

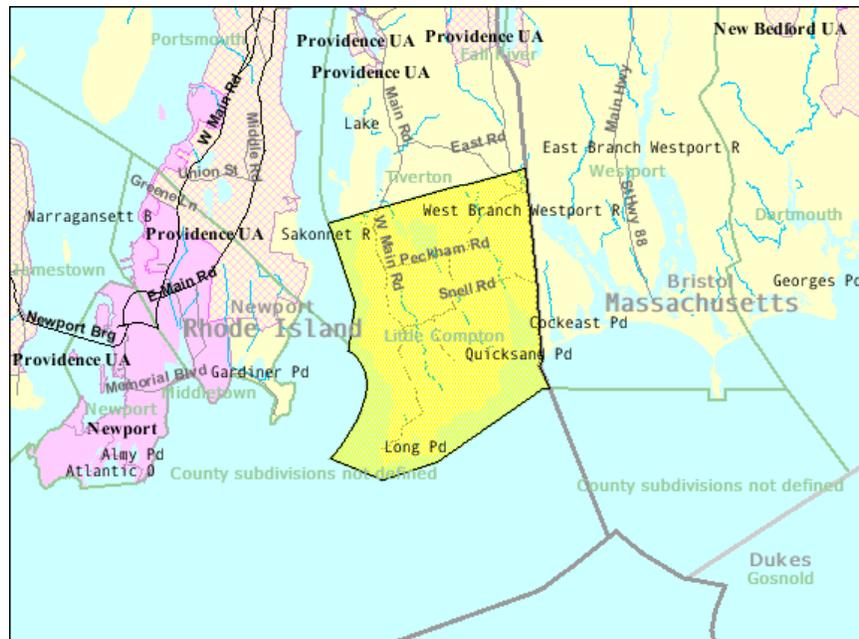
# LITTLE COMPTON, RI<sup>1</sup>

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

### PEOPLE AND PLACES

#### Regional orientation

The Town of Little Compton (41.51° N, 71.17° W) is located in Southeastern Rhode Island in Newport County, along the Massachusetts border. It borders Tiverton and Westport, MA, and is located along the Sakonnet River, part of Narragansett Bay (USGS 2008).



Map 1. Location of Little Compton, RI (US Census Bureau 2000)

#### Historical/Background

Little Compton was originally home to the Sakonnet or “Segonet” Indians, a Wampanoag tribe led by Awashonks, the sister of King Philip. The original English settlers here were part of Plymouth Colony seeking to expand their land holdings; there were thirty-two original “owners” of the land that is now Little Compton. Among them was Colonel Benjamin Church, who would become famous for his role in the King Philip Indian Wars of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Little Compton was incorporated in 1682 as part of Plymouth Colony, and was later annexed to Newport County as part of Rhode Island together with Tiverton in 1746. Little Compton was raided by the British several times during the Revolutionary War, who met with much resistance from settlers (RIEDC nd). The Sakonnet Point Lighthouse was completed in 1884 and was relit in 1997 after 43 years out of commission (D’Entremont 2007). “Today, Little Compton is a

<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).”

rural-farming community. It was in Little Compton that the famous Rhode Island Red, (a breed of fowl and the State Bird), was developed. Fishing is still a major industry in the town, as one can observe with the daily departure of the fishing fleet from the Sakonnet Wharf. The town has also developed into an ideal vacation spot with the traditional atmosphere of colonial New England” (RIEDC nd). It is also home to what is debatably the oldest continuously operating store in the country, Gray’s Store (RIEDC nd). Sakonnet Point in Little Compton is the most easterly and isolated fishing port in Rhode Island (Hall-Arber et al. 2001).

### Demographics<sup>3</sup>

According to Census 2000 data<sup>4</sup>, Little Compton had a total population of 3,593, up 7.6% from the reported population of 3,339 in 1990 (US Census Bureau 1990). Of this 2000 total, 49.3% were males and 50.7% were females. The median age was 43.5 years and 75.7% of the population was 21 years or older while 20.9% was 62 or older.

The most populous age group (Figure 1) for both men and women in the 2000 Census was the 40-49 year old grouping, followed closely by both the 50-59 age group. The age structure shows a dip in population for both men and women in the 20-29 age bracket, indicating an out-migration of young people moving elsewhere for college and/or to seek jobs that is common in many fishing communities.

