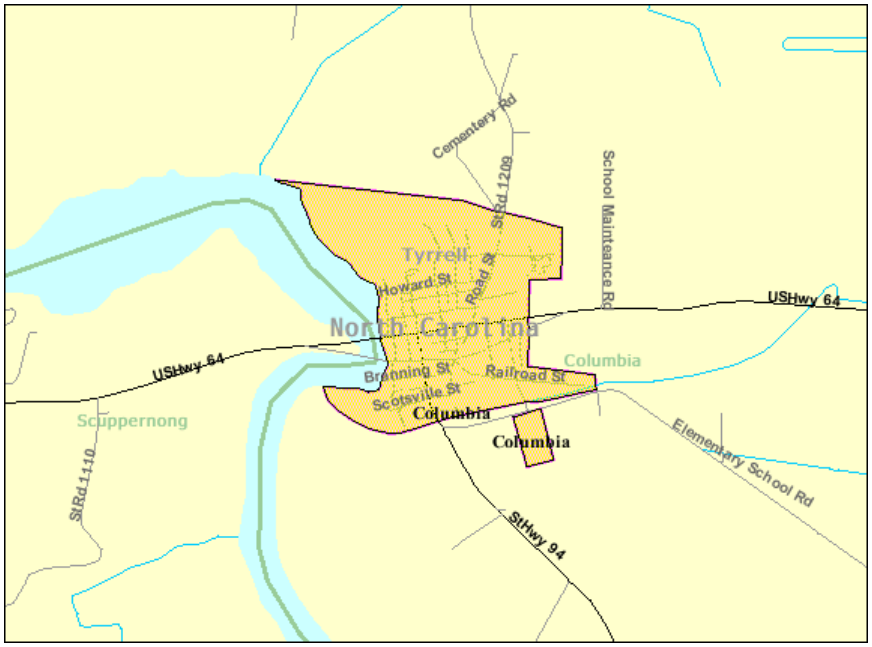
COLUMBIA, NC[1]
Community Profile[2]

PEOPLE AND PLACES
Regional orientation

Columbia is located in Tyrrell County (35.917, -76.252) in the state of North Carolina. It is situated along the east bank of the Scuppernong River along the Albemarle and Pamlico Peninsula and the Alligator River (USGS 2008). The Native Americans called the area the "the place of the sweet bay tree" (IWC-NET nd). The elevation is 5 feet above sea level (USGS 2008).



Map 1. Location of Columbia, NC (US Census Bureau 2000)

Historical/Background

Columbia was chartered in 1793 and 3 years later it was chosen as the seat of Tyrrell County. Tyrrell County was established in 1729 as a precinct to Albemarle County. Columbia was originally named Elizabethtown but was changed in 1810 to Columbia to avoid confusion between the other Elizabethtown in North Carolina (IWC-NET nd). The economy in the 18th and early 19th centuries was based primarily on subsistence fishing and farming (Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce 2006). According to the 1870 census, Columbia had slightly over 100 individuals living in the city. The main industries were milling, mercantile trade, county administration, and maritime occupations. The population expanded after the Civil War

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[1] These community profiles have been created to serve as port descriptions in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for fisheries management actions. They also provide baseline information from which to begin research for Social Impact Assessments (SIAs). Further, they provide information relevant to general community impacts for National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and information on minorities and low income populations for Executive Order (E.O.) 12898 on Environmental Justice.

[2] For purposes of citation please use the following template: "Community Profile of *Town, ST*. Prepared under the auspices of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Fisheries Science Center. For further information contact Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov."

primarily due to the local lumber business (IWC-NET nd). This area was at one time known as the lumber capital of the nation; juniper was once commonly harvested for boat building, while today the lumber is more commonly pine or hardwoods. In the 1920s, the Army Corps of Engineers began draining some of the swamplands around Columbia to create land suitable for agricultural production (Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce 2006). In the last half of the 20th century, Tyrrell County has seen an influx of large agricultural corporations buying up significant tracts of land for farming and transforming the landscape. Today, Tyrrell County is one of the most isolated (although it is near Highway 64)[3] and least populated areas of the state, largely due to the fact that much of the land is swamp and wetlands. Adding to Columbia's interesting history, the town was twice nominated for the "American Dream Town" competition.

