

Sub-region Profile
Counties: Washington and Newport

5.2. Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Sub-NRR is characterized by diversity in both cultural and biophysical capital. Features include the coastal area of Eastern Long Sound, the complex shoreline and inlets of Narragansett Bay, and the tidal-riverine system of Sakonnet Point and Tiverton. Although Point Judith, Rhode Island's premier fishing port, lacks the complex infrastructure of New Bedford or Gloucester, MA, it still ranks 5th on the New England regional index of fisheries infrastructure with adequate space and facilities to handle its robust fishing fleet. The fleet's diversity and shifting patterns of resource use set it apart from the fleets of other prominent New England ports. The topography of the Bay system allows for a variety of niche fisheries to co-exist with significant industrial activity in the upper bay system and a dominating recreational presence on Jamestown and Aquidneck Islands on the eastern side of the Bay. Beaches mixed with river inlets and bisected by the major port of Point Judith dominate the western and southern parts of the bay and state. These variations in coastal geomorphology and ecosystem niches are reflected in the variations in gear type, species targeted, and the presence of both inshore and offshore fishing vessels of various sizes and levels of technological sophistication.

There is an important distinction between fishing in the upper and lower parts of Narragansett Bay. The lower Bay is in close proximity to the oceanic waters and is dominated by the two main ports of Rhode Island: Point Judith and Newport. The upper Bay is the home of some 12 small (up to 40 feet) bay druggers and about 30 bay lobster boats that are not concentrated in any one location, but are scattered in small clusters in Kent, Providence, and Bristol Counties along the perimeter of the upper bay. These boats in aggregate rank third in importance in this sub-region. This has not always been the case, for the upper bay ports such as Warren and Bristol were very important up to the 1940s when the oyster population of the bay was still healthy. In recent decades, with the decline of the bay finfish stocks, the number of bay druggers has declined to its current level, dispersed along the perimeter of the bay. There are no state commercial fishing dock facilities in the upper bay as there are in Point Judith and Newport, so the boats must tie up in private marinas or other private facilities. The vast majority of fishermen in the upper bay are bullrakers who fish from skiffs for quahogs. This fishery is managed by the state of Rhode Island. The numbers of bullrakers are known to vary inversely with general economic conditions. Currently there are approximately 300 licenses for this shellfish industry.

There are two ocean clam boats in the upper bay that tie up in Warren as their market dictates (the boats move to the market). There are several herring boats and ones that target under-utilized species (e.g., mackerel) that work from docks at Quonset Point (Davisville). There are perhaps as many as a dozen boats from other ports, both inside and outside of Rhode Island, that target species in the Bay from time to time.

Dockage is the problem in the upper bays as it is in Jamestown, Newport and Point Judith. This problem is related to gentrification and competition for waterfront land and space, including parking and gear areas. The ports in the lower bay reported on here represent the range of variation in that part of the sub-region and are the ones that mainly utilize the near and offshore ocean water.

Commercial fishermen pursue fish as far north and east as the Hague Line and as far south as the deep-water canyons off Long Island Sound. Lobster fishermen work both in and offshore, other fishermen dredge and dig for scallops, clams and quahogs, employ floating fish traps for tidal species such as bluefish and scup, and use purse seines to catch squid, butterfish, mackerel and herring. Inshore fishing provides product for both local restaurants and wholesale markets. Fish such as mackerel, herring, butterfish, and squid are sold

internationally. Point Judith is usually one of the top five fishing ports in New England in landings.

Rhode Island's early history was dominated by agricultural pursuits, followed by a prosperous textile industry utilizing the upper bay and river systems. By the end of the 1970s, agriculture was no longer a significant industry. The numbers of agricultural workers declined from a high of 1,388 in 1930 to none in the 1980 census.

The commercial fishery of Newport and Sakonnet Point has origins going back to the 17th century. In fact, Sakonnet Point boasts a fish trap that has been in continuous operation for over 300 years. Nevertheless, the modern phase of commercial fishing began as a secondary industry, with 178 fishermen in 1930 which grew to an estimated 390 fishermen in 1990 as counted by the U.S. Census.

The first commercial fishermen used hook and line, beach seine and floating traps. Both the floating fish traps and beach seines were worked by seasonal "fishing gangs" who stayed in temporary fish houses along the beach.¹ Beach seining gangs were equipped with two boats and a seine to catch menhaden. This fishing practice, which began around 1867, continued until about 1940. A decline in stocks and loss of local markets led to the closure of many of the dehydration plants and beach seining gradually disappeared. Trap fishing and lobstering were also important early fishing methods in this area. In the early 1900s, though, lobsters were not considered a commercially important species and were principally used as feed for pigs and cattle.

Recently there has been an increase in fishing for herring. The herring is sold for lobster bait, canned for human consumption, and sold as feed for zoo animals. In Davisville, large-scale offshore fishing vessels pursue such species as butterfish, squid, herring and mackerel, which are flash frozen and generally sold to overseas markets. These were once called "underutilized species," though some say they should more accurately have been referred to as "under marketed." Now, new markets have been developed. For example, herring products from Rhode Island are sold as bait for long-line fisheries in Costa Rica.² An expansion of processing facilities is being considered to take advantage of the large offshore biomass of herring identified on Georges Bank. Maximum yearly processing has ranged from 1,000 to 1,500 tons depending on markets and availability. While products such as whiting, squid and butterfish have taken precedence, the downturn in groundfish and the shift of biomass towards mackerel and herring has the processing sector considering an upgrade in capacity to take advantage of these conditions.

Interestingly, when a company out of Rhode Island first began to flash-freeze squid at sea, the markets were wary. When squid is first caught it is a reddish-purple, later as it starts to age, it fades to a white gray, then when it has spoiled it turns back to purple. When frozen at sea, squid retains a reddish-purple, fresh color, but early buyers feared that it was the purple of old squid. Education of the dealers and consumers ensued.³

In 2000, Rhode Island communities with significant fishing industry activity included Pt. Judith (Galilee), Westerly, Jamestown, North Kingston, Wickford, Warwick, East Greenwich, Newport, Bristol, Warren, Sakonnet Point, and Tiverton. Pt. Judith has the bulk of the large fishing vessels, but not the large number of small boats characteristic of some of the other ports. The small boats have increased their already flexible annual round to include fishing for such species as quahogs, scup, winkles, eels, and lobster. Shellfishermen of the west bay tend to be part-time fishermen, working as teachers or firemen as well and they often keep their boats at marinas. Fishermen of the east bay tend to trailer their boats and work full time. Many have only state licenses/permits.

¹ Whaley (1939:4).

² Dyer et al (1998: 26).

³ Key respondent interview.

Fishing Dependency Indices

Tourism is the other growth industry in Rhode Island. South County has become a summer haven for recreation, Narragansett Bay has always been an attraction, and Newport has a 100-year history of tourism focusing on water sports, sailing, and summer "cottages" for the rich and famous.⁴ Our gentrification scale puts Newport (factor score .862, tied rank score of 5) near the top of the gentrified ports of New England, with Point Judith (factor score of .842, rank score of 7), and Jamestown (factor score of .701, rank of 11) ranked high and only Tiverton (rank of 27) and Sakonnet Point (factor score of .939, rank score of 30 out of 36) far behind. Collectively, this makes the Rhode Island fishing communities among the most gentrified in New England.

Tourism is said to be pushing the fishing industry into the economic background as these ports become increasingly gentrified.⁵ However, when compared to other fishing ports in the U.S. on the basis of quantity and value of landings, Point Judith remains among the top ports. For example, in 1999, Pt. Judith landed 72.5 million pounds worth \$51.2 million dollars, second only to New Bedford among New England ports and eighth among major U.S. ports. Rhode Island as a whole, was ranked third compared to the other New England states in both quantity and value in 1998 and 1999. State boat registration and licensing statistics indicated 4,491 fishermen in Rhode Island in 2000.⁶

Even so, traditional cultural traditions associated with the fishing industry are being transformed. For example, the "Blessing of the Fleet" celebration has become as much a celebration of recreational boating as commercial fishing. This represents a shift in social and economic capital away from commercial fishing towards tourism, of which recreational fishing is a major component. However, the shift began as a consequence of the commercial fishermen's insurance company's regulations. The Coop's Board of Directors started the Point Club as a separate entity for self-insurance. An early regulation was instituted that disallowed passengers on the fishing boats. Since one of the attractions of the Blessing was the opportunity to bring family and friends on the decorated boats for the parade and for a party, this regulation quickly dampened enthusiasm for the Blessing. Today (2001) there is a renewed effort to determine what would again attract commercial fishermen.

Taking into account the three dependency indices based on employment statistics, the Rhode Island sub-region ranks 7th overall out of the 11 sub-regions on this index. However, Point Judith ranks fifth (after Chatham, above Portsmouth) on the fishing infrastructure differentiation scale and Newport ranks 13. Obviously, fishing remains significant for Point Judith.

⁴ Bort (1981).

⁵ Dale (1992).

⁶ Statistics kept by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

Community Profile
Washington County
Rhode Island Sub-region

5.2.1. Washington County

5.2.1.1. Pt. Judith/Galilee

Background

The original inhabitants of the region were Algonquin Indians who hunted, trapped and cultivated until being replaced by European colonists. Indian displacement began with the Pettaquamscutt Purchase in 1658, followed by other transactions in 1660 and 1662. During the Colonial period, the Galilee area was known as Point Judith Neck. The Colonists used the land for farming, an occupation that continued to dominate the regional economy until the 19th century. The rich pastures, created by the melting of glaciers 10,000-12,000 years ago, supported the grasses to feed horses, cattle, and sheep. The major crops were corn, potatoes, and oats. In addition to the harbor that allowed for transporting agricultural products, a salt pond served as a safe refuge for boats transporting goods to Providence, Newport, other coastal ports in the east, and the Caribbean.

