

Seaford, Virginia

People and Place

Location

Seaford, located near the convergence of the York River and the Chesapeake Bay, is approximately 70 miles east of Richmond, Virginia, in lower York County. The geographic coordinates of Seaford, Virginia, are 37°11'53N, 76°26'00"W. Because Seaford has no legally defined boundaries, no data are available on the amount of land and water area encompassed by the town.¹

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Seaford was 3441. In 2000 the gender structure was evenly divided with slightly more females (50.2%) than males (49.8%). The median age was 41.2, which is higher than the national median of 35.3 for the same year.

For the population 18 years and over, 88.7% had a high school education or higher, 27.2% had attained a bachelor's degree or higher, and 10.1% had earned a graduate or professional degree. The highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma/equivalency for 25.1% of the population, and 29.4% reported having some college but no degree. These levels of educational attainment are higher than the national averages for the same year. In 2000, 87.7% of the population lived in family households.

The racial composition of Seaford, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, was predominantly White (94.2%), followed by Black or African American (3.4%). The categories of Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander each constituted less than one percent of the population (0.8%, 0.4%, and 0.3% respectively). Overall, 0.3% indicated that they belong to some other race and 0.8% of the population identified with two or more races. Only 1.6% indicated that they were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and 1.7% of the population was foreign-born. Of the foreign-born residents, 29.3% were born in Greece and 15.5% were born in Japan.

History

The area surrounding Seaford was originally home to Algonquian-speaking native peoples, who were united in the early 17th century by Chief Wahunsunacock (who later changed his name to Powhatan after the name of the village in which he was born).² The many tribes united by this leader came to be known collectively as the Powhatans or the Powhatan Confederacy. Their main village was located near Gloucester, but they established hundreds of satellite villages throughout the Chesapeake Bay area and the Virginia coastal plain.

The Powhatans cultivated corn and other vegetables and subsisted heavily on fish, oysters, clams, and waterfowl.³ They were the first native peoples encountered by the European settlers who founded Jamestown in 1607. Powhatan agreed to the marriage of his daughter, Pocahontas, and the leader of the colony, James Smith, in the hope that the gesture would prevent conflict between the two groups, but disease and bloody encounters with Euro-American settlers soon decimated the native population in the area.

Powhatan tribes gradually lost control of their ancestral lands, but many descendants of these native peoples still reside in the area today.

York County was established in 1634 as one of eight shires in Colonial Virginia. The community that would become Seaford was originally called Crab Neck, Crab Rock, and Calamar.⁴ Prior to the onset of the Civil War, there were only thirty families living in Crab Neck. During the war, Northern troops tore down the local Methodist Church to build a hospital for Union soldiers. A post office first opened in the community in 1889, and the first local elementary school was constructed in 1920.

Today, the community remains small, and the majority of businesses are oriented toward fishing, boating, lighthouse construction, and other marine-related activities. The community also depends heavily on scallop fishing (in both the Mid-Atlantic and North Pacific), and Seaford hosts a large scallop processing facility, which operates more than 20 scallop dredgers and markets its products under the name Captain Wells Brand Scallops™. The Seaford Scallop Company was founded in 1979 and quickly became one of the largest processing facilities on the East Coast. Today, the company also includes Wells Scallops and Wells Ice and Cold Storage and supplies fresh scallops to consumers year-round.⁵

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Businesses located in Seaford include Calvin Huges Welding and Machine Works, Lighthouse Marine Surveying and Consulting, Mill's Marina, Seaford Transfer (and independent moving company), Seaford Scallop Company, Seaford Country Store, and the Seaford Yacht Club.⁶ The Seaford Scallop Company, Wells Scallop, and Wells Ice and Cold Storage, which operate jointly from a facility in Seaford, employ a total of 62 local residents. This joint operation is one of York County's top employers.⁷ Other major employers include York County Schools and the York County Government. Two large nearby industrial complexes, Virginia Power and a British Petroleum/Amoco Oil Refinery may also employ Seaford residents.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 66.6% of Seaford's potential labor force was employed. The community displayed a 2.7% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), which compared favorably to the 5.7% national unemployment rate for the same year. Of the population over the age of 16, approximately 31.5% were not in the labor force (not actively seeking work). Of the employed civilian population, 18.2% worked in 'Manufacturing' and 14.8% worked in 'Educational, health and social services'. The armed forces accounted for 7.0% of the labor force. A total of 19.3% of the employed civilian population worked for the government at the local, state, or federal level. However, none were reported as working for the government in the 'Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining' sectors. None of the employed civilian population over the age of 16 was involved in 'Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.

The per capita income in Seaford was about \$28,905 in 1999, compared to a national per capita income of \$21,587. The median household income in Seaford was about \$64,392, compared to a national median household income of \$41,994. Approximately 3.3% of residents were living below the poverty level in 1999, a value that compared very favorably to the national poverty level of 12.4%. In 2000, there were

1354 housing units in Seaford, 95.3% of which were occupied, 4.7% of which were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 91.2% were owner occupied and 8.8% were renter occupied. Of the vacant housing units, 25.0% were 'for sale only'.

