefits of closing areas for a time. While rotating closed areas have been suggested in the past, there now seems to be very widespread support for the concept.

Other requisite changes including the sizes of the rings (now 3 1/2 inch), elimination of "cookies," and the cuts in the crew size have made a difference in the sizes of the scallops caught and quantities handled. One respondent commented that the regulations (and their impacts) have diminished the fleet to half the size it was.

Characteristics of local fishermen

A good fisherman has patience, longevity and can keep a steady crew. "A captain's word is law." "If a non-owner captain doesn't produce, he doesn't stay." The captain must be respected.⁶⁴

Competition is part of the fishing tradition. The captains of three vessels owned by one respondent all compete to bring in the largest catch. They won't tell each other where the best fishing is and they are happy if they can bring in even "one bag more" than the others. The competitive culture may have contributed to some of the "poaching" that went on in closed areas. One respondent noted that his partner "went over the line" [into the closed areas], was caught and is now painting houses.

"You know it's out there, you know the government is wrong, you aren't doing well...I regret that the government has made us criminals, given us a bad name."

Safety

It is safer now, partially because DAS limits the time you can fish. Though the boats are going short-handed, in most cases the boats are down to only "good men, good fishermen."

Job satisfaction

Fear of the future is ruining many fishermen's satisfaction with their jobs. Nevertheless, retraining is viewed skeptically: "How are you going to retrain a forty-year-old accustomed to making 40 or 50 thousand dollars a year to accept \$15,000?"

Fishing families

Though several of the Norwegian families are said to have "educated their children out of the industry," key informants had mixed views as to whether or not that was true and whether or not they wanted their own children to stay in the industry. One informant pointed out that some children of fishermen have gone to college, but have returned to fish.

⁶⁴ Captains often receive a bonus of 10 percent of the boat share.

Community Profiles
Bristol County, Massachusetts
New Bedford

5.3.1.3. Westport

Background

Incorporated as a town in 1787, “Westport is a town of farms, of beautiful scenery, of people who live from the water, of small businesses and of homes. Each of these aspects of the community is characterized and strengthened by the superb natural resources to be found within the town's borders. The key to Westport's recreational resources also lies within its natural environment.”⁶⁵

Westport is a small estuarine port in southeastern Massachusetts. It is bordered by Fall River on the north and west; Dartmouth on the east; the Atlantic Ocean on the south; and Tiverton and Little Compton, Rhode Island, on the west.

In the late 1700's Westport was a Quaker enclave. Paul Cuffe, whose efforts obtained blacks the right to vote in Massachusetts in 1783, spent most of his life in Westport. He earned his fortune from whaling and trade in the Americas and Europe. He owned shares, over a period of time, in up to ten ships, and the financial support of the Friends and their doctrine figured in his success as a businessman. They captained some of his ships and believed that industry and frugality were pleasing in the sight of God. Cuffe's faith was a factor in his using a substantial portion of his wealth to help others, building a school when the community failed to do so and contributing to the raising of a new Friends meetinghouse in Westport.⁶⁶

Today, the commercial port consists of a single town dock whose upkeep is funded directly by the fishermen. Approximately 100 fishermen live in the town, but not all fish from the town's port, instead some fish out of New Bedford. The western dock area is exclusively maintained for commercial fishermen, while the docks across the Housatonic River are dominated by recreational marinas. Westport has gentrified as surrounding real estate has been bought up by newcomers to the area. It was not included in the infrastructure survey, but is similar in this regard to Stonington, Connecticut.

The isolation of this traditional fishing has kept the community intact, and residents lament the intrusion of outside development: “*Life is worse here than it was five years ago. With more building in town, people have discovered ‘beautiful Westport’. Soon you’ll be able to call it a city. Last year there were 300 building permits in a town with only around 300 houses. Sections that were woods are now house lots.*” Despite the recent buildup of housing, one of the reasons local development has proceeded slowly and there is no significant service industry is that the town lacks a public sewer and water infrastructure. In 1989, only 161 housing units were on a public sewer and the majority of housing units obtained water from individual wells (4936 drilled and 690 dug).