The industrial sector boomed in the early 1800s with the growth of textile mills, while the agricultural sector experienced declines with gentrification of the area and shifts in labor to mill jobs.

Galilee salt marsh borders a barrier beach. The channel leading into Point Judith Pond has changed location over the years due to storms, erosion and composition of the barrier beach. The original breachway was a few hundred yards to the west. In 1890 the government decided to build a permanent channel and the Point Judith Harbor Refuge. The Refuge was built about a quarter mile off the beach, in the ocean. Two man-made jetties comprised of large rocks, stretch out from the east, near Point Judith Lighthouse,⁷ and the west, at Matunuck. A third jetty, in the shape of an elbow, is located between the east and west jetty, separated from them by two channels. Construction was completed in 1910. The Refuge provided ships with a safe haven from storms and protects the shore since the jetties receive the impact of ocean waves, tides, and current.⁸ Later, a breakwater was constructed in the mid-1930s as part of Roosevelt's New Deal program.

The fishing village of Galilee developed in the mid-1800s.⁹ The first commercial fishermen used hook and line, beach seines and floating fish traps for fishing. Beach seining for bass and menhaden began around 1867.¹⁰ Seining was carried out by "fishing gangs," who resided in fish houses along the beach outfitted with bunks in which they slept until it was time to fish. Gangs were equipped with two boats and a seine. This fishing practice continued until about 1940. Trap fishing and lobstering were also important early fishing methods in the area.

Today, Galilee is a busy commercial fishing and recreational boating port. There are sightseeing, whale watching, and fishing trips available, as well as a ferry to Block Island. (Block Island is a small, fashionable island located thirteen miles from the coast.)

In 1948, the fishermen of Galilee organized the Point Judith Fisherman's Cooperative in

⁷ Point Judith Light was built in 1857, the octagonal, granite tower stands on the west side of the entrance to Narragansett Bay. It is the third lighthouse to be erected on the site. The two previous lights, a wooden tower built in 1810 and a stone tower built in 1816, were both destroyed in storms.

⁸ <http://omp.gso.uri.edu/discovery/saltmarsh/smh15.htm>

⁹ History of Galilee see <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/9105/galhist.html>

¹⁰ Whaley 1939:4

order to obtain better prices for their catch. Prior to this, the fishermen generally consigned their fish for sale to the New York or Philadelphia markets. The Cooperative provided processing plants, freezing plants, dock facilities as well as representatives who could deal effectively with state and federal agencies. Through the Co-op, fish were marketed throughout the East Coast from Maine to South Carolina. The Point Judith Fisherman's Cooperative was one of the most successful in the country and was a major influence in making Galilee a thriving fishing port. As of 1978, Point Judith's landings made up 61 percent of Rhode Islands' total catch. In 1992, the total value of finfish landed in Point Judith was \$36.2 million. The Co-op failed in 1994. Some informants suggested that the Co-op became over-extended constructing new facilities, others suggested that its non-profit status caused the Directors to underestimate the funds needed for cash flow and expansion, so too much was dispersed to the membership.

The Point Club was started by the Board of Directors of the Coop to self-insure the vessels. It was created as a separate entity from the Coop and remains viable. It draws membership from the whole Atlantic coast.

Since the post-war days, significant change has come to Point Judith. Tourism is pushing the fishing industry into the economic background as the port becomes more gentrified.¹¹ Areas where fishermen used to park before setting out to sea are now reserved as parking lots for tourists. All but one of the social gathering spots for fishermen have been converted into such tourist attractions as ice cream shops and restaurants. Nevertheless, in 1999, fin fish landings reached 72.5 million pounds worth \$51 million.

While the immediate future of the fishing industry in Point Judith is promising, a lack of recruitment and loss of social and cultural capital through gentrification prevents the industry from expanding, and could accelerate its decline if gentrification intensifies. There is evidence that this is occurring, since the South Kingstown area is experiencing a population growth due to the high quality of living and the benefits of a good school system that is driving rapid land development.¹² As values of local dock space and land increase, further declines in fishing infrastructure may follow.

Point Judith has a gentrification scale rank of 7 and factor score of .842, compared to the highly gentrified Newport with a rank of 5 and factor score of .852.

*Demography*¹³

Population

Narragansett (based on the school district boundaries) had 14,985 people according to the 1990 Census, 7,362 male and 7,623 female.

Age Structure

The population of children was 2,311 (3 to 19 years old) in 1989.

Education

For persons 20 years and older, 1,256 had no high school diploma; 2,387 had graduated from high school, 4,033 had some college and 4,105 had a Bachelor's or higher degree.

Housing

Of the 8,206 housing units in 1989, 3,382 were owner-occupied, 2,461 were rented and 2,363 were vacant.

¹¹ Dale 1992

¹² Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation

¹³ <http://govinfo.library.orst.edu/sddb-stateis.html>

Racial and Ethnic Composition

The population was largely white (14,473) with 121 Blacks, 137 American Indians/Eskimo/Aleut, 122 Asians and 9 "Other." The first ancestry reported (in rank order) was Irish, English, Italian, German, French, Hispanic and Polish with scattered representatives of various others.

Economic Context

Income

Median household income in 1989 was \$35,545 and per capita income was \$16,986.

Employment

Details of demographic transition and economic history up to 1970 can be found in Poggie and Gersuny (1978). The primary trend has been towards an increase in the services sector away from primary and secondary sectors. In 1970, only 1.1 percent of workers were engaged in agriculture (93 people), 903 in manufacturing (including 244 in textiles), 24.2 percent in material goods-producing occupations, with the majority (74.7%) involved in various professional, white collar, and service pursuits.

As of 1996, the labor force remains skewed towards the service industry, with fishermen numbers remaining fairly constant.

Fisheries Profile

Community

Pt. Judith fulfills the definition of a fishing community on the basis of central place theory. Fish are legally sold ex-vessel to a dealer, processor or the public;¹⁴ fishing support services are provided; there are public facilities providing dockage; fishing people satisfy their daily and weekly social and/or economic needs here, and some fishermen and their representatives participate in fisheries resource management.

Despite changes, as one respondent put it, "*there is still a distinct community of fishermen here.*" Fishermen comprise a social and occupational network: "*People know each other.*" The small town atmosphere is punctuated by functions such as the Fishermen's Scholarship Fund's annual game feast where \$6,000 was recently raised for the sons and daughters of fishermen. The Fund also sponsors a road race and all events are fully subscribed.

Commercial fishing and fisheries-related employment

Harvesting structure

A fleet consisting of offshore and inshore vessels follow a cyclic, shifting pattern of resource use that sets Point Judith apart from most northern New England ports. Point Judith boats are diverse in their annual round and approach to the fisheries. Fishermen are employed full-time as they switch fisheries, gear and boats during the year. The port most similar to Point Judith is Chatham, although Chatham has no large offshore vessels in its fleet.

Port facilities, although small scale compared to New Bedford or Gloucester, are adequate for the size of the local fleet. There are approximately 230 vessels of all types berthed in Point Judith.¹⁵ The area is not much bigger than 3 city blocks, but all the activity in the area is associated with some aspect of the fishing industry. Vessels are located at a number of docks that extend perpendicular to the main street. Another set of docks, mostly used by lobster boats, extends off a large industrial area. Across from the harbor are a number of

¹⁴ "Ex-vessel" means directly from the fishing vessel.

¹⁵ Personal communication, Dan McGovern, Division of Coastal Resources

empty docks for seasonal recreational boaters.

Adaptability is a trademark of the Point Judith fleet. Point Judith fishermen have the capacity and willingness to innovate and spread their efforts across different gear types and fishery stocks.¹⁶ For example, recent increases in local landings resulted from targeting herring, which involves a gear conversion costing \$125,000. Such success and economic flexibility is mirrored in a fleet that is fairly modern and in good repair.

The number of commercial vessels in port is 134. Vessels range from 45-90 feet, with most being ground trawlers. Of these, 55 are between 45 and 75 feet, and 17 over 75 feet. The smaller vessels have 1-2 person crews, with larger vessels manned by 4-5 crew. Most larger vessels fish for squid, herring and whiting. Some smaller inshore boats were targeting groundfish at the time of the interviews, but no boats over 70 feet were doing so. Key respondents explained that most of the vessels are flexible, fishing whatever species they believe they can catch and for which they can find markets.

There are about 40 inshore and 10 offshore lobster boats that call this port their home, along with 4 lobster dealers and one bait house that specializes in lobster bait (i.e., salted herring and strung skates). Newport has 6 large offshore lobster boats and about 20 inshore boats. The distinction between inshore and offshore lobster boats has blurred of late as many so-called inshore boats may be capable of going offshore with the highly sophisticated equipment they have aboard.

Some larger vessels from Gloucester and other ports occasionally join the local fleet. One fisherman from Gloucester recently fished for squid off of Rhode Island. His motivation was to establish a history in the squid fishery (a form of future "fishing investment"), although he lost money on the initial venture.

The captain of the one eastern-rigged side trawler still in operation fishes south past Montauk and north to New Bedford. He described his fishing strategy as 'opportunistic' (marketing whatever is caught). For example, his recent catches have included skate, which is salted in barrels and sold as lobster bait.

Processing structure

The large industrial area at the northern end of the street is where most fish processing is done. Six processing plants including the former Point Judith Coop (now owned by an independent operator) and Town Dock are located there.

"Town Dock" receives a variety of groundfish, although they do not process much cod and haddock. The company started packing herring in the 1980's, sending 10 trucks to Gloucester daily. For a time the company concentrated on yellowtail, fluke, and cod. About seven years ago it shifted its focus because of a decrease in landings for these species. Now they process little groundfish but primarily handle squid, herring and mackerel. This has caused problems for those who continue to target groundfish. At least one fisherman has moved his vessel to Newport, claiming that processors favor the larger offshore vessels.

