

Community Profile

Point Lookout, New York

By Johnelle Lamarque

I. Community Description

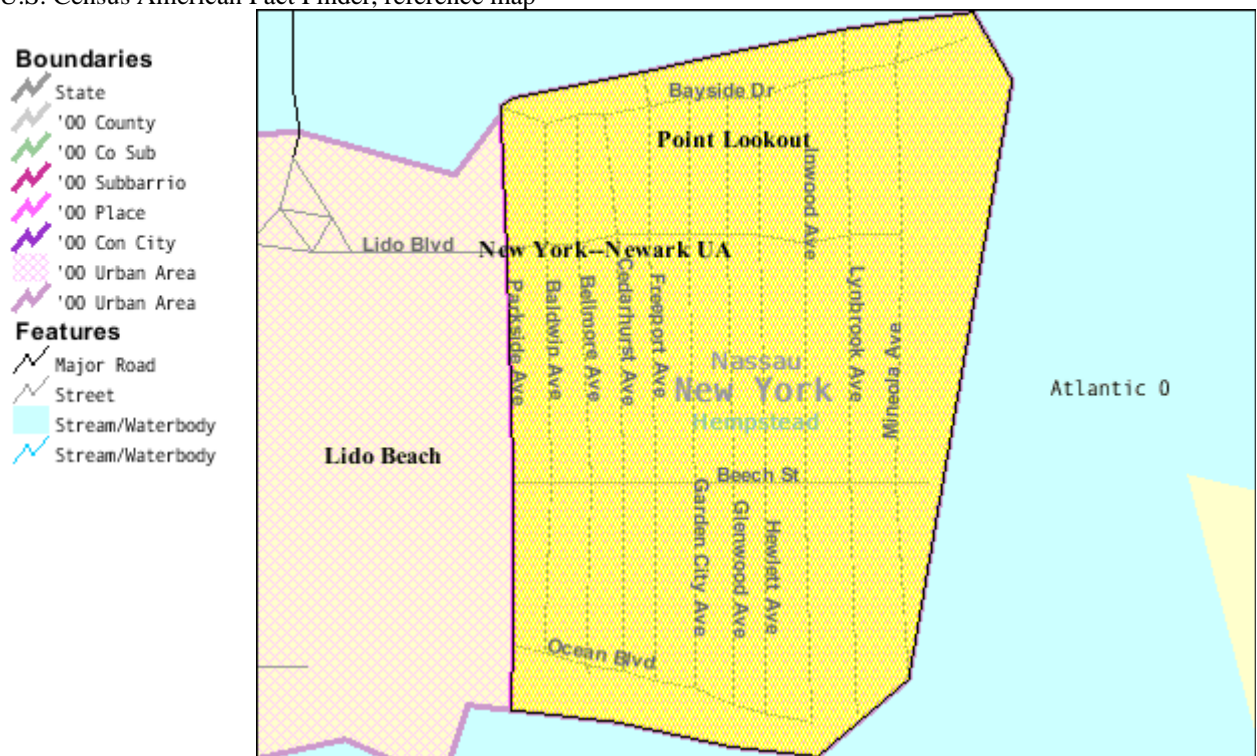
Considered a “significant maritime place” in Long Island’s south shore estuary and a deepwater commercial port (www.dos.state.ny.us), Point Lookout, New York, supports both commercial and recreational fishing enterprises, a summer community and an increasingly a year-round upscale residency. Point Lookout, population 1,520, is a relatively exclusive community on a barrier island between the Atlantic Ocean and Nassau County bays in western Long Island, less than 40 miles from Manhattan. It lies on the Jones Inlet, a passage for boats between Long Island bays and the Atlantic Ocean. Point Lookout is part of the Town of Hempstead and is accessible by a system of wide highways that move New Yorkers through the Long Island suburbs and then south toward protected beaches and summer getaways on the Atlantic Ocean.