Besides fishing, the early residents worked on farms and vineyards in the area. A few small farms, including a vineyard, remain, but most labor jobs are in Fall River or New Bedford. Several residents hold outside jobs in manufacture of wire reels and appliances.

*Governance*⁶⁷

Board of Selectmen, Administrative Assistant, and Open Town Meeting

⁶⁵ <http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/iprofile/334.htm#NARRATIVE>

⁶⁶ http://www.ai.mit.edu/~isbell/HFh/black/events_and_people/html/007.paul_cuffe.html

⁶⁷ Ibid.

*Demography*⁶⁸

Population

The population of Westport according to the 1990 Census was 13,852 with 6831 male and 7021 female.

Age Structure

Children (up to 21 years old) numbered 3737 in 1989, adults (21-64 years) numbered 8214 and seniors (65 and older) numbered 1901.

Education

For those 25 years and older, 2906 had no high school diploma, 2868 had graduated from high school, 1826 had some college, and 1750 had a Bachelor's or higher degree.

Housing

There were 5881 housing units, 4952 of which were occupied and 929 were vacant. Of those occupied, 4004 were owner-occupied and 948 were rented. The median value of the owner occupied units was \$149,300 and the median year all housing structures were built was 1962.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

The overwhelming majority of the population was white with 13,834 individuals and 18 Asian (all Korean). The only ancestries noted by more than a hundred or so individuals were Portuguese (4370), French (1861), English (1769) and Irish (1177).

Economic Context

Income

The median household income in 1989 was \$37,092 and per capita income was \$15,525.

Employment

INDUSTRY

Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over

| | |
|---|------------|
| Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (000-039)... | 140 |
| Mining (040-059)... | 0 |
| Construction (060-099)... | 732 |
| Manufacturing, nondurable goods (100-229)... | 687 |
| Manufacturing, durable goods (230-399)... | 743 |
| Transportation (400-439)... | 249 |
| Communications and other public utilities (440-499)... | 151 |
| Wholesale trade (500-579)... | 213 |
| Retail trade (580-699)... | 1267 |
| Finance, insurance, and real estate (700-720)... | 528 |
| Business and repair services (721-760)... | 305 |
| Personal services (761-799)... | 157 |
| Entertainment and recreation services (800-811)... | 108 |
| Professional and related services (812-899): | |
| Health services (812-840)... | 424 |
| Educational services (842-860)... | 699 |
| Other professional and related services (841, 861-899)... | 298 |
| Public administration (900-939)... | 311 |

OCCUPATION

Universe: Employed person's 16 years and over

| | |
|--|-----|
| Managerial and professional specialty occupations (000-202): | |
| Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations (000-042)... | 983 |
| Professional specialty occupations (043-202)... | 929 |

⁶⁸ <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/gazetteer>

| | |
|---|------------|
| Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations (203-402): | |
| Technicians and related support occupations (203-242)... | 202 |
| Sales occupations (243-302)... | 931 |
| Administrative support occupations, including clerical (303-402)... | 1073 |
| Service occupations (403-472): | |
| Private household occupations (403-412)... | 22 |
| Protective service occupations (413-432)... | 75 |
| Service occupations, except protective and household (433-472)... | 467 |
| Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations (473-502)... | 139 |
| Precision production, craft, and repair occupations (503-702)... | 1124 |
| Operators, fabricators, and laborers (703-902): | |
| Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors (703-802)... | 602 |
| Transportation and material moving occupations (803-863)... | 269 |
| Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers (864-902)... | 196 |

Transportation and Access

Westport is served by the airport and port facilities of New Bedford. In addition, Interstate 195 and State Routes 24 and 140 provide access to the airports, ports, and intermodal facilities of Providence and Boston.

Principal highways are State Routes 88 and 177, U.S. Route 6, and Interstate Route 195.

Westport is a member of the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA), which provides fixed route service between Fall River, Westport, Dartmouth, and New Bedford. SRTA and the Council on Aging also provide paratransit services for the elderly and disabled.