Among the companies that handle squid are the Pt. Judith Fishermen's Company (formerly the Co-op), Town Dock, South Pier Fish and Sea Fresh Corporation.

As in Gloucester, there is an external market for seafood products, including processing of non-local seafood products. For example, the Mitsubishi Corporation has an arrangement with Sea Fresh Corporation. Mitsubishi Fresh, Inc. contracts 16 Taiwanese longliners to fish for big eye and yellowfin tuna off of Brazil and Trinidad. These vessels stay out for six months at a time, unloading their catch onto carrier vessels in exchange for fuel and food, and then return to Trinidad where the main plant is located. Fish are handled and shipped from Trinidad to Miami and New York for distribution in the US markets. Most of the harvest

¹⁶ Key respondent interview.

is sold domestically. However, all sales and business are conducted out of Narragansett. The involvement of foreign investors in local seafood processing is a pattern that is being repeated in many ports. Processing of foreign fish products is an important economic activity in both New Bedford and Gloucester.

Support Services

There are numerous support industries along the water. Facilities include dockside fuel pumps, a single restaurant/store, bait shops,¹⁷ commercial marine suppliers, recreational suppliers, and vessel repair shops. Along the adjoining streets are several other restaurants devoted to seafood. The Block Island Ferry leaves from this port so a large seasonal population of people passes through town.

A telephone survey identified eleven suppliers of fisheries equipment, 32 wholesale fish and seafood buyers, four seafood brokers, and 2 packers. New in September 2001 is a seafood display auction in Galilee associated with the auction in Gloucester. Owned and operated from Point Judith, through electronic links, the auction and sales of groundfish will be conducted in Gloucester. Lobster and shellfish will be handled by the owner's existing business. The facility has 159 foot, privately owned dock where vessels can land their catch. Fuel and ice will also be provided.¹⁸ Eight cents per pound paid by the seller covers the cost of offloading, handling, processing and ice. Buyers must have a \$50,000 bank credit line to participate and they pay other fees. Payment to the fishermen is thus guaranteed.

There is a waiting list for a designated docking space in the port. Lobster boats (small day boats) have a particular dock spot for which they pay annually. New boat purchasers are entitled to keep the vessel's designated dock space if the purchaser is a relative of previous owner. If not a relative, the designated spot goes to next person on the waiting list and the new vessel owner is added at the end of the list. The annual fee for dock space is \$1300 and is handled by the state. Vessels without designated spaces can use the transit dock, but run the risk of being crushed by larger boats. Large boats also pay annually (by their length), but do not get a personal spot. *"First come first serve when you arrive in port; at any given time most vessels are at sea and there is plenty of space. The day before a storm all boats will be in and you will see them all rafted off — chaos."*¹⁹

Respondents noted that Rhode Island's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is hoping to bring in "for-profit" dock management. Some fishermen anticipate that such management would enforce rules (such as fee collection) and thus make it easier for those who are on the waiting list to obtain a designated spot. Evidently, some people maintain their spot by keeping a dory rather than an active commercial fishing vessel. Nevertheless, some are concerned that the EDC's management would favor recreational vessels over commercial and "like the port across the pond, commercial vessels would be pushed out."

There is no public cold storage facility in the state of Rhode Island.

Employment and dependency

Point Judith is the most fisheries-dependent of the communities in Rhode Island. There are approximately 500 households involved in the commercial fisheries, and another 400 indirectly dependent. Key respondents noted that the federal employment statistics are very

¹⁷ Lobster bait: A windowpane flounder (brill)/skate mix was said to by one respondent to be the most common bait now. In winter windowpane flounder is the usual bait but in summer it breaks down too fast, so skate is mixed in to increase fishing time. This is especially true for people with large gangs of traps who can't pull them often. Another respondent said that bait is usually skate, menhaden or shad. Shad only lasts one day, but lays a scent trail that attracts lobsters. Skate lasts longer and so provides food for trapped lobsters. Both menhaden and shad are caught floating fish traps; menhaden is also caught in purse seines.

¹⁸ *The Fishermen's Call*, Vol 1, Issue 2, August 2001

¹⁹ Raft-out means the boats are tied up one to another rather than directly to the docks, visually comparable to double or triple parking.

inaccurate for Rhode Island.

“Town Dock” employs 50 people and hires between 20-50 part-timers as needed. Temporary employees work there on a seasonal basis depending on the species being packed. Permanent employees all live in the area, while part timers live as far away as Providence.

Point Judith is situated in a highly gentrified and gentrifying area, with pressure from tourism pushing up real estate prices. Yet, the fishery continues to hold on with a fishery infrastructure rank of 5th (with a factor score of 1.350), supported by the presence of bait houses, boat yards, docking facilities, fishermen’s associations, processors/wholesalers, seafood restaurants, welding suppliers and locally-based seafood trucking operations.

Sales/revenue

In 1999, Pt. Judith landed 72.5 million pounds worth \$51.2 million dollars, second only to New Bedford among New England ports.²⁰ Point Judith ranked 8th in value of landings among major U.S. ports in 1999 (9th in 1998).

In 1999, the flooding of fish markets with Russian cod, Canadian, and European fish products drove down dockside prices of domestic product. The result was that valuable fish such as grey sole were being bought at \$.10 a pound (key respondents, Point Judith and New Bedford), far below their retail value to consumers and far below a break even price for domestic groundfish fishermen. In addition, Southeast Asian frozen flat fish, scallops and squid from South America, China and India competed with domestic product. Imported fish has few restrictions, and local fishermen are forced to deal with occasional floods of foreign product that turn otherwise productive fishing trips into “brokers,” i.e., net-loss activities.

Sixteen percent of the seafood exports of the East Coast come from Rhode Island (45 percent of New England’s exports) and are comprised primarily of squid and lobster.

Species, Seasonality

Fish product from Point Judith is considered to be of very high quality. It commands high prices in Fulton’s Market in New York and the Boston Fish Exchange.

Species	Season
Squid	Year round, with the bulk in May
Herring	December to April
Mackerel	March to May
Whiting	Year round, with the bulk in summer
Scup	Year round, but recently scarce

Other important species include butterfish and fluke. Squid, herring, mackerel and whiting are predominantly offshore midwater species caught by large (70') vessels. Groundfish such as yellowtail, winter and summer flounders are primarily targeted by inshore medium length vessels (no large, offshore vessels).

An ecological advantage for Point Judith fishermen is that they are close to many of their primary stocks. Another advantage is that Point Judith fishermen have access to mid-Atlantic stocks such as butterfish, which are approaching the northern most point in their range, as well as access to northern traditional groundfish areas and stocks. An important key to the adaptability of Point Judith fishermen is the switching of both target species and gear. Proximity to the different ecological systems of the mid-Atlantic and New England assures the success of this strategy.

Twenty-five years ago, whiting, squid, butterfish and scup were already primary targets of

²⁰ *Fisheries of the United States, 1999*. U.S. Dept of Commerce, NOAA, NMFS. Prepared by Fisheries Statistics Division. Available at <http://www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/fus/fus99/index.html>

Point Judith vessels. Groundfish was targeted only when the others were less abundant. Point Judith is also a "short trip" port because the species usually targeted do not store well. Thirty years ago, vessels also caught swordfish using harpoons. Fifteen years ago, gillnets were used for swords, though there were never more than about four gillnetters.

Lobster is also an important local fishery. However, the lobster and shellfish fishermen were severely impacted by a 1996 oil spill. On January 19, 1996, the tank barge NORTH CAPE and the tug SCANDIA grounded on Moonstone Beach in southern Rhode Island after the tug caught fire, spilling an estimated 828,000 gallons of home heating oil. Oil spread throughout a large area of Block Island Sound, including Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge, resulting in the closure of a 250-square mile area of the Sound for fishing.²¹ It was later determined that 9 million lobsters were killed by the spill, as well as 19 million surf clams, 4.2 million fish, and over half a million kilograms of marine biomass such as worms, crabs, and mussels. In the salt ponds, 6.5 million worms and other amphipods, more than one million crabs, shrimp, clams and oysters, and another half-million fish were killed. Birds were also harmed by the spill; 2,300 marine birds were killed, including 402 loons. In addition, there were five to ten fewer piping plover chicks hatched at Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge. Closure of these waters and the death of millions of lobsters and shellfish had a severe local impact. Lobster fishermen were forced to discard polluted traps, fish outside traditional areas, and discard lobsters that had any signs of being polluted.

The spill also forced some fishermen to dock in Newport and fish in areas where they would normally not go. The water around Pt. Judith could not be used to pump out the herring boats, so Town Dock had to pump out at Quonset. The greatest impact of the oil spill has been on the lobster fishermen, although nearshore areas fished by inshore bottom trawlers have also experienced closures. Furthermore, a domino effect on the communities was noticeable. Everyone from hairdressers to grocery stores owners had to lay off employees. A restoration settlement agreement was finally announced in July 2000.

Landed species include butterfish, fluke, herring, mackerel, squid, whiting, scup and lobsters.

Cultural role of fishing

Cultural events

The social cohesiveness of the Point Judith community was based on the sharing of a common occupation and traditions of the fishing lifestyle. Twenty years ago, there was a different atmosphere to the community. Bait processing and related jobs brought locals with no prior experience into contact with established fishermen to share in the development of the industry. An event that represented this shared lifestyle was the "Blessing of the Fleet." The Blessing, put on by the Lions Club to honor the commercial fishing industry, was marked with food, games, parades, and other festivities. Commercial fishing boats would be cleaned and decorated for the celebration to symbolically demonstrate their central value in the social and economic life pattern of the community. Restrictions by the insurance companies for the commercial vessels have severely curtailed participation by commercial fishermen in the Blessing. It is now an event principally celebrated by the recreational fishing participants.

