

# CAPTREE ISLAND, NY<sup>1</sup>

## Community Profile<sup>2</sup>

### PEOPLE AND PLACES

#### Regional orientation

Captree Island, New York (40.65°N, 73.26°W) is situated on the southern side of Long Island in Great South Bay. Captree State Park encompasses an area including Captree Island and a section on the eastern tip of Jones Beach Island, a barrier beach to the south of Captree Island (LongIslandTourism nd). To the south, separating Captree from the Atlantic Ocean, is Fire Island, another barrier island. Gilgo – Oak Beach – Captree CDP has a total area of 3.7 square miles, of which 25% is water (USGS 2008).



Map 1. Location of Captree, NY (US Census Bureau 2000)

#### Historical/Background

Jones Beach Island was purchased from the Native Americans by a Welsh privateer in 1695 to use as a whaling outpost. Later, entrepreneurs ventured to this area to harvest salt hay and other sea grasses which had a variety of uses in the 1700s. There were no permanent buildings here until 1879 when a cottage was built in Oak Beach; shortly afterwards, this area became a beach resort, with ferries running back and forth from the main part of Long Island (Newsday 2008). Fire Island, Oak Island, and Cedar Island became the headquarters of the Life

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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](mailto:Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov).”

Saving Service, and also served as a place of quarantine in the late 1800s for immigrants arriving from Europe out of fear of cholera (Town of Babylon nd). It is believed the name Captree came from a local bayman’s practice of placing a cap on top of a tree to mark the channels here (Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau 2004). Today, there are nearly 2 million visitors to the park annually (Yankee III nd). Robert Moses, who spent many summers in Oak Beach, was responsible for turning much of the island into state parks (Newsday 2008). Today, Jones Beach Island is made up largely of state parks, including Jones Beach State Park, Tobay Beach Park, and Gilgo State Park in addition to Captree State Park. The section of Fire Island to the immediate south is Robert Moses State Park. First designated in 1954, Captree State Park is well known as a destination for fishing and picnicking, and encompasses 298 acres (Long Island Exchange nd).

**Demographics<sup>3</sup>**

According to Census 2000 data, Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree CDP has a total population of 333 (1990 Census data was not available for Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree). Of this 2000 total, 52.3% were male and 47.7% were female. The median age was 48.4 years and 85.3% of the population was 21 years or older while 25.2% was 62 or older.

The population structure for Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree’s (Figure 1) shows the largest percentage of residents to be between the ages of 40-49, followed by 30-39. There are very few children in this area and almost no residents between the ages of 20-29, a decline often seen in small communities but more dramatic in Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree. There is also a significant older population here, with many residents in the 60-69 and 70-79 age categories.

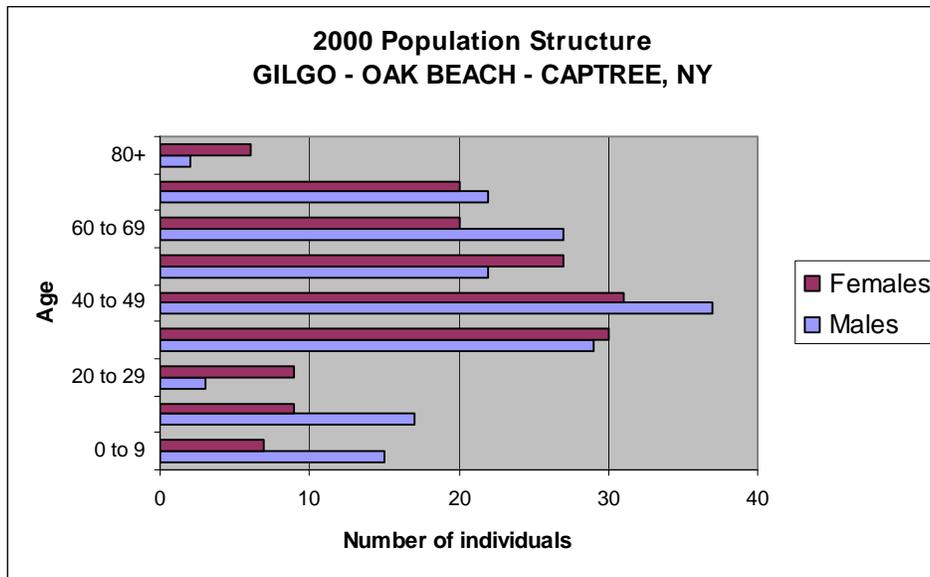


Figure 1. Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree’s population structure by sex in 2000