Surrounded by county, state and local parks, a wildlife area, the ocean and bay, Point Lookout maintains a small, seaside town feel and also commands much higher property values than more inland fishing areas, such as Freeport. While the community of Point Lookout grew as a commercial fishing center and continues to support, and in many ways depend on, the commercial and recreational fishing industries, few involved in the fishing industry live there. The Loop Parkway constructed in 1934 (www.lihistory.com) made Point Lookout more accessible, and many summer homes were converted to year round homes in the 1950s. Still, the area remains largely a summer and retirement community for the wealthy.

Within the 0.2 square miles of Point Lookout, more than 17 percent of the houses are used seasonally and the median cost of an owner-occupied home is \$400,700, according to the 2000 Census. Nassau County’s median home value is almost half that at \$242,300. More than 94 percent of the town’s residential population is white. While just more than two percent of the population are Hispanic or Latino, the presence of that group increases, as workers commute to Point Lookout for jobs in commercial fishing businesses. Less than 3 percent of the residential population in Point Lookout is unemployed. The per capita income of Point Lookout residents, \$39,953, exceeds that of the Nassau County’s average, \$32,151, and is nearly double Freeport’s per capita income of about \$21,000. The median age of Point Lookout residents, 43, is also well above the county average. More than 21 percent of Point Lookout residents are over 65, compared with only 15 percent and just over 10 percent of Nassau County and Freeport, respectively. The U.S. Census lists education, professional and finance as the top three industries in which Point Lookout residents are employed.

Point Lookout, New York

U.S. Census American Fact Finder, reference map



0.8 mile across

II. Dependency and Engagement in the Fisheries

A. Commercial

Point Lookout is the site of two major seafood processing and wholesale operations, supplied by five large boats and a handful of baymen. Doxsee Sea Clam, established in 1865 and located in Point Lookout since 1933, is the older of the two operations and one of the oldest seafood businesses in the state (www.nyseafood.org/members/doxsee/default.html). Point Lookout Fish Dock, formerly Jones Inlet Packing, has been in operation since 1977. The name change in the mid-1990s reflects the business's shift from only fish packing to broader wholesale work. Both of these operations are located on Bayside Drive, at the northern edge of town. Years ago, the barrooms in town did a brisk business when scallop boats docked. Now, the other businesses in town are no longer dependent on commercial fishing, except perhaps restaurants for which fishing boats are an attractive backdrop.

Three ocean-going draggers dock at the Point Lookout Fish Dock. One is owned by an owner of the fish dock. Two others are owner-operated by individual fishermen. The Doxsee clam processing plant and wholesale business owns two hydraulic dredge surf

clam boats with New York state licenses that supply the plant. In addition to these large boats, a handful of local gillnetters and inshore clammers, and one lobsterman unload in Point Lookout. The draggers are rigged with otter trawls and pack out at the Point Lookout Dock, which buys the fish itself or freights their catches to the Fulton Street Fish Market in New York City at a charge of 13 cents per pound.

Point Lookout was not listed separately in NMFS weighout data before 2001 so it is difficult to use federal data to gauge shifts in the commercial industry. Previously Point Lookout landings data was combined with the data of Freeport, New York. Federal data for 2001 shows that 13 commercial boats from seven New York ports and one Rhode Island port, with an average size ranging from 20 feet to 84 feet in length, landed their catches in Point Lookout. The number of trips per boat averaged from 1 to 109. According to 2001 weighout data, whiting accounted for 60 percent of the catches landed in Point Lookout, and other species for 40 percent. However, the value of those catches were nearly reversed, with whiting accounting for 44 percent of the total value and “other” accounting for 56 percent.

Informants say that a decade ago 15 boats docked in the port, compared to only five now. Boats from the Carolinas and New Jersey, as well as local day boats that targeted whiting used to land at the Point Lookout dock. Many of the 30 or so day boats that offloaded at the Jones Inlet Dock, newly opened 26 years ago, docked in Freeport or elsewhere in the Jones Inlet. One informant says of day boats, “those are done in New York”.