Ethnicity in the fisheries

The majority of fishermen are first generation and lack historical ties to the industry. There is also little ethnic diversity in the population. The overwhelming majority of fishermen are white males. Older fishermen refer to themselves as "Swamp Yankees." "*These fishermen are mostly Yankee... they change. The more ethnically rooted a fishing community is, the more difficult it is for them to change. There is a good side to a lack of tradition.*"

²¹ <http://www.darp.noaa.gov/neregion/ncape.htm>

A majority of fish processing workers are ethnic minorities. The former Coop contracts a company to bus in Asians and Hispanics (e.g., Puerto Ricans, Colombians, and Dominicans) from Providence to work in the fish houses.

Fishing related organizations and their roles in the community and fishery

Commercial fishing associations

Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative

Until 1994, the Point Judith Fisherman's Coop was a viable organization that provided marketing support to members. The marketing-purchasing organization of the Coop made it *"one of the most effective fishing cooperatives in the United States. Overcapitalization has been cited as the major factor in the failure of the cooperative, but other conditions such as poor prices and market conditions could have contributed to its demise."* The Coop has been purchased, and is now run as an independent fish marketing organization.

With enactment of the 200-mile limit in 1976, new entrants into the fishery were encouraged by inexpensive boat loans made available through the US Department of Commerce. This expansion of the industry pressured the Coop to put a moratorium on memberships. This was extended until 1986-87 when the Coop increased its processing capacity by moving into a new larger building. Yet during the Coop moratorium, other companies filled the niche created by the expanding industry, and by the time the Coop could accommodate the influx, there was little incentive for fishermen to join. The expansion of the Coop increased operating costs and, along with pressures from local and external (main market) competitors, contributed to its collapse in 1994.

The building and facilities of the cooperative have since been taken over by a fish dealer from out of state and now operates as the Point Judith Fishermen's Company.

East Coast Fisheries Federation

An important fishing organization based in Point Judith is the East Coast Fisheries Federation (ECFF). It is mainly a large boat organization extending from New Bedford to New Jersey. ECFF is partially supported by funding from local processors, and functions to keep fishermen abreast of important management issues. Funds are taken from fuel costs, with \$.3 cents from every gallon going to the organization, which ensures its existence even if there is a lack of interest.

According to the organization president *"most fishermen are issue orientated when it comes to joining organizations...so when the crisis is handled, the organization usually goes down the drain. Because there is a no hassle membership subscription with our organization, these vessels are ensured consistent representation and information from the stability of the organization funds."* The president claims he has never lost a member by default and sees a continuing solid base of participation.

Rhode Island Seafood Council was established in 1976 as a nonprofit, statewide seafood marketing association to promote top quality seafood and seafood products.

The American Seafood Institute, an offshoot of R.I. Seafood Council, was formed in 1982 for overseas promotion and export assistance programs. The Institute is a cooperator under the United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service Market Access Program (MAP). Both generic seafood promotion overseas and assistance to individual company's marketing are undertaken. For example, the Institute works with the Maine Lobster Promotion Council and Maine Lobster Processors Association to promote overseas exports of "American lobster."

The Bay Company, the Rhode Island Marine Trade Education Initiative, was developed by the RI Seafood Council in 1999 to increase collaboration among educators and the various employers in marine-related industry. Not only is the program intended to ensure a qualified workforce for the diverse trades, but also to help employers improve their

productivity and economic viability.

Rhode Island Commercial Fishermen's Association formed in 2000 to "protect Rhode Island's first industry from becoming extinct by maintaining the commercial fishery in the State of Rhode Island as a way of life for present and future generations." The membership includes fishermen, dealers, suppliers and others. One of the goals is to reach consensus on issues, improve working relationships with state and local officials, harvest fish sustainably, obtain quota for Rhode Island fishermen, and have input in management regulations.

Other associations:

Rhode Island Lobstermen's Association
 Rhode Island Inshore Commercial Fishermen's Association
 Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association
 Ocean State Fisherman's Association
 Rhode Island Commercial Rod & Reel Anglers
 Ocean State Aquaculture Association

Fishing-related programs and services

Other NGOs

The Point Judith Mission initially helped fishing families in crisis with food and small loans. Over the years the emphasis moved towards helping fishermen and others with substance abuse problems. Today, some key respondents feel the Mission has lost its community orientation as a support resource for fishing families and in fact has retained little connection with the industry.

The Coastal Institute seeks to advance knowledge and solve problems in coastal ecosystems. The Institute partners with local, state, national and international agencies. One of its programs is the "Fish, Fisheries and Aquaculture Initiative focused on practitioners and scientists committed to sustainable use of living aquatic resources."²²

The American Seafood Institute established in 1982, is dedicated to promoting seafood both to the American consumer and to international markets.

The Narragansett Lions Club started the "Blessing of the Fleet" in 1972 to honor the commercial fishermen and their families. They produced a brochure with participating boats' names and pictures, ran food and beer tents, and organized a road race. In recent years, there has been little participation by commercial boats and in fact, some have been disgruntled by the closing of the port for two days to prepare for and hold the road race.²³ Two members are currently investigating ways to make the ceremony again appeal to the commercial fleet.²⁴

Extension programs

University of Rhode Island's Sea Grant Program has maintained strong ties to the industry, providing safety training courses, alternative fishing gear development (and outreach for gear research), development of markets for alternative species and more recently, aquaculture.

Recreational fishing associations

Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association

²² <http://www.ci.uri.edu/partners.htm>

²³ Key respondent interview.

²⁴ *The Fishermen's Call*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, July 2001

Perceptions of the Fishing Community²⁵

Importance of fishing to the community

The development of tourism in South Kingstown and a focus on offshore trawling has created problems for the few inshore draggers who wish to continue bottom trawling. Dock space is expensive and the commercial infrastructure cannot be expanded since it must compete with a growing recreational boat sector. The trend has been towards consolidation of infrastructure and a loss of “social” space as the surrounding area becomes gentrified. However, as one respondent noted, the fishing village atmosphere is what makes Point Judith attractive to tourists. “Without the fishing fleet it is only a ferry dock.”

Boundaries

Most fishermen from this port live within a 20-mile radius. There is little residential housing near the port. Thus, there is no communal enclave of fishermen residences and fishing families are scattered throughout the small local communities of Southern Rhode Island, including Snug Harbor, Wakefield, and Narragansett. Although Point Judith does have a tradition in the fisheries, many of the people here have few family connections to the fishing industry. One key respondent suggested that the typical Point Judith fisherman is around 40 years old, has some college education, and came into the fisheries during the 1960's primarily for the lifestyle and financial independence afforded by the occupation. A statewide survey is currently being conducted that presumably will confirm or qualify this perception.

Communication Issues

Key respondents indicated that they are often insulted by the way they are perceived and publicly portrayed by fishery scientists, that is, there is no perceived respect for their knowledge or experience as fishermen by those managing the resource.

Four government regulatory agencies are important to Rhode Island commercial fishermen, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) (managing herring with NEFMC), the New England Fishery Management Council (managing groundfish, monkfish, dogfish), the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (managing fluke, black sea bass, squid, butterfish, scup and bluefish) and Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM). The Rhode Island Fisheries Council, chaired by DEM's director, has the most influence on state fishery regulations.²⁶

Assessments

“ . . . A lot of times the information that the National Marine Fisheries Service uses for their surveys is really off track, because of the limited amount of time and their methods—just not enough to come up with accurate numbers to base management on. And then with the politics that come into play between the different use groups and the different fishermen, things get distorted . . . ”

“ Nobody knows better than the fishermen, nobody, without a doubt. For the amount of time that they put out there, there's nobody that has a better idea of what's happening within the fisheries than the fishermen themselves.”

Local management practices

Lobstermen use the threat of violence to prevent people from taking lobster by scuba even though it is legal to do so. Violence is also possible when there are theft of catch issues

²⁵ Based on key informant interviews

²⁶ In June 2001, the Council became less significant because it became “advisory.”

(someone is suspected of taking lobsters from another's pots).

While there are no specifically allocated dock spots for trip vessels, a vessel whose owner has been in the port for a long time will have a regular space that people leave him whenever possible. This is only informally enforced by verbal retorts from "owner" or an "accidental" brush by his vessel.

Economic Change

Respondents indicated that the lobster fishery in good shape now and was the same five years ago. Respondents were also hopeful for the future. *"Seeing lots of egg bearing lobsters this year, even small ones, believes in seven years there will be a great lobster catch."*

Other respondents believe that a gauge increase would hurt lobstermen financially. *"People are making a living, but a few are just squeaking by, they could go out if gauge increased."*

Fishing families

Up to the end of the 1980's, the social reproduction of the fishery usually followed a father-son, uncle-nephew progression, that is, fishermen were related to each other patrilineally. Even though the history of commercial fishing is relatively short, the kinship ties of fishermen in this area are long-standing. Poggie and Gersuny (1978) found that 51 percent of fishermen active in 1971 had surnames found in the 1774 colonial census of the town, as contrasted with 28 percent of textile workers. This is predicted by the Natural Resource Community model, in which relationships to utilization of local resources, whether they be extracted through commercial fishing, farming, or for subsistence purposes, tie individuals to a location through the social and cultural value of a renewable natural resource extraction lifestyle.

Within the sample of fishermen there was some variation; 57 percent of lobstermen and 47 percent of trawl fishermen have surnames found in the colonial census.²⁷ From the 1971 sample, 73 percent of fishermen said they had one or more of their relatives in fishing, while only 16 percent reported one or more of their wife's relatives in fishing.

In 1978, among 116 members of the fishing cooperative, 18 surnames accounted for 47 percent of the members, while one family name, represented by three or more fishermen each, accounted for 32 percent of the members. Thus, patrilineal kinship ties have defined the social and occupational networks of local fishermen for generations. Even though the influence of kinship in recruitment has probably declined, a recent (1999) dockside intercept survey of seven boat captains found them working with a son and/or one other male relative as part of the crew.

