

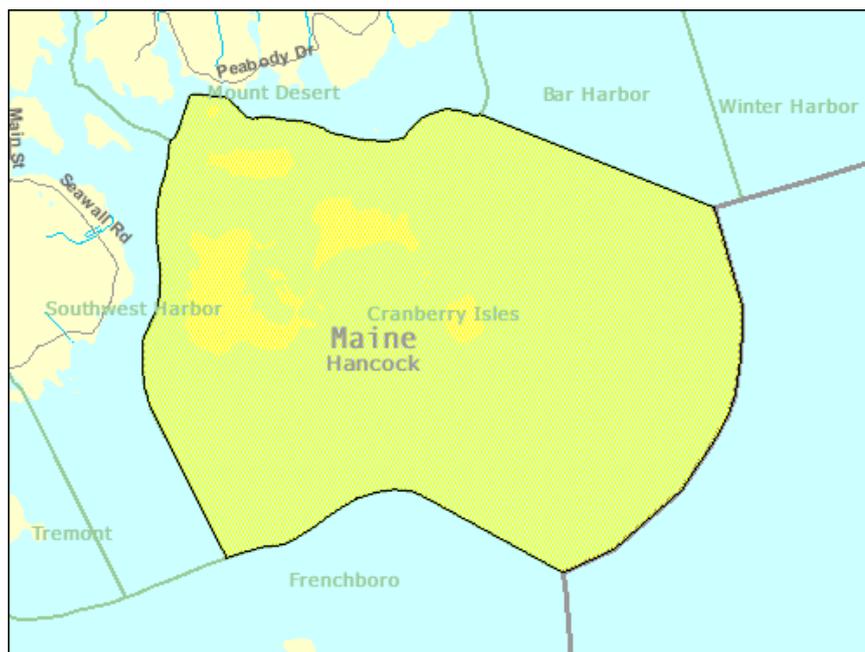
ISLESFORD / CRANBERRY ISLES, ME¹

Community Profile²

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Regional orientation

The community of Islesford is part of the town of Cranberry Isles, Maine (44.26°N, 68.23°W), a cluster of small islands located in Hancock County. The area is located to the south of Mount Desert Island and at the entrance of Somes Sound, a fjord that splits Mount Desert Island. It is roughly 17 miles from Bar Harbor. Cranberry Isles is made up of five islands: Great Cranberry, Islesford (Little Cranberry), Sutton, Baker, and Bear Islands (State of Maine 2004).



Map 1. Location of Cranberry Isles, ME (US Census Bureau 2000)

Historical/Background

Cranberry Isles was first settled in 1760 (Ellsworth American 2005), and was first named in 1762 by Massachusetts Governor Bernard after a 200 acre cranberry marsh found on Great Cranberry Island (State of Maine 2004). The town of Cranberry Isles was incorporated in 1830 from a portion of Mount Desert. During the early 1900s, the islands became a popular destination for summer visitors (Ellsworth American 2005). Only two of Cranberry Isles five islands have year-round residents; Great Cranberry has 44 residents and Little Cranberry has 77, concentrated in the village of Islesford. The population of these islands grows to around 550 each summer. The smaller islands have some summer homes, but no roads. Despite their proximity and a mailboat and ferry that runs between Great Cranberry and Little Cranberry Islands at least six times a day during the summer, the

¹ These community profiles have been created to serve as port descriptions in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for fisheries management actions. They also provide baseline information from which to begin research for Social Impact Assessments (SIAs). Further, they provide information relevant to general community impacts for National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and information on minorities and low income populations for Executive Order (E.O.) 12898 on Environmental Justice.

² For purposes of citation please use the following template: "Community Profile of *Town, ST*. Prepared under the auspices of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Fisheries Science Center. For further information contact Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov."

residents of each island have little interaction with each other, with the exception of a few yearly events which bring residents of both islands together (Ellsworth American 2005). The best-selling book “The Secret Lives of Lobsters” about the biology of lobsters and about the lobstering industry was written by a former Islesford lobsterman (Harper-Collins 2004).

Demographics³

According to Census 2000 data⁴, Cranberry Isles had a total year-round population of 128, down 34.7% from the reported population of 196 in 1990 (US Census 1990). Of this 2000 total, 46.9% were males and 53.1% were females. The median age was 45.5 years and 80.5% of the population was 21 years or older while 31.3% was 62 or older.