Demographics[4]

According to Census 2000 data (US Census Bureau 2000a), Columbia had a total population of 819, down 2.0% from the reported population of 836 in 1990 (US Census Bureau 1990). Of this 2000 total, 54% were males and 46% were females. The median age was 39.1 years and 69.1% of the population was 21 years or older while 22.2% was 62 or older.

The age structure for Columbia (see Figure 1Figure) is similar to other North Carolina fishing villages. The highest age bracket is between 40-49 years, while the lowest percentage of the population is 80 years or older. The age structure shows that there is not much of an out migration; individuals tend to live in the town their entire lives.

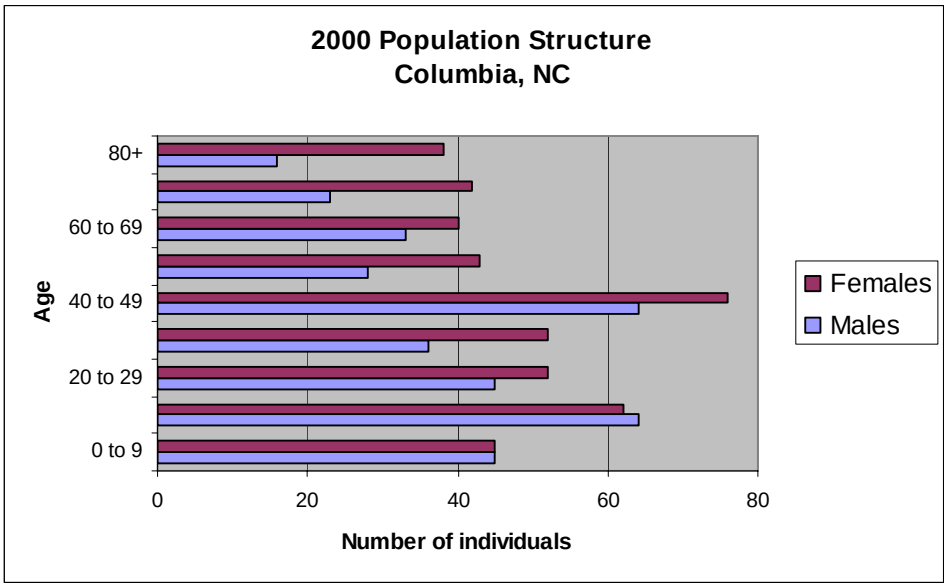

Figure 1. Columbia's population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

The majority of the population was black or African American (53.3%), with 39.9% of residents white, 1.5% Asian, 0.1% American Indian or Alaskan Native and none Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). Only 7.3% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.

[3] Community review comments; Tom Stroude, Partnership for the Sounds, PO Box 55, Columbia, NC 27925, September 17, 2007

[4] While mid-term estimates are available for some larger communities, data from the 2000 Census are the only data universally available for the communities being profiled in the Northeast. Thus for cross-comparability we have used 2000 data even though these data may have changed significantly since 2000 for at least some communities.

Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: United States or American (12.2%), English (9.9%), and "other" (53.5%). With regard to region of birth, 78.8% were born in North Carolina, 14.1% were born in a different state and 6.7% were born outside of the U.S. (including 6.4% who were not United States Citizens).

