

Community Profile

East Hampton, NY

By Bryan Oles

I. Community Description

This report focuses on the baymen of East Hampton. East Hampton is a large township at the eastern end of Long Island's South Fork that includes villages such as Montauk, East Hampton, Amagansett, and Wainscott. The Town of East Hampton, which covers approximately 48,000 acres including Gardiners Island, is bordered by the Town of Southampton to the west, the Atlantic Ocean on the south, and Gardiners Bay and Block Island Sound to the north. The town has over half a dozen harbors along the north shore including Northwest Creek, Three Mile Harbor, Accobonac Harbor, Napeague Harbor, Northwest Harbor, Hog Creek, and Lake Montauk.

East Hampton was settled in the mid-1600s when 31,000 acres of the region were sold by the native Montauketts to governors of the New Haven and Connecticut colonies. The Dongan Patent, which established a body of Trustees as a representative government, was signed in 1686 under the authority of King James II. Under the Patent, "residents of the town serve the waters, the lands under the waters, products of waters, fish, game and fowl, for the common use of all residents, forever" (cited in McCrave, n.d.). The patent authorizes Trustees to oversee the policy formation concerning waterways, bay productivity, and lands (including bay bottom) held in public trust. To this day, the Trustees govern water-related activities including boating, shellfishing, and shoreline development.

The early development of East Hampton was dictated by the original proprietors who were granted title to the land and the agrarian focus of the economy. Growth was very slow due to the private stake that the proprietors and their inheritors had in the land (Horne Rose LLC et al. 2003). The 18th century saw the development of numerous communities including Wainscott, Sag Harbor, Springs, and Amagansett. Sag Harbor, in particular, flourished between 1820 and 1850 as the whaling industry burgeoned. Agriculture and fishing continued to dominate the landscape and economy in the 19th century, but the area was discovered by vacationers at this time. The Long Island Railroad was extended to Bridgehampton in 1870, opening up the region to visitors from New York City. A number of remarkable events brought about the transformation of East Hampton's agrarian life. Agricultural land in the Village of East Hampton was sold and developed as summer cottages in the 1870s; Montauk was sold to a resort developer from Brooklyn in 1879; and Gardiners Island, which had a 250 year tradition of farming, was leased as a hunting preserve in 1890. "This marked the end of the common pasture system which had been in effect for over 220 years and may have been the single greatest resource to East Hampton's agrarian economy" (Horne Rose et al. 2003:13).

The tourist economy that gradually displaced the maritime and agricultural focus of the area encouraged a housing boom that created jobs for a year-round population of

laborers, retailers, and service sector employees. The early emphasis on developing small summer cottages for visitors transformed in the 1950s and 1960s when a more affluent sector began construction of large second homes in East Hampton. This trend has continued to erode the agricultural and maritime orientation of the local economy and culture.¹

In 2000, East Hampton had a year-round population of 19,719, up 22.24% from 1990 (US Census 2000). The seasonal population swells significantly during the summer to over 63,000 (Horne Rose LLC et al. 2003:14). Over half of the homes in the township are seasonal (54%). The town economy is largely dependent on tourism and continues to experience growth in real estate. Of the 7,000 jobs in the town, 40% are in the retail, hotel accommodations or other services, indicating the heavy presence of the tourist economy. The cost of living has been rising and in recent years the lack of affordable housing has become a great concern of the Town of East Hampton. Commercial fishing has remained an integral component of the economy and social life in some villages such as Montauk, but across East Hampton the number of baymen has plummeted drastically.

II. Dependency and Engagement in the Fisheries

A. Commercial Fishing

History and Current Description

The legendary fishing families of East Hampton have been immortalized in Peter Matthiessen's *Men's Lives* (1986), which describes the historical travails of baymen and haul-seiners on the South Fork. Many fisheries have come and gone since the early days of settlement. Whaling was an important industry from the earliest times in East Hampton, as far back as the mid-1600s. In the late 1600s there were at least seven whaling companies in Southampton and East Hampton Townships. This early form of whaling was conducted from shore. Boats were kept on the beach and launched when whales traveling close to shore were spotted. Amagansett is famous for the construction and operation of shore-based whaling boats. Whales were butchered and rendered right on the beach. Shore whaling receded in importance during the early to mid 1700s when ocean whaling became a dominant industry. By the middle of the 1700s Sag Harbor was becoming an important whaling port, which reached a pinnacle in the early 1800s with a fleet of over 60 whale ships. Following the collapse of the ocean whaling industry in the 1860s, shore whaling was resumed for a short period by the farmer-fishermen of East Hampton (Matthiessen 1986:17).