It is difficult to discern a clear pattern of age structure in Cranberry Isles because there are so few residents (Figure 1). The largest segments of the population were males between the ages of 40-49 and women between the ages of 60-69. Generally the town had an older population, with the greatest number of residents overall in the 60-69 age category. There were few young children here, and also few residents in the 20-29 age category. At the time of the 2000 Census, there were only four residents between the ages of 18-24, three of whom were male.

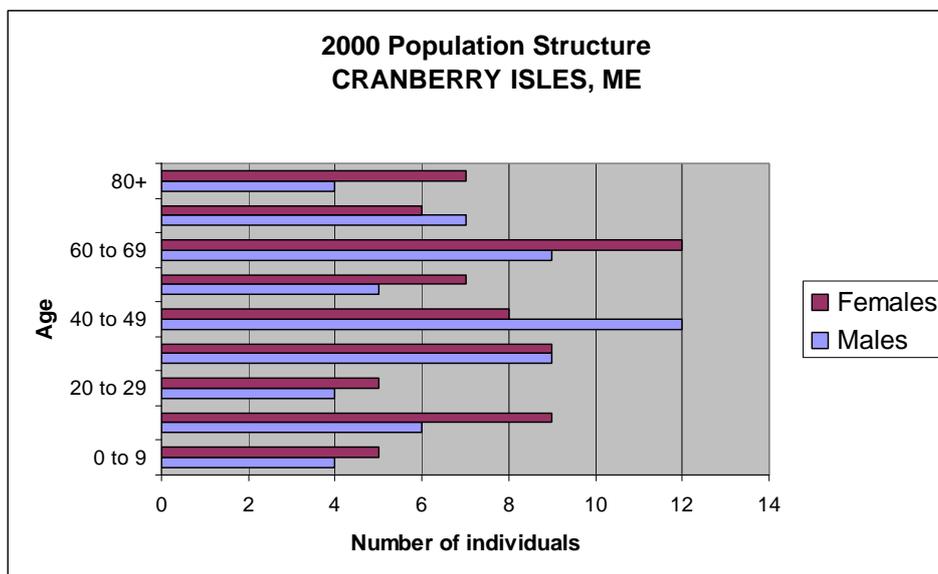


Figure 1. Cranberry Isles' population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

The majority of the population was white (98.5%), with 1.5% of residents Native American, and no residents black or African American, Asian, or Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). None of the population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: English (43.8%), Irish (18.8%), Italian (7.0%), and Other Ancestries (14.8%). With regard to region of birth, 63.3% were born in Maine, 34.4% were born in a different state and 1.6% were born outside of the U.S. All residents were U.S. citizens.

³ While mid-term estimates are available for some larger communities, data from the 2000 Census are the only data universally available for the communities being profiled in the Northeast. Thus for cross-comparability we have used 2000 data even though these data may have changed significantly since 2000 for at least some communities.

⁴ These and all census data, unless otherwise referenced, can be found at U.S. Census: American Factfinder 2000 <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>; census data used are for Cranberry Isles town, Hancock County, ME (cited Jul 2007)

