

Mid-Atlantic

- Delaware
- Maryland
- New Jersey
- New York
- Virginia



Mid-Atlantic Summary

Regional Context

The Mid-Atlantic region includes Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia. These states combined share 428 miles of coastline: 130 miles in New Jersey, 127 miles in New York, 112 miles in Virginia, 31 miles in Maryland, and 28 miles in Delaware. Many sounds, bays, inlets, and related features characterize the coastal area of these states such as the Chesapeake Bay and Long Island Sound. Although the region's seacoast is not particularly lengthy, it shares 10,528 miles of tidal shoreline distributed among the states as follows: Virginia, 3,315 miles; Maryland, 3,190 miles; New York, 1,850 miles; New Jersey, 1,792 miles; and Delaware, 381 miles. The most commercially important species today in the Mid-Atlantic region are sea scallop, blue crab, surf clam, menhaden, quahog (inshore), summer flounder, striped bass, lobster, squid (loligo), and monkfish.

Historically, the Chesapeake Bay has had one of the Nation's and the region's more productive commercial fisheries dominated by blue crab and oysters, but also including finfish like striped bass. Many Maryland and some Virginia fishing communities are located on its tidal creeks and islands. Examples include: Smith Island, Solomons, and Deale, Maryland; and Reedville, Wachapreague, and Cheriton, Virginia. Today many of these areas provide recreational fishing opportunities and second homes for people from metropolitan Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland, and increasingly primary homes for others. This is another local example of the national trend of population movement to coastal zones. Both shores of the Chesapeake Bay and the whole Delaware/Maryland/Virginia or "Delmarva" Peninsula are undergoing transformation, impacting local fisheries and fishing communities. Commercial fisheries production in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries is in decline for complex reasons including pollution from agriculture and urban expansion throughout its vast watershed, and species-specific disease. The Chesapeake Bay area's experience is typical of the region as a whole.

Loss of commercial fishing infrastructure to alternate uses increasingly constrains commercial fishing and is changing the nature of fishing communities. Gentrification and tourism are factors in communities including: Barnegat Light/Long Beach, Belford, and Atlantic City, New Jersey; Greenport and Hampton Bays/Shinnecock, New York; Lewes, Delaware; Ocean City, Maryland; and Hampton, Virginia. Many processors and fish houses have ceased operating in the last decade. Some examples of fishing communities where this is happening include Chincoteague and Norfolk, Virginia and Ocean City, Maryland.

Saltwater recreational fishing is found along the entire coast and its importance is increasing. In 2006, New Jersey received the most saltwater recreational fishing trips,



Fresh fish and seafood at The New Fulton Fish Market, Bronx, New York

followed by New York, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. Among the top fishing communities that service saltwater anglers are Barnegat Light/Long Beach, Point Pleasant, and Belmar, New Jersey; Mattituck and Montauk, New York; Lewes and Indian River, Delaware; Ocean City, Maryland; and Hampton, Newport News, Wachapreague, and Chincoteague, Virginia. These offer a variety of shoreside support services as well as sportfish tournaments.

A large number of the region's fishing communities host seafood festivals and fishing-related festivals such as blessings of the fleet in the warmer months. Examples include the communities of Lewes, Delaware; Ocean City, Maryland; Atlantic City, Avalon, Barnegat Light/Long Beach, Belmar, Cape May, and Point Pleasant, New Jersey; Greenport, Oceanside, Point Lookout, Mattituck, and Montauk, New York; and Chincoteague, Hampton, Newport News, and Seaford, Virginia.

The Fishing Communities

Overall, 58 fishing communities have been profiled by NMFS social scientists because of the nature of their links with commercial and/or recreational fishing in the Mid-Atlantic region. These communities are distributed as follows: Delaware, five communities; Maryland, nine communities; New Jersey, 17 communities; New York, 13 communities; North Carolina, 24 communities; Pennsylvania, two communities; and Virginia, 12 communities.¹ In 2006, six of the United States' top fifty

¹Neither North Carolina nor Pennsylvania are included in this regional summary. North Carolina is described in the South Atlantic Regional Summary. Pennsylvania was omitted here due to its limited engagement in marine-related commercial harvest and recreational fishing sectors. Maryland's fishing communities were identified by non-NMFS regional specialists because fisheries landings are not tied to ports in that state.

Fishing Communities Facts

- The community of Belford, New Jersey is reported to be one of the oldest fishing ports on the East Coast.
- Smith Island, Maryland, with a population of under 400, is one of only three Mid-Atlantic islands to still have year-round residents.
- The landing site of Port Mahon, Delaware is located in a Nature Conservancy Preserve and can be accessed only by four-wheel drive vehicle. Fishermen do not reside here but in nearby Little Creek, Delaware.