Fishermen-farmers of East Hampton employed a vast array of fishing technologies through the 18th and 19th Centuries. In addition to the shore whaling, the men of East Hampton would launch dories from the Atlantic coast to pursue cod with hook and line and to set gillnets along the beaches for a variety of fish. Cod were found much closer to shore, only a few miles at most. Pound nets, or traps, were also very important in the

¹ For more information on the area's history see Rattray 1989.

early days of fishing on the East End. One long-time resident estimated that there were 25 pound netting crews operating in the area in the early 1900s. A map from the early 1900s depicts the location of approximately 300 traps between Montauk Point and Gardiners Island (ibid: 90). In addition to these fisheries, baymen raked clams, dredged for scallops, and employed myriad additional techniques for the capture of fish and shellfish.

Amagansett residents set fyke nets and worked haul-seines from the earliest times. Haul-seines were favored for capturing menhaden, or bunker, which were used as fertilizer on farm plots. There were thirty full-time seine gangs who harvested bunker for farmers in 1840 (Matthiesson 1986:120). Later, bunker processing plants were established in East Hampton, such as the Smith Meal Company at Promised Land in Napeague. There were some 232 sailing craft and 24 steam ships working Gardiners Bay for bunker in 1880 (ibid.). Some fishermen would alternate between working ocean pound nets and crewing on the bunker steamers in the summer. Bunker processing waxed and waned in the 1920s and 30s with the fluctuations in availability of product. Production at the Smith Meal Company was halted during World War II, but resumed when the previously requisitioned steam ships were returned. The factory, or "Bunker City" as it was known, was closed in 1968.

Prior to the extension of the railroad to Montauk in 1895, the commercial sale and shipment of fish in East Hampton was insignificant. Food fish like striped bass were used for home consumption or barter among the farming-fishing households. Improvements in transportation coupled with the development of the resort economy brought about the decline of fishermen-farmers, but many were able to make a living by selling fish commercially. The baymen of East Hampton thrived through most of the 20th century.

In the early to mid 1980s, a number of events initiated the decline of commercial fishing in East Hampton - specifically among the fabled haul-seining gangs. In 1983, the minimum size of striped bass was increased from 16 inches to 24 inches. This displaced some haul-seine crews who tried to make ends meet by setting pound nets and gillnetting in the bay. It is estimated that half of the income from haul-seining depended on striped bass harvests. In 1985, New York issued a ban on the sale of striped bass due to PCB contamination found in striped bass from the Hudson River. This was done despite the fact that East Hampton striped bass are associated with the Chesapeake estuary and did not have the same contaminants. At the same time, the sports fishing lobby was able to get a ban on haul-seining for striped bass, which was the death knell for a once thriving community of fishermen. Without the striped bass harvest, haul-seining crews could not stay in business. The haul-seine season went from April through November, and the crew would occasionally supplement their income by harvesting bay scallops. Tragically, the bay scallop population was decimated simultaneously by the appearance of the brown tide.

The bloom of brown algae began in the Peconic and Gardiners Bay system, spreading at an alarming rate. It started off by Riverhead in Flanders Bay and moved East with incredible rapidity, turning the water a coffee color, blocking the sunlight and killing the

eelgrass. The bay scallops perished in a very short time. The scallop crop died out entirely in 1985. Dense blooms lasted between 1985 and 1987 and to date, neither the eelgrass nor the scallop population has rebounded.

Commercial baymen were cornered by this unfortunate confluence of forces. Many left the fisheries altogether while others attempted to move into different fisheries. A settlement with General Electric over the dumping of PCBs provided area fishermen with a bit of cash (said to range from a few thousand up to a few hundred thousand dollars) that some used to purchase new gear. Approximately 25 fishermen were able to keep going by moving into the lobster fishery.