Seasonal Round/Fishing Grounds

The draggers are rigged with otter trawls and tend to target loligo squid all year, whiting in December, January, February and March and porgies in January and half of February, with other species sprinkled in here and there. Draggers use Days at Sea (DAS) to fish for ground fish. Each of these species requires a different sized mesh and so one trip must be dedicated to one species. These 60-foot-to- nearly-80-foot boats steam out to the Hudson Canyon, off Block Island and George’s Bank to fish. One dragger says that when he fishes for yellowtail, the boat steams 28 hours out to Canadian waters and lands in New Bedford, MA. The past decade has seen a change regarding the location and timing of catches. Instead of working closer to shore in the winter, boats travel to the continental shelf. The Ambrose Channel is a prime location that failed fishermen in 2002.

Fishermen usually spend time in the spring doing boat repair and maintenance, during a 20-day block in March, April, or May when regulations prohibit fishing. One informant says that mandated block of time has “got a little merit to it because that’s when the fish are spawning.”

Crew Description

None of the commercial fishing crew lives in Point Lookout. In general the draggers and surf clam boats carry a captain and two or three crew. So, with only five commercial boats in port, the most people employed on the boats would be 20. Most of the captains and crew live in Nassau or Suffolk Counties in Long Island. One captain lives in upstate New York when he is not fishing and stays on his boat when he is. His son, who fishes

with him, lives in Pennsylvania. Informants say that it is difficult now to obtain good crew because there is less potential to make money on a fishing boat than there was in the past.

There are a couple of different ways to pay crew. In one, 40 percent of the catch goes to the boat and 60 percent to the captain and crew, with the captain getting 10 percent off the top and the crew dividing the remaining 50 percent. The “broken 50” is another payment strategy in which the expenses for the trip are taken off the top of the payment for the catch. The expenses include things like fuel, ice, oil, food, and five percent for the captain. After expenses, the boat gets 50 percent and the crew (captain included) gets 50 percent. Another way to think about it is that the boat gets 45 percent and the crew gets 55 percent, with the captain getting 5 percent on top of his crew share. A typical trip out to catch porgies would burn 700 to 800 gallons of fuel, which comes out of the crew’s paycheck.

Infrastructure

Point Lookout’s commercial fishing centers on the two seafood businesses in town. Employees commute to work and boats land at the docks. Both of these seafood businesses have undergone significant changes in the past decade. The Doxsee surf clam business no longer handles federal-water clams, following the Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) reorganization of that industry. During the 1990s, New Jersey vessels landed significant quantities of surf clams at the Point Lookout-based plant, but in 2000 no federal surf clams or ocean quahogs were landed in New York ports (McCay et.al. 2003, Social Impact Assessment Surf Clam and Ocean Quahogs). The boats that dock at the Point Lookout plant are two among 23 boats licensed to catch ocean clams in New York state waters. In addition to these two businesses, a part-time lobsterman sometimes sells his catch from the dock behind his house, advertising through a website (www.community-2.webtv.net/lobsterdick/PointLobsterandFish). He has been in business for several years, using a boat that has been commercial fishing much longer. Of those involved in Point Lookout’s commercial fishing community, only this part-time fisherman and the owner of Doxsee Sea Clam live in town.

Together, the two wholesale and processing businesses employ between about 50 and 55 people (more during the summer), including their direct employees and boat crews. Most live in Long Island communities outside of Point Lookout. Many are Latino immigrants. One business employs about a dozen Latino immigrants, about half that business’s workforce. Their jobs include drivers, fish cutters, order supervisor, retail market manager and clam bar workers. An owner of that business says, “I was lucky. I got one really good guy. Through him, I got every other employee. It was a chain reaction.” The immigrant laborers are year round, full-time employees who commute together to work in a ride-share situation from the Westbury, New York area, about 20 miles away. They all come from El Salvador and attend the same church. The informant calls the workers “good people”, religious people. As the business expanded and needed more employees, he was able to draw on this social network of his original reliable and capable employee. This business offers medical benefits, but not all employees take them. He says these workers stay because the jobs pay well and the workers are treated well. He says he lets

