

Community Profile

The North Fork of Long Island, New York: Mattituck and Greenport Village

By Bryan Oles and Teresa Johnson

I. Community Description

The North Fork has historically supported important commercial and recreational fisheries. The North Fork area is located within Suffolk County at the Eastern end of Long Island, stretching from Riverhead to Orient Point. One of ten townships in Suffolk County, Southold consists of 10 hamlets: Laurel, Southold, Cutchogue, East Marion, New Suffolk, Peconic, Fisher Island, Orient, Greenport, and Mattituck. Greenport is the only incorporated village in the township.

This area was first settled in 1640 by Puritans from the New Haven Colony, escaping the harsh New England conditions. These Puritans first settled in what is today the village of Southold. Southold's official flag proclaims it the oldest English town in New York State. Agriculture has been important since the founding of the area. Women oversaw garden patches of potatoes, parsnips, carrots and watermelons to supplement the wheat, corn and rye. While many Yankee owners of the original farms had sold to the Irish and moved away in search of better jobs, the majority of Southold's land was used farmed for potatoes, cauliflower and sprouts. In turn, Irish families moved on in the early twentieth century in search of a better living and sold their farms to new immigrants from Poland, Russia, and Lithuania. However, "as old methods of farming became financially unattractive; land was kept open and green with horse farms and vineyards"(<http://southoldtown.North Fork.net/History.htm>). In many communities of the region, fishing was practiced by farmers for both subsistence and sale. While the North Fork is being rapidly developed it remains an important agricultural region that actually supports a growing tourist trade centered on local produce. Vineyards, in particular, have burgeoned across the North Fork in recent decades.

Greenport

The village of Greenport lies between Gardiners Bay and Long Island Sound. In 1682 descendants of Southold's founder settled on the west side of Stirling Basin at the north edge of what is now Greenport. This hamlet was called Stirling. Another tiny settlement facing Greenport Harbor was named Green Hill. These two communities later became known as Greenport. In 1838 Greenport was the second village in the United States to become incorporated.

Around the time of its incorporation, Greenport became a whaling port of significant prominence. The height of the whaling boom was in 1844, when the Long Island Railroad extended to Greenport. The village then became the main link in the Rail-Steamboat route between New York City and Boston. This brought more people to the area and the population grew.

As whaling disappeared, other industries connected with the water were developed. Important industries included the menhaden fisheries, the scallop industry, fertilizer plants, and oystering. The fleet of “bunker boats,” targeting menhaden, (which are locally known as “moss-bunker”), was particularly significant. Menhaden was used as the principal fertilizer in the area. Fishermen would camp out in shanties on the beach for a week at a time during the fishing season. There is a story “of a phenomenal catch, many years ago, of two and a half million fish at one haul” (Craven 1906:229). The use of fish as fertilizer has since been replaced with commercial fertilizers and manure.

This fishing industry kept the local boatyards busy with repair work. In the 1890's Greenport alone had twenty large fishing smacks taking huge quantities of cod in winter and bluefish in the summer from the waters off Long Island and New Jersey. During Prohibition, rum-runners were active off Greenport and a Coast Guard station was opened in the village. Local shipyards again benefited from the business with the rum boats as well as the Coast Guard chasers.

Today, the maritime history of Greenport is reflected in the local expressive culture, but the connection to the water has attenuated significantly. Tourism and shopping dominate what once was a working waterfront, and the commercial fishing industry has declined substantially. Educational, health, and social services account for the highest percentage of jobs in Greenport (22%), followed by retail trade (15%), and entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (12%). The village population, at 2048, actually declined 1% from 1990 to 2000.

Mattituck

Mattituck lies between Long Island Sound and Great Peconic Bay. It is approximately 83 miles east of New York on the main line of the Long Island Railroad. Mattituck covers roughly 8-9 square miles, the Sound and Bay being three miles apart. Mattituck Creek is an estuary extending inland from the Sound two miles towards the south with several arms of significance reaching towards the east and west.

Historically, Mattituck locals were known to ‘follow the water’ (Craven 1906). “The bays and creeks about Mattituck abound in sea food of every description, and from the earliest of times to the present some inhabitants have devoted most of their time, to fishing and procuring eels, clam and crab. The oysters of Mattituck creek have been recognized for many years as of superior quality, but it was not until the tide gates at the mill were removed that their cultivation on a considerable scale was successful” (Craven 1906:236). There was also an important scallop fishery in the Peconic Bay with boats “manned by Mattituck men.” Mattituck men also joined the whaling voyages that sailed out of Sag Harbor and Greenport. Many from Mattituck were also engaged in the coastal trade, and Mattituck was known for ship design innovations. The widely used centre-board, which replaced the clumsy lee-board on the side of ships, was invented by a Mattituck man. Mattituck Creek was also the center of a small-boat building industry.

Mattituck has also experienced the transformation from a community centered on commercial fishing to one increasingly focused on waterfront development and rising property values. There is a growing number of marinas catering to high-end yacht owners and a declining number of

commercial fishing families. The top three employment categories in Mattituck include educational, health, and social services (25%), retail trade (11%), and construction (9%). The 2000 population, totaling 4,199, has grown nearly 8% since 1990.

Overall, the North Fork area remains an important agricultural and fishing region. Today, recreational fishing dominates the waters and surf but commercial fishing continues. Recreational fishing has a long history in the area. People have been coming to fish on the for-hire (party and charter) boats and rental rowboats since the Long Island Railroad was completed.

Relative prosperity, improved transportation and communication, and accessibility have combined to increase the number of second homes on eastern Long Island. People from New Jersey, New York City and Nassau County began spending summers on the North Fork and eventually began buying second houses. This trend continues today. Magazine articles tout Southold as an ideal and inexpensive place for retirement. To accommodate the people visiting the area in the summers, both Mattituck and Greenport offer a variety of hotels/motels and bed and breakfasts, as well as numerous restaurants, delis, and retail stores.

In Greenport, there are two notable museums: the East End Seaport Museum and the Railroad Museum of Long Island, which are both located next to the Shelter Island Ferry. There is also an old-fashioned carousel in town. The village shops and restaurants also attract visitors. Mattituck in-town attractions include browsing the “Love Lane” shops, Wolf Pit Lake, the Old Grist Mill (now a restaurant), the 1854 Octagon House. Additionally, the Mattituck Historical Society operates a historic complex on the south side of Route 25. Both areas offer a variety of recreational fishing opportunities.

II. Dependency and Engagement in the Fisheries

A. Commercial Fishing

History and Current Description

Greenport

The whaling industry put Greenport on the maritime map back in the 1800s. After this industry faded, other fisheries took its place. Oystering was once an important industry in Greenport during the mid 1900s. The area supported as many as 15 oyster companies. There were also over a dozen draggers that fished for porgy during the 1950s through the 1970s. Pound netting also had a substantial presence in the area, especially prior to the closure of striped bass. Greenport also received business from Montauk boats including the haul seine gangs and draggers. Boats from Shinnecock and Sheepshead Bay would also land in Greenport during the spring and summer when the porgy were plentiful. The menhaden fishery was one of the most significant early industries in Greenport that employed upwards of 300 people from July through October. The dozen or so boats involved in the industry had crews of 30 that relied heavily on local food stores, supply shops, and shipyards. This industry was gone by the 1970s.