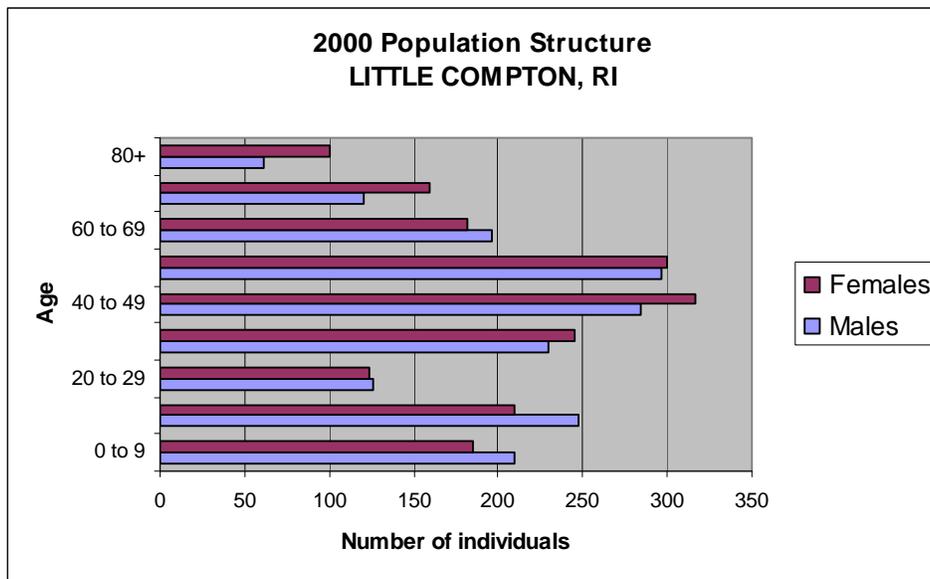


Figure 1. Little Compton’s population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

The majority of the population was white (98.8%), with 0.1% of residents black or African American, 0.4% Asian, 0.5% Native American, and 0.1% Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). Only 0.9% of the total population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: English (27.6%), Irish (24.5%), Portuguese (14.8%), and French (9.3%). With regard to region of birth,

<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.

<sup>4</sup> These and all census data, unless otherwise referenced, can be found at U.S. Census: American Factfinder 2000 <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>; census data used are for Little Compton town (cited Jul 2007)

33.7% were born in Rhode Island, 61.9% were born in a different state and 3.7% were born outside of the U.S. (including 1.1% who were not United States citizens).