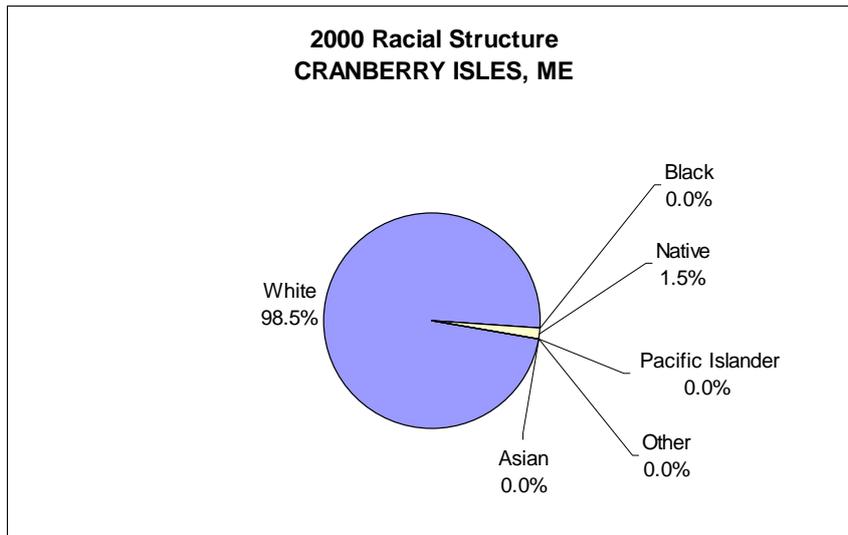


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

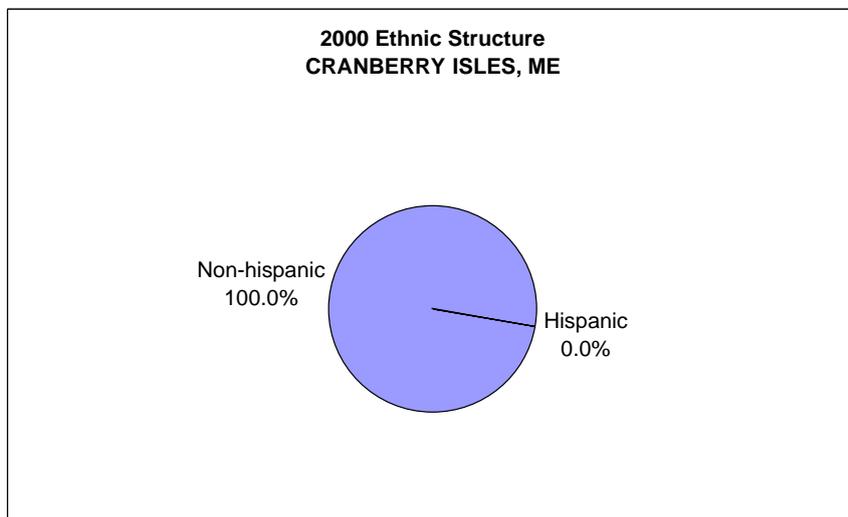


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 96.1% of the population, only English was spoken in the home, leaving 3.9% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, and including 1.6% of the population who spoke English less than “very well” according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 82.4% were high school graduates or higher and 29.6% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 10.2% did not reach ninth grade, 7.4% attended some high school but did not graduate, 28.7% completed high school, 21.3% had some college with no degree, 2.8% received an associate’s degree, 26.9% earned a bachelor’s degree, and 2.8% received a graduate or professional degree.

Although religion percentages are not available through the U.S. Census, according to the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) in 2000, the religion with the highest number of congregations and adherents in Hancock County was Catholic with 10 congregations and 6,292 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were the United Church of Christ (19 with 1,957 adherents), and American Baptist Churches of USA (17 with 1,774 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was up 25.2% from 1990 (ARDA 2000). There are two Congregational churches and one Catholic Church in Cranberry Isles (Ellsworth American 2005).

Issues/Processes

Cranberry Isles town suffers from a decreasing population, which threatens to eliminate the island's identity as a working community and transform it into purely a summer resort. A lack of students recently forced the closure of Great Cranberry Island's only school; its single pupil now must take the ferry to Little Cranberry Island to attend school (Ellsworth American 2005). Like many similar towns, the rapidly growing costs of real estate and the resulting increase in property taxes has made it difficult for residents of Cranberry Isles to own property here; the sons and daughters of current home-owners are forced to move elsewhere because they cannot afford to live here. The non-profit Cranberry Isles Realty Trust was formed to address this problem, and with a Community Block Development Grant has been working to provide housing for those wishing to remain on the island (Ellsworth American 2005).

Maintaining frequent ferry service to the mainland and providing transport to the residents once they arrive at the ferry terminus on Mount Desert Island is an important issue for Cranberry Isles, as it is necessary to allow residents access to jobs, groceries, healthcare, etc. While lobstering is still a strong industry in Islesford, Great Cranberry Island has shifted from an island-based economy centered around lobstering and boat-building to one based on jobs on the mainland. If year-round residents cannot access the mainland for work, the population will continue to decline (Conkling 2003).

Many shellfish beds between the Cranberry Islands and Mount Desert Island have been closed since the mid-1980s because of non-point source pollution; a number of these were re-opened by the Maine Department of Marine Resources in October 2004. The shellfish beds immediately around the islands remain closed by the town; however, deep-water beds nearby were opened to harvesting mussels, clams, oysters, and quahogs (Chapman 2004).

In 2006, the State of Maine passed the Working Waterfront Tax Law, to address the problem of working waterfront property being heavily taxed based on its projected market value. The goal of this tax is "to encourage the preservation of working waterfront land and to prevent the conversion of working waterfront land to other uses as the result of economic pressures caused by the assessment of that land for purposes of property taxation." The law requires the tax assessor to value the property based on what it is worth as working waterfront land, rather than what its market value would be if it were sold and converted to residential or other uses (Maine DMR 2005).