Prior to these events, there were 140 full-time fishing families, including five haul-seining crews in East Hampton and two crews in Southampton. Each crew had a minimum of five men. Today there are less than 25 fishing families in the town of East Hampton, including the villages of Amagansett, East Hampton, and Montauk. "Today there are guys who would not know what else to do if they didn't fish and so they keep struggling on and some of them live in rather humble circumstances." There are also a few who have figured a way to fish profitably, including a few small bay draggers, some pound trappers, and lobster potters. Pound trapping has seen a slight increase in fishermen due to shifts from other fisheries. There were five full-time pound trappers in the early 1990s and by 2003 there were approximately 15 including part-timers. Some gillnet part-time and participate in other fisheries, but there are few full-time gillnetters. This is due to strict limits on bluefish, weakfish, and other target species. There are two haul-seine rigs including dories, nets, trailers, trucks, and winches. One of them is hired by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for haul-seine surveys. Other fisheries that some have gotten into include snorkeling for clams in Lake Montauk and rod and reel fishing for striped bass. Clamming in the winter has always been important along with oysters. Some also use seine nets for catching baitfish for the sportfishing industry including sand eels and spearing. There are also a few eel potters. This has become less attractive as eel prices have declined. Some fishermen also set crab pots and conch pots but no one does any of these exclusively. Eel plotting and crab potting are said to be more commonly practiced among older fishermen due to the relative ease of physically participating in these fisheries. While some have been able to adapt to the adversities, the decline seems irreversible. One long-time baymen remarked: "Men who I thought would never stop working on the water, it was so in their blood, they loved it and I've seen them leave."

[Landings data and analysis needed]

Seasonal Round

The baymen of East Hampton have traditionally been very adaptable to changing seasonal conditions, moving between fisheries. Typically, baymen were on the water between April and December and then some went clamming and oystering during the winter, or else juggled land jobs. Haul-seine crews would begin fishing in the middle of April when they would catch mackerel and striped bass. In May they would catch

weakfish, butterfish, fluke, and porgy. Starting in June and running into July the haul-seiners would catch big cow striped bass that could fetch \$2.50 or \$3.00 per pound. When ocean fishing was slow in the doldrums of August some haul-seiners would go clamming. Some of the crew would go together and some would go solo. They might haul-seine once or twice a week in order to keep the market supplied. In the fall they would scallop in September for two to three weeks in the morning and then go to the ocean in the afternoon. In mid-October they were back in the ocean full-time until Thanksgiving or until the last of the good weather. They would catch primarily striped bass in the fall along with bluefish, weakfish, and a mixed bag of other finfish.

Depending on the particular focus of the remaining baymen, the season can follow a number of different paths. In the spring, lobster potters will be setting their pots and pound trappers will be driving their stakes. Some might turn to gillnetting during the summer, while others might clam or oyster. A few baymen crab in Georgica Pond during the summer. Shellfishing tends to be a fill-in fishery for slack times but there are a few who do it year-round in Montauk. In the fall, some gillnet for striped bass or dredge for scallops if they are available. Some work fyke nets for flounder in the harbor during the winter. Of course, the few bay dragners operate year-round, catching a variety of finfish. Some fishermen take land jobs to make ends meet, working as carpenters, caretakers of estates, or running bait businesses.

A pound trapper described his own seasonal round: The fishing season starts in February when they are building traps and cutting stakes. By April they are working steady, painting stakes and tarring gear in order to have their traps in the water by May. In May and June they catch squid, bunker, bluefish, porgy, and fluke. Trapping usually slows down during July, at which time he sets gillnets for bluefish, weakfish, and Spanish mackerel. In late August he moves his traps to different parts of the bay that are more sheltered and fishes them until Christmas. He is generally inactive during the holidays, but if the weather is good in January he might gillnet for herring or do some clamming later in February and March. His primary waters include Gardiners and Peconic Bay.

Crew Description

Is difficult to estimate the number of commercial fishing families in East Hampton because some of the families are big and include different offshoots. Estimates range from 25 to 50 baymen, many of whom work land jobs in the winter. Baymen either fish alone or have one mate.

There is a very narrow pool of labor available to fishermen. The mate is usually a family member such as a son or grandson. Some find mates who are younger, but not high school children or college kids. Baymen are reticent to hire green mates. It is not considered a summer job for a high school student. Mates are usually paid by the share. According to one fisherman, no immigrant labor is being used in bay fishing. Haul-seining was unique, requiring five members on each crew. The Haul-seining gangs were built around family relations.