Between 1960s and the mid-1980s Greenport supported a significant fleet of scallopers, bay draggers, pound netters and summer transients, many of whom came from North Carolina to fish for fluke and yellowtail. Prior to 1984 there were roughly 15 full-time scallopers in addition to transient scallopers. The state dock in Greenport was originally built in the mid-1980s to accommodate the overflow of big boats - scallopers and fluke draggers. However, in 1985 a draconian fuel tax imposed by New York chased off fulltime local and transient fishermen who used the dock. The relocation of the scallopers to ports such as New Bedford and Cape May is said to have devastated the community. Scalloping had been an important part of the economy in Greenport since at least the 1940s.

Today in Greenport the fishing industry is a shadow of its past. Among those who land fish and operate out of Greenport are roughly four pound netters, some of whom also gillnet; three inshore bay draggers, two of which are fulltime; and a few bay clambers. Outside of Greenport are a handful lobsterman located in nearby Orient, Southhold and Shelter Island. Shelter Island is also home to a handful of gillnetters, only two of whom are fulltime.

Mattituck

Mattituck has experienced a great deal of fluctuation in the nature and composition of its fishing industry. The village was once a farming and fishing community that focused on the cultivation of potatoes and the harvest of seafood from the Long Island Sound. Mattituck became a major center of oyster production on Long Island during the early 1900s. In the mid-1900s, Mattituck was home port to a number of small draggers and also hosted numerous transient fishermen who came from places such as Brooklyn, Montauk, and Belford, New Jersey. The village would receive as many as thirty draggers at a time during the summer months and into September. These boats would drag for summer flounder, scup, and weakfish in the sound.

The area experienced a severe decline in fish during the 1980s and 1990s which drove local fishermen to innovate and explore other fisheries. Bay clamming was started in the mid-1980s and peaked in 1990 when the community had as many as 60 clam boats working the water. Most of the boats were operated by local crews. An area packing house was moving 35 trailer truck loads of clams each week during the boom. The industry bottomed out in the early 1990s and was just getting started back up in 2003 when the state instituted a yearly quota of 50,000 bushel. According to locals, one boat started the trend and within a very short time dozens of boats jumped into the fishery, both local and transient.

Mattituck is known as a lobstering port, but this fishery was only recently developed. There were only a handful of fulltime lobstermen working out of Greenport in the 1960s and 70s. Lobster fishing used to be primarily a part-time summer occupation in the past, but warmer temperatures turned the fishery into a year-round fishery. The best months for lobster fishing used to be July and August, and later in the fall but this varied depending on water temperature. Many locals and outsiders got into lobstering only after the clam collapse in the 1990s. There have been as many as two dozen fulltime lobstermen working out of Mattituck, but the numbers have declined sharply, to as low as one half dozen, as a result of lobster die-offs in the Long Island Sound. Some of the lobstermen went into surf clamming or dragging, while others are out

of the fishing business entirely and have turned to land jobs. Unfortunately, there are limited opportunities because most are middle-aged and lacking in educational credentials.

Mattituck also has a small hand rake clam fishery. Mattituck Creek is open on a conditional basis depending on rainfall. It is open in the winter but 3/10 of an inch of rain will shut it down because of road runoff and pollution. While the quality of the shellfish is said to be excellent, the state has mandated these closures. In addition, a few small trawlers continue to operate out of Mattituck as well as a small number of gillnetters.

In the past, there was not so much switching from fishery to fishery among local fishermen. The area was marked by owner-operators who had their boats rigged in a specific way. However, the collapse of finfish fisheries, followed by the loss of clams and then the lobster die-off compelled fishermen to search for new alternatives and adapt to a changing resource base.

[Landings data and analysis needed]

Seasonal Round

Greenport

The seasonal round of fishermen in Greenport is said to vary in accordance with the regulations that have disrupted traditional fishing patterns. For example, a local dragger said that he must pursue groundfish from November through May because state regulations have prevented him from fishing for his traditional quarry - bluefish and butterfish. He may fish for groundfish in the summer, or shift focus to whiting and squid depending on many different factors.

In the past he fished for fluke January through March and made a few scup trips during this time. Fluke accounted for as much as one third of his income during these months. He would run inshore for cod at night and then switch from fluke to cod in March. Following this he would shift to yellowtail in May, fishing out of both Greenport and Montauk. As a result of the increasingly stringent regulations on groundfish, he shifted to scup, squid, and whiting. He explains that midwater trawling for scup was a neat, clean fishery with little discard but drastic regulations reduced it to a by-catch fishery. He also fished for bluefish in the sound until the trip limit was reduced to a point that could not sustain the activity.

An inshore dragger described his season, which starts in April and runs through the end of November. In April he drags for flounder and fluke, shifting attention to butterfish, porgy, and squid in May. June through August he fishes for fluke, striped bass, sea bass, butterfish, and squid. His schedule is also dictated in large measure by regulations.

The seasonal round of pound net fishermen is primarily dependent on the weather, water temperature, and species availability in concert with regulations. One pound net crew fishes primarily May through November, depending on the weather. In 2003 it was a cold winter and the water had remained cold well into May. During the winter, they primarily repair nets but will occasionally clam in December. In the past they could harvest bay scallops in the winter but the brown tide has severely hurt the scallops. Currently, they tend six nets but tend as many as

nine in a season. Their activities change every year depending on species availability and regulations. The amounts vary from year to year. For example, in 2003 porgy were very abundant but regulations prevented large harvests. Other species of importance include bunker, fluke, bluefish, weakfish, flounder, Spanish mackerel, striped bass, and butterfish. Years ago, striped bass was a large part of their operation. Flounder, butterfish, and porgy all used to be very important.

Mattituck

Fishermen in Mattituck have experienced a great deal of fluctuation in the fisheries which accounts for the diversity of activities in which some engage throughout the year. One fisherman, for example, clams between January and June and then either goes to drag for squid in the ocean or stays inshore for fluke, porgy, and butterfish. He may switch back to clamming in October or wait until the next year.

This pattern is similar to another fisherman who drags for flounder in the spring (April through June) and for a variety of fish such as fluke, scup, bluefish, weakfish, butterfish, and squid between June and November. He clams during the winter months (January through March). Some boats attempted to switch gear over to clamming, but by the time they were ready the season was closed, the quota was filled.

Boats no longer have only one type of gear as they did in the past. As one fisherman said, "You have to be highly diversified to survive." Presently, some plan to participate in the conch fishery because it is relatively untouched by regulations and few boats are currently involved. Lobstermen have witnessed a terrible decline in their resource that has driven some out of business and others into other fisheries. "I'm a lobsterman at heart so I'm hesitant to rig my boat for fishing but I'm out of options. Luckily I have the knowledge of fishing so I will rig up to fish or else I will have to get a job." This lobsterman plans to fish for sea bass between Memorial Day and the Fourth of July and again at the end of September and through October. He will likely drag between July and September for weakfish, scup, butterfish, squid, and fluke.

Crew Description

Greenport

Greenport used to be the home of approximately 20-25 commercial fishing families. Today, there are perhaps half a dozen. This attrition is reflected in the US Census which indicates a drop in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries jobs from 39 in 1990 to four in 2000. Most of the boats are run by fulltime owner-operators. A few part-time operators will also crew for draggers on occasion. Crewing boats has been difficult for a number of reasons. Some boats simply cannot afford to hire extra hands. Furthermore, it is challenging to find new recruits who are willing to work hard at sea. A number of boats work without mates. Some blame regulations for the inability to crew the boats. "We have a 60 year old, a 72 year old, and a part-timer in his 50s who are not allowed to keep enough fish to crew their boats."

Many of the commercial fishermen from the area have gone out of business entirely. Those who leave commercial fishing typically do not find employment in the sportfishing domain as is the case in other places. One fisherman described the jobs of three men who were driven out of business: one works for the state; another drives a fuel truck; and the third works as a janitor. It is not uncommon for father-son teams to work together on the water, but there are fewer children who want to stay in the fishing business of their fathers. The son of one captain with whom I spoke said that he intends to get out of fishing because the work is too hard and the pay is too low.