Cultural attributes

The Great Cranberry Island Historical Museum has an exhibit on lobstering (GCIHS 2005). Working lobster boat tours can be taken from Islesford, where passengers learn about lobsters and about hauling lobster traps (Islesford.com 2005).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Economy

The largest employers on Mount Desert Island where Cranberry Isles residents may commute for work are in Bar Harbor, and are as follows: Acadia National Park; Bar Harbor Banking & Trust Co.; Bar Harbor Inn; Jackson Laboratory; Mount Desert Island Hospital; Songee Estates (nursing home); and U.S. Department of the Interior. Other significant employers in Southwest Harbor, where one of the Cranberry Isles ferries travels to, are Hinckley Brothers, Co. (boat brokers and boat building) and the U.S. Coast Guard (Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce 2005).

According to the U.S. Census 2000⁵, 56.1% (64 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (Figure 4), of which 1.8% were unemployed, none were in the Armed Forces, and 54.4% were employed.

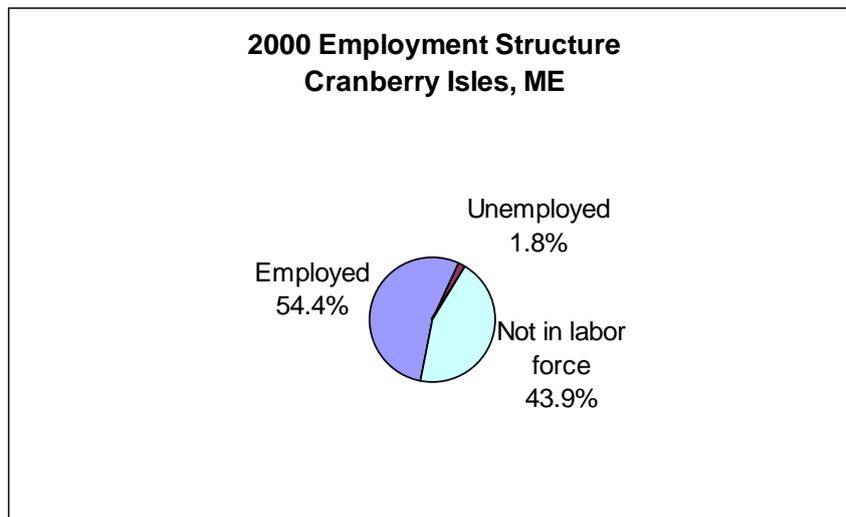


Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 20 positions or 32.3% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 33 positions or 53.2% of jobs. Construction (9.7%), manufacturing (9.7%), and transportation and warehousing, and utilities (9.7%) were other primary industries.

Median household income in Cranberry Isles was \$39,063 (up 91.3% from \$20,417 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and median per capita income was \$23,873. For full-time year round workers, females made approximately 3.2% more per year than males.

The average family in Cranberry Isles consisted of 2.77 persons. With respect to poverty, 5.7% of families (down from 15.8% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 13.3% of individuals earn below the U.S. Census poverty threshold. This threshold is \$8,794 for individuals and ranges from \$11,239 through \$35,060 for families, depending on number of persons (2-9) [US Census Bureau 2000a]. In 2000, 31.4% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Cranberry Isles had a total of 351 housing units of which 17.4% were occupied and 94.9% were detached one unit homes. More than sixty percent (60.1%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes, boats, vans, and RVs accounted for 1.7% of the total housing units; 84.0% of detached units had between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$202,800. Of vacant housing units, 80.5% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units, 13.3% were renter occupied.

Government

The local government of Cranberry Isles is comprised of a three-member Board of Selectmen and a Town Clerk (Cranberry Isles 2005).

⁵ Again, Census data from 2000 are used because they are universally available and offer cross-comparability among communities. Some statistics, particularly median home price, are likely to have changed significantly since 2000.

Fishery involvement in government

Cranberry Isles has a Shellfish Committee, and a Town Harbormaster based in Islesford (Cranberry Isles 2005). The town has a Shellfish Conservation Ordinance which currently prevents commercial harvesting of clams and limits recreational harvesting of clams to allow the shellfish beds in town to be replenished (Cranberry Isles 2005).