Another significant change is that women are involved more as crew and dockside support than they were in the past, with at least one woman boat owner in the port. Another difference with the present fishing populations from the early 1970s is that there was an influx of first generation fishermen from URI and nearby communities that have no family history in the industry who got into fishing because it was an available option. Present recruitment, however, is at a standstill as limits on permits, well-established occupational networks, the end of the Fisheries Program at URI and high start-up costs inhibit new entrants to the fishery.

Interactions with recreational fishing industry

Other issues include gear conflicts, area restrictions, and competition for resources with the recreational sector. Social conflicts noted by Poggie and Gersuny in 1978 have only

²⁷ Census of Rhode Island 1969:84ff

worsened since, and their description is apt: "Although they are circumspect in talking about them, commercial fishermen also have to contend with sports fishermen and pleasure boating enthusiasts as competitors in the social environment. Inshore pot lobstermen in particular view these groups as their enemies, as human predators who interfere with their livelihood. Pleasure boaters frequently violate the rules of the road and damage fishing gear, as well as compete for scarce dock space."²⁸

²⁸ Poggie and Gersuny (1978:48)

Community Profile
Newport County
Rhode Island Sub-region

5.2.2. Newport County

5.2.2.1 Jamestown

Background

Jamestown is a fairly exclusive island community with a mixture of high-priced and some modest real estate in the middle of Narragansett Bay. The community is characterized by scenic water views and a substantial port area dedicated to recreational boating and fishing. Jamestown has many tourist shops and restaurants to go along with historic buildings in a well-maintained waterfront district. Until the Newport/Jamestown Bridge was built, the link between the island and Newport was only possible by ferry, an exclusivity that many residents would have preferred to maintain. Now that the island can be reached by car, from the west and east, the downtown area and pier has become a focal point both for tourists and for Rhode Islanders wishing to spend a day at the beach or walk along its sunny waterfront. Despite a heavy emphasis on recreation and tourism, the location of Jamestown allows it to support a modest fleet of about 30 commercial fishing boats that work the Narragansett Bay and the nearby coast of Rhode Island.

Nevertheless, a heavier reliance on tourism and recreational boating by local residents has put pressure on the commercial fishing sector. In particular, docking space is now at a premium, seen as more valuable for recreational uses than commercial. Most of the town marina caters to regional and local pleasure craft, with 15 of the 16 docks reserved for recreational use. The last remaining commercial fishing space consists of one pier at the main dock. This is seen by city fathers as a hindrance to further recreational development.²⁹ An ordinance already exists that requires the commercial fishermen's vehicles to be parked away from the pier. This is a limiting factor that has isolated fishermen from the pier front and is seen by some as an attempt to push commercial fishermen completely out of the downtown area. Jamestown doesn't rank much higher than the small Sakonnet Point operation in fishing infrastructure differentiation, with a low rank of 27 and a factor score of -.406. Moreover, Jamestown ranks high on the gentrification scale, with a rank number of 11 and factor score of .667. This gentrification process is consistent with what is found in such other communities as Bridgeport (Connecticut) that are not obviously concerned about the survival of the commercial fishery.

The conflict over proper or best use of waterfront property is one found throughout New England. Some communities have chosen to safeguard waterfront access for water-dependent use including commercial fishing. However, this concern is not universal. Some communities have chosen to de-emphasize commercial fishing in their rush to cash in on what is viewed as a more lucrative industry, tourism and with it recreational fishing. However, conservation of what little docking infrastructure remains is essential if commercial fishing is to be sustained at even a modest level.

Given the marginal position of Jamestown's fishing industry, it is unlikely that changes will occur favoring the industry in either regulations or development. Developmental trends and the emphasis on water recreation and gentrification in Jamestown's economy suggest that the future of the present fishing population is uncertain. For comparison, even though there are numerically more commercial fishermen in Jamestown when compared to Sakonnet Point, Sakonnet Point, being isolated and with few tourist amenities, represents a stable state of total fishing capital. Jamestown has the potential for significant loss of total capital devoted to commercial fishing.

²⁹ Key fisherman respondent, Jamestown

Fisheries Profile

Community

Most local fishermen (52 out of 62 or 83%) live within Jamestown proper. The others live in Narragansett or other enclaves a short distance from the pier.

Commercial fishing and fisheries-related employment

Harvesting structure

There are approximately 30 boats that fish out of Jamestown. Most of them are docked in town but some of the lobster boats are docked at other locations in the town. Boats range between 16 and 40 feet, and include 12 wooden lobster boats, 15 small shellfish skiffs, and 3 draggers (otter trawls).

Employment (year-around and seasonal)

According to a key respondent, at least 60 households are directly dependent on the commercial fishery. Using a multiplier of four to calculate the number of households indirectly dependent on the fishery, he estimated that there are about 160 households.

There is very little recruitment into the fishery, virtually no possibility for expansion, and those who pick up additional workers do so in the spring and summer, when extra help is needed sorting groundfish or hauling in lobster pots.

Species, Seasonality

Live caught fish and lobsters are premium products. Fishermen from Jamestown target a wide variety of local species. The groundfish targeted are: cod (offshore), flounders, fluke, dabs, winter flounder, yellowtail (offshore), hake, weakfish and gray sole (offshore). Small mesh fisheries include whiting and squid; pelagics targeted include herring and mackerel; crustaceans targeted are crab and lobster; other fish include swordfish and tuna along with striped bass, dogfish, skate, monkfish, tilefish, bluefish, conch, scallops, whelks, bass, scup, soft shell clams, quahogs, mussels and menhaden (for lobster bait). One niche fisherman collects rockweed on a part-time basis.

Cultural role of fishing

Ethnicity in the fisheries

Though none of the fishermen are foreign born, many of their last names hint of a Portuguese or French ancestry.

Perceptions of the Fishing Community³⁰

Importance of fishing to the community

Jamestown residents celebrate their recreational fishing and boating activities, and local marinas and Chamber of Commerce carry brochures touting these aspects of the dockside community. Despite the small size of its port, Jamestown has most of the amenities desired by tourists or boaters such as restaurants, marinas, diesel fuel, and retail lobster availability. But there are very few services that support commercial fishing. This is consistent with the local value system and its emphasis on the recreational boating sector. There is no fish dealer and both fish and lobster landed in Jamestown are trucked to other locations. Lobster bait is also trucked into the community.

Despite the relatively few people who depend directly or indirectly on the fishery, our key respondent thought that the fishery is very important socially, while economically (“a business point of view) it is only “slightly important.” Although commercial fishing is not a

³⁰ Based on key informant interviews

prominent presence in Jamestown, some of the fishermen hold strong sentiments regarding their contributions to the local economy and culture.

Boundaries

Commercial fishermen must rely on those communities that support larger commercial fishing operations, such as Newport and Point Judith, for almost all supplies unique to the industry. However, there is one locally produced commercial fishery vessel product (fasteners for wooden boats) that serves the needs of lobster and shellfish fishermen operating wooden boats in the Bay.

The location of Jamestown in Narragansett Bay shapes the centrality of community contacts and capital flows, and contributes to the regional aspect of local fishing communities in Rhode Island. A key respondent pointed out that with Newport just across the bay and Point Judith no more than 20 minutes away, fishing supplies are easy to access. The communities people have the most contact with are Newport and Providence, followed by Point Judith. Moreover, the choice of whether to go Newport or Point Judith to find the supplies or buy them in Jamestown is often a matter of personal choice rather than necessity.

Where do people go to do the following things?

Sell Fish	Newport/Point Judith
Offload Fish	Newport/Jamestown
Buy Fishing Gear	Pt. Judith
Buy Ice	Pt. Judith
Buy Fuel/ Oil	Jamestown
Haul out Boat Repairs	Jamestown/Providence/Wickford/Point Judith
Bookkeeping	Jamestown
Banking	Jamestown
Shopping	Jamestown
Go to church	Jamestown
Got to school	Jamestown
Go for Health Care	Jamestown/Newport
Go for Childcare	Jamestown
Visit Relatives	Rhode Island
Visit Friends	Rhode Island
Go for Vacation	Florida/New Hampshire
Go for Recreation	Warwick
Socialize	Jamestown

Communication Issues

A key respondent described the harbormaster of Jamestown as "energetic and doing an excellent job." Communication with local and state officials is "very good." It is important to note that there is no stratification between local and state officials as Rhode Island is managed on a statewide level. Communication with federal fishery managers is considered "poor."

Despite the relatively positive responses to questions about communication with everyone except federal managers, in cases where conflicts have arisen, they have resulted in court cases. Litigation by individuals and communities in addition to increasing enforcement cases was said to have made the fishery in this sub-region very litigious. For example, there

are four current (1997) cases mentioned by one key respondent.

Some respondents in Jamestown also take issue with the New England Fishery Management Council, whose authority is limited to making regulations on size, numbers of fish, methods of harvest and season. They question the Council's right to designate which people will take the resource, "*if anglers can take it why cannot the commercial fishermen as well compete for that resource?*"

Economic Change

On a one to five scale, ten years ago fishing was rated as "good": "*It was an open fishery, if you worked hard, you could make money.*" Five years ago, fishing was considered "fair," "*but you could see the government coming.*" Today, fishing is rated as "poor." This elicited no comment, perhaps attesting to how bad the fishing has become. Five years from now was also given a "poor." According to the key respondent, "*I can't see how it will be different, even worse.*" Life has definitely not gotten better during the last five years. "*It is harder to make a living these days.*" The cause of this, according to the key respondent, "*is the government, they screwed it up, fishermen are easy to control.*"

Economic Condition of the Fishery

Ten Years Ago	Good
Five Years Ago	Fair
Today	Poor
Five Years from Now	Poor

Effects of recent management

Recent fishery regulations that are said to be having the most impact are the numbers of regulations and limited entry. "Limited entry provides protection in the short term but limits access and competition. Those with the money end up controlling the fishery and tend to act like corporations after 20 years of the status quo. The government has created this attitude of self preservation and greed."