Mattituck

Estimates given for the number of fishing families who live and own property in Mattituck vary from eight to 15. Like Greenport, attrition is reflected in a decline in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries jobs from 103 in 1990 to 59 in 2000. There are one to two fishing families of multiple generations, but most are first-generation. Others who fish out of Mattituck live elsewhere on the North Fork and trail their boats, or else come from greater distances and keep their boats tied in the creek during certain seasons.

As is the case in Greenport, the number of fishing families is decreasing because most children are moving out to pursue other careers. The trend among some older residents has been to move south to Virginia and the Delmarva Peninsula due to that region's similarity to the Long Island of the 1960s. The few younger fishing families that remain are having a more difficult time financially. Older fishermen who have paid their mortgages and built up their gear are less vulnerable than the younger fishermen who have children in school and mortgages to pay. Even so, there are those who dropped out of the fishing industry after years of involvement. Some of these men have found work on yachts that are coming to dominate the area.

The Mattituck fishermen are typically full-time fishermen but there are a number of part-time baymen. According to the locals, fishermen in the area have to have working wives in order to make ends meet. "There are more working wives today who are needed to help with healthcare costs. I was paying between \$800 and \$900 a month for healthcare so my wife went to work in order to take care of the healthcare costs." One fisherman explained that the decline in area fisheries has negatively affected fishing families, creating stress between husbands and wives.

Crewing boats is not that problematic for Mattituck fishermen. Among lobstermen, some operate their boats solo, but the majority have one or two deckhands. "In the summertime guys will hire high school students and because the money is good they typically don't have any problems. Some lobster crew are paid a flat rate while others are paid by the pound. Among clammers, crew may be paid by the bushel harvested. Most boats are owner-operated by full-time fishermen but some hire captains to run their boats, paying them by the pound (lobster). This has not always been the case. Fifteen to 20 years ago the area supported a great number of part-time lobstermen who would run 20 to 50 pots. According to one lobsterman, "the part-timers have been pushed out to reduce effort and this originally troubled me because it used to help put some kids through school."

Infrastructure

Greenport

Greenport's commercial infrastructure has been severely eroded since the 1980s. Of four packing houses, only one remains. Winter Harbor, which went out of business in the late 1990s used to pack clams and a variety of fish including butterfish and whiting. Cooper's, a cutting house that packed yellowtail, fluke and other species went out of business prior to that. Claudio's, which used to pack scallops, lobsters, and flatfish also went out of business.

The one remaining packing facility handles the boats that are run from Greenport as well as some of those from Orient, Shelter Island, and Mattituck. The operation includes a retail fish market, a commercial packing facility, and a private dock. The facility employs one full-time dock and maintenance man, one full-time retail market helper, and one part-time employee, but they anticipate hiring another full-time employee for the fish market. With increased regulations the packing dimension of the business has decreased due to reduced catches and reduced product coming across the dock. The dock typically operates between April and October. The retail market is more active than it used to be. It deals primarily in cod, flounder, and shrimp in the winter; and lobster, tuna, and swordfish in the summer.

This facility packs out approximately 30 to 40 boats. This includes roughly 20 part-time and full-time hook and line fishermen; six pound net fishermen who fish their nets from East Marion, Orient, and Shelter Island; six draggers from Greenport, two of which belong to the owners of the packing house. They also pack out approximately eight gillnetters from Greenport, Shelter Island, East Marion, and Orient. Other fishermen occasionally come from Southold, Sag Harbor, and Jamesport. The boats pay for the shipping charge on a per carton basis. The house's two boats allow them to keep expenses down for the small boats by lowering freight and box cost.

Prior to the institution of a management plan, bluefish used to make up 70% of the packing house product and 20% of the value. Recently, fluke accounts for 50% of the product and 80% of the value; porgy makes up 40% of the product and 20% of the value, and bluefish make up less than 10% of the total value. The values of the other fish including mackerel, butterfish, weakfish, black back flounder, shellfish, and conch vary from year-to-year and the seasons depend on water temperature. Conch have become more important in recent years.

Greenport has a few docks for mooring commercial vessels. Some lease space from private shipyards and marinas. The 'Railroad Dock', which is operated by the village of Greenport, could support many more large commercial vessels than currently use it. The village also owns 'baymen's dock' which has about one dozen spaces for commercial boats under 25 feet in length. The village has little else in the way of fishing infrastructure beyond a welding company, a small scale electronics supplier, and a number of shipyards. A fishermen's supply store that used to serve the area is no longer in business. The depauperate state of infrastructure in Greenport is said to be sufficient due to the lack of fishermen in village.

Mattituck

Mattituck has even less infrastructure for commercial fishermen. Most of what the village does have is privately owned. Commercial fishermen moor at a marina near the mouth of Mattituck Creek and further south along the creek at a few privately owned docks. There is a very small town-dock for transients located next to a restaurant along the creek. A handful of lobsterman own creek-front property.

The majority of fishermen pack their catch out of their own docks, but some unload at the marina and others pack at the only packing house on the creek. Dealers from other locations come to the waterfront to buy lobster as well, but many dealers have gone out of business and others may soon follow as a result of the lobster die-off.

The small packing operation on the creek has been in operation since 1964. The facility includes a packing house, two docks, ice machine, box machine, two coolers, and a freezer. The family-run business is nowhere near capacity and is considered to be a part-time operation. Scup used to account for 75% to 80% of their business, while the rest was a mixed bag including weakfish, bluefish, fluke, squid, and butterfish. Presently, herring accounts for the largest amount of poundage but has little value. The operation packs herring in the winter and flounder in the spring. Strict limits on fish make it difficult to operate during the summer when "one tow of fish will break the law." Their suppliers include a few hook and line fishermen and three draggers. They also used to pack four surf clam boats.

Years ago there were more facilities in Mattituck, but it was never saturated with commercial infrastructure. Property towards the mouth of the inlet was once used by draggers, and 35 to 40 years ago there was a packing house on what is now state land. Overall the facilities are said to meet the needs of fishermen but there is concern that the industry is losing space to private waterfront redevelopment.

Economic Networks

Greenport and Mattituck

The economic networks of fishermen in Greenport and Mattituck overlap to a large degree due to the lack of service and supply infrastructure. There is a difference in markets among the two ports due to the different fisheries. For example, those from Greenport engaged in finfish fisheries sell virtually all of their catch to dealers at New York's Fulton Market. The local retail market buys some of the fish, and a few of the fishermen such as pound netters sell bunker as bait to lobstermen who come from Rhode Island and Connecticut. The lobster die-off has curtailed much of this market in bait which has encouraged some to catch horseshoe crabs as bait for the new interest in conch potting. Beyond these markets, the bay scallops are sold across Long Island. In Mattituck, the lobstermen sell to dealers who come from other towns on Long Island such as Mastic, Huntington, and Southold. The surf clams are sold to major processors such as Sea Watch in Milford, Delaware and Surfside in Port Norris, NJ.

Beyond these differences in product markets, the local fishermen in both ports and across the North Fork rely on similar economic ties. Billy Adams trucking is used in both ports to move product. Local fuel companies provide the fuel to marinas and docks, while others fuel their

boats from common service stations. Ice is obtained from the two local packing houses. Fishermen haul out in Greenport at Greenport Yacht and Shipbuilding, Sterling Harbor, Brewers, and Douglas Marine. Some of those from Mattituck use their local marinas. North Fork Welding in Greenport is commonly visited for welding services, but some fishermen do their own welding. Electronics are now obtained through many mail and Internet catalog outlets but fishermen also patronize two small electronics dealers in Greenport and a few in Hampton Bays. Gear Works in Riverhead, NY is one of the premier fishing supply and survival equipment businesses on Long Island and they receive the business from North Fork fishermen. Some fishermen get nets from dealers as far away as Tennessee. Fishermen obtain loans from a number of banks such as North Fork, Farm Family, and Suffolk County National.