the workers do the job they're supposed to do and to do it comfortably. The business is always busy and in some seasons he hires additional help. He has never had to lay-off anyone. The sea clam processing plant employs about 20 people, including office workers and those who operate the plant's steam shucking and other processing equipment. Most of the jobs are unskilled kinds of labor conducted by employees who travel by bus from nearby Long Beach. The two surf clam boats employ crews of three to four each. In addition to the large wholesale operations, some charter boat captains and recreational fishermen in Point Lookout carry federal permits and dealer licenses and occasionally sell their catch.

The fish dock includes its wholesale operation, a fish market and a clam bar. A recently acquired restaurant is adjacent to the building that houses those facets of the business and was excluded from the data provided regarding the business. The business depends mostly on wholesale operations, rather than packing fish like when it began. In the summer, the business buys from four local gillnetters.

While 20 years ago, local boats that landed their catch at the fish dock supplied almost all of the product, today the business gets less than half of its supply from boats landing at the dock. Informants say federal regulations have diminished the amount of fish that local boats can supply. In response, the business diversified and increased its wholesale operations. Tuna comes to Point Lookout through JFK airport from places like Trinidad and Bali. Today, the business's main species is salmon imported from Canada, Maine and sometimes the west coast. The wholesale business also gets product from fish auctions in New Bedford and Gloucester, MA. This diversification in supply keeps the business operating year round. Boat captains also move their efforts to New England, occasionally running trips out of Massachusetts and other areas instead of Point Lookout. Informants say that there is no problem with the market or labor supply but that the government-imposed limits on product supply is a problem.

The fish dock has a capacity of 15 tons per day of ice. Two trucks and five vans, some refrigerated others insulated, and hired trucking firms transport fish to and from the port. The packing dock increased capacity recently by boxing fish at sea a few years ago. If the fish were available, they could pack 60,000 to 80,000 pounds per day. Because of federal limits, the dock only sees about 45,000 pounds per week of local catch. "Sometimes the boats don't go out," says one informant. "Forget about the weather – it's because of the quota. They catch their limit and they're done for a week."

Point Lookout commercial fishermen take advantage of the same basic infrastructure available to commercial fishermen in nearby Freeport, regarding fishing gear, fuel delivery, navigational equipment and haul out. Dragners get ice from the Point Lookout Fish Dock where they anchor. A boat yard in town closed some time ago and now there are parking spaces and residential homes where it once stood. One captain likes to haul out in Staten Island where he can work on his boat himself or at a shipyard in Canada where the dollar is worth more. The few boats that dock in Point Lookout tend to be larger than the Freeport boats. The larger boats have hull and P&I insurance from

businesses in New Bedford, MA or Long Island. All of the fishermen in the area use a tax service in Smithtown, NY. Boat captains or their wives do their business's bookkeeping.

Although there are problems such as a dock in some disrepair and other issues, draggers remain at the Point Lookout Fish Dock because of convenience. It is a good location for docking a large ocean-going boat relatively close to home. The docking space is arranged inefficiently so that one of the three boats has to anchor adjacent to another boat and the crew has to cross over that boat to access the dock. Problems occur when the boat closest to the dock leaves. The fish dock's new capacity to pack and ice fish at sea brings in better looking fish and makes for a quicker off-loading process. However, the boat captains and crew do not get better prices for their catch. The Point Lookout Fish Dock pays a couple of cents more per pound than the Fulton Street Fish Market, but one informant says that the dock doesn't pay as quickly as Fulton Street. None of the New York wholesalers pay their suppliers for fish until after the fish are sold. A boat captain complains that the trucks leaving Point Lookout do not get to the Fulton Market until after others and miss out on early buyers.