The men who have a mortgage to pay or children to support will go into carpentry or trade jobs during the winter. In the past it was common for some crew to go offshore in the winter but it is considered to be brutal work. They would go out of Montauk on draggers for groundfish, squid, or scup in the canyons. Not a lot of baymen are getting into offshore work any longer.

Commercial fishermen used to be concentrated in several residential areas including an area called Poseyville in Amagansett and Springs. Some of the older families still live in Amagansett and there are half a dozen fishing families that live in Springs while the rest are scattered throughout town. There are, for example, a few baymen in Sag Harbor. The legendary local fishing families are called 'Bonnackers' - a once derisive term equivalent to 'hillbilly' that is now a term with more romantic, positive connotations.

Infrastructure

Outside of Montauk, East Hampton does not have a strong infrastructure for commercial baymen. There are no dockside fish houses or processing facilities. Most fishermen launch their boats from the beaches or from the ramps at Accobonac Harbor, Napeague Harbor, and Three Mile Harbor. Some land their catch at the small commercial dock in Three Mile Harbor. This dock is maintained by the town and provides slip space for 14 commercial boats. The slips are leased to commercial fishermen at a reduced rate but not all of them are occupied. Most baymen transport their boats to and from the public launches and beaches on trailers. Besides these three regions, some land catch in Northwest Bay which also has a beach and a ramp, and a few brave gillnetters still launch their boats from the Atlantic shore. Fishermen truck out their own catch no matter where they land. Most store their gear on their own property although some store gear, including lobster pots, on the town dock.

There are two packing houses in East Hampton including one in Amagansett and one in Wainscott. There is one trucking company based in Riverhead that transports the fish from these places to Fulton Fish Market in New York. There are also a few wholesalers in the region that will buy product direct and ship it elsewhere.

The owner of one packing facility described their operation which includes a retail seafood market, catering operation, and wholesale seafood packing and distribution house. They employ five people in the winter and 12 in the summer, most of who live in East Hampton. Finding employees is difficult due to the high cost of living and housing. They compete with the landscaping companies, construction, and other retail operations for employees.

The business is supplied by roughly two dozen baymen, including a dozen or so pound netters and three bay draggers. They also deal with a few hook and line fishermen who bring in porgy or striped bass during the summer. The fishermen pack their own catch. They purchase some of the fish for use in the retail market and they sell some wholesale to local restaurants in the Hamptons. The business runs a small filleting operation that processes the fish sold in this manner. The majority of product is shipped whole to

Fulton Fish Market. The business provides the ice and the cartons for the fish. A trucking company from Riverhead (J and H) transports the product. The trucking company bills the business for each carton they ship and the business bills the freight to the fish buyer. Elsewhere, fishermen pay the freight.²

The business was started as a packing house for commercial fishermen and has been in business since the mid-1950s. The packing operation has been declining over the years and presently constitutes a smaller percentage of the overall operation. They do not operate at full capacity. This is attributed to tighter regulation of the fisheries and less product coming through the house. Prior to the appearance of the brown tide in 1985, scallops were the most significant product, but now diversity is very important. Striped bass went from being extremely important to having very little significance as a result of the ban on haul-seining and the reduced tag limit. The primary species that they pack include bluefish, striped bass, fluke, squid, butterfish, porgy, weakfish, blackfish, sea bass, various baitfish, conch, and flounder. Outsourcing has become more important because the local fisheries cannot supply the demand. For example, because local fishermen cannot catch the striped bass needed to supply local restaurants year-round, they have to get the striped bass from Virginia, Maryland, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and North Carolina.

The business really starts in April and runs up until New Year's. They experience incredible fluctuations in supply. "Yesterday, for example, we packed 200 cartons and today we packed 12." In April squid is usually the primary product. In May and June they typically get bluefish, porgy, and fluke. They pack a mixed bag of species through the summer. In the fall, bluefish and striped bass are the primary species. They also pack some oysters that are usually sold locally.

Overall, the infrastructure in East Hampton is spare, but it is said to be adequate for the current demand. Fishermen say they would enjoy having a facility at the dock, but the infrastructure has been the same since the 1960s and no one expects it to grow.