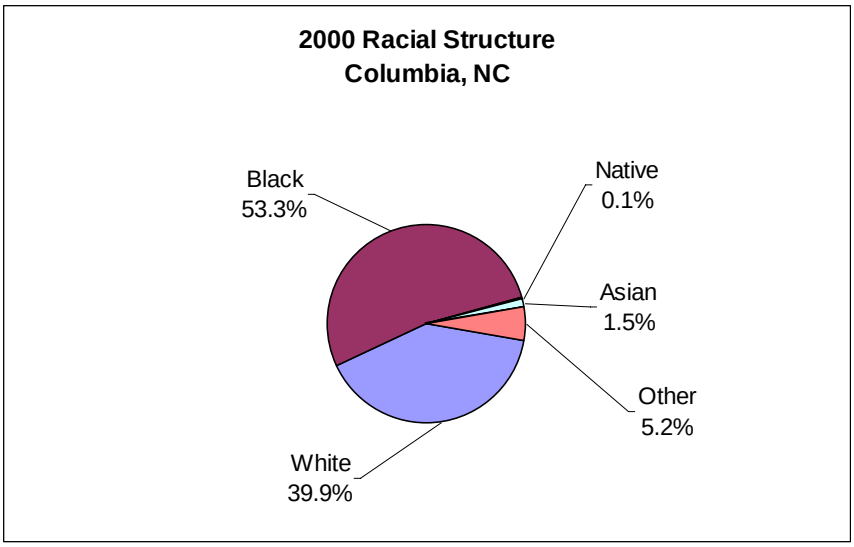

Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

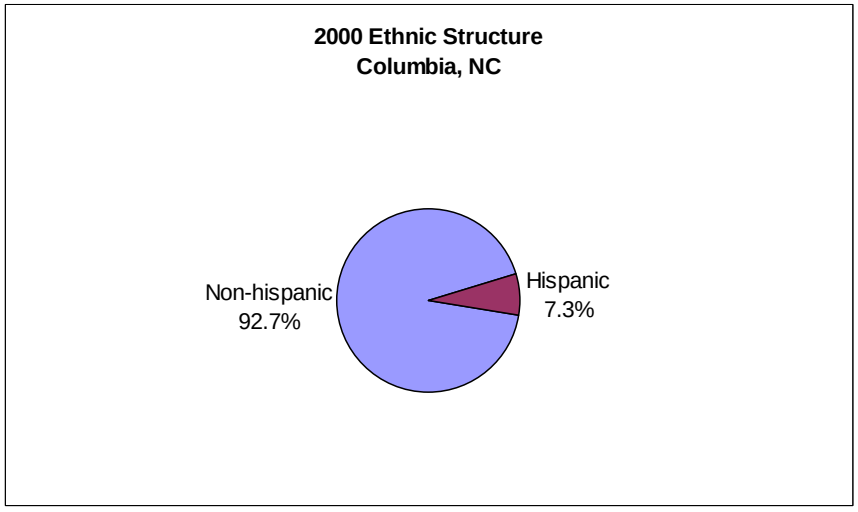

Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 92.6% of the population, only English is spoken in the home, leaving 7.4% in homes where a language other than English is spoken, and including 6.2% of the population who spoke English less than "very well" according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 56.7% were high school graduates or higher and 11.6% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 18.2% did not reach ninth grade, 25.1% attended some high school but did not graduate, 30.8% completed high school, 11.8% had some college with no degree, 2.5% received an associate's degree, 6.4% earned a bachelor's degree, and 5.2% received a graduate or professional degree.

Although religion percentages are not available through the U.S. Census, according to the

Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) in 2000, the religion with the highest number of congregations and adherents in Tyrrell County was Christian Churches and Churches of Christ with 3 congregations and 416 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were the United Methodist Church (3 with 377 adherents) and the Original Free Will Baptist (3 with 268 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was down 35.6% from 1990 (ARDA 2000). There were approximately 33 churches in Tyrrell County; 32 Protestant and 1 Catholic (Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce 2006).

Issues/Processes

Columbia's Main Street is loosing its residential area to more shops and businesses. There is one bed & breakfast available in the town. According to a 2005 Report by Defenders of Wildlife; "The town would like to become known as a tourist destination, attracting a percentage of tourists on their way to or from the Outer Banks. Since 1989, Tyrrell County has looked at nature-based tourism as a possible solution to generating revenue for the county and its residents" (Defenders of Wildlife 2005).

Crab fishermen along North Carolinas eastern coast have also seen an increase in competition from the global market, with an influx of imported crab meat from around the world. Many local crab processors are unable to compete and are losing profit (NCSG 2002).