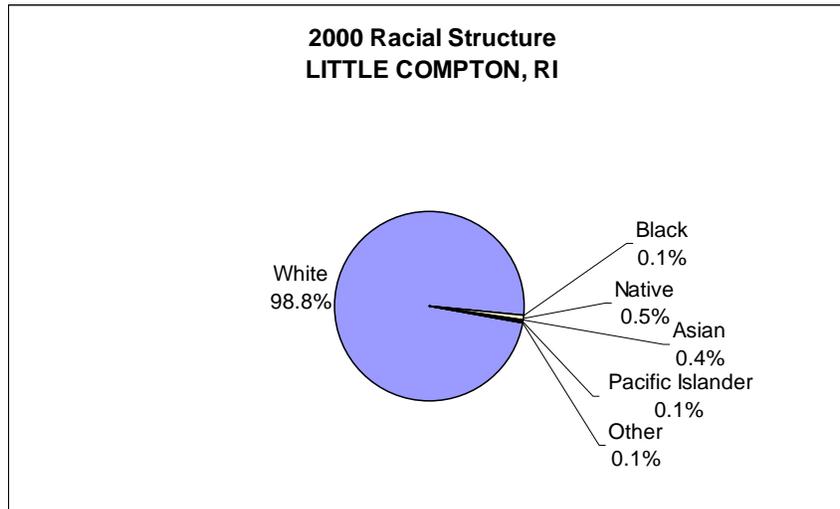


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

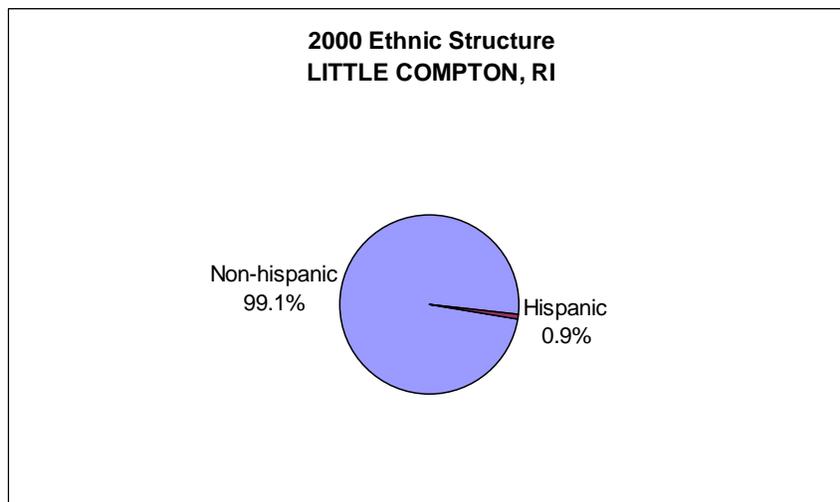


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 94.4% of the population, only English was spoken in the home, leaving 5.6% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, and including 1.6% of the population who spoke English less than 'very well' according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 91.0% were high school graduates or higher; 45.0% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 3.8% did not reach ninth grade, 5.2% attended some high school but did not graduate, 22.1% completed high school, 15.3% had some college with no degree, 8.6% received an associate's degree, 25.8% earned their bachelor's degree, and 19.2% received either a graduate or professional degree.

Although religion percentages are not available through U.S. Census data, according to the Association of Religion Data Archives in 2000, the religion with the highest number of congregations in Newport County was Catholic with 13 congregations and 68,668 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were Episcopal (10 with 4,720 adherents), and

American Baptist (15 with 3,022 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was up 57.3% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

### Issues/Processes

The Sakonnet Point Club is a group of families and individuals who are currently building a clubhouse at Sakonnet Point next to the fishing dock, in place of a dilapidated former restaurant. The club will be used to store recreational boats and will include a restaurant and exercise facility. This plan has been controversial because of concerns it will exclude some of the community from this area of waterfront access. This is the one sign of gentrification in Little Compton (Hall-Arber et al. 2001). One house in Little Compton recently sold for \$4.4 million, breaking a record, demonstrating the escalating cost of buying a home here (Dunn 2006).

Local lobstermen are concerned about new rules requiring sinking line on lobster traps to protect whales; one commented that making the switch to sinking line from floating line, which most lobstermen use currently, will be costly, and sinking line is more likely to become chafed.<sup>5</sup>

### Cultural attributes

Little Compton holds an annual Fourth of July celebration as well as an annual antique show and chicken barbecue each August.

### Infrastructure

#### *Current Economy*

According to the U.S. Census 2000<sup>6</sup>, 63.4% (1,877 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (Figure 4), of which 2.0% were unemployed, none were in the Armed Forces, and 63.4% were employed.

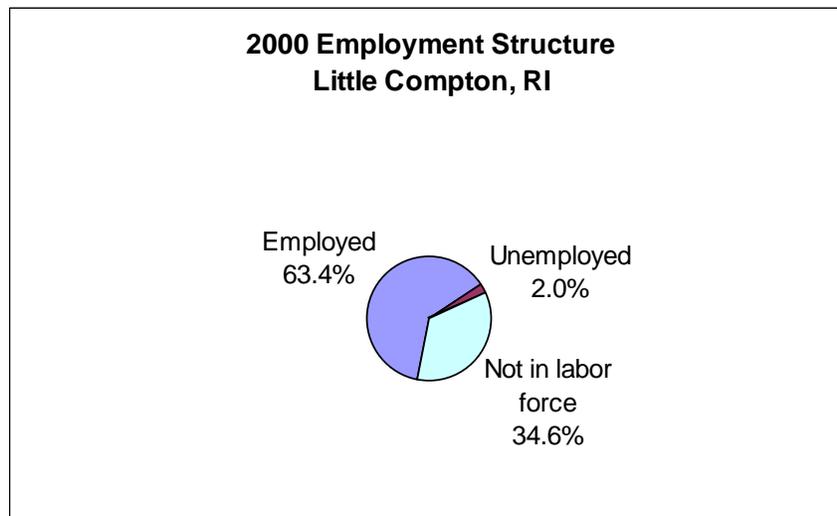


Figure 1. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 39 positions or 2.1% of all jobs. Self

<sup>5</sup> Profile review comment, Gary Mataronas, Sakonnet Lobstermen's Association, 22 California Road, Little Compton, RI 02837, September 6, 2007

<sup>6</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.

employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 190 positions or 10.4% of jobs. Education, health, and social services (27.4%), professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (10.9%), and manufacturing (10.8%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Little Compton was \$55,368 (up 34.4% from \$41,187 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and per capita income was \$32,513. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 50.6% more per year than females.