Economic Networks

The economic ties of the baymen in East Hampton are locally oriented. They depend on the two packing houses in town to move their product to Fulton Fish Market where the majority of seafood from the region is sold. Baymen have a loyalty to one or the other, but may pack with both depending on their needs and circumstances. Some have ties to local buyers such as restaurants and aquaculture operations that purchase live fish. Other supplies and services purchased by fishermen tend to be local: fuel is purchased from gasoline stations; ice comes from the packing houses; and local welders are used for repairs or else they do it themselves. Many do not use electronics but those who do

² Fishermen actually do end up paying the freight. According to one fishermen, the fish buyer takes out a per carton fee which is usually \$.12 per pound or eight dollars for each carton and sends the check to the fish market/packing house who then pays the trucker for the shipping fee which is usually \$3-\$4 per carton. The fishermen pay the freight because it comes out of the price that they receive per pound.

purchase them from Seatronics in Hampton Bays or West Marine in Riverhead. Fishing gear is purchased from Gear Work in Riverhead or else is mail ordered from businesses across the US.

Social Networks and Community Relations

The central role that fishing once played in the community of East Hampton can not be overstated. Baymen and 'surfmen,' or haul-seiners, were the core of numerous small villages like Amagansett. Haul-seine crews, in particular, formed the nucleus of the fishing community in East Hampton. At the height of recruitment, the industry had six crews, each with at least five men and up to as many as seven. The operation required at least five individuals doing different tasks. The communal nature of the fishing activity was reflected in the close kinship ties and friendships among the crew. Some crews were entirely composed of kin, while others had a core of related individuals such as father-son or an affinal (marriage) connection. There were areas in town where fishing families were, (and to some extent still are), concentrated such as Poseyville and Springs. Fishermen were, however, a much more integral part of the economic and social life of East Hampton than they are today. It is worth quoting one fisherman at length, whose attitude is not uncommon among others:

At one point in time commercial fishing was very important to the local area. Now it is nowhere near important. Both socially and economically we have experienced a gradual loss of the town's character and culture. We are no longer able to reap the benefits of our own labor. We thought that we would never say that we do not like it here in this town, because this is our home, but now we're thinking about leaving. Today all you find here are yuppies and Latin Americans looking for work and it is very different than it used to be. We used to know all the people on the street and now we know no one. We no longer go to the movies anymore. You can't even get into the village because of the traffic. The contractors are here building second homes for people from the city and the prices are out of sight. Our boys will never fish. The baymen's children are moving away because there's nothing here but the fast life for tourists and second homeowners. One of my crewmen moved to North Carolina in order to keep fishing. There is no new recruitment into the industry. People used to come here for the fishing tradition and they would really valorize the profession, but this is their town now with their galas and film festivals. They are not trying to keep the fishing tradition going here but some clam for their own fun.

Others described the sensation of being invisible to the community, alienated from the socioeconomic and cultural life of the town. Referring to the population of newcomers who have essentially turned the area into a resort playground, one fisherman said: "I don't mingle with them. We stay in our own area. There are so few of us left that we are nonentities now."

Relations between fishermen and the wider community, if not warm, are typically not antagonistic. There have been complaints about traps being set in front of homeowner's property. "People who move here don't want to see fishermen's gear." Some have gone so far as proposing to close fishermen's access to the bay. The problem, as some see it, is based on the collision of two entirely alien worlds of meaning: one obsessed with money

and material possessions and one centered on living simply and independently off the water.

The collision of different worlds is played out in the battles between commercial and recreational fishermen. The relationship between commercial baymen and recreational fishermen has been problematic ever since the sportfishing industry authored the ban on haul-seining. While individuals may get along due to the small community that they share, the relationship remains tense and gear conflict is not uncommon. Ocean gillnetters are vilified by surf fishermen and sometimes have their nets cut.

Baymen in East Hampton are said to get along with one another despite minor disputes. "There is no gear conflict or stealing from each other. It is more of a community than a business for us." Even though a sense of community persists among fishermen, the social fabric that holds them together is no longer as tightly knit. In the past, packing out a harvest of fish was an important social event. Haul-seine crews would arrive at the packing houses with 10,000 to 20,000 pounds of fish and all the families of the crew would gather and participate in packing fish. Crews from different boats would also assist each other at times, receiving a share of the catch. Kin ties between the various crews facilitated reciprocity in the community and even in the absence of kin ties the community of fishermen was close. "It was an exciting, fun time and now it is no more." Families would also attend clam chowder dinners, hunt together, and have beach parties. Today the East Hampton Town Baymen's Association has a get-together once a month to discuss the issues related to the fisheries. In the past the association used to host clam chowder suppers and fundraisers; fishermen's wives would work closely together but presently it does not instill a great sense of community due to declining membership. The association still maintains a baymen's dory rescue squad composed of volunteer baymen who provide rescue service on the waters. As one bayman noted, "it used to make us proud but it is not so much a baymen's thing anymore. Few fish on the ocean any longer and so those skills are disappearing."