One respondent cited government intervention in the fisheries as one of the most significant changes in the fishing industry. His suggestion to the government is "keep it simple—simple regulations. Complex regulations need effective enforcement. Ineffective enforcement makes the playing ground more uneven, which then calls for more complex regulations, creating a vicious cycle of regulatory layering that creates a difficult paperwork burden for those who fish."

He also labeled technology as the other most significant change in the industry. This, unlike the former change, was seen for both its negative and positive changes and contributions to the industry. Safety has been traditionally seen as a very positive aspect of technology. Some "have viewed technology like GPS and Fish finders as the devil that did in the fish while others have likened it to David and Goliath, equalizing the fishermen with the sea."

Characteristics of local fishermen

Job satisfaction

When asked if local fishermen are satisfied with their work, a key respondent stated that "nobody fishes if they didn't want to, they must prefer that to other things." This is a sentiment that has been shared by many of the fishermen. This is especially pertinent in

Jamestown compared to Downeast Maine, where there are few options outside of fishing, and many young people who chose not to fish outmigrate from the area. Jamestown, being close to Newport and Providence offers fishermen a plethora of marine and non-marine related jobs should they choose not to fish.

Fishing families

Fishing in Jamestown was said to contribute 25 to 100% of fishing households' incomes, with an estimated average fishing contribution of 60 percent. Spouses contribute to the household through second jobs and by assisting with the paperwork burden. As noted, there is no economic motivation for young people to enter the fishery especially since many other options are available in nearby communities such as Providence and Newport. It is unlikely that many local people will enter the fishery as it is not promoted as the "thing to do" with one's life. This mirrors opinions expressed by fishing operators in Connecticut, who noted that the easy access to indoor jobs requiring little physical labor makes commercial fishing unattractive to most youth.

Community Profile
Newport County
Rhode Island Sub-region

5.2.2.2. Newport

Background

Newport is a historical port dedicated to tourism and recreational boating but with a long and persistent commercial fishing presence. Before the development of the docking facilities at Point Judith, Newport was the center for fishing and shipping in the state. In 1971, 57 percent of all commercial fisheries landings were in Newport, but Point Judith surpassed Newport in importance by 1973, and now is the dominant commercial port in the state.

Tourism in Newport started as far back as the 1700s. Visitors included southern plantation owners who stayed in Newport to escape the heat of the summer. By the 1830s, tourist hotels began to dominate the shore side landscape. The famous "cottages" of Newport where built by industrialists seeking to outdo each other in ostentatious displays. The present tourist economy is centered on year round activities with the highlights being summer and sailing events. The Americas Cup races were regularly held in the area, attesting to the importance of the pleasure boating industry.

The period from 1800 to 1930 saw the development of the indigenous (bay and inshore) fleet. Fishing effort was concentrated on stocks that could be reached in a day, fished, and then landed. Most fish, with the exception of menhaden, were taken in floating fish traps. This was also the period when industrial fish was a major component of the economy. For example, in 1889 in Newport and other Rhode Island ports, fish reduction plants for menhaden, and fish drying operations for cod and other groundfish, processed 127 million pounds of fish, 89 percent of which were menhaden (Olsen and Stevenson 1975:53). This fishery collapsed in the 1930s, and the fishery transitioned towards groundfish trawling. During the 1920s, marine diesel engines effectively extended the range and fishing time of commercial groundfishing vessels using otter trawls.

Beside tourism, the East Bay Navy base has a major economic impact in the area. The base employs thousands of local civilians in service roles. The service industry also caters to a large retirement community. Many naval personnel familiar with the area from their attendance at the local War College or at the command schools select Newport for retirement. They bring money into the community with their retirement pensions and they contribute to the support of many service-oriented businesses as significant consumers.

*Demography*³¹

Population

According to the 1990 Census, the city of Newport had 28,227 people, 13,724 male and 14,503 female.

Education

For those 25 years and older in 1989, 2828 had not graduated from high school, 5024 were high school graduates, 4230 had some college and 5728 had a Bachelor's or higher degree.

³¹ <http://venus.census.gov/cdrom/lookup/984169169>

Housing

Of the 13,094 housing units in 1989, 4,647 were owner-occupied, 6,539 were rented and 1,898 were vacant. The median year structures were built was 1939 and the median value of housing units was \$153,300.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

The majority of 1989's population was white (25,136) with 2,215 Black, 144 American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut; 310 Asian and 422 "other."

For those who speak languages other than English at home, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Greek or German were the most frequently spoken.

*Economic Context*Income

The median household income in 1989 was \$30,534; per capita income was \$16,358.

Employment

INDUSTRY

Universe: Employed persons 16 years and over

Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (000-039)...	291
Mining (040-059)...	0
Construction (060-099)...	812
Manufacturing, nondurable goods (100-229)...	216
Manufacturing, durable goods (230-399)...	810
Transportation (400-439)...	347
Communications and other public utilities (440-499)...	224
Wholesale trade (500-579)...	225
Retail trade (580-699)...	2953
Finance, insurance, and real estate (700-720)...	653
Business and repair services (721-760)...	685
Personal services (761-799)...	832
Entertainment and recreation services (800-811)...	256
Professional and related services (812-899):	
Health services (812-840)...	1099
Educational services (842-860)...	1280
Other professional and related services (841, 861-899)...	1317
Public administration (900-939)...	899

OCCUPATION

Universe: Employed person's 16 years and over

Managerial and professional specialty occupations (000-202):	
Executive, administrative, and managerial occupations (000-042)...	1769
Professional specialty occupations (043-202)...	2331
Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations (203-402):	
Technicians and related support occupations (203-242)...	436
Sales occupations (243-302)...	1488
Administrative support occupations, including clerical (303-402)...	1805
Service occupations (403-472):	
Private household occupations (403-412)...	126
Protective service occupations (413-432)...	377
Service occupations, except protective and household (433-472)...	2330
Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations (473-502)...	316
Precision production, craft, and repair occupations (503-702)...	1185
Operators, fabricators, and laborers (703-902):	
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors (703-802)...	380
Transportation and material moving occupations (803-863)...	210

Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers (864-902)...

146

Hospitals, schools, libraries

Museum: Fishermen's Church Institute

Fisheries Profile

Community

Fishing has always been an integral part of the local economy, although not of the stature of tourism and other components.³² It does not make much sense to talk of the degree of community "dependency" on fishing in Newport, for the existing "community" could do quite well if commercial fishing disappeared altogether. A different perspective is to think of the fishing "community" as a regional contributor to the commerce associated with fishing, and as a means of providing support to approximately 200 families with a sustainable livelihood while they contribute a high-quality food product to the commerce of the region and nation.

Commercial fishing and fisheries-related employment

Harvesting structure

Newport's groundfish fleet has dramatically declined over the last twenty years. The decline has been spurred by increasing property values restricting fishing industry infrastructure in addition to competition with recreational vessel for limited wharf space. No new boats or new shoreside fishing businesses have come into the fishery in the last twenty years. The local waters of Narragansett Bay are overfished, and nearshore grounds off the coast and nearby Block Island experienced significant declines in groundfish. Factors forcing a decline in groundfishing are not recent, but has been ongoing for some time. In 1981, Bort writes:

"The general direction of the community's development does not bode well for the future of fishing. Neither tourists nor pleasure boaters are typically enthusiastic about sharing a harbor with commercial fishermen. The stereotypic grizzled old man handlining from a dory is romanticized. The modern steel trawler is viewed as a source of odor and noise and as competition for space. The fishing industry is far down on the list of economic inputs to Newport, and probably also on the community's list of priorities" (1981:89-90).

Bort was correct in this prediction. There is still a degree of prejudice by the Newport community against commercial fishing and the fleet has declined dramatically.³³ In 1977, 164 boats made landings in Newport. Of these 49 were from Newport, 45 from New Bedford, and the remainder from as far north as Gloucester and as far south as Virginia.³⁴ In 1978, only 91 of these vessels had returned to Newport.

Processing structure

One processor processes lobster meat in addition to buying and selling lobster. They also own a fish trap that provides product for boxing and shipping.

Support Services

Newport has one of the best natural harbors on the Northeast. It provides excellent protection from rough weather, and is deep enough to provide berthing for US naval vessels. There is only one wharf area that is presently used by fishermen. It is leased by the state from the Newport Shipyard Company. This stone-filled wharf is adequate to service the 20 vessels that regularly land groundfish in Newport. In 1981, major fish buyers included Anthony's Seafood, Aquidnick Lobster Company, and Parascandola and Sons.

³² The history of the fishery and its state up to 1981 was described by Bort (1981)

³³ Key respondent, Office of the Harbormaster

³⁴ William Murphy, National Marine Fisheries Service, Newport, RI

Anthony's is no longer in business, and Parascandola markets all groundfish landings that come into Newport. Finfish is not sold or processed locally, but ice packed and sent by truck to Boston, New York, New Bedford, and markets south. Decisions about where to ship the fish are based on equitable pricing and demand. The Eastern Ice Company located in Newport supplies ice to these firms. The Tallman and Mack Company, that operated fish traps between April and November out of Newport, is no longer in business.³⁵

In 1996, the number of multispecies permits held by Newport commercial vessels was 16, with a total of only 20 vessels landing groundfish in the port. Of these, only 2 fished in the bay, and another 2 fished in nearshore waters, with the remainder fishing 7-10 day trips on grounds north and south of Rhode Island. Using the 1981 figure of 91 vessels as a benchmark, this represents a 78% decline in commercial fishing vessels landing in Newport over a fifteen-year period. Similar declines have been reported in Gloucester and New Bedford.