While participants in the fishing industry have extensive networks beyond the North Fork, many have intimate ties to the local economic life. One example of the intensity of local economic ties comes from the fish dock in Greenport. They maintain relationships with a great many local businesses in Greenport including North Fork Welding, Lewis Marine Supply, Whites Hardware, Clinton Humble Plumbing, Arcade department store, Preston Marine, Birds Reliable Fuel, Hand's Fuel, Riverhead Building Supply, Penny Building Supply, Lindsay Auto-parts, BJ's, Greenport IGA, Greenport Shipyard, and the Lower Yacht Basin.

Social Networks and Community Relations

Greenport

Greenport has done much to preserve and instill a sense of the village's maritime heritage. For example, the village hosts a maritime festival, supports a maritime museum, and uses the iconography of a fishing dragger on attraction placards in the downtown area. Furthermore, the village built a monument for commercial fishermen lost at sea.

Fishermen feel that the community has been supportive of the commercial industry for the most part. There are occasional problems with property owners who do not like to see their vistas 'spoiled' by fish traps, and yacht sailors who do not want to navigate around fishing gear, but these conflicts are rare. More commonly, the local fishermen are involved in community affairs, supplying church functions with fish and donating ice or product to local organizations.

Commercial fishermen in town are said to get along despite the competitive nature of the business. One fisherman explained that there is a lot of reciprocity between the local fishermen: "I used to have a lobsterman help with pounding the stakes (of his pound net) and I gave him bait in return."

Relationships with recreational fishermen are more tense. While it is said that there is little gear conflict, the tensions result from a battle over fish quota. Commercial fishermen were irked, for example, by a movement among charter boat fishermen to obtain commercial fluke licenses that would allow them to land and sell 100 pounds of fluke. Commercial fishermen see this as 'double dipping' - cashing in on the client fees and the harvest. Much of the conflict is a result of a burgeoning recreational industry that has followed on the heels of resurgent striped bass and fluke fisheries. There are more charters than ever in ports along the North Fork. One commercial

fisherman noted: "Orient never was a fluke fishing location but it is getting bigger every year and the guys are catching astronomical numbers." Some commercial fishermen also complain about the closet commercial business that is carried on behind the guise of recreational fishing. Party boat clientele are said to sell their catch locally and in the city.

Mattituck

Mattituck does not have the expressive culture of a place concerned with maritime history, but it is blessed with a good relationship between the commercial fishermen and the local community. A local Mattituck woman who lost her son at sea was instrumental in getting the commercial fishermen's monument in Montauk. The ailing industry has garnered the support and sympathy of long time residents who wish to maintain the commercial industry. As one fisherman explained: "We all know each other and they feel our plight." Some local legislation supports commercial fishing. For example fishermen are allowed to store gear in their yards and are protected from complaints. Even on property that is not zoned commercial, lobstermen are allowed to store their gear and boats because it is a business of theirs. Furthermore, the town owns underwater ground based on the Andros Patent, which was granted in 1676 to the town of Southold. The Board of Trustees issues dock permits and manages the underwater ground.

As in Greenport, however, friction comes from newer property owners who do not want to have their personal aesthetics disrupted by clam rakers and other commercial gear and activities. Further, some contend that the town of Southold does not really care for the commercial industry in the same way that is evident in places like Southampton, where local politicians have demonstrated their support for the baymen.

The relationship among commercial fishermen is more complex and problematic. On the one hand, "there is a strong sense of community among those who have a commitment to the town and a stake in the town." On the other hand, there are tensions between the local property-owning fishermen and the transients who come to the town. One local remarked, "those who come from outside are just here for the money and have no responsibility towards the place itself." By place he referred to both the town and the marine resources that can be reached from Mattituck. This lobsterman, who has been threatened for his stance on trap limits, feels that the transients lack a sense of stewardship for the town and the lobsters. "The problem is these fishermen who come in fish out of Mattituck do not live here, and do not pay taxes, they do not contribute anything. Many will keep their boat here and live elsewhere - up island or on the other side of the island. They are an embarrassment to me." The competition over scarce resources has resulted in some maintaining a proprietary attitude towards resources such as the resurgent surf clam population: "We need to encourage sustainability by reducing the number of participants. The surf clams that are within five miles of Mattituck need to be our clams and not for fishermen who come from elsewhere. Why should we share these resources with people who contribute nothing to the town? All they pay is dockage." In addition to the tension between locals and transients, conflict also depends on gear group affiliation. For example, there have been problems between mobile gear and fixed gear fisheries that resulted in a ban on dragging within one mile of the beach.

On a local scale, the relationship between commercial and recreational fishermen is said to be cordial. The small town atmosphere and local relations tend to reduce friction. Commercial fishermen feel that the controversy is being stirred by the extra-local recreational leadership that pits the industries against each other.

Discussion: Community/fisheries dependency and engagement

Greenport

The history and identity of Greenport is steeped in the commercial fishing industry, but a host of forces is eroding the economic and cultural significance of fishing in the community. Some consider commercial fishing to have a very marginal role in Greenport's economy, which has become increasingly centered on tourism, real estate, and shopping. This situation is in stark contrast to the importance of fishing historically. Even in more recent decades fishermen made substantial contributions to the local economy. During the scallop boom many area businesses including motels, restaurants, grocery stores, clothing shops, and bars were kept in business. A local fisherman described the way it was in the mid-1980s:

Fifteen to twenty scalloping boats would come in for long trips and fill up shopping carts. There used to be two grocers in town and now there is only one. The motels were kept in business because fishermen's wives would come up and stay in the motels. Among scallopers the only thing on their mind was spending money, and 80% of their money went back to the village and restaurants, bars, motels, clothing stores, liquor - it was a year-round business. When the scallopers were here we had job opportunities for unskilled labor and they could make good money and make a living. Real estate now is far too expensive and the youth cannot afford to buy in the area. A high school graduate will not be able to return to live here.

Greenport's village board wants the fishing heritage remembered and to that end have initiated a local waterfront revitalization program. The village has a moratorium on the construction of condominiums. An example of the village's support of the commercial fishing industry involved a case in which a condominium owner's association took an oyster company to court over their operations. Upon losing their legal battle, the association was required to write a clause into the owner's agreement recognizing commercial fishing operations. For the last 20 or 30 years the mayors have been supportive of the industry if not actual participants in the industry or kin to someone who was.

There are fears among fishermen, however, that if the administration becomes dominated by newcomers to the area this support will disappear. Those who remain state that they have had to fight hard against the perception among some who feel they do not contribute to the local economy. "We got letters of support from all of the vendors to show the village board all of the businesses that we deal with."

Despite the support that the industry receives from the village, some do not consider Greenport to be a fishing community due to the declines it has endured over the years. The owner of a local

shipyard stated: "This is not a fishing community; it is a tourist community that wants to be thought of as a fishing community. It is no longer a working waterfront - so many commercial fishing related businesses are no longer in operation." The problem, as many see it, is the ever tightening stranglehold of fishing regulations that no amount of local support can loosen.