The majority of the population was white (97.0%), with 0.3% of residents black or African American, 2.7% Asian, none Native American, and none Pacific Islander or Hawaiian

<sup>3</sup> 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.

(Figure 2). Only 1.8% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: Irish (28.8%), Italian (27.2%), German (24.8%), and English (11.5%). With regard to region of birth, 77.4% were born in New York, 19.8% were born in a different state and 2.8% were born outside of the U.S. (all of whom were United States citizens).

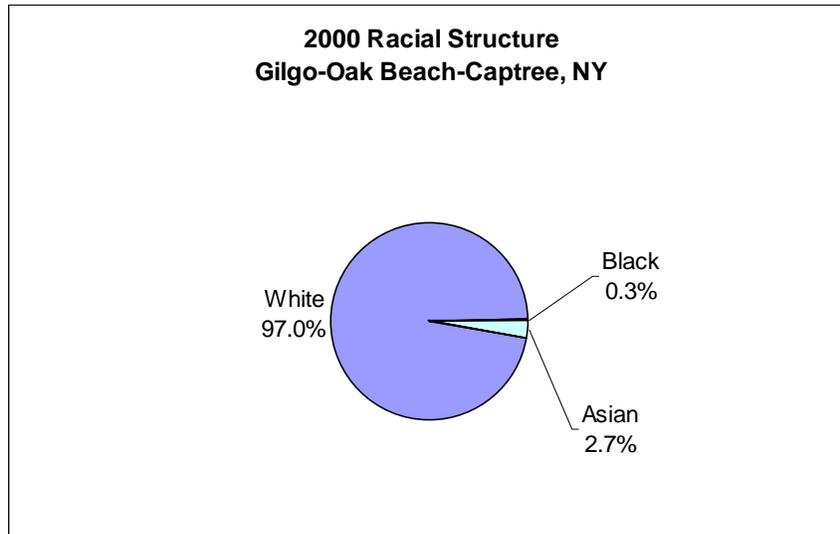


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

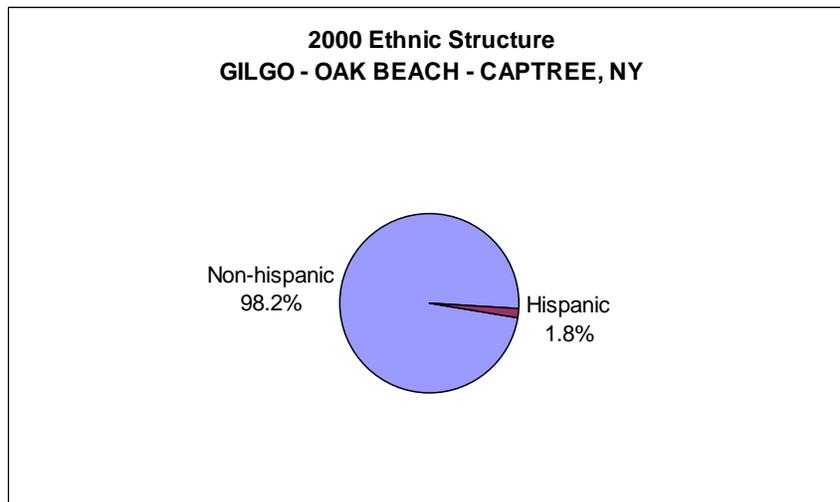


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 90.1% of the population, only English is spoken in the home, leaving 9.9% in homes where a language other than English is spoken, including 0.6% of the population who spoke English less than 'very well' according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 93.4% were high school graduates or higher and 43.4% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 1.1% did not reach ninth grade, 5.5% attended some high school but did not graduate, 20.2% completed high school, 21.3% had some college with no degree, 8.5% received an associate's degree, 25.4% earned a bachelor's degree, and 18.0% 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 Suffolk County was Catholic with 72 congregations and 734,147 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were Jewish (48 with 100,000 adherents), United Methodist (47 with 22,448 adherents), Episcopal (40 with 16,234 adherents), Evangelical Lutheran Church (26 with 19,378 adherents), and Muslim (9 with 12,139 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was up 3.8% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