The greatest decline has been in the indigenous, or bay and inshore fleet. After WW II, the Newport fleet consisted of 20 vessels. In 1981, this number was down to only eight, and in 1996, only four. Declines in nearshore stocks, pollution impacts, competition with stationary gear, and area closures have made inshore groundfishing more difficult. Overall, the Newport fleet is more dependent proportionately on groundfish than the more diversified fleet fishing out of Point Judith. All of the vessels are essentially groundfish fishing, with some having the capacity and permits to fish squid (*Loligo*) as needed in order to maximizing the benefit of days at sea limits.

Docking Facilities: Lobster boats tie-up at State Pier 9 and large draggers and scallopers tie-up at Parascandola's. The Department of Environmental Management currently runs State Pier 9 though there is some indication that the Economic Development Corporation might take over. The majority of respondents indicated that fishermen do not trust EDC and fear that their take-over would result in increased tourism and cruise ships. Point Judith fishermen express this same rumor and fear about their dock.

Employment (year-around and seasonal)

Newport has 40-50 operating boats, about 75% of which are lobster boats. With the exception of a couple of eastern rigs, the rest are stern draggers.

Approximately 200 families are directly dependent on fishing and another 100 are indirectly dependent

Sales/revenue

Newport is comparable to Boston, Massachusetts in the level of landings and their value. In 1998, 8 million pounds worth \$8.2 million was landed and in 1997, 8.1 million pounds worth \$7.6 million. This was a major drop from 1996 when 18 million pounds were landed worth \$12 million.

Costs related to lobstering: 3' traps are \$38 ea. 4'X6' traps cost \$50-60 ea. Float line costs \$60/coil (one ten-trap trawl), and a sink line costs \$80-90/coil.³⁶ *"The difference matters because you must have scope on your line. You use a float line for the 5-6 fathoms next to the trap, to keep it off the bottom. If you use a float line higher, it can kink into loops which catch animals."*

Species, Seasonality

Landed species include:

Groundfish: cod, flounders including yellowtail and grey sole, haddock, pollock, and hake
Small mesh: whiting, squid

³⁵ Reported by Bort (1981) and photographed in 1935 by Captain Wilfred E. Warren. Warren's photo collection is maintained by the Seamen's Church Institute Archives in Newport.

³⁶ A coil = 1200 feet of line.

Pelagics: herring, mackerel

Crustaceans: lobster, crab

HMS: swordfish, tuna

Other: striped bass, dogfish, skate, monkfish, bluefish, tilefish, sea bass, scup, and weakfish. Sturgeon occasionally caught but can't be kept.

Other shellfish: conch (Bristol area), softshell clams, mahogany clams, quahogs, scallops, sea bass, slime eels, menhaden (less now).

There's no aquaculture, though there used to be a mussel farm.

Gillnetters have a live fish fishery catching sea ravens and sea robins that they ship to Japan.

Recreational fishing and employment

Recreational fishing: stripers, blues, black fish. All rod and reel. There is one individual who takes tourists surf casting, provides gear, picks them up, takes them to the right spots.

Mostly rod and reel individuals fishing from shore for stripers.

Fishing related organizations and their roles in the community and fishery

Commercial fishing associations

Ocean State Fishermen's Association

Rhode Island Fishermen's Association

Mass. Lobstermen's Association (many RI members for insurance, etc.)

Rhode Island Lobstermen's Assoc.

State Pier 9 Association

Atlantic Offshore Fishermen's Association

Fishing-related programs and services

Seamen's Church Institute—brings soup around to the docks for workers and fishermen.

Rhode Island Seafood Council—(See page 83).

Perceptions of the Fishing Community³⁷

Importance of fishing to the community

Importance of fishing to Newport was said to be "not important." "State Pier 9 would be excellent real estate for tourist uses. It's the last big piece of harbor real estate that is undeveloped." "They don't need us anymore." It would hurt, respondents commented, but not devastate, Newport's economy if fishing stopped.

Boundaries

Middletown, followed by Jamestown, Portsmouth and Tiverton (equally), is the community Newport fishermen have the most contact with. In addition, the proximity to New Bedford allows access to fishery services not available in Newport.

Where do people go to do the following things?

Sell Fish	Newport, Middletown, Fulton's (NY); New Bedford, Portland, Boston (depends on prices)
Offload Fish	Newport, trucks at pier
Buy Fishing Gear	Middletown, New Bedford, Pt. Judith, order from Maine
Buy Ice	Newport

³⁷ Based on key informant interviews

Buy Fuel/ Oil	Newport, Middletown (trucked in)
Haul out Boat Repairs	Portsmouth, small boats Newport, large boats New Bedford
Book Keeping	Home
Banking	Newport
Shopping	Newport, Middletown in summer
Go to church	Newport
Got to school	Newport
Go for Health Care	Middletown clinics, hospital Newport
Visit Relatives	"This is an island community, they don't drift too far. A lot of extended family still around." Nationally
Visit Friends	"insular community" People "don't go anyway" Nationally
Go for Vacation	Florida, tropical islands
Go for Recreation	Boating
Socialize	Home or bars

Communication Issues

There was no consensus among respondents about how well fishermen and managers communicated. Answers ranged from “very good” to “fair” for all three levels of communication. One respondent who rated communication as “good” noted that “fishermen aren't very communicative, but it is tough having a bunch of "desk-jockeys" determining your fate.” Another noted that fishermen had good rapport with the state Department of Environmental Management, but that “regulations are years in the making and changing.” Another mentioned that the department is huge, the scientists not considered knowledgeable and the web site is not kept current on fisheries-related topics, issues or meetings.

One respondent said, “federal laws impacting you now were decided years ago and take years to change.” One rated communication as fair, commenting that state communication was effective for some, not for all and the federal managers were “paper pushers.”

Assessments

Asked whether fishermen and scientists agreed or disagreed on stock assessments, the respondents also varied in their opinions, though most either said they “disagree” or partially disagreed. One respondent claimed that fishermen agree with any plans not affecting them personally.

Local management practices

For lobstering there is a form of folk management. This was described as a “gentlemen's agreement” on lobster trap areas and dragging areas. The fishermen actually exchange charts and mark areas to avoid gear conflict. There is agreement on which directions trawls will be laid (ne-sw out, n-s inshore). Sticks on endfloats are set in front, 15+ trap trawls have a middle float without a stick. Ninety-nine percent of the fishermen follow the norms. However, this is less true inshore (“*inside it's not as well done*”). One respondent noted that Clorox bottles line the shipping lanes near Newport. Many lobstermen use them instead of buoys with their colors.

“Fishermen are surprisingly cooperative with legislated laws. They know in the end they're saving their own industry.”

Economic Change

The economic condition of the finfish fishery ten years ago was reported as “excellent.” Five years ago it was “average” and today it is considered “fair.” Costs have increased, days at sea have decreased. Five years from now it was anticipated that the economic condition would be “fair.” *“People who have stayed in industry this long have it down to a science as far as staying steady.”* Worrisome though is that the worth of a dollar is down and the unknown impact of the oil spill.

For the lobster industry, ten years ago the economic condition was considered “good” to “average.” More lobsters were said to have been caught especially offshore, though local catches were down. Oil spills may be partly responsible for declines. In general though it was considered a “good way to make a living.”

Five years ago, the condition of the industry was “fair” according to some respondents. Offshore boats were leaving, but there were more pots in the water. Today the economic condition is considered “poor,” the catch has been reduced, particularly in terms of catch per unit. *“I have ten times lower catch per effort than my father took in the 40s.”* The boats have to go further out, standards of living are lower, and “we’re being squeezed out by yachts.” Increases in the numbers of traps also means higher costs. Five years from now though, the condition was anticipated as “good.” *“If the licenses are limited and trap limits enforced it should be better.”*

An alternative view maintained that five years ago the economic condition of the lobster fishery was “good” mainly because prices were climbing. Today, it is also “good” according to this viewpoint because technology is *“squeezing the middle man out of market. Trucks meet the boats at their dock and take fish to Boston. This increases the boat price, and consequently decreases wholesale price.”* Furthermore, with so many fewer groundfish more lobsters are maturing (lack of predation on young). Five years from now, the conditions could be “good.” The lobstermen’s biggest fear right now is focused on a new hotel complex and boatyard surrounding the state pier. The boatyard was bought out by yachting interests. Since the pier is being taken over by a different government body (EDC from DEM) fishermen fear that they will lose fishing access. Already fishermen can no longer store traps or other gear there and they believe they are gradually being pushed out. *“Loss of the pier would end fishing in Newport, unfortunately, since there’s still a living to be made.”*

The standard of living for the general population has gone down according to some respondents. The public school quality dropping, all rich children are sent to private schools, so the rich fight any increase in school expenditures. The large poor constituency is losing out. Only 75 out of 300+ high school graduating class got into college.

Changes in fishing effort

Respondents noted that they are “having to work harder for less money (trips remain the same length, but the catch is smaller. Technology has improved, but has reduced the skill or mystery of fishing. On the other hand, it has also reduced some of the risk. Other changes include the fact that the price of fish is up; people are changing the species they are willing to eat.

Many lobster fishermen leave pots in the water even in seasons they don't catch, just to hold the bottom for the next season. Therefore, they can have many non-fishing traps in the water at any given point, but only bait the traps that are catching. Thus, they don't move traps around seasonally. New escape vents are 1 15/16 inch. It is anticipated that some legal size lobsters will escape through those vents.

Effects of recent management

The regulation with most impact may be HACCP, “a big complicated way of explaining what you've always had to do to keep things fresh.”

"We have size limits, but we haven't figured out how not to catch the wrong size. We're still killing fish, so what has been accomplished?"

Characteristics of local fishermen

Harvesters are usually full-time in one fishery, though they may occasionally trip on another's vessels.

A good fisherman is someone whose attitude is not to worry about what can't be changed, who will work alongside a deckhand, being on-time for crew, paying crew on-time, and not taking advantage of people down on their luck.

Safety

Fishing is safer. More survival gear is required, more state of the art technology both for gear and communications.