Commercial fisheries

- In 2006, there were 1,382 vessels with a Northeast federal permit whose owners lived in the Mid-Atlantic, but 982 vessels which landed in the Mid-Atlantic.
- Traditionally many menhaden fishermen, though few captains, have been African American. The menhaden is a small fish caught in large quantity used to produce fish meal and other products.
- Delaware fishermen generally land their catch in Ocean City, Maryland as there have been no fish packing facilities in Delaware since 1986.
- North Carolina commercial fisheries are so intertwined with certain primarily Mid-Atlantic species that North Carolina has a seat on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, in addition to its seat on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Recreational fishing

- The Cape May County Fishing Tournament in New Jersey is one of the longest continuously running fishing tournaments on the East Coast. Avalon, Cape May, Wildwood, and Sea Isle City, New Jersey are all within Cape May County.
- Freeport, New York (near Oceanside, New Jersey and Point Lookout, New York) hosts the largest annual shark tournament on the East Coast.

Seafood sales

- The Fulton Fish Market in New York City is the largest consortium of seafood wholesalers in the country.

Historical context & recognition

- In 1871, there was a whaling “lookout” station established on what is now known as Point Lookout, New York.
- In 1877, if oystermen were added to the total, the states with second and third most fishermen in the U.S. were Virginia and Maryland with 16,000 each.
- The village of Greenport and Mattituck Inlet in New York have been designated as historic maritime areas by the Town of Southold, within which they are located.
- Reedville, Virginia is home to Omega Protein Corp. The company can trace its roots back to a primitive fish processing facility begun by John Haynie in what is now Reedville in 1678.

Other fish facts

- According to some researchers, Slaughter Beach in Milford, Delaware is the most important horseshoe crab spawning ground in the world.
- Newport News, Hampton, and Virginia Beach, Virginia, as well as some other nearby communities, are sometimes referred to collectively as the Hampton Roads area.
- Dorchester County, Maryland (location of Cambridge, Maryland) is the origin of the skipjack, a type of sailboat developed on the Chesapeake Bay specifically for oyster dredging.

ports by pounds landed were located in the Mid-Atlantic region. They are: Reedville and Hampton Roads, Virginia; Cape May-Wildwood, Atlantic City, and Point Pleasant, New Jersey; and Montauk, New York.

Several major metropolitan areas are located in the Mid-Atlantic region, a center of population for the United States. The region’s top fishing communities located within larger urban areas are all located in Virginia. They include Virginia Beach, Richmond, Newport News, and Hampton. Another seven of the region’s top fishing communities are smaller cities between 10,000 and 41,000 population. Some examples include Atlantic City and Point Pleasant, New Jersey, and Oceanside and Hampton Bays, New York. The remaining top fishing communities have populations of 7,000 or less and are located as follows: Maryland has seven and New Jersey has eight fishing communities of this size; and Delaware, New York, and Virginia each have five fishing communities of this size. Six top fishing communities in the region have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants: Barnegat Light, New Jersey; Port Mahon/Little Creek and Bowers Beach, Delaware; Wachapreague and Cheriton, Virginia; and Smith Island, Maryland.

Community Resiliency, Growth, Marine Health, and Well Being

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 9.2% of families in the U.S. live below the poverty line, the median income level is \$42,000, and 18% of residents over five years of age speak a language other than English at home. The Mid-Atlantic region and its fishing communities are fairly comparable to the national picture, with state-level poverty rates ranging from 6.1% to 11.5%, median income levels ranging from \$43,000-\$55,000, and the percentage of residents over five years of who speak a language other than English at home ranging from 9.5% to 28%. More information on these and other factors that may affect community resiliency are discussed below.

Delaware

The percentage of family households below the poverty level in Delaware was 6.5%. The poverty rates in fishing communities varied but were still comparable to the national rate. Indian River and Lewes had the lowest poverty rates at 1.7% and 3.4%, respectively. The poverty rates in the other top fishing communities ranged from 7.7% to 10.6%. The percentage of residents over five years of age who spoke a language other than English at home was 9.5% for the state (a regional low) but generally lower across the fishing communities.

At the state level, indicators show that population has grown 16.1% between 1997 and 2006 and the unemployment rate fell 10.3%. The number of annual

Mid-Atlantic Summary

building permits issued increased 37%, despite falling 21% from 2005–2006. There were six disaster declarations and two emergency declarations during the 1997-2006 time period.

Maryland

The percentage of family households below the poverty level in Maryland was 6.1% in 2000, the lowest in the region. The family household poverty rate in fishing communities varied. Four fishing communities (Ocean City, Deale, Shady Side, and Solomons) had poverty rates at 6% or less. Crisfield (30.5%), Cambridge (17.2%), and Smith Island (14.4%) had the highest poverty rates. The percentage of fishing community residents over five years of age who spoke a language other than English at home was 12.6% for the state but markedly lower across the fishing communities (7% or lower, less than half the national average). The median education level for the fishing communities was “high school” for six communities and “some college” for three. The median education level for the state was “some college.”