Discussion: Community/fisheries dependency and engagement

The baymen of East Hampton have different conceptions of what constitutes community and how fishing fits into the social and economic life of those communities. Some do not consider the places where they live to be fishing communities as such, due to the large influx of newcomers who no longer share their lifestyle or values. For them, the experience of being part of a fishing community is more contingent on sharing an occupation and a set of values based on hard work, and not a neighborhood or village. One long-time fisherman sadly remarked: "I used to think that this town was a fishing community but I no longer think that. I changed my mind this past year. It is a tourist community with some fishermen in it."

Others, however, emphasize the importance of place in defining their membership in a community that has further distinctions based on occupation and fishery. As one fisherman put it, "You cannot circumscribe the community within the boundaries of the town like Amagansett or other small places. We consider ourselves part of the community that includes Montauk. On the other hand, there is an offshore community

and an inshore community, even though some participate in both. The bottom line is we are all here together and we all have roots in this place."

Despite the marginalization that baymen experience, East Hampton Town does recognize the importance of sustaining the region's maritime heritage and has been supportive of commercial fishing. For example, a town official showed up during a protest of the ban on haul-seining in the mid-1980s and was arrested with other fishermen. The town also sided with the fishermen when second homeowners attempted to restrict fishermen's access to the ocean beaches. The town has demonstrated its support for fishermen in numerous other ways such as permitting fishermen to store gear on residential property, reducing dock fees, consulting with fishermen on shellfish restoration, and advocating for commercial fishing interests at the state level. For example, back in the 1980s the DEC was required to certify all waters for shellfishing but because they did not have the time to certify local waters in East Hampton, the state closed the waters to clamming. The East Hampton Town Supervisor took the issue to court and received a ruling against the DEC. The Supreme Court later ruled in favor of East Hampton and gave the DEC seven days to certify the waters or else allow clamming.

The Town Board also organized a "Fishing Committee" to represent fishing industry interests in the development of the town's comprehensive plan. The 2003 plan states that commercial fishing is a significant and historic industry in East Hampton. Goal number seven of the plan is to "support and retain traditional local resource based fishing and agriculture industries that practice environmentally sensitive methods of operation" (ibid.).

In addition to these outward manifestations of support for the declining industry, there are expressive signs of the importance of the baymen's tradition in East Hampton including a maritime museum in Amagansett.³ Commercial fishermen are also honored with the lost at sea monument at Montauk Point, and the Lost at Sea Memorial Pike (route 114) running to Sag Harbor.

Support from the Town of East Hampton is related to the overall economic significance of commercial fishing in the town. Commercial fishing brought in an estimated \$34 million in ex-vessel revenue to the town in 1999 (Horne Rose LLC et al. 2003). Much of this, of course, is attributable to the large vessels operating out of Montauk. Second home development and tourism overshadow the economic contribution of fishing across the whole of East Hampton. Employment in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries accounted for a mere 2.1% (215 individuals) in 2002, down from 5.5% (465 individuals) in 1990.

Baymen are in agreement that the economic and social value of fishing in the community, however conceptualized and bounded, has been dramatically eroded since the 1980s. The lack of recruitment, the aging population of baymen, the tightening regulations, and the overwhelming presence of the resort economy are all said to contribute to the inevitable

³ Some contend that the museum, which does chronicle the historical fishing activities of East Hampton, has been neglected by the East Hampton Historical Society, which favors other museums in the town.

decline of this way of life. While baymen acknowledge the importance of fishing in their own lives, they also recognize its insignificance relative to tourism and development. A sense of fatalism permeates the conversations with those who remain:

You're talking to the last of us. I learned this trade at my grandfather's knee - it is all he did. He was born and died here, this is his home. I am now planning to move to the Eastern Shore of Virginia to retire. There used to be a large community here, part of East Hampton community, but our children are not following us into it. This is now a resort area and everything costs too much. There are so few people in fishing anymore that it is not really a community. It is more of a museum piece and we do not have the economic weight or the numbers anymore to be more than a curiosity. The town makes an effort to be helpful but is beyond their ability to maintain us.