Mattituck

Fishermen in Mattituck feel that they have an even more tenuous connection to the economic and social life of the village and North Fork, more widely. Most expressed the sense that commercial fishing is simply not very important to the economy relative to the growth of tourism, second home development, and retirement communities. As one fisherman noted, "If we disappeared it would all be white yachts. They want the North Fork and they are getting it. The potato fields have been turned into vineyards." Numerous vineyards have cropped up along the North Fork since the first vineyard was planted by the Hargraves in 1971. These wineries and agriculture in general, draw weekend tourists throughout the year.

The changing economy and demographics, in concert with the declines in commercial fishing has gradually eroded a place-based sense of community among fishermen. The occasional tensions between resident fishermen and transients help bolster a local sense of community among fishermen in Mattituck, but the increasing number of newcomers to the area serves to marginalize their voice to a certain extent. Fishermen do express a sense of belonging in fishing communities, but they are more often described in terms of gear types and not specifically anchored to a geopolitical entity. This is illustrated by the statement of a resident lobsterman: "I definitely consider myself to be part of the fishing community. I'm a lobsterman and the local lobstermen are in my community but so are the people from up north in Maine, in New England."

B. Recreational Fishing

History and Current Description

Recreational fishing has a long history on the North Fork according to informants. Numerous ports in the region have offered a variety of recreational fishing opportunities since the early 1900s including charter boats, party boats, and rental skiffs. The area continues to attract recreational fishermen seeking these opportunities as well as private boat owners and shore-based anglers. Today, a broad range of recreational fishing activities are pursued including fly-fishing and spear fishing.

Important species targeted by recreational fishermen include fluke, flounders, sea bass, blackfish, porgy, weakfish, bluefish, and striped bass. The weakfish fishery was traditionally very important to the area but experienced a major decline in the mid-1980s as a result of the brown tide phenomenon. Since that time, weakfish have started to make a comeback, although fishermen are only witnessing a spring run and not yet seeing a strong summer run. Striped bass has also made a notable comeback. Informants throughout the area noted the rise in catch and release fishing in the area, particularly in fly-fishing. The area has experienced a major decline in

the snapper-bluefish (small, schooling bluefish) fishing, which has had a significant financial effect on tackle businesses that used to sell tackle to children who fished for snapper-blues from the shoreline and bridges. Squid jiggling from piers is a unique and interesting recreational fishery known to the area. Ethnic populations including Koreans, Japanese, and Greeks participate in this fishery. A popular site is the railroad dock in Greenport. One informant claims to have witnessed a single fishermen catch over 300 pounds in one night.

Most of the party and charter boats have moved to Greenport and Orient, although there is a party/charter operation in Mattituck (consisting of two boats). The local party boats target winter flounder, fluke, porgy, blackfish, and sea bass. Rental rowboat fishing has an important history in the area, in both Mattituck and New Suffolk. Recent declines and more stringent recreational regulations have hurt this industry. Initially, the brown tide in the 1980s curtailed the rowboat business. More recently, the business has been negatively affected by the regulations on porgy. One boat rental business in Mattituck that used to rent between 45 and 60 rowboats went out of business in 2003. Another boat rental business reduced the number of rental boats from 70 to 15 over the past few years.

Greenport

Greenport is known more for its commercial fishing and whaling history than as a recreational fishing port. In 2003 there were two party boat operations located near the North Ferry Company, which runs to Shelter Island. A number of small charter boats also operate out of Greenport. In addition, there is a growing number of recreational marinas.

Mattituck

In Mattituck, there are two party boats, which are also available for charter. These boats have been in the area for 33 years. Unlike other parts of Long Island, Mattituck is not a typical tourist destination. There are two public ramps in Mattituck on Route 48. The Mattituck Park District operates one ramp for residents of Mattituck. The other ramp is owned by Southold Town and is for residents of Southold. There is also a ramp at Strong's Marina that costs \$10 per boat. A state ramp is currently being constructed.

Orient

Orient is the home port of a substantial number of charter boats that dock at the Orient by the Sea Marina at the Point. There is also one boat ramp in Orient.

Seasonal Round

Water temperatures and regulations, in addition to other factors, determine the fishing season. In the cold winter months from January to March, there is some fishing for groundfish (cod, pollock, and haddock) offshore. This lasts until June, depending on the weather. Also in January, some fishing for eels goes on in the creeks and canals. Sea bass begin to come into the bay in March. April through May fishermen begin to see weakfish, sea bass, flounders, porgy, mackerel, and fluke. There is also some recreational lobster fishing that goes on in the spring.

One individual can fish six pots with a resident permit. In June, bluefish are popular. Fluke are caught until October. Winter flounder closes June 30th and the blackfish season runs from June 1-October 6. People typically fish for weakfish from mid-May to mid-June, when there is a run of large spawning fish called “tide runners.” After that time until August, fishermen catch smaller fish in the one to two pound range.

The porgy season is very important to the area. The porgy fishing season is often dictated by regulations, which are described as being inconsistent and unpredictable. Two years ago, the state responded to declines in porgy by placing a bag and size limit on the fishery, which subsequently came back tremendously. Right now there is a 50 fish per-person limit and a 10 inch minimum size. In 2002 there was a porgy closure in the middle of the season between September 1 and September 15. Local informants attributed the loss of rowboat fishing business to this closure. Porgy fishing in the fall is very good and remains strong until November. In 2003 there was no closed season on fluke or porgy.

By July, tunas and sharks are targeted offshore and this continues through the fall. Crabbing goes on all year, but summer is the primary season. Surfcasting activity starts to increase during September when fishermen target striped bass, weakfish, bluefish, and fluke. Fishing starts to wane by November when tuna, fluke, and porgy are scarce. There is another run of mackerel in November. Many fishermen fill garbage bags full of mackerel during this run in order to use as bait later. Striped bass fishing is also good during November and December.

Some of the party boats start fishing in April for winter flounder in the Bay and Sound. It is said that winter flounder fishing has declined since the use of mosquito pesticides. From May to October party and charter boats target porgy, sea bass, blues, and striped bass. Fluke season runs from May to September. Fluke is fished throughout Long Island Sound, from the Mattituck Inlet east to Horton’s Point, and off Greenport in the Peconic Bay. From July to October, some party boats go for porgy in Long Island Sound. One informant estimated that 99% of all porgy fishing is in the Sound. Sea bass are also caught on the party boats in May. From October to December, blackfish are targeted in the Sound.

Fishing Grounds

Access is limited for shore-based fishing in the North Fork area. There are no public or pay fishing piers. Jigging for squid was observed off the commercial dock in Greenport near the North Ferry Company. This pier is also popular for night fishing with lights, which also requires a permit from the town. Beach fishing is limited and most properties require permits. Parking is another significant issue that limits shore-based fishing access and trailer access.

For-hire and inshore boats fish relatively close to shore. Fishing effort is concentrated in the Mattituck Inlet, the Long Island Sound, and the Peconic Bay. The party boats in Mattituck fish in the Inlet and in the Sound. The party boats in Greenport fish primarily in the Peconic Bay.

Angler/Cientele Description

Recreational fishing in Mattituck, Greenport, and other villages along the North Fork is dominated by fishermen from western Long Island, New York City, and New Jersey. These population centers are said to constitute a large percentage of each segment of the recreational industry including for-hire clientele, those who keep boats at local marinas, those who trail their boats to ramps, and shore-based fishermen. One party boat captain estimated that 70% of the clients are from upstate New York and New York City, while 30% are from Long Island. They also receive business from people who drive from as far as Cape May, NJ.