### **Issues/Processes**

Some of the Charter fleet captains in Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree claim to have lost business in recent years because of more stringent regulations on fluke; many potential customers are no longer interested in going out on a for-hire boat if they cannot take home something to eat with them. There are also conflicts for fishing space between the for-hire fleet from Captree and the commercial fishermen out of Freeport and other nearby ports (Lamarque 2003).

A recent proposal to build an eight-mile long wind farm offshore from Jones Beach and Gilgo Beach has stirred controversy within the community, with a spectrum of residents both strongly supporting and opposing the project (Elliott 2006).

### **Cultural attributes**

Each fall, the state park hosts the Fall Harvest and Seafood Festival. This nautical themed, family-oriented event features seafood specialties, fresh Long Island produce, free boat rides, crab rides, pony rides, magic shows, interactive pirate shows, and more (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation – Events 2008).

There are a number of fishing tournaments which take place at Captree State Park, including the South Shore Classic, a snapper derby, and bluefish and surf fishing derby (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation - Events 2008). New York Sea Grant and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's "I FISH NY" program also runs a salt water fishing clinic at Captree State Park as well as Jones Beach State Park (NYSG nd).<sup>4</sup>

### **Infrastructure**

#### *Current Economy*

There are an estimated 70 full-time and 30 part-time people employed on the charter and party boats out of Captree State Park, in addition to several others who work at the offices of the boats or at the bait shops. These residents live throughout Long Island (Lamarque 2003).

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<sup>4</sup> New York Sea Grant (NYSG). nd. I Fish NY [cited Jul 2006]. Available at: <http://www.seagrantsunysb.edu/ifishny/>

According to the U.S. Census 2000, 69.4% (193 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (see

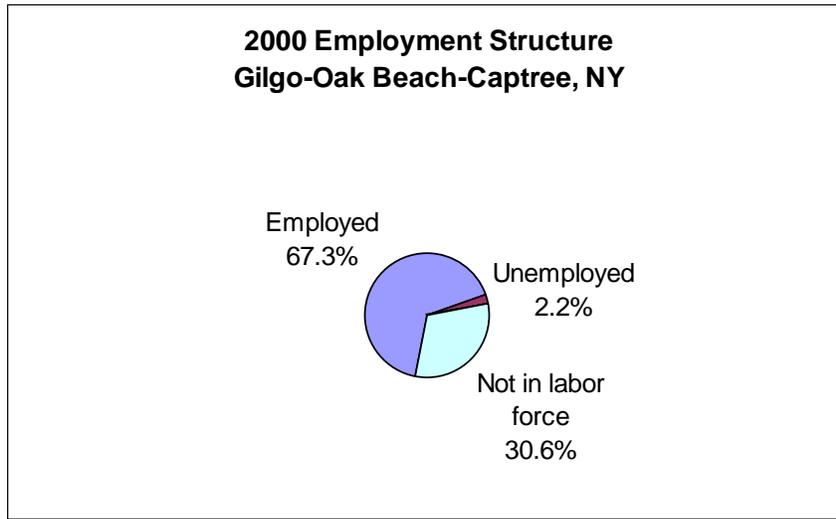


Figure), of which 2.2% were unemployed, none were in the Armed Forces, and 67.3% were employed.