New Bedford Municipal Airport is a Primary Commercial Service (PR) facility with scheduled passenger flights.

Hospitals, schools, libraries

No hospitals.

Westport Free Public Library

Fisheries Profile

Commercial fishing and fisheries-related employment

Harvesting structure

The town dock is home to approximately 30 fishing vessels with lengths ranging from 16-65 feet. Eight of these vessels are wood, five steel, one aluminum, and the remaining 16 fiberglass. All of these fishing vessels are lobster boats. Some of them may change over to gillnetting when there are spring fish runs in the Housatonic tidal estuary. Full-time gillnetters are said to have been forced out of the fishery because the loss of days at sea has made it impossible to make a living finfishing. Others supplement their income dredging clams and quahogs. Some lobster boats tie up in June and take unemployment the rest of the year, but this is only adaptive for those whose boats work as corporations rather than private companies.

The pattern for fishing is to fish two days, remain home two days, fish two days. Fencing on one side of boat enables fishermen to stack traps higher without risk of losing them in rough weather.

Processing sector

There is one small fish processor in Westport.

Support Services

There are no bait houses, ice houses, fish brokers, dockside bars, or fish auctions in Westport. Fishermen go to New Bedford for bait or boat repairs. The four fish retailers provide ice to their customers, which is trucked in, or picked up in Tiverton.

Tripp Marine is a source of diesel fuel for the local lobster fleet, and is complemented by one small fish processor and four retail stores. Across from the commercial fishing docks are two marinas, a tackle shop, a recreational fishing supply shop, and marine railway. There are also eight seafood restaurants, a harbormaster station, and one local inn.

Employment (year-around and seasonal)

Overall, it is estimated that there are 100 households in Westport directly dependent on the fishing industry, with another 20 to 30 retailing fish products or working in seafood restaurants.

Angler Corp—boat hauling
 F L Tripp and Sons—boat equipment
 Baker Boat Works—“classic small boat designs and plans”⁶⁹
 Ross Boats—boat manufacturing
 Westport River Rovers—charter & rental
 Falmen Fisheries Corp—commercial fishermen
 Fall River Rod & Gun Club—fishing supplies
 George T Leach & Son—marina
 Bottoms Up Marine Svc—marine contractors
 Sea-Walk Mgr—marine contractors
 A & K Marine—outboards
 Bayside Marine & Auto—outboards
 JB Marine Svc—outboards
 Westport Yacht Club—yachts

Species, Seasonality

Species commercially fished include cod, flounder (by-catch and recreational), crab, lobster, tuna, striped bass, dogfish, skate (by catch), monkfish (main target of gillnetters), bay scallops (varies year to year), whelks (by catch), sea bass (rod and reel, fish traps), softshell clams, and quahogs.

Recreational fishing and employment

On Line Charters

Captain Brad Sherman’s Charter Boat Service

Cultural role of fishing*History and museums*

A fishing monument commemorates the loss of lives at sea, and dates back to the early 1900s, with most of the names dating back to the time of the 19th century whaling industry.

In 1996 The Westport Fishermen’s Association began to lobby for a monument to residents lost at sea to be erected at Westport Point.

Fishing related organizations and their roles in the community and fishery*Commercial fishing associations*

The Westport Fishermen’s Association

Formed in the early 1980s by commercial fishermen, the association had 500 members in 1996.⁷⁰

The Association has worked to improve the Westport River estuary and its water quality and participated in the Bay Scallop Restoration Project that began in 1993. The main objective of the project was to enhance scallop stocks by applying a modified Japanese technique of placing artificial spat collectors near adult scallops held in rafts at various locations within the estuary.

⁶⁹ <http://www.by-the-sea.com/bakerboatworks/>

⁷⁰ <http://www.s-t.com/daily/12-96/12-15-96/c06lo096.htm>

The Eastern Massachusetts Shellfishermen's Association manages the rich beds of shellfish far up into the headwaters of the river system. They stage fundraisers to help them pay for their cultivation activities, using the funds to buy and raise quahog seeds and seeds flats. They are experimenting with cultivation of their own shellfish spat.