People who come to the North Fork to fish are attracted by the diverse fishing opportunities, the area's beauty, and the infrastructure for boating. One informant described it as being “about as good as Montauk”, which is one of the premier sportfishing destinations on the East Coast. Unlike other recreational fishing hot spots, the North Fork is not a hub of commercial tourism. This area is described as being the most pristine region on Long Island and anglers are attracted to the rural atmosphere and relative lack of development. Many folks who come from the western end of Long Island choose to keep boats in the area because dockage fees are less expensive. The North Fork is seeing increasing numbers of second home owners who bring their boats for fishing.

The recreational fishing population on the North Fork is constituted by a diversity of races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic status levels. Those who fish from their own boats are described as being “middle class folks.” Generally, those in higher economic brackets book charters while party boats cater to those from lower income brackets, but there is considerable diversity in both industries. Additionally, all ages and both genders are represented. Although men have traditionally dominated the party and charter industry, several informants stated that they are seeing a greater number of women on the boats.

Several ethnic groups are known for targeting specific species in the area. Porgy are favored by African Americans, Greeks, Europeans, and Spanish while Caucasian fishermen are said to favor fluke. Greeks and Asians are also known for squid jigging off the piers.

Crew Description

Party boats typically have two mates and a captain. In some cases the captain is also the owner of the boat. In other cases, the owner hires someone to pilot the boat. The two for-hire boats operating in Mattituck are owned by the same individual. The owner runs one boat and hires a captain, who has been working with him for 20 years, to operate the other. The captains and crew on the party and charter boats in Greenport and Mattituck are said to live on the North Fork within 25 miles. Crew turnover rate varies by boat and captain, but is said to be high. High turnover was attributed to the seasonality of the work and the difficulty of keeping crew during the off-season. Mates are paid daily, with no contracts. The mates also get paid tips from the clients. One captain estimated that half of his crew’s income comes from tips. It is understood (a verbal agreement) between the captain and crew that there is no guarantee that they will go out everyday, mainly because of unpredictable weather. This work also suffers during economic downturns as people cut back on recreation. One captain stated that this kind of work “can’t be a full time job.”

Generally crewmembers are recruited by word of mouth. In some cases people walk up to the boat looking for work. Crewmembers range in age from 18 to 33. A mate on one of the party boats started when he was 12 years old and is now enrolled in Captain's School.

Greenport

An informant estimated that there are six employees on the party boats in Greenport. Captain and crew live locally. No estimate is available for the number of charter boats or the size of their crew.

Mattituck

The owner of the boats in Mattituck employs 11 individuals full-time for eight months. Two of these individuals live in Mattituck and the others live within 25 miles of Mattituck. There are no known charter boats that operate out of Mattituck.

Infrastructure

Marinas are numerous in Mattituck, Greenport, and nearby Southold, New Suffolk, and Orient. These tend to cater to private boat fishermen and pleasure boaters, including yachts and cruisers. The majority of these provide access to dry storage, marine repair, and electronics. Most also specialize in yacht and fishing boat sales. Only a handful have slips available to for-hire boats. The largest concentration of for-hire boats is in Orient, at the Orient by the Sea Marina.

Marinas in the area are changing over from a focus on party and charter boats to yachts. These marinas are now catering to yacht owners, pleasure boaters, and private boat fishermen. This growing population is said to have disdain for the for-hire industry, its hours of operation, and its clientele. Several marinas deal strictly with pleasure or cruising boat clientele who do not go fishing. Many individuals using the marinas in the area are coming from western Long Island, New York City, and New Jersey. Dockage is more affordable than it is further west, but there are not enough slips to meet the demand.

There are only a handful of independent bait and tackle shops on the North Fork. They are located in Greenport, Aquebogue, New Suffolk, Southold, and Riverhead. There are no local wholesale bait suppliers, though some bait is bought from local commercial boats.

Greenport

There are approximately four marinas in Greenport that offer slip space, fuel, electricity, and water. There are two bait and tackle shops in Greenport. One of the bait and tackle shops in Greenport was recently bought by a local recreational and for-hire fisherman from a family that had run the business for 77 years. The new owner is keeping the name out of respect for its history and the family. The actual structure of the shop is a wheelhouse dated to 1870 that sits on piles of scallop shells. The other bait and tackle shop in Greenport is very small, consisting of a large shed. Locals said it was not a serious operation. Local tackle shops, according to one local, are being squeezed financially by the large retailers like Sports Authority and Wal-Mart.

Shore-based fishermen fish from the Railroad Dock for squid and other species, but otherwise there are few shore-based facilities.

Mattituck

There are four marinas in Mattituck. One fishing station recently closed as a result of increasing restrictions on porgy. Local marinas generally cater to private boat fishermen and pleasure boaters, including yachts and cruisers. There is no infrastructure for additional party and charter boats in Mattituck and so the industry is not likely to expand. The two party charter boats in town are docked on the inlet next to the Old Mill Inn. At the end of the road past the party charter boats is a large private boat marina featuring two hydraulic lifts and two large boatels. The marina operator said that all of the boats at the marina are cruising and pleasure boats. He said that the marina has never had a fishing clientele. On the other side of the inlet is a very large, full service marina with 125 slips that has been in business for at least 25 years. This complex includes a restaurant, swimming pools, and yacht club. Approximately half of the boats using this marina are recreational fishermen. On the main road there is a small marina with 30 slips that has been in operation for 40 years. This marina also provides dry land storage. On the creek there is another large marina with 98 slips that caters to both pleasure and fishing boats. There are no bait and tackle shops in Mattituck. Marine repair is available at most of the marinas and in surrounding towns, such as Southold, Greenport, and Riverhead.

There is insufficient infrastructure to support those who trailer their boats to Mattituck. There are two public ramps in Mattituck on Route 48. The Mattituck Park District operates one ramp for residents of Mattituck and the other is owned by Southold town for residents of Southold. There is a ramp at a private marina which costs \$10 per boat. There is currently no state ramp, although there is one in the works. Informants noted that a state ramp would improve recreational fishing in the area, but locals do not want to attract any more transients.

Facilities for shore-based fishing are limited. There are several beach parks that require permits. Baillie's Beach Park and Breakwater Beach Park are located on opposite sides of the Mattituck Inlet and a parking permit is required from the Mattituck Park District to park at each. There are also two parks along Bay Avenue: Bay Avenue Park (along James Creek) and Veteran's Memorial Park and Beach. There is little parking at Bay Avenue Park and parking with permit only at the Veteran's Memorial Park. There are no public or pay fishing piers. Until only recently, there was a thriving boat rental business in Mattituck. It went out of business in 2003 as a result of declining clientele, which is attributed to strict regulations in the porgy fishery.

Economic Networks

Greenport

Recreational fishing in Greenport is more closely tied to the tourist economy. Some of the clients that go on the party boats in Greenport are in the area for other reasons besides fishing. Similarly, those who come to go fishing also spend money at local shops. There are numerous restaurants and boutiques in the historic village that are patronized by recreational fishermen in addition to bed and breakfasts.

Mattituck

Individuals and businesses involved in the recreational fishing industry in Mattituck have important economic connections to the local community. One informant noted a recent study showing that for each dollar spent on for-hire boat fees, \$6.00 is spent in the local economy either by clients or by the boats themselves. Clients on the for-hire boats are said to spend money on gas, lodging, food, and tourist activities such as visits to local vineyards and produce stands. The delis and diners, in particular, benefit from the for-hire boats. Local delis hire more people at the beginning of the fishing season in order to accommodate those visiting the area.