The state population grew 10.3% between 1997 and 2006 and the unemployment rate fell 19% during this period to 3.8% in 2006. The number of building permits issued declined 10.4% during this time, largely due to a 23% decline from 2005-2006. There were five disaster declarations and two emergency declarations during the 1997-2006 time period.

New Jersey

In New Jersey, the percentage of family households below the poverty line was 6.3%. Eight fishing communities had poverty rates less than the national rate and six were below the state poverty rate. Atlantic City (19.1%) and Wildwood (20.2%) had poverty rates twice the national average. These fishing communities also had the highest percentage of residents who spoke a language other than English at home, 38.4% and 20.6%, respectively. Among New Jersey's top fishing communities, Wildwood (\$24,000), Atlantic City (\$27,000), and Cape May (\$33,000) had the lowest median income levels.

Between 1997 and 2006, state population growth was 8.3% and the unemployment rate fell 11.3%. The issuance of building permits increased 22.5%, despite falling 11.1% from 2005-2006, the lowest decrease in the Mid-Atlantic region. There were eight disaster declarations and four emergency declarations during the 1997-2006 time period.

New York

The percentage of family households below the poverty line in New York was the highest in the region at 11.5%. With the exception of Greenport (21.1%), the family household poverty rate across the selected fishing communities was lower than the state and national rates. The percentage of residents over five years of age who spoke a language other than English at home was 28% for the state but generally lower across the fishing communities. Montauk (30.3%) had the highest percentage of residents who spoke a language other than English at home, while Mattituck (8.1%), Amagansett (9.5%), and Point Lookout (9.5%) had rates roughly half the national average. The New York fishing communities had the highest median education level attained in the region (“some college”).

At the state level, population grew 6.4% between 1997 and 2006 to 19.3 million residents. The unemployment rate dropped 29% during this time period to 4.6% in 2006. The number of building permits issued increased 65%, declining 12.2% from 2005-2006. There were 18 disaster declarations and 11 emergency declarations during the 1997-2006 time period.

Virginia

The percentage of family households below the poverty line in Virginia was 7%. The poverty rate was generally lower or comparable in Virginia's fishing communities, with the exception of Richmond (17.1%) and Newport News (11.3%). The percentage of residents over five years of age who spoke a language other than English was 11.1% for the state. The fishing communities all had lower rates, averaging 5.3%. Only three fishing communities (Seaford, Poquoson, and Virginia Beach) had median income levels higher than either the state or national median income levels.

Virginia's population growth rate was 13.5% between 1997 and 2006 and the unemployment rate fell 19% during this period to 3% in 2006. Building permit issuance, which peaked in 2004, fell 23% from 2005-2006. There were 16 disaster declarations and two emergency declarations during the 1997-2006 time period.

List of Fishing Communities & Ports

The following list contains fishing communities and ports that have been identified by NMFS social science staff as having ties to commercial and/or recreational fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic region. Profiles of most of these communities will be available in late 2008. Communities not yet profiled are identified with an asterisk (*). Though not mentioned in the regional summary for the Mid-Atlantic, both Pennsylvania and North Carolina

have communities have ties to fisheries in this region. North Carolina is described in the South Atlantic regional summary. Community profiles will be available in the summer of 2009 at http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/read/socialsci/community_profiles/.

New York

*Amagansett**
Brooklyn
Captree Island
City Island
Freeport
Greenport
Hampton Bays/Shinnecock
*Islip**
Montauk
Mattituck
New York
Oceanside
Point Lookout

New Jersey

Atlantic City
Avalon
Barnegat Light/Long Beach
Belford/Middletown
Belmar
Brielle
Cape May
Cape May Court House
Highlands
Newark
Point Pleasant/Point Pleasant Beach
Port Norris
Sea Isle City
Toms River
Vineland
Waretown
Wildwood

Delaware

Indian River
Lewes
Milford

Maryland

Cambridge
Ocean City

Pennsylvania

Bloomsburg
*Philadelphia**

Virginia

Carrolton
Cheriton
Chincoteague
Hampton
Newport News
Norfolk
Poquoson
Seaford
Virginia Beach
Wachapreague

North Carolina

Atlantic
Atlantic Beach
Aurora
Avon
Ayden
Bayboro
Beaufort
Belhaven
Columbia
Engelhard
Hatteras
Kill Devil Hills
Lowland
Manteo
Morehead City
Nags Head
New Bern
*Ocracoke**
Oriental
Sneads Ferry
Swan Quarter
*Swansboro**
Vandemere
Wanchese