The Loop Highway, constructed in the early 1930s, and the Meadowbrook State Parkway provide important access to the larger transportation network of Long Island. The port's situation on the Jones Inlet, with easy access to the Atlantic Ocean and shelter of the bay makes it an ideal spot for large fishing vessels to dock and to land their catch, however few do any longer. Now, much of the commercial industry in town involves buying, filleting and selling fish obtained elsewhere.

B. Recreational Fishing

Point Lookout is home to a for-hire boat fleet docked at the municipal marina and two fishing stations on Bayside Drive. The fishing stations sell bait, tackle, fuel and other supplies. They rent small livery boats and serve as information centers for recreational fishermen. The five for-hire boats docked in the Point Lookout municipal marina are in the range of 60- and 70-feet long. Each boat typically operates as both charter and party boats. There are no 6-pack charter boats in Point Lookout.

Our informant says that each business (or boat) is different. One boat fishes year round, others work from mid-April to mid-December doing maintenance and repair during the off season. More boats used to fish year round, but don't anymore because of the declining options for winter fishing. The traditional winter fisheries in this area are whiting and cod, but both those have disappeared. Like Freeport boats, some started fishing half days in the 1970s to accommodate the more "touristy" clients. Now nearly all of the Point Lookout boats fish half days.

Back in the early 1970s, a dozen for-hire boats docked in the marina. Some moved to other ports, some went out of business and eventually the count went down to one. Now the for-hire fleet is back up to five party/charter boats for anglers and one dive boat that takes people out to wrecks. The major change in the industry has been the availability of species, limited through stock decline, regulations or both. Another change is the shift in food preference that changed what anglers want to target. When people started using

mackerel as shark bait, that oily fish lost its appeal as food. Then bluefish lost their appeal when they became synonymous with PCB contamination, says one source.

The Point Lookout and Freeport for-hire fishing fleets dock only about four miles apart and deal with similar client, species, crew and infrastructure issues. This community profile doesn't recount their overlapping concerns regarding species and regulations, the problems retaining good crew, organizational structures of the businesses and the shared infrastructure that supplies the boats with gear, bait, repair and other services. Please see the Freeport profile for these details. This profile only notes some differences between the for-hire fishing fleets in each town.

Like Freeport and elsewhere, the clustering of the for-hire boats is important so that clients know where they can find a fishing boat. Therefore, the town marina is an important feature of the Point Lookout for-hire industry. The price for slip rentals is not expensive and the parking area is adequate. Losing access to the marina would be a major problem for the industry but that does not seem to be a threat. The Point Lookout boats do not coordinate as an association for slip rental negotiations or other items like buying bait or sharing crew.

Each boat is its own, individually run small business. The for-hire boats in Point Lookout each offer different services and so are not as competitive with each other as boats in some other ports. One captain notes that the more boats in the port, the more "cut-throat" it is. While each boat offers different services and runs its business in different ways, they have all in general been doing more bottom fishing and feel they have been forced by restrictive regulations into putting more pressure on sea bass this year (2003) that will show up as a problem in next year's stock.

Because Point Lookout is such a tiny community, the effects of party and charter boat clients shopping in town is better seen than in the larger town of Freeport. The five Point Lookout boats seem to provide a larger portion of the clientele for ancillary businesses than they do in Freeport. The five boats draw an estimated 500 to 600 people into town each day during the summer. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of those people spend money in the small town. The Point Lookout deli, gas station and restaurants benefit from the influx of for-hire boat clients. "You can't get in the door on Saturday and Sunday at 6:30 in the morning," says one boat captain of the local deli. The for-hire captains and crew also buy their morning coffee and personal provisions in Point Lookout stores. Point Lookout's local economy is less diversified than the larger village of Freeport.

None of the for-hire crew or captains lives in Point Lookout because the property values in town are too high. The 30 or so people involved in Point Lookout's for-hire fishery live in other areas of Long Island's Nassau County and in western Suffolk County. Those employed in the for-hire industry tend to work full-time.