The average family in Little Compton consisted of 2.92 persons. With respect to poverty, 3.7% of families (up from 2.1% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 3.4% of individuals earn below the official U.S. Census poverty threshold. This threshold is \$8,794 for individuals and ranges from \$11,239-35,060 for families, depending on number of persons (2-9) (US Census Bureau 2000b). In 2000, 17.3% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Little Compton had a total of 2,103 housing units of which 70.1% were occupied and 92.6% were detached one unit homes. More than one quarter (25.5%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes accounted for 3.4% of housing units; 83.4% of detached units have between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$228,200. Of vacant housing units, 27.9% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units 19.4% were renter occupied.

## **Government**

Little Compton has a five member Town Council headed by the council President (RIEDC nd).

### *Fishery involvement in government*

David Borden, a Little Compton resident and the Former Director of Natural Resources of the Rhode Island DEM, was named chair of the New England Fishery Management Council in 2003 (RIDEM 2003). There is a Harbormaster in Little Compton.

## **Institutional**

### *Fishing associations*

The Sakonnet Point Fishermen's Association is made up of local fishermen, mostly combination lobstermen and gillnetters, who fish out of Sakonnet Point (Hall-Arber et al. 2001). Some of Little Compton's fishermen also sit on the board of the [Rhode Island Lobstermen's Association](#).

The [Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers' Association](#) is dedicated to conservation of the marine environment and of fisheries, and to protecting the rights of saltwater recreational fishermen in Rhode Island. Rhode Island has several other fishery associations to which fishermen in Little Compton might belong, including: the Ocean State Fishermen's Association, the Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association, the Rhode Island Inshore Fishermen's Association, and the Rhode Island Commercial Fishermen's Association (RIMRU 2002).

### *Fishing assistance centers*

Information on fishery assistance centers in Little Compton is unavailable through secondary data collection.

### *Other fishing-related institutions*

[Save the Bay](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and protecting the environmental quality of Narragansett Bay. The organization works towards this goal by monitoring the health of the Bay, initiating action to clean up the Bay, and through advocacy and

education programs. The [Sakonnet Point Club](#) is a group of families and individuals wishing to revitalize Sakonnet Point by building a clubhouse for its members. The club would primarily serve recreational fishermen (Hall-Arber et al. 2001). The Sakonnet Harbor Conservancy is another group which formed in opposition to the club (Editorial 2004).

The [Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island](#) was founded in 2004 and is home to nonprofit commercial fishing organizations, and serves “as a headquarters for bringing fishermen, scientists, managers, and elected officials together to discuss issues.” The goals of the center are “to improve fisheries and understanding of the marine environment through education, collaborative research, and cooperation.”

## **Physical**

Little Compton is roughly 18 miles from Fall River, 20 miles from New Bedford, and 35 miles from Providence. The closest airport is T.F. Green Airport in Warwick, RI, roughly 42 miles away (MapQuest nd). There is no public transportation to Little Compton, and only one sizable road, Route 77, leading into Little Compton, making the town relatively isolated.

The fishing industry in Little Compton is based at Sakonnet Point, at the southern end of the town. There is a small harbor here with a boat ramp and fishing wharf. Sakonnet Lobster is a lobster wholesaler located in Little Compton at Sakonnet Point. Point Trap Company is another lobster company, located on the town dock.<sup>7</sup> Sakonnet Point Fish Trap Companies include; Tallman and Mack; Point Trap, HN Wilcox, and Seal Rock.<sup>8</sup> There is virtually nothing else at Sakonnet Point other than the fishing operation (Hall-Arber et al. 2001). Sakonnet Oyster Company is an oyster aquaculture company, growing oysters in the Sakonnet River off Little Compton (USDHHS 2005).