The for-hire industry in Mattituck also has economic ties to other parts of Long Island. For example, bait is purchased by a business in Freeport. Snack products sold to clients are obtained within 25 miles of Mattituck at Sam's Club and BJ's. Rods and reels are often purchased in East Moriches or through the Internet. Safety equipment is purchased at West Marine or Port Supply. Insurance is a significant expense for the boats. In the last five years the cost of insurance has tripled. Prior to September 11th, 2001, insurance was \$3000 per boat, and now exceeds \$11,000 per boat. Private boat fishermen who keep their boats at local marinas also contribute to the local economy. They rely on the marinas for gasoline, bait, and ice. They also use the marina's repair and electronics services. Visiting shore-based anglers and those who trail their boats to town not only spend money at local delis, stores, restaurants, and gas stations, but often stay at local hotels and motels.

Social Networks and Community Relations

While recreational fishing has an economic presence throughout the North Fork, local informants felt that the villages and other local businesses do not appreciate its contribution. Some complained that town officials do not promote the industry.

Overall, the place of recreational fishing is supported by development on the North Fork. The relationship between town residents and recreational fishermen is good. One captain said that there are "no problems whatsoever" and that people want to see people fishing and the maritime life. Many local recreational fishermen are involved in non-fishing organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus and the Moose Club. Some bring members of their clubs to the charter operations. There is some tension, however, between the longtime residents and those who have recently moved to the area, which is rapidly becoming a retirement and 2nd home destination. Some claim that longtime residents have a better appreciation for recreational fishing than those who have only recently moved in. However, many who move into the area come because of the recreational fishing opportunities. Relations among recreational fishermen are generally good, but there are occasional conflicts involving transients who do not keep respectful distances from other boats.

Several informants noted the importance of promoting recreational fishing among children in the community. They noted that it is a good activity for young ones to engage in because it keeps them away from drugs and trouble. One father who had brought his son on a party boat said that the captain is very good about promoting fishing among families by reducing rates for children.

Captains would like to see increased interest in fishing by the younger generations, especially those in the local area. One captain felt that local children are not being educated about fishing or introduced to it.

In general, recreational and commercial fishermen get along. Although a number of recreational fishing informants expressed concern that commercial fishing was depleting the fish stocks and damaging essential habitat necessary to rebuild those stocks. Recreational fishermen placed more blame on the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for instituting ill-conceived regulations that have not effectively managed local stocks. Most local recreational fishermen expressed sympathy for the plight of commercial fishermen in the area, but also feel that there is a significant problem with allocation.

The charter boat industry is represented locally by the North Fork Captain's Association. The party boats are represented by the United Boatmen of New York and New Jersey. There are other recreational fishing organizations on Long Island, such as the Captree Boat Association, the Freeport Boat Association, and the Sheep's Head Bay Association, but none that are active on the North Fork. Informants stated that there are no tournaments operated from the North Fork, but said that there were numerous tournaments around Long Island in which local fishermen participate.

Discussion: Community/fisheries dependency and engagement

Although recreational fishing has a notable presence in Mattituck and Greenport, infrastructure is lacking for expansion and the industry has declined in recent years. The loss of the boat rental business in Mattituck is one example of this decline. Slip space and dockage are lacking for party boats, charter boats, and private boats. One participant in the for-hire industry predicted that party and charter boat fishing will not expand in Mattituck, or anywhere else on the North Fork. He noted that commercial space is hard to find anywhere on Long Island and those few properties that are established are being weeded out through waterfront development that centers on condominiums and private docks. The charter boat industry has become concentrated at a single marina at Orient Point, although there are three or four charter boats in Greenport. Much of the bleak outlook expressed by informants about the future of recreational fishing is due to recent regulations and declines in fish abundance that has made fishing more difficult and less attractive to visiting fishermen. Boat fishermen and shore-based fishermen also express concern about recreational fishing in the area. Informants suggest that limited boat ramps and parking make the area less accessible to fishermen than it could be.

According to some locals, Southold does not recognize the contribution that recreational fishing brings to the area, both economically and socially. They suggested that the town could promote the industry by encouraging tourism which would boost recreational fishing in the area, particularly on the for-hire boats. One informant in Greenport said that the town does a lot to promote shopping in the Greenport village shops, but not enough attention is paid to recreational fishing as a source of revenue to the area.

III. Vulnerability and Cumulative Impacts

Gentrification and Economic Development

Greenport

Greenport has a welcome sign declaring the village as "The Shopping Hub of the North Fork." Boutiques line the small waterfront streets that attract more and more tourists each year. Greenport's economy has shifted from a working waterfront to one based on the service sector and housing development. Many feel it is rapidly becoming a retirement community, and new 'continual living' developments have been created in the area. Median value of specified owner-occupied dwellings in 2000 was \$151,400, which does not indicate a significant trend towards high property values in the village.

The development in Greenport is not taking place without regard for what remains of the fishing industry. As aforementioned, one case involving conflict between a condominium owner association and a processing operation went in favor of the processor, and the village has made it a priority to protect such businesses through a waterfront revitalization program. This program, initiated in 1988 and amended in 1996, was designed to prevent condominium development from threatening the maritime commercial waterfront. The village revised the zoning code and adopted new local laws to protect waterfront commercial development. They also enacted a local historic preservation law to protect historic resources. The Village has raised money for the project through a variety of creative grants and initiatives. It is hoped that this approach will not only allow for the continued presence of commercial fishing operations but encourage new development.

Mattituck

The fishermen in Mattituck feel somewhat isolated from the development craze that has taken Long Island by storm. "The only thing that has saved us so far is being on a tiny spit of land." Property values are rising nonetheless which creates an increasing tax burden on locals. One fisherman who owns waterfront property complained that his taxes now exceed \$10,000/year: "I'm essentially renting land from the town." This is squeezing his fishing operation which includes a packing house that he cannot afford to run due to the high cost of fuel for the business' generator. A lobsterman explained that he used to calculate the price of commodities and other costs based on a pound of lobsters. For example, it used to cost 500 pounds of lobster to pay his taxes in the past. Now they cost him 1000 pounds of lobster. "You can see how much more resource you need in order to pay for your expenses. There are high property taxes and fuel taxes and these expenses out-pace the lobster prices."

The growth of vineyards, wine tourism, and second home construction is resulting in rising property values. Median value of specified owner-occupied dwellings in 2000 was \$203,900. Some believe that the tragedy of 9/11/01 is encouraging people to come out and buy property where they feel safer. The rising property values price-out the children who grow up locally who must go elsewhere to buy affordable property. Waterfront is converted to private marinas that may encourage the growth of recreational fishing but limit access for commercial vessels. This

development can also threaten sportfishing businesses. A property on Mattituck Creek where a for-hire operation is based, for example, was recently sought (unsuccessfully) by a private interest willing to pay \$4 million.

Environment

Communities in Mattituck and Greenport have shared the experience of environmental challenges. The lobster die-off in the Long Island Sound is particularly distressing. While the cause of the phenomenon is debated, the effects are clear: the fisheries collapse has driven many lobstermen out of business. "I have \$60,000 invested in lobster gear that is sitting on the beach. It is no use trying to sell a lobster trap that is worthless. Each lobster trap costs approximately \$50 and I might be able to sell them for \$20 apiece now but I probably would not be able to give them away." In addition to this disaster, shell-rot in the lobster fishery is causing additional problems for lobstermen. This condition started showing up in Orient in the late 1990s and has been moving further west in the sound and north to Cape Cod. Some believe it results from dredge spoils dumped in the race, which is south of New London, between Plum and Fishers Island. It is said to affect 75% of the lobsters in the Orient area. There have been significant declines in other fisheries including surf clams, bay scallops, porgy, and bluefish.

Local for-hire boats, private boat fishermen, and shore-based anglers are very concerned about the health of the fish stocks, but a number of informants noted that many fish stocks are rebounding with regulations on both commercial and recreational fishing.