Cultural attributes

The residents of Columbia have always had a strong tie to the Scuppernong River which flows past the town. On the second Saturday of every October since 1992, Columbia hosts a festival which includes canoe races, fishing contests, clowns, a parade, music, a 5k run, seafood, etc. The Columbia Theater Cultural Resources Center, housed in a renovated theater, is an environmental and cultural history museum focusing on human interaction with the environment of the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula, particularly with regards to fishing, farming, and forestry. "Steamed Blue to Red-Hot Lively" is the name of an annual crab dinner and art auction in Columbia hosted by the local Pocosin Arts center. Recent additions to the areas attractions include a downtown photography gallery and a coffee house offering antiques.[5]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Economy

Captain Neill's Seafood is a large crab picking and canning facility in Columbia. They employ around 80 people during the height of the season, and have around 10 year-round employees.[6] Full Circle Crab Company is a wholesale and retail business employing at least 15 workers at the height of the season, with 6 year-round workers.[7]

The locals make money by fishing and crabbing along the Scuppernong River. In Tyrrell County, the average annual income from fishing was greater than the average income for all other professions (McCay and Cieri 2000). Cotton is also a big industry in North Carolina. Cotton was difficult to grow historically in the state because of North Carolina's rich soil, but

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[5] Community review comments; Tom Stroude, Partnership for the Sounds, PO Box 55, Columbia, NC 27925, September 17, 2007

[6] Personal Communication, Elizabeth Hopkins, payroll department, Captain Neill's Seafood, PO Box 164 Columbia, NC 27925, June 16, 2006

[7] Personal Communication, Willy Phillips, Full Circle Crab Co., 1366 Highway 64 East Columbia, NC 27925 , June 16, 2006

now it is being genetically engineered and comprises 50,000 acres in Beaufort, Hyde, Washington and Tyrrell Counties (North Carolina Business History 2002). There are also a number of large agricultural corporations with extensive farms around Tyrrell County (Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce 2006). The Tyrrell Prison Work Farm outside of Columbia has a staff of 200 employees. Weyerhaeuser operates a saw mill in Plymouth, NC, about 33 miles away, which has more than 50 employees; Weyerhaeuser also has a large amount of timberlands around Tyrrell County. Other large employers in Plymouth include Domtar Paper Co., Plymouth Pallet, Plymouth Fertilizer, and Kanban Industries (Visit Plymouth North Carolina 2006).

According to the U.S. Census 2000[8], 49.1% (305 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force, of which 4.3% were unemployed, none were in the Armed Forces, and 44.8% were employed.

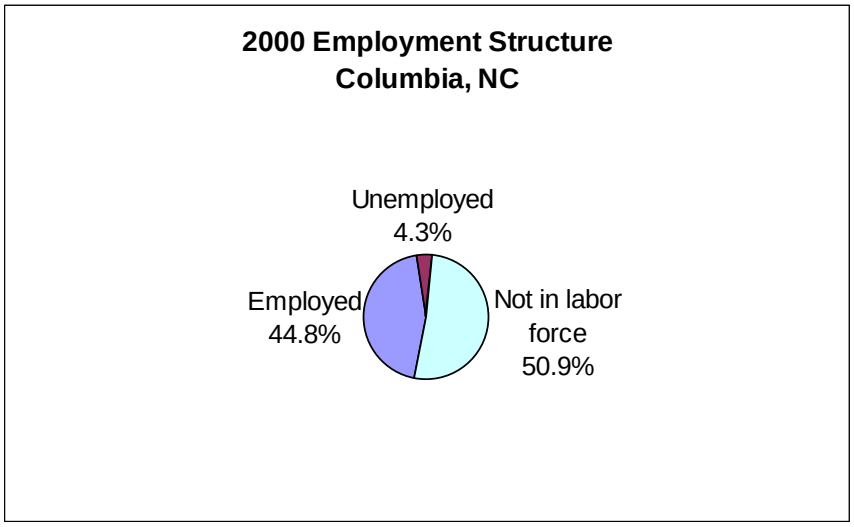

Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 21 positions or 7.6% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 56 positions or 20.1% of jobs. Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (23.1%), educational, health and social services (15.1%), retail trade (14.0%) and public administration (9.4%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Columbia was $20,588 (up 47.3% from $13,973 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and per capita income was $12,216. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 2% more per year than females.