## **INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES<sup>9</sup>**

### **Commercial**

The Parascandola Fish Company in Newport operates a system of fish traps at the mouth of the Sakonnet River from May through October. The permits and sites for the traps date back to colonial times. Sakonnet Lobster is a lobster company at Sakonnet Point which sells lobsters locally, regionally, and internationally. The fishing industry here is relatively stable between these two operations. Most fishermen in Little Compton are a combination of lobster-gillnet fishermen (Hall-Arber et al. 2001).

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<sup>7</sup> Profile review comment, Mike Massa, Harbormaster, 40 Commons, PO Box 226, Little Compton, RI 02837, September 11, 2007

<sup>8</sup> Community Review Comments, Walter Anoushian, NMFS Port Agent, 83 State St 2nd Flr, P.O. Box 547, Narragansett, RI 02882-0547, January 31, 2008

<sup>9</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.

Little Compton has a highly diverse fishery. The most valuable species grouping landed in Little Compton in 2006 was summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, worth \$733,407, followed by lobster (\$571,640), and monkfish (\$519,116). The value of the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass category was higher in 2006 than the ten-year average value for 1997-2006, as was the value of lobster (Table 1). Landings in Little Compton were highest in 2005, at just under \$2.9 million. Landings were well over \$1 million in most years except for 1997, when landings were just under \$300,000. Home port data provided combines data for Little Compton and Sakonnet (Table 2), as some vessels out of Sakonnet Harbor are listed under Sakonnet. The number of home ported vessels increased slightly from 1997 to 2006. The value of home port landings jumped to over \$1 million in 1998 and 1999, and over \$1.5 million in 2000, but fell below \$1 million for the years 2000-2005. Landings were over \$1 million again in 2006. The number of vessels with owners living in Little Compton also showed an increasing trend from 1997 through 2006.

### Landings by Species

Table 1. Dollar Value of Federally Managed Groups of Landings in Little Compton, RI

	<b>Average from 1997-2006</b>	<b>2006 only</b>
<b>Monkfish</b>	635,661	519,116
<b>Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass</b>	618,604	733,407
<b>Lobster</b>	295,979	571,640
<b>Other<sup>10</sup></b>	138,283	143,217
<b>Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish</b>	103,537	159,304
<b>Largemesh Groundfish<sup>11</sup></b>	70,815	173,306
<b>Skate</b>	50,849	68,925
<b>Bluefish</b>	23,736	18,889
<b>Dogfish</b>	17,029	45,765
<b>Herring</b>	1,412	14,000
<b>Smallmesh Groundfish<sup>12</sup></b>	457	919
<b>Scallop</b>	289	2,887
<b>Salmon</b>	3	0
<b>Tilefish</b>	3	0

<sup>10</sup> “Other” species includes any species not accounted for in a federally managed group

<sup>11</sup> Largemesh groundfish: cod, winter flounder, yellowtail flounder, American plaice, sand-dab flounder, haddock, white hake, redfish, and pollock

<sup>12</sup> Smallmesh multi-species: red hake, ocean pout, mixed hake, black whiting, silver hake (whiting)

## Vessels by Year<sup>13</sup>

Table 2. All columns represent vessel permits or landings value combined between 1997-2006 for Little Compton and Sakonnet

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# vessels (owner's city)	Level of fishing home port (\$)	Level of fishing landed port (\$)
1997	14	13	411,274	272,099
1998	19	17	1,094,677	1,598,820
1999	16	14	1,048,972	1,853,959
2000	14	12	1,578,341	2,678,285
2001	14	12	835,704	1,619,088
2002	13	13	971,428	2,170,451
2003	14	14	764,211	2,170,451
2004	16	16	659,019	2,179,372
2005	18	18	925,276	2,863,485
2006	20	21	1,177,839	2,451,375

(Note: # 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>14</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 three fishing charters listed for Little Compton: Captain David Cornell Fishing Charters, Captain Bud Phillips Fishing Charters, and Island Charters. They fish for tuna, shark, bass, and bluefish (Forte Marketing nd).

### Subsistence

Information on subsistence fishing in Little Compton is either unavailable through secondary data collection or the practice does not exist.

### Future

The community is generally focused on keeping development down in the town, and with the exception of the clubhouse at Sakonnet Point which is being built, there are no major changes planned for the community (Hall-Arber et al. 2001).

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<sup>13</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>14</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.

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