Job satisfaction

Opinions varied about fishermen's job satisfaction. Some said fishermen are dissatisfied because of the regulations: records required, fishing day limits, licensing by area. Some like trap limits, some don't.

Others said yes, fishermen are satisfied. "*Grumble and complain, but return year after year. Majority enjoy it. An instant gratification job. Some fish because they lack other skills.*"

"No such thing as a satisfied fishermen." Most wouldn't do anything else though. With all these regulations driving everyone crazy, prices have been pushed higher and making most money ever. Even though there's less fish, less work, less time and more aggravation they're still making a good living.

Fishing families

Most spouses work full-time outside of home in order to obtain health and other benefits for their family (most are nurses and teachers), some homemakers.

Community Profile
Newport County
Rhode Island Sub-region

5.2.2.3 Tiverton

Tiverton is located northeast of Newport. It is the first fishing town you go through as you work your way down south from the intersection of 24 and 77 towards Sakonnet Point. Although small, it is an active fishing village.

Fisheries Profile

Community

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

Commercial fishing and fisheries-related employment

Harvesting structure

The fishermen living in this community utilize the shellfish and finfish resources located right in Narragansett Bay, to support themselves and their families. There are anywhere from 122 to 150 lobster boats, 12-15 conch boats, and 16 finfish vessels. Of these about 4 are wooden, 12, steel and the rest, fiberglass.

The relatively small fiberglass vessels are practical for traditional shellfishing (lobstering) as well as conch fishing, a niche fishery in Tiverton. The gear used includes for shellfishing, bull rakes, tongs, scuba and dredge; for crustaceans, lobster pots and crab traps; and for finfish, gillnets, longlines, and trawls (dragnets).

Wholesale dealers

The town has 7 wholesale operations which are; Bayside Shellfish, Rhode Island Clam Co., Pt. Judith, Baystate, Bridgeport Seafood, Pt. Trap Retail, and Nordstrom. Out of these 7 wholesalers half of them also participate in retail operations. Including these whole/retail operations there are approximately seven retail fish markets. Quahogs and shellfish are the main species that are dealt with in Tiverton. Bayside Shellfish and RI Clam Co. deal exclusively with shellfish and lobsters. Nordstrom deals with lobster and fish and the remaining wholesalers deal with a variety of fish and shellfish species.

Little of the shellfish is sold locally, rather it is bagged and shipped by refrigerated truck to either Boston or New York where it is distributed as far west as Nevada and to various points in Canada. The small "ones" are sold by the piece and the larger "ones" are sold by the pound. Most of the product is sold to specific states on a regular basis. Boston serves simply as a hub on the shipping route. Distributors in the area own their own refrigerated trucks for shipping. One respondent's wholesale facility has a number of trucks, which originate their parent company. Another respondent's wholesale facility owns 2 trailers, 1 tractor, 3 small trucks, and 1 van. Despite the condition of the fishery, the wholesalers have grown and diversified. One respondent's company buys from 20-25 boats daily, about 150 boats a week. Another respondent's company has grown and diversified and buys from approximately 40 boats a day. The business although friendly, is highly competitive, but in the end the wholesalers will buy and sell from each other in order to keep the fresh product moving.

Support Services

Although Tiverton has a large fishing community, they do not have a commercial marine

supplies facility. Many commercial fishermen from this town go to New Bedford or Newport if they need gear or boat equipment.

The town does have its own icehouse, numerous haul out facilities, two ramps, gas and diesel fuel accessibility, a airfill station for divers and dock facilities used for both berthing and offloading of shellfish and finfish.

Employment (year-around and seasonal)

The fishing industry is the main source of employment for Tiverton residents. Other jobs found there may include those in the gas and oil business and others that are small scale and part time located in the service sector. The majority of Tiverton residents either work in the fishing industry or commute to jobs outside of the town of Tiverton. However, fishing has become increasingly difficult, due to regulations and poor stock conditions, forcing some to fish part-time, working in labor jobs outside of town, and others to get out of the business entirely.

Species, Seasonality

One natural factor that can affect everyone in the shellfish business is heavy rain. Since the beds the fishermen are using are located within Narragansett Bay, they can easily be affected by pollution runoff caused by rains. Only 1/4 to 1/2 inch of rain can cause certain beds to be closed for at least 7 days.

Landed species include:

Shellfish: hardshell clams (quahogs), little necks, softshell clams, mussels, periwinkles, oysters, conch

Crustaceans: lobster, crab

Finfish:

Groundfish: cod, flounders including fluke, dabs and winter flounder

Pelagics: mackerel, herring

Small mesh: squid

Other: weakfish, striped bass, dogfish, skate, monkfish, bluefish, sea bass, and scup

Recreational fishing and employment

In addition to the commercial fishing out of Tiverton, there is a lot of recreational fishing as well. Narragansett Bay has a wide array of fish, and is easily accessible by both land and water, through Tiverton. There is one bait shop that deals exclusively with recreational gear, bait and accessories.

Cultural role of fishing

Ethnicity in the fisheries

Lots of the people who participate in recreational fishing in Tiverton are Cambodian or have other ethnic backgrounds. Some of this "recreational" activity may actually support a fisheries- based subsistence life style.

Kinship & family

The numbers of households in Tiverton that rely on commercial fishing is relatively high, and may even come close to 40% of the total number. These households are largely comprised of people who were born in the town and have continued to live and raise families there.

Perceptions of the Fishing Community³⁸

Importance of fishing to the community

Fishing is important to Tiverton.

³⁸ Based on key informant interviews

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). The majority of outside social contact of Tiverton residents with other communities is with Newport, Warren and Bristol.

Sell Fish	Tiverton
Offload Fish	Tiverton
Buy Fishing Gear	New Bedford/Westport/Newport
Buy Ice	Tiverton
Buy Fuel/ Oil	Tiverton
Haul out Boat Repairs	Large boats-Providence/Newport
Book Keeping	At home
Banking	Tiverton
Shopping	Tiverton, Fall River
Go to Church	Tiverton
Got to School	Tiverton
Go for Health Care	Tiverton, Fall River
Go for Childcare	Tiverton
Visit Relatives	Tiverton
Visit Friends	Tiverton
Go for Vacation	Maine
Go for Recreation	Rod & reel fishing
Socialize	Newport/Narragansett/local bars

Communication Issues

Communication between fisherman and fishery managers had mixed reviews, though was most frequently rated as "fair" at each level. Respondents did complain that information was basically "one-way." Communication with local level managers or representatives was rated as "poor" to "fair." Communication with state and federal level managers or representatives was "fair" to "good."

Assessments

Fishermen and scientists do not appear to agree on the assessment of stock conditions. When asked how well fisherman and scientists agree on a 1 to 5 scale (1 strongly disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Agree, 4 Strongly Agree) Respondent #1 rated it a 2, and Respondent #2 rated it a 1 saying that fishermen are hands on while scientists are more book knowledgeable.

Economic Change

Economic condition of the fishing industry ten years ago was rated as "good" to "average." Five years ago it was rated as "average," today was rated as "fair" to "good" and five years from now is anticipated to be "fair."

One respondent indicated that in the past the economic condition of the fishery was better than it is now primarily because the laws were not as strict and the stocks were good. He felt that now stocks are down and laws are getting stricter, resulting in added strain on the fishing industry. For the future he feels that the conditions will probably not get much better than they are now. Another respondent indicated that in the past the economic conditions of the fishery could have been better and have been steadily declining over the years. Although he did feel that due to good weather and cyclical patterns, this year has been good (1998). However, he feels that there is too much uncertainty to predict the future but suspects that the conditions will continue to steadily decline.

Community Profile
Newport County
Rhode Island Sub-region

5.2.2.5. Sakonnet Point

Sakonnet Point is the most easterly and isolated fishing port in Rhode Island. It sits at the very end of the eastern peninsula of Rhode Island across the bay from Westport, Massachusetts. The existing site of Sakonnet sits on a narrow spit, with little land available for either expansion of fishing facilities or gentrification. Nor is there much support in the local ethos for any expansion. As one respondent said, "We want to keep the 'little' in Little Compton (the township)." The river runs up into the bay next to Sakonnet Point, and has been the source of targeted seasonal fish schools since colonial times. In the narrows of the river, fish traps were set to take advantage of this natural fish concentration. Permits and sites for present fish traps go back to colonial times. Today, the tradition is continued with the Parascandola Fish Company, who own a series of fish traps that they tend from May through October, when fish concentrations are common in the river. The use of fish traps is one of the specialized niche fisheries in New England that occurs under conditions where other competing fisheries have not wiped them out. Today, similar fish weirs (but staked, rather than floating fish traps) are only used in a few other spots on Cape Cod and in Downeast Maine.

Overall, Sakonnet Point has a fishing infrastructure ranking of 33, with a negative factor score of -1.466. Although there is little to the fishing operation, there is virtually nothing else besides this, making it a singular, albeit small-scale, total capital operation. Because the local township likes to keep development down, little has happened here to transform the area. No local hotels, bars, restaurants or other such development grace the area, and the road into the point is lined with well-established homes separated by considerable green space.

Besides the fish trap operators, a small collection of combination lobster-gillnet fishermen works out of the port. They form the Sakonnet Point Fishermen's Association. Facilities in the port and nearby village include churches, Tallman and Mack Fisheries, Parascandola Fisheries, and Sakonnet Lobster. Sakonnet Lobster, about a half-mile north of the point, boasts a considerable collection of lobster traps, a lobster tank, and supports a local regional, and international market, with the smaller "chic lobsters" (1/3 lb.) sold in Canada.

A small movement towards gentrification is occurring with the planned opening of the Sakonnet Point Club, a restaurant that would service local recreational fishermen. This goes along with a small charter boat fishery. The key word for this town is "small." However, the fishery activity is stable at its present level. The Parascandola operation, building on the long local history of trap fishing, has been successfully fishing here since 1965, and they have no reason to discontinue their present operations.