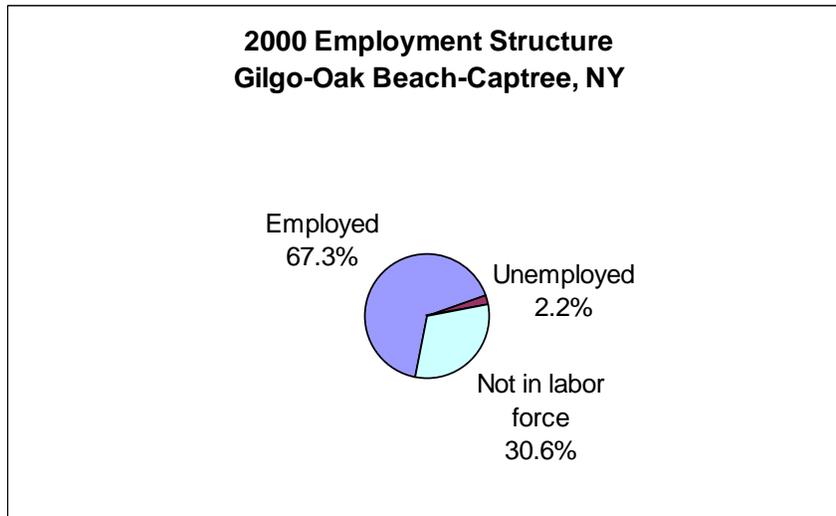


Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data<sup>5</sup>, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 3 positions or 1.6% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 19 positions or 10.2% of jobs. Educational, health and social services (18.7%), finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing (13.9%), transportation and warehousing, and utilities (10.2%), wholesale trade (10.2%), and construction (10.2%) were the primary industries.

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

Median household income in Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree was \$66,250 (1990 Census data was not available for Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree) and per capita income was \$55,813. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 65.2% more per year than females.

The average family in Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree consisted of 2.64 persons. With respect to poverty, no families (1990 Census data was not available for Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree) and three individuals (0.9%) earn below the official US 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, 20.0% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree had a total of 305 housing units of which 52.8% were occupied and 100.0% were detached one unit homes. More than twenty percent (21.0%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes, boats, RVs, vans, etc. accounted for none of the housing units; 91.9% of detached units have between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$356,100. Of vacant housing units, 43.9% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units 11.2% were renter occupied.

## **Government**

Captree is within the town of Babylon, in Suffolk County, New York. Babylon is governed by a Town Board, made up of a four-member Town Council and the Town Supervisor (Town of Babylon nd).

### *Fishery involvement in the government*

The Town of Babylon employs several bay constables, which are authorized to enforce the town's laws on the water. The Department of Environmental Control undertakes a yearly hard clam survey in the town's waters, and grows and re-seeds shellfish in the town's waters where necessary. The department is also responsible for monitoring conditional opening and closing of shellfish harvesting (Town of Babylon nd).

As a state park, Captree State Park, including the park's boat basin and fishing piers, are maintained by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (New York Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation 2008).

## **Institutional**

### *Fishing associations*

The 26 for-hire fishing boats at Captree as well as some diving and sightseeing boats located here are all members of the Captree Boatmen's Association, which organizes the charter and party boats. The current (2007) president of the six-member board is Mike Eagan. The Boatmen's Association recently instituted a rewards program for repeat customers to earn prizes for returning to Captree (Captree Fleet nd).

The New York Seafood Council is the larger association representing fishing interests in the state. "The New York Seafood Council (NYSC) is an industry membership organization comprised of individuals, businesses, or organizations involved in the harvesting, processing, wholesale, distribution or sale of seafood products or services to the seafood industry in New York" (NYSC 2008).

### *Fishing assistance centers*

Information on fishing assistance centers in Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree is unavailable

through secondary data collection.

#### *Other fishing related organizations*

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York Sea Grant run a program called “I FISH NY”, which is an outreach program in New York City and on Long Island designed to increase local knowledge of salt and fresh water resources through fishing. I FISH NY offers in- and out-of-classroom programs throughout the year. In-class programs begin with a school visit and are accompanied by a fishing trip at a later date. Out-of-class events consist of free public fishing events as well as youth group programs, including at Captree State Park. Loaner rods and bait are supplied at every event (NYSG nd).