The average family in Columbia consisted of 2.93 persons. With respect to poverty, 27.9% of families (down from 29% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 33.7% of individuals earn below the official U.S. Census poverty threshold. This threshold is $8,794 for individuals and ranges from $11,239 through $35,060 for families, depending on number of persons (2-9) (US Census Bureau 2000b). In 2000, 70.9% of all families (of any size) earned less than $35,000 per year.

[8] Again, Census data from 2000 are used because they are universally available and offer cross-comparability among communities. Some statistics, particularly median home price, are likely to have changed significantly since 2000.

In 2000, Columbia had a total of 402 housing units, of which 83% were occupied and 56.7% were detached one unit homes. Greater than fifty percent (55.5%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes in this area accounted for 23.9% of the housing units; 95.3% of detached units have between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was $53,200. Of vacant housing units, 3.2% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units, 45.7% were renter occupied.

Government

Columbia is the county seat of Tyrrell County. The town also has an alderman-manager type of government. The terms are staggered with elections held in odd years (Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce 2006).

Fishery involvement in the government

Information on fishery involvement in the government in Columbia is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Institutional

Fishing associations

The North Carolina Fisheries Association has been supporting fishing families since 1952, with the goal "to celebrate and preserve commercial fishing families, heritage, and seafood" in North Carolina. This is achieved through lobbying federal, state, and local legislators and through public awareness projects.

Fishing assistance centers

Information on fishing assistance centers in Columbia is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Other fishing related organizations

The Partnership for the Sounds, based in Columbia, "promotes sustainable, community-driven economic well-being and stewardship in the Albemarle-Pamlico region through environmental education and nature-based and cultural tourism."

Physical

The town of Columbia is Tyrrell County's only incorporated town (Tyrrell County Chamber of Commerce 2006). It boasts one of the most picturesque waterfronts in all of North Carolina. Protected deep water anchorage is allowed off of the town docks. In 1995, a mile long board walk was completed; it travels along the Scuppernong rivers edge and into the riverine forest. Columbia is bordered by Scuppernong River on the west. Tyrrell County has the borders of Albemarle Sound in the north (the east coasts largest estuarine system) and the Alligator River in the east; which is part of the inter-coastal waterway system (IWC-NET nd). Cypress Cove Marina is the marina located on the river in Columbia. Downtown Columbia is a one block jog off of the main Highway 64, and consists of a quaint Main Street with shops, hardware store, Ben Franklin store, realtors, and county and town offices.

The closest cities to Columbia are Creswell, North Carolina (9 miles) and Hertford, North Carolina (24.1 miles); Raleigh is about 156 miles away by car (MapQuest 2006). The nearest airports are the Northeastern Regional located in Edenton, NC which is 23 miles away and

Norfolk International located in Norfolk VA is about 90 miles away (City-data.com 2006). Route 64 runs through Columbia, connecting it with Plymouth, NC to the west and the Outer Banks to the east.

INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES[9]

Commercial

Captain Neill's Seafood is a wholesale soft crab picking and processing facility which buys crabs from fishermen throughout the Albemarle Pamlico area. They sell both fresh and canned crab. Full Circle Crab Company is a local seafood wholesale and retail business, which buys seafood directly from Albemarle Sound watermen. They buy crabs, oysters, and finfish from about 60 different fishermen from the area, and have two crabbing vessels of their own, in addition to a research vessel.[10] Full Circle has a retail outlet just outside of Columbia which sells only locally caught seafood. Furlough and Sons Seafood[11] has gone out of business.[12] [13]

In 1998, Tyrrell County brought in over 4.5 million pounds with $3.3 million landing value (McCay and Cieri 2000). Crab potting was the harvest mechanism which dominated the landings, capturing 88.5% of the total value while summer flounder was the species that has the second highest landings. A crab pot is a two foot square made out of chicken wire with a funnel that allows crabs to enter the structure; the crabs are baited with Menhaden, razor clams or other bait fish. Gill netting, pound nets, fyke nets, and fish, turtle, and eel pots were the primary gear types used in capturing 31 different species in the Columbia area (McCay and Cieri 2000).

Other than crabbing, there is not much commercial fishing in Columbia. There are a few vessels whose owner's city was Columbia between 1997 and 2006, but only one vessel was reported with their home port as Columbia in 1999 and 2000 (Table 1). Atlantic Blue Crab, Flounder and other finfish generate the most landings in Columbia, although these species may be targeted for recreational purpose only; Atlantic Blue Crab is possibly the only species in this list that is fished for commercial purposes.