III. Vulnerability and Cumulative Impacts

Gentrification and Economic Development

The sustainability of the baymen tradition in East Hampton is threatened by rampant development that has driven property values to astronomical levels. Between 2000 and 2002, the town issued an annual average of 330 new residential building permits, which is double the average annual number between 1990 and 1994 (Horne Rose LLC et al. 2003:16). The median house value of specified owner-occupied homes in 2000 was \$293,300 (U.S Census 2000). According to East Hampton Comprehensive Plan, of the 632 homes sold in 2001, only three were affordable to those households with the town's median family income of \$52,201 (\$150,000 mortgage based on 30% of income for housing). "This means that teachers, Town workers, many seniors and other people who make up the fabric of the community can no longer afford to buy a home in East Hampton. Over time, homes of workers who currently live in the Town will change hands and become the next round of million dollar housing" (ibid: 23).

The lack of affordable housing extends to the rental market. Forty seven percent of renters in East Hampton spend more than 30% of their income on housing and 24% of renters pay over 50% of their income on rent (ibid.). A Town representative remarked that the Town is at a turning point, "we are at risk of losing our middle-class."

Baymen described this problem in detail, explaining that a lack of recruitment is related to the inability of their children to buy property and afford to live in the town. Some long-time baymen have moved and others are considering it. It is not simply the higher costs, but the people, attitudes, and lifestyles that have accompanied the development. Fishermen feel as though they are viewed as quaint and archaic by the fast paced newcomers. Some experience a deep sense of alienation from places they and their families have lived for generations. Asked what could be done to prevent the demise of fishing in East Hampton, one bayman sarcastically remarked: "They could start by

blowing up the bridge over the Shinnecock Canal and get rid of two thirds of the new homeowners."

Environment

The decline of the baymen in East Hampton is closely associated with environmental calamities including the appearance of the brown tide. Algal blooms of *Aureococcus anophagefferens*, otherwise known as the brown tide, have devastated the bay scallop and shellfish populations over the years since they first poisoned the ecosystem in 1985. Some believe that the brown tide phenomenon is ultimately caused by nitrogen starvation that prevents the growth of beneficial algae (Drumm 1998). According to this theory, the nutrient depletion, which has been an ongoing process since the massive oyster harvests of the early 1900s that includes the effluent control measures that were instituted in the mid-1900s, is responsible for the overall decline in shellfish productivity from 1910 to the present. While there is evidence for a long-term decline in shellfish productivity, the most damaging effects have been experienced since the appearance of the brown tides in 1985. Since that time, the brown tides have devastated eelgrass populations and crippled the area's multimillion-dollar bay scallop industry. Scallop harvests immediately declined following the first brown tide bloom in 1985. Harvests improved during the mid-1990s, but yields were a paltry one-tenth of the annual harvests brought in during the early 1980s. The decline all but eliminated the family scalloping operations that characterized community activities during the fall and winter. The age-old Blue Point oyster company went out of business in 1998 due to the excessive length of time needed to grow shellfish to marketable size. Research into the problem is ongoing. The Peconic Estuary Program, an element of the US Environmental Protection Agency, National Estuary Program, is working towards solutions with community members, advisors, Trustees, and administrators.

Other ecosystem disruptions have negatively affected the activity of baymen. Following the ban on haul-seining and the emergence of the brown tide in the mid-1980s, some fishermen turned to the lobster fishery. Since that time, the lobster population has suffered significant declines that may be related to pollution and over-harvest. Further, in recent years a disease known as shell rot has been affecting local populations of lobster. The disease thins the lobster shell and may lead to death. While shell rot does not make lobsters dangerous to eat, it does lower their marketability, bringing reduced prices (Drumm 2003).

Fisheries Management

Baymen tend to agree that they could deal with all of the other pressures that they face if it were not for ill-conceived and draconian fisheries management. They are embittered by the political power wielded by sportfishing interests against the haul-seine and feel alienated from a process run by legislators from Albany who "don't know what a fish is or where Long Island is located." The battle waged by sportfishermen goes back to the late 1800s when clubs protested the commercial harvest of striped bass. Their victory in having the haul-seines banned was the death knell for many East Hampton baymen.