The Town of Hempstead advertises the for-hire fishing boats by producing and distributing brochures. However the "I Love New York" book, a regional publication, fails to list Point Lookout and other locations (aside from Captree) as places people can

find saltwater fishing opportunities. For-hire captains would like to see more free advertisement of the area's fishing opportunities. While there are some regular newspaper columns regarding recreational fishing in this part of Long Island, they do not compare with the many in New Jersey newspapers.

C. Economic Networks

The Point Lookout commercial fishing community is enmeshed in a large economic network through the regional and national markets that its two major wholesale and processing businesses supply, as well as in the international markets that supply the Point Lookout Fish Dock. The dense urban population of the New York City metropolitan region provides an adequate market and labor supply for the businesses. The handful of baymen who occasionally supply the businesses in this port live and fish in the Jones Inlet area and create additional local economic links. The plant employees live nearby and the offshore crews typically live elsewhere in Long Island.

Competition from imported seafood has increased all across the region and affected commercial fishermen. Informants note that New York's Fulton Street Fish Market no longer thrives on domestic catches. Locally, the Point Lookout Fish Dock sells product -- fresh fillets and iced fresh seafood -- to restaurants, wholesale markets and fish retailers in New York City and Eastern Long Island. Most of the loligo squid ends up at a processing plant in Newark, New Jersey (McCay and Cieri 2000). In summer, the wholesale business sells squid and other bait to the two fishing stations in town. The Doxsee clam business sells product -- frozen chopped ocean clams and clams in various chowders, sauces, breaching, as well as other products -- more broadly throughout the country.

For-hire boats draw their crew from nearby Long Island communities and their clients from the New York metropolitan area. Likewise, crew and other employees in the commercial industry come largely from Long Island communities.

D. Social Networks

As elsewhere, the relationship between commercial and for-hire fishers is strained, but individuals in Point Lookout are more amicable toward each other. A commercial fisherman reports that two of the party boat captains in town agree "we need to make a living also." He says those captains are "old school", implying that the rift between commercial and recreational fishermen has emerged during his career. He reasons that a "flashy" for-hire captain in a fast, new boat who can't catch fish sees an old slow commercial boat successfully pulling in a haul places blame on the commercial fisherman rather than on his own lack of skill. He says the "flashy guy" doesn't realize that fish eventually leave popular wrecks and have to be tracked down elsewhere.

Commercial fishermen, involved in the same fisheries talk out on the water and often share information. When one boat comes in, the captain tells a debarking boat captain where he was last catching fish. "Then they turn around and help you when you go out," says one captain, adding that the Jones Inlet boats would not share such information with

boats from other places. A few captains working out of Point Lookout have known each other much of their lives and so have that additional connection as incentive to cooperate.

Belonging to fishermen's associations is too costly for some who can't afford to pay the membership fees, particularly for those who do not see that the associations accomplish their goals. Despite a lack of enthusiasm for commercial fishing associations, informants were able to name several fishermen and fishermen's associations active in the Long Island, the Jones Inlet area, and the broader Mid-Atlantic region. For-hire fishermen are enthusiastically organizing around the recently revived United Boatmen's Association.

The Town of Hempstead used to run a seafood festival in Point Lookout but ceased in 1999 (McCay and Cieri 2000), however informants did not mention those losses to the fishing community during our most recent visits to the area.

E. Gentrification:

Despite its history as a fishing center, commercial and for-hire fishermen in Point Lookout no longer consider this sleepy little town to be a fishing community. Informants say that Montauk is the only fishing community remaining on Long Island, with former strongholds such as Shinnecock and Greenport in decline. Point Lookout is considered more of a summer area. In the winter, the town used to be nearly vacant. Those who remained were plumbers and electricians, working class people who maintained and repaired the summer bungalows but often owned their own homes there too. Now instead of working class people, "yuppies" live there year round, complains one fishing industry source.