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[9] In reviewing the commercial landings data several factors need to be kept in mind. 1) While both federal and state landings are included, some states provide more detailed data to NMFS than others. For example, shellfish may not be included or data may be reported only by county and not by port. 2) Some communities did not have individual port codes until more recently. Before individual port codes were assigned, landings from those ports were coded at the county level or as an aggregate of two geographically close small ports. Where landings were coded at the county level they cannot be sorted to individual ports for those earlier years, e.g., prior to 2000. 3) Where aggregated codes were used, those aggregate codes may still exist and be in use alongside the new individual codes. Here the landings which are still assigned to the aggregate port code cannot be sorted into the individual ports, so port level data are only those which used the individual port code. 4) Even when individual port codes exist, especially for small ports, landings may be coded at the county level. Here again it is impossible to disaggregate these to a port level, making the port level landings incomplete. 5) In all these cases, the per port data in this profile may under report the total level of landings to the port, though all landings are accounted for in the overall NMFS database.

[10] Personal Communication, Willy Phillips, Full Circle Crab Co., 1366 Highway 64 East Columbia, NC 27925 , June 16, 2006

[11] The phone number listed in the SEFSC database for Furlough and Sons Seafood is now for another business.

[12] Personal Communication, Willy Phillips, Full Circle Crab Co., 1366 Highway 64 East Columbia, NC 27925 , June 16, 2006

[13] Community review comments; Tom Stroude, Partnership for the Sounds, PO Box 55, Columbia, NC 27925, September 17, 2007

Vessels by Year[14]

Table 1. All columns represent vessel permits or landings value combined between 1997-2006

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# vessels (owner's city)	Level of fishing home port ($)	Level of fishing landed port ($)
1997	0	1	0	0
1998	0	1	0	0
1999	1	3	0	0
2000	1	4	confidential	0
2001	0	3	0	0
2002	0	3	0	0
2003	0	3	0	0
2004	0	3	0	0
2005	0	1	0	0
2006	0	1	0	0

 # Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport
 # Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence[15]
Level of fishing home port ($) = Landed value of fisheries associated with home ported vessels
Level of fishing landed port ($) = Landed value of fisheries landed in location
Confidential = Value information is confidential in ports with fewer than three vessels

Recreational

Fishing contests are held each year in Columbia as part of the annual Scuppernong River Festival. The Partnership for the Sound also hosts a weekly excursion on the Scuppernong River called River Roaming.[16]

Subsistence

Although no specific information was collected on subsistence fishing in Columbia, according to residents in the county, "sizeable numbers of Vietnamese were brought to the port of Columbia in this county to fish for crabs; there are also said to be some Vietnamese on the northern side of Albemarle Sound" (McCay and Cieri 2000). These residents may also engage in subsistence activity in the area.

FUTURE

In 2005, Tyrrell and Hyde Counties were exploring the possibilities of developing more ecotourism in those areas. According to a report by Defenders of Wildlife (2005), residents were asked their views on ecotourism as a potential activity in their areas. Residents expressed affection for their areas and the natural beauty and wanted to see it preserved. However, "most seemed unaware that the very thing they appreciate was also a tremendous tourist draw to

[14] Numbers of vessels by owner's city and homeport are as reported by the permit holder on permit application forms. These may not correspond to the port where a vessel lands or even spends the majority of its time when docked.

[15] The Owner-City from the permit files is technically the address at which the owner receives mail concerning their permitted vessels, which could reflect the actual location of residence, the mailing address as distinct from residence, owner business location, or the address at which a subsidiary receives mail about the permits.

[16] Community review comments; Tom Stroude, Partnership for the Sounds, PO Box 55, Columbia, NC 27925, September 17, 2007

outsiders who appreciate the same, and want to visit areas like this for the same beauty and serenity of nature." Some potential ecotourist activities that have been suggested related to the water include: guided hunting and fishing trips, educational nature tours, water access activities, and party boat trips out of Alligator Marina (Defenders of Wildlife 2005).

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