Besides the ban on haul-seines, restrictive quotas are considered to be the most difficult hurdle for baymen trying to make a living on the water. While some recognize that limits have allowed certain species to rebound, they are frustrated that the state does not lift the restrictive quotas. Striped bass tags allocated to individual commercial fishermen are considered to be miniscule in comparison to the thriving population of fish, as are the trip limits for other species: "100 pound of bluefish, 70 pounds of fluke, 100 pounds of porgy -- you can't make a living with quotas like that; they are too restrictive." The limit on porgy in New York, for example, effectively eliminates Long Island baymen from the fishery due to the ability of Rhode Island fishermen to land 25,000 lbs. "Our baymen are dumping their porgies overboard while Rhode Island fishermen are bringing in tons to New York. When our baymen bring in their small catches, the price is down to \$.30 a pound. Not to mention the discard problem."

The lopsided difference in allocation is based on historical data that are considered by baymen to be entirely bogus. New York has "an abysmal record keeping system." Due to the inequities embedded in the system, some resort to noncompliance. "If I don't fish today, I land 200 pounds tomorrow. We get cut back if we put more on the market and it does not help if I tell them we caught 9,000 pounds I can't prove that we are catching more fish because then we're breaking the law and we will get cut back. In addition they add mortality of 15% so if we report 9,000 pounds of catch that was discarded, they estimate 15% of that was killed and so they reduce our numbers of catch for the following year. We cannot overcome the obstacles."

Fishermen pointed out other absurdities in the fisheries management process. For example, there was a bill to allow an increase in weakfish by-catch from 150 pounds to 300 pounds during the weakfish closure between June 24 and August 28. The bill had been sitting on the commissioner's desk for six months and still no action had been taken. Further, New York State is now required to get size and length figures for 600 weakfish in order to comply with Federal laws. Rather than obtain the fish from markets, the state asked the commercial fishermen to freely provide them with the fish. Fishermen were told that they would lose their quota for the following year if they did not comply.

"This is why the community is going downhill. I think we'll disappear within twenty years. Men will retire, and die, and that will be it."

Resilience and Representation

The resilience of the East Hampton baymen has been sorely tested through all of the trials and tribulations that they have experienced since the 1980s. In the past, baymen adapted their seasonal round to accommodate natural environmental fluctuations - they could scallop in the fall, gillnet in the spring, clam in the summer, oyster in the winter, or employ myriad other technologies in different fisheries. Some were even capable of weathering the ban on haul-seines by switching to other fisheries. Eventually, however, the restrictions in various fisheries, coupled with the growth of the resort and second home industry and rising cost of living in East Hampton created an untenable situation for many baymen who were forced to find other work.

Political organization and activity among baymen has eroded as a result of the attrition. The East Hampton Town Baymen's Association is much less active than it was in the 1980s, but it still maintains a sense of solidarity among those who remain members. Fishermen have some support among town Trustees. Among the nine Trustees of East Hampton, at least four have ties to the fishing community. Baymen are also represented by the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association (LICFA), which is very active in promoting commercial fishing across Long Island. The Executive Board of LICFA is composed of members from all fishing gear types across the region. Many of the local baymen participate on state marine resources advisory councils and some are involved in local political processes, serving as Trustees and members on town boards.

Despite the visibility of baymen in town politics and the local support that they garner, most feel that there is little the town can do to save them. There simply are not enough new recruits to sustain the industry. One bayman expressed a commonly shared prediction: "I see the end of the baymen due to the lack of recruitment. No new baymen are coming in to work the waters." This problem has been exacerbated by licensing. While commercial fishermen have agreed to the need for licensing to limit entry, some predict that regulations will make it difficult to achieve the licensing requirements which will stifle the growth of the industry over time.

The baymen of East Hampton have a proud tradition that is rapidly ebbing away. Photographs of the old ways, produced for Matthiessen's *Men's Lives*, hang like memorials in the Maritime Museum and in the homes of baymen. The way of life these photographs depict has been assaulted by the howl and cry of environmental and sportfishing lobbies, beaten by environmental calamities, bruised by punishing fisheries regulations, and all but swamped by the economic juggernaut of development. That any baymen are still plying the waters and their craft is a testament to their dedication to this way of life.

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