Governance

Seaford is not incorporated as a city and has no local, municipal government. Therefore, the community falls under the jurisdiction of the York County Government, which is headquartered in nearby Yorktown (9 miles). Seaford residents elect York County officials and pay taxes levied by the county. York County collects a 5% sales and use tax and a lodging tax of 5% plus an additional \$2.00 per room, per night.⁸

The State of Virginia levies a 2% tax on the sale of watercraft, with a maximum tax burden of \$2000. Motor vehicle fuel is taxed at a rate of 16 cents per gallon, but commercial watercraft operators are eligible for a refund of 14.5 cents per gallon. Commercial watercraft operators may also direct the state to credit their share of this motor fuel tax to the state's Marine Fishing Improvement Fund.⁹ Boats weighing over 5 t are taxed as tangible personal property.

The State of Virginia Department of Taxation does not levy landing taxes on commercially harvested fish and shellfish, but the Virginia Marine Resources Commissions does require commercial fishermen to purchase various fishery and gear-specific licenses and pay additional associated fees.

Seaford lies within the jurisdiction of the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council, which has its nearest meetings in nearby Hampton. The closest United States Coast Guard Station is located in Yorktown. Seaford falls under the jurisdiction of the National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Office, headquartered 652 miles away in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, which has a Law Enforcement Field Office 10 miles away in Gloucester Point, Virginia.

Facilities

Seaford is located at the junction of VA-718 and VA-622, about 3 miles east of US-17. The Newport News-Williamsburg International Airport is located about 6 miles from Seaford in Newport News. The nearest hospital facilities are located in nearby Newport News, Hampton (9 miles), and Yorktown (9 miles). According to available sources, there are no hotels or motels in Seaford.

Seaford is located in the York County School Division, which is headquartered in Yorktown (9 miles). Students residing in Seaford attend elementary school in Seaford and middle and high school in Yorktown.

Law enforcement services in Seaford are provided by the York County Sheriff and fire safety services are provided by Neighborhood Fire Station #6, located in Seaford and operated by York County.¹⁰ Electricity is supplied by Dominion Virginia Power, and Virginia Natural Gas provides gas services. Most Seaford residents utilize private wells and septic tanks.

The community hosts a marina for use by commercial and recreational fishermen and a scallop processing facility that is home to more than 20 scallop dredgers that operate along the Atlantic Coast. Mill's Marina, which is located on Chesapeake Bay at the mouth of the York River, is a full-service facility.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 available data indicates that there was no involvement in West Coast fisheries by Seaford residents.

Sportfishing

Seaford residents may have been very active in sportfishing in the West Coast Fisheries in 2000. However, no data on the extent of this involvement are currently available.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 there were three vessels owned by Seaford residents that participated in North Pacific fisheries. These vessels made landings in the North Pacific scallop fishery, but specific information (landings in metric tons/value of landings) is confidential.

No Seaford residents were crew members on vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. In the same year, two community residents held state permits for Alaska fisheries and three Seaford residents held federal permits for North Pacific fisheries.

Residents of Seaford held a total of five commercial fishing permits for North Pacific fisheries in 2000. Residents held two Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) scallop permits and two License Limitation Program (LLP) scallop permits.

Sportfishing

Four Seaford community members purchased Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000. There were no sportfishing businesses in Seaford that participated in Alaskan fisheries in 2000.

Additional Information

Involvement in East Coast Fisheries

Seaford residents are heavily involved in the East Coast Fisheries, especially the scallop fishery. Seaford Scallop, Wells Scallop, and Wells Ice and Cold Storage, which operate a scallop processing facility in Seaford, employ over 60 full-time employees and operate more than 20 vessels active in the New England and Mid-Atlantic scallop fisheries.¹¹

¹ York County Government. 2004. Demographics, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.yorkcounty.gov/econdev/demographics/population.htm](http://www.yorkcounty.gov/econdev/demographics/population.htm) (access date - April 2005).

² York County Government. 2004. Native Americans, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.yorkcounty.gov/cyc/native.html](http://www.yorkcounty.gov/cyc/native.html) (access date - June 2005).

³ Spaar, Kathy. No Date. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club – Short History of the Powhatan Indians, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.patc.net/history/native/ind_hist.html](http://www.patc.net/history/native/ind_hist.html) (access date - June 2005).

⁴ Quass, Brian. 2003. Seaford Virginia Home Page, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.quass.com/seafordvirginia.html](http://www.quass.com/seafordvirginia.html) (access date - June 2005).

⁵ Captain Wells Scallops. 2005. History, [Online]. Available: URL: [Hhttp://www.captainwellsscallops.com/history.html](http://www.captainwellsscallops.com/history.html) (access date - June 2005).

⁶ Quass, Brian. 2003. Seaford Virginia Home Page, [Online]. Available: URL:
Hhttp://www.quass.com/seafordvirginia.htmlH (access date - June 2005).

⁷ York County Office of Economic Development. 2004. Top Employers, [Online]. Available: URL:
Hhttp://www.yorkcounty.gov/econdev/industry/top_employers.htmH (access date - June 2005).

⁸ York County Government. 2004. Business Tax Information, [Online]. Available: URL:
Hhttp://www.yorkcounty.gov/revenue/businessstax.htmH (access date - June 2005).

⁹ Virginia Department of Taxation. 2005. Tax Code of Virginia, [Online]. Available: URL:
Hhttp://www.policylibrary.tax.virginia.gov/OTP/Policy.nsfH (access date - June 2005).

¹⁰ York County Government. 2004. Neighborhood Fire Station #6, [Online]. Available: URL:
Hhttp://www.yorkcounty.gov/fls/fstat/Stat6.htmH (access date - June 2005).

¹¹ Captain Wells Scallops. 2005. History, [Online]. Available: URL:
Hhttp://www.captainwellsscallops.com/history.htmlH (access date - June 2005).