Commercial plates on pick-up trucks have been a problem because they are not allowed to park on the street. "That tells you which is most important", says one fisherman, comparing the parking rules for commercial vehicles with private vehicles. Parking is tight and the clam bar, retail market and restaurant get very busy in the summer. One informant says the local government does nothing to help solve the parking problems. He cites the local government's refusal to support a shuttle parking service from the municipal marina where the parking is ample to the restaurant. This parking problem puts pressure on the commercial draggers who park in the clam bar lot. An owner of one of the two seafood businesses in town complains that the businesses are the largest tax payers in Point Lookout yet do not receive the full benefits of local services. For example, they pay private garbage pick-up.

An owner of one of the seafood businesses on Bayside Drive laughs and says the "community could get along without me." He continues, "I'm sure some people would like to see my property gentrified." However no coordinated effort to remove the seafood businesses exists and, he adds, "Everybody's friendly enough". Aside from a stalemate regarding parking problems on Bayside Drive, informants report no problems with local government.

Some say that the clam bar associated with the Point Lookout Fish Dock is best place to eat in town, and the wholesale operation benefits from its association with the favored

local restaurant. The business has dedicated one employee to clean up the dock all day, reducing the odors of a commercial fish dock. The restaurant also benefits from its association with the boats because diners like seeing the boats at dock. One informant noted that years ago, commercial fishing boats were strictly for fishing, but now the boats are more “decorative,” providing a nice backdrop to waterfront restaurants. The town built a new bulkhead and is putting in a boardwalk with tables and chairs. One commercial fisherman complains that now, “you gotta watch your language.”

F. Environment

Informants offered no discussion of changes in environmental factors that affect fisheries.

G. Fisheries Management

Both for-hire and commercial fishing informants say that conservation-oriented New York state politicians have damaged their industries by trying to set an example among other states in the region for conservation of certain species. Decline in the fluke fishery in the past 10 years has been the worst problem according to both for-hire and commercial boats. Boats fish nearby federal waters but land elsewhere because of New York’s limits and quotas.

Like in Freeport, for-hire informants say that New York allocations are not fairly divided between the east and west sides of Long Island. The south shore used to host the fluke fishery and the north shore hosted the porgie fishery. Informants claim that the south shore area has never had 17-inch fish, and the larger fish seem to be at the northern end of the range. “We’ve always been a smaller fish fishery, from Captree to Atlantic Highlands. That’s why these regulations strangle the west end of Long Island,” said one for-hire fishery informant. Also, the same controversy between for-hire and commercial allocations is reflected in Point Lookout as in Freeport and other areas.

Increased mesh size for trawlers is a big problem. Boat crews can’t switch nets at sea because regulations won’t allow smaller meshed nets on the boat at all. Years ago boats targeted different species and prices remained high. Now, as boats go after the same species, they deplete stocks and flood the market so that prices remain low. Informants say the situation was better when the fishermen were allowed more flexibility in their efforts. For example, each trip consists of three to four days at sea. If they were fishing for squid and wanted to jump over to whiting on the other side of Hudson Canyon, they would simply change lines at sea. Then if they caught a certain number of pounds of whiting, then they would have to switch to another species such as porgies. Or, if the weather got bad while fishing in the ocean, they could move into the bay to fish a different species. They could keep shrink-wrap around nets that were not in use. This switching of nets is no longer allowed and has diminished the flexibility fishermen have on each trip and exacerbated the effects of reduced quotas on specific species. Although fishermen can change the cod-end of their nets and stow those not in use, they must carefully plan the series of those switches and cannot switch at all when it comes to groundfish. One captain complaining of New York state limits that he says don’t allow him to catch enough to make a trip worthwhile says, “These people in New York, they don’t care what we spend on fuel.”