Perceptions of the Fishing Community⁷¹

Boundaries

Capital contacts can be divided up into those encompassing social capital (e.g., visit friends, go for recreation, go for vacation, visit relatives, socialize, go to church); economic (e.g., sell fish, offload fish, buy fishing gear, haul out for boat repairs, go to the bank, go shopping), and human (e.g., go to school, go for childcare, go for health care, go for retraining).

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Sell Fish | Sakonnet Point/Westport |
| Offload Fish | Westport |
| Buy Fishing Gear | New Bedford/Tiverton |
| Buy Fuel/ Oil | Westport-delivered at the dock |
| Haul out Boat Repairs | New Bedford/Fairhaven/Providence |
| Bookkeeping | Westport |
| Banking | Westport |
| Shopping | Fall River/New Bedford/Dartmouth |
| Go to Church | Westport |
| Got to School | Westport/Fall River/Providence |
| Go for Health Care | New Bedford/Fall River/Westport |
| Go for Childcare | Westport |
| Visit Relatives | Westport |
| Visit Friends | Westport |
| Go for Vacation | Florida/New England |
| Socialize | VFW in Westport |

Communication Issues

Communication with local and state fishery managers is considered "very good," while communication at the federal level is considered "poor."

The contention of some Westport fishermen is that the federal managers do not spend time out in the communities, and that most appointees to the management council do not have enough knowledge of contemporary conditions of fishing or fisheries.

Assessments

One key respondent "strongly disagreed" with the conclusions fishery managers draw. "They are trying to use scientific knowledge, but they don't really know what's going on. They'd have a better perspective if they came out on the boats and knew what was going on, rather than thinking they know what's going on."

⁷¹ Based on key informant interviews

Local management practices

“Sea that has fewer traps means less maintenance, more bottom space for lobsters, less conflict with draggers. Some guys fish so many traps they leave them a month at a time. Don’t believe in fishing more than you can tend in two days. Even the offshore boats only fish 1000-1,500 from Westport.”

Economic Change

The economic condition of fishing industry ten years ago was considered “average” (scallopers and draggers were said to be doing well, but lobster and gillnetting was considered down). Five years ago conditions were “good” and “scallopers were doing well.” Today, the economic conditions are only “fair”, as the conditions of the shellfish beds are down and restrictions on finfish cut into profits: *“Fishery by fishery there is great variation. Lobstering and gillnetting is doing well, and scallopers and draggers are doing worse due to Days at Sea reductions.”* Five years from now, the fishery is predicted to be “good,” unless regulations have a negative impact.

Effects of recent management

Recent regulations having the most impact are those that limited days at sea and daily allowable catch of groundfish regulations, which has resulted in an increase of fishing pressure on the lobster stocks.

Lobstermen who had switched to full-time gillnetting are coming back to lobstering because so few days at sea are permitted for gillnetting.

“Trap limits are a great idea. Open George’s Bank up on a part-time schedule. Close it during groundfish spawning seasons. The problem is big corporations are what the government is looking for, trying to drive the small ones out of the business.”

Characteristics of local fishermen

A “good fisherman” is someone who *“likes the outdoors, wants to work, and is pretty smart.”* A common trend for the “good fishermen” is that they are being forced to work longer hours, at higher risk, for less return. Despite longer hours, fishermen are unable to earn their full income from fishing. Key respondents in Westport only earned 65% of their income from fishing.

As effort has increased, more time is invested. Most significant recent changes are said to be an increase in the amount of gear in the water and lobster prices failing to increase at the same rate as inflation. With the intense competition in Westport for stocks, fishermen are highly independent, and with few kinship connections between boats, are not inclined to share information on fish conditions or stock conditions: *“I like to share information on fishing as much as I want to share my girlfriend. If you don’t have to share, you’re taking more lobster and doing better.”*

Job satisfaction

Commercial fishermen ‘like what they do’, but would like to “make more money doing it.”

Fishing families

A key respondent indicated that most commercial Westport fishers were born in the community, though not necessarily to a fishing family.