#### **Physical**

There is not one particular community associated with the fishing fleet in Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree, as the captains and crew may be from all over Long Island (Lamarque 2003). There are, however, a number of small communities here which make up the Gilgo – Oak Beach – Captree CDP, including West Gilgo Beach, Gilgo Beach, Cedar Beach, Oak Beach, Oak Beach Island, and Captree Island. The land for these communities is leased from the State of New York, rather than being privately owned (US Census Bureau 2000).

Captree State Park is accessible to visitors by taking the Long Island Rail Road to Babylon Station, where they can then transfer to a bus that travels to the park. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) offers a package deal to visitors who buy a ticket to fish aboard the [Captree Fleet](#); they can purchase admission for fishing as well as train and bus fare for \$40 round-trip for adults. Captree Island is about 14 miles from Freeport, 37 miles from Brooklyn, and 44 miles from Manhattan by car. Long Island MacArthur Airport is a 19 mile drive and JFK International Airport is about 30 miles from Captree Island (MapQuest 2005). Captree Island, Captree State Park, and Fire Island are all connected with one another and with the town of Babylon on the main part of Long Island by the Robert Moses Causeway. No commercial vehicles or pick-up trucks are permitted on the causeway. Captree State Park is also accessible by the Ocean Parkway, which travels the length of Jones Beach Island. At the other end of Jones Beach Island is Jones Beach State Park, across Jones Inlet from Point Lookout (USGS 2008).

The Captree State Park Boat Basin is on the north side of Jones Beach Island. The for-hire fleet and the bait shop are located at the boat basin. There is another fishing pier on the south side of the park. Captree State Park has two fishing piers open 24 hours which are handicapped accessible (Lamarque 2003). The park also has a marine fuel station and a boat ramp (Explore Long Island nd).

## INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES<sup>6</sup>

### Commercial

Despite having a number of home ported vessels, there were no landings listed for Captree Island for 1997-2006. Of the home ported vessels, only in 2000 did any of those vessels report landings, with a total of \$3,175 that year (Table 1).

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

## Vessels by Year<sup>7</sup>

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	10	0	0	0
1998	5	0	0	0
1999	8	0	0	0
2000	5	0	3,175	0
2001	2	0	0	0
2002	5	0	0	0
2003	6	0	0	0
2004	5	0	0	0
2005	4	0	0	0
2006	4	0	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<sup>8</sup>

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

### Recreational

There are more than two dozen party and charter boats found in Captree State Park (Lamarque 2003). The website for the Captree Boatmen's Association lists fourteen open boats and twelve which offer charters within the Captree Fleet. Most offer fishing year-round (Captree Fleet nd). Most of these boats are fairly large, generally over 60 feet in length. They offer full- and half-day excursions, as well as night trips for bluefish. All include bait and tackle with the price. Most of the fishing from these boats is for weakfish, bluefish, and fluke, and most fishing occurs within the bay. There is one bait and tackle shop, Captree Bait and Tackle, in the park (ScreamingReel.com nd). Boats also target striped bass, sea bass, porgies, and blackfish (JIB VI 2008). While Captree Island generally advertises itself as a family-friendly fishing destination, in the past at least one boat did 24-hour offshore tuna fishing trips out to the canyons (Johnson nd).

In addition to the for-hire fleet, there are two fishing piers in the state park. Surf fishing is common, especially on nearby Fire Island which faces the Atlantic Ocean to the south (Long Island Exchange nd). Oak Beach also has a fishing pier which has recently been rebuilt (South Shore Estuary Reserve Council nd). Log book data indicates between the years 2001-2005 there were a total of 10 charter and party boats which logged trips in Captree Island, carrying a total of 39,909 anglers on 1,318 different trips. However, it seems this data does not fully reflect all of the for-hire boats listed for Captree.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

## Subsistence

Information on subsistence fishing in Gilgo-Oak Beach-Captree is either unavailable through secondary data collection or the practice does not exist.

## FUTURE

The Captree for-hire fleet does not face the same threat of gentrification as many other communities, because the fleet is based entirely within the state park (Lamarque 2003). A number of renovations are taking place at Oak Beach Park, which when completed will include an 800-foot pier, a tackle shop, and other businesses such as restaurants along a new walkway and revitalized beach area (James 2005).

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