Most recently, boats fishing on George's Bank have been fixed with tracking devices that they must leave on at all times, even when docked. The boat must designate which area in George's Bank it intends to work and does not have the flexibility to shift to a different area. This means that if the boat is not catching in one location, it cannot try to "save expenses" by moving into another area to catch fish. Slipping beyond the newly designated boundaries results in seizure of the trip's catch.

The surf clam processing plant in Point Lookout was seriously affected by the implementation of ITQs in that fishery. The plant no longer processes federal water clams and informants with that operation refused to discuss changes in the business since ITQs. Currently, the plant handles only New York state clams caught by its own boats. One former surf clam captain recalled the trajectory of sea clams in the New York area. He said that the vagaries of quahogs and New York state clams combined with the establishment of ITQs shifted boat captains and boats out of business. He recalled that during the transition the clam business Seaside in Point Norris, New Jersey, laid-off captains, but Sea Watch (his former association) kept what he called "their captains". Many of the captains who lost work during the consolidation of the sea clam industry that followed the establishment of ITQs have tried their hand at other fisheries.

While those shut out of the ocean clam fishery deride the ITQ system, a similar system appeals to at least one dragger in Point Lookout. He says that typical quotas flood the market with a particular species, deflating prices and closing the fishery down all together once that quota is met. He suggests the quota be divided so that it stretches throughout the year. He notes that some fish are half the price of what they were 30 years ago.

As elsewhere, Point Lookout for-hire and commercial fishermen have been involved in political organizing and management meetings, but have been disenchanted with the process. As one informant says, "The government's gonna do what they want. Your voice doesn't matter." Also, fishermen note that the time attending meetings and the expense involved in paying dues and travel are prohibitive, particularly when they have to spend more time fishing for less money. In 2003, for-hire fishermen in Point Lookout were more enthusiastic about the potential for organizing themselves to benefit their interests. They were reviving organizations, both in the Long Island area and regionally in order to combat what they viewed as political and regulatory support that favored commercial fishing as well as environmental conservation.

Broad national and international moves also affect the Point Lookout fisheries, particularly the larger commercial boats in this deepwater port. One commercial informant suggests that the world's 200-mile zone, which expels foreign fishing fleets from nationalized waters, was established mainly to protect oil rights and less for commercial fishing. He argues that the U.S. government should have developed processing plants along the shore instead of increasing fishing capacity after the 200-mile zone was set. He says the boats would have come along as the markets increased. Noting the government subsidies that Irish and Canadian fishermen get, he argues for their presence in U.S. fisheries and also suggests tariffs on imported fish.

H. Resilience

Although this deepwater port should be an ideal docking and landing area for commercial fleets and an ideal location for for-hire boats, few of either remains in Point Lookout. According to commercial and for-hire informants, their industry's resilience depends on increasing flexibility for fishermen.

Commercial and for-hire fishermen associated with this relatively isolated community tend to live elsewhere in the densely populated communities of Long Island. They should be able to find other kinds of work, but often have invested so much money in their boats and businesses, as well as so much of their lives and knowledge in the industry that many continue to attempt to carve out some niche for themselves rather than looking for other work. For-hire fishermen are hoping that their recent organizing efforts pay off.

One life-long commercial fisherman interviewed in the spring of 2003 called that summer his "last horrah" if he failed to make money fishing for yellowtail in New England with the equipment he had saved for and recently purchased. He also needed to use the DAS that came with a boat he purchased three years ago in that area. Despite a run of engine failures that kept him docked much of the winter and tightening regulations that limit his catch potential, he continues to invest in commercial fishing. As of September 2004, he was still hanging on in the economically troubled industry. "Everybody wants out, but you've got your investment (in the boat, equipment and licenses)," he said. "That's all the money I got in the world." The same boat captain opened a fish market in the upstate New York town where he lives, but the town's main employer closed and the fish market did not survive. Other boat captains and crewmembers work in construction and other kinds of labor, but generally prefer fishing. This boat captain remarked, "You always think back to when you did make money at (fishing). It's a good way of life."