Recreational and commercial fishermen raised concern over the Brown Tide phenomenon, which is an algal bloom of the species *Aureococcus anophagefferens*. This has been the most overwhelming problem of the Peconic Bay system. The microscopic algal bloom was first detected in the Peconic system in 1985 and has since reappeared in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1995. The Brown Tide is responsible for virtually eradicating the bay scallop populations, depleting other shellfish and finfish populations, decimating eelgrass beds, and inhibiting the growth of plankton.

The region's creeks have healthy populations of clams, but they are closed in summer due to coliform bacteria. Many do not feel this precaution is warranted: "The clamming shuts down between May 1st and December even though the water is cold enough to drink." Clamming is also shut down in response to high rainfall levels that create runoff pollution in the creeks. One other environmental issue in Mattituck involves the maintenance of the inlet, which is the responsibility of the Army Corps of Engineers. It used to be dredged every seven years but in 2003 had not been dredged since 1991.

Fisheries Management

Fishermen of all stripes gripe over the way that fish stocks have been managed by the DEC. Recreational fishermen tend to complain about commercial fishing's role in over-fishing and how the state has handled it, but they are primarily concerned about the seasonal closures, size, and bag limits. The example most cited by informants was the late opening of the porgy season in 2002 that decimated the rental boat business and hurt the for-hire industry.

Commercial fishermen have much more to complain about. As one fishermen explained, the problem does not lie in one regulation but in the cumulative effect of all of the years of regulations acting in concert with other forces such as the draconian fuel tax. A dragger cited the recent cut-backs in days-at-sea. The anger leading to demonstrations in places like Montauk was not incited by the 20% reduction in days-at-sea mandated by Amendment 13, but rather the 20% reduction on top of a 50% reduction, on top of an earlier 20% reduction. "I am down from 280 days to 62 days for groundfish." There are other regulations, such as summer flounder trip limits, that further reduce fishermen's adaptability. This same fisherman landed 99% fewer fluke in the past year because of stringent trip limits. One of the most significant problems in New York is the poor state of data collection that leads to gross inaccuracies in landings estimates. For example, one processor had over 8,000 pounds of bay scallop meat come over the dock but the state estimated that only 2,000 pounds came through Long Island. Poor data collection for the environmental impact assessment of the bluefish management plan resulted in a miscount of boats involved in the bluefish fishery and underestimates for landings. The merger between the Bureau of Marine Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife has added another layer of government, and many commercial fishermen say that going through Albany has been very difficult.

Inaction at the state and federal levels is also seen as a problem. One Greenport fisherman claimed that he, "spent nine years to try to stop killing scup by imposing some regulations, something simple to protect the stock. They waited until it collapsed and then made drastic measures." Fishermen in Mattituck had similar things to say on this issue: "The state always responds too late to environmental changes and the fishermen have to suffer for it. There is no proactive regulation - all response." Similar complaints were made over trip limits that result in excessive by-catch and discard: "I can spend a whole trip running away from cod on Georges Bank because there is a 200 pound trip limit. I can make four to six tows to get other fish and I'm killing more than I'm allowed to keep, perhaps 1,000 pounds per tow. We said, 'give us 1,000 pounds and we will go home because the fish are dying anyway.'" Some lobstermen blame inaction for declines in lobster populations: "Despite the disaster in the lobster fishery New York would not set limits on pots or effort. When they first instituted a tag limit they simply asked fishermen how many tags they wanted and they sent them." Another lobsterman declared that the trap tag program was farcical because it allowed lobstermen to simply self-describe historical participation and many inflated their numbers, sold the extra tags, and made money from the state without reducing effort at all.

Commercial fishermen are also upset over allocation issues and recreational fishing overages. The local fishermen are upset that when the recreational industry exceeds their quota for summer flounder, the overage is taken from the total allowable landings the following year, which means that commercial fishermen absorb 60% of the recreational overage. They have been fighting to make the recreational fishing industry accountable for overages in the summer flounder fishery. This would be included in addendum eight to the summer flounder, scup and black sea bass fishery management plan.

Other specific regulations have had noticeable effects on businesses and communities on the North Fork. The porgy fishing regulations, for example, had an impact on recreational,

subsistence, and commercial fishing in Mattituck. Porgy is very important to the large Greek community in Mattituck. The porgy closure not only resulted in the loss of their business at the boat rental, but the local packing house, which sold fish to the Greek community, lost as much as 60-70% of its business. The state is faulted for not properly informing the public about the regulations: The public "didn't know when the season would open and when it closed because there was no advertising for the general public. The state and the federal government should publicize the rules and regulations. For example, they once made a mistake in the regulations that raised the minimum porgy size to 12 inches. Everyone freaked out and no one could be reached at the state." Some raised the fear that in the long run, the industry is going to lose a generation of fish eaters because of the inconsistencies in regulations.

Resilience and Representation

There is limited organization among recreational fishermen on the North Fork. The charter boats are represented locally by the North Fork Captain's Association. The party boats do not have local representation but are part of the larger organization, United Boatmen of New York and New Jersey. Another important group in which some fishermen participate is the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA). Some of the bait and tackle shops on the North Fork are members of the statewide New York Tackle and Trade Association. Participation is tepid among some. One informant said that most are not active participants in these organizations. A few informants cynically commented that meetings only serve to let fishermen find out the fares of others so that they can under-price and steal their customers.

Commercial fishermen on the North Fork have been more galvanized in recent years. In Greenport, it is said that the fishermen's wives are the political movers and shakers. There are a few organizations that represent North Fork fishermen. The Long Island Commercial Fishermen's Association is one of the most politically active groups. It is said the Greenport Baymen's Association, "amounts to two guys getting together and having a few beers." In Mattituck commercial fishermen formed the Mattituck Fisheries Association in recent years. It originally started as a lobsterman association but was expanded to include all fisheries. Lobstermen also participate in the Long Island Sound Lobsterman's Association, which was started in 1990." It is said that philosophical differences and rifts among fishermen over proper management of lobster have limited the effectiveness of this group." Unity is needed in order to counter the marginalization that many feel in the management process. "Management does not respect our profession. They have the perception that fishermen do not know anything, and they only respect white-collar knowledge."

Local fishermen fear that the end of commercial fishing is near. Recruitment is a significant problem and few children are willing to follow the trade of their fathers. The number of residents in Greenport and Mattituck employed in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries dropped precipitously between 1990 and 2000.¹ Greenport went from 39 to four and Mattituck from 103 to 59. This decline likely involves the loss of certain jobs in commercial fisheries. A shipyard owner in Greenport is particularly pessimistic. He has seen commercial boats go from one third of his business to a tiny fraction. The age of fishermen is advancing and there are no youth to

¹ The accuracy of these census employment data is questionable and it is not clear how much of this represents declines in agriculture vs. fisheries.

take their place. He warned: "If you going to write a report on commercial fishing you better do it quickly because it is dead."

In Mattituck the resilience of fishermen has been sorely tested as they have run from one fishery to the next. Presently, surf clamming provides an alternative to collapses in lobster and other finfish fisheries, but this is not going to sustain the industry alone. As one local explained: "I know a few fishermen who are out of business. One guy sold his boat and still has his gear in the water. Another just got a job at a marina. There is nothing on the horizon for fishermen. Right now fishermen will go for clams and may drag for fish, but I do not know how they will make ends meet." Those with the knowledge and gear can bounce around in different fisheries, but it is taking more than just an economic toll on fishermen - it is exacting a social and psychological price: "I believe there is a conspiracy on the part of management to make us so miserable that we will just quit."

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