Institutional

Fishing associations

The fishing associations that serve Cranberry Isles fishermen are the Downeast Lobstermen's Association located in Deer Isle, Maine, and the Maine Lobstermen's Association. The [Maine Lobstermen's Association](#) (MLA) was founded in 1954, and works to protect the lobster resource and the lobstermen's way of life. The association was founded by lobstermen with a goal of empowering Maine's lobster industry by representing lobstermen with a united front. The MLA is the largest commercial fishing industry group on the east coast, and represents the interests of 1200 lobstermen. The town also has a Fishermen's Co-op with roughly a dozen members, which maintains a dock in the village of Islesford. At the peak of the season, there are 30-35 fishermen landing their catch here.

Fishing assistance centers

Cranberry Isles Realty Trust is working to create affordable housing for Islesford's year-round residents, many of which are fishermen.

The Working Waterfront Coalition is a statewide collaboration of various industry associations, non-profits, and government agencies with the goal to support Maine's working waterfronts. The [Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program](#), administered by the Department of Marine Resources, provides money to applicants such as municipalities, fishing co-ops, private commercial fisheries businesses and more, ranging from \$7,000 to \$475,000. The intention of the program is to preserve commercial fisheries working waterfronts and to help secure property for these businesses. As of December 2007, the \$2 million pilot program has reportedly supported over 400 jobs, 194 boats, and assured access to clam flats, parking, wharfage and fisheries in six towns (Maine DMR 2005). Voters [approved an additional \\$3 million](#) to continue the program in 2007.

Other fishing related organizations

The [Maine Fishermen's Forum](#) was founded in 1976, and its goal is to provide continuous opportunities to educate the public and the fishing industry about marine resource issues and fisheries, as well as to provide a platform for discussion and decision making. The Forum also holds an annual three day event which focuses awareness on issues that affect the commercial fishing industry.

Physical

Cranberry Isles is located about 50 miles from Bangor (MapQuest 2005), and is accessible by the mainland only by a ferry from either Southwest Harbor or Northeast Harbor, both on Mount Desert Island. Both ferries are about a fifteen minute boat ride away on Mount Desert Island to the north (GCIHS 2005). Ferries depart every two hours during the summer months and travel to both Great Cranberry Island and Little Cranberry Island; they visit less frequently during the off season. Island Explorer buses stop at both ferry terminals and provide free transport to Bar Harbor and other areas of Mount Desert Island (Cranberry Isles 2005). Hancock County - Bar Harbor Airport is located halfway between Ellsworth and Bar Harbor, and it is approximately 18 miles from Cranberry Isles. A regional service is provided between this airport and Logan Airport in Boston, MA (GCIHS 2005).

The international airports of Portland and Bangor are roughly 180 and 50 miles respectively from Cranberry Isles.

Fishermen bring their catch to the Cranberry Isles Fishermen’s Co-op Dock, where it is taken by boat to Mount Desert Island, purchased by a waiting truck, and taken to New York. The co-op provides bait to the lobstermen. The fleet is moored in the harbor just off the co-op dock.⁶

INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES⁷

Commercial

The commercial fishing industry in Cranberry Isles is based at the Fishermen’s Co-op Dock in Islesford, where lobstermen come to unload and sell their catch. The Co-op has about five fishermen who fish year round, and as many as 30-35 at peak season. About eight of these boats are from other towns on Mount Desert Island.⁸ Great Cranberry Island had a number of lobstermen at one time as well, but “the number of lobstermen on Great Cranberry has steadily diminished during the last decade and will probably never recover” (Conkling 2003). The [Thomas Lobster Company](#) in Islesford is a one-man operation of catching, packing, and shipping lobsters around the country.

Lobster fishing is by far the most significant industry in Cranberry Isles (see Table 1). All landings are done at the Co-op, and are therefore listed for Islesford. There were no landings at all listed for 2003-2006. Prior to 2003, landings had been steadily increasing. The number of vessels listing their home port as Islesford remained relatively constant, while the number of vessels with owners living in Islesford slightly decreased over the same time period. Most vessels list Islesford as their home port (see Table 2), but a few have listed Cranberry Isles; vessel data here is combined for both. It is somewhat difficult to define exactly where the fishermen are from; some may have homes in Cranberry Isles and fish here, but also have a home on Mount Desert Island.⁹ However, the number of home port vessels and the number of owner’s city vessels are the same in many years, indicating that most people residing on Cranberry Isles keep their vessels here as well. The level of home port fishing was low for all years and zero for several years listed, indicating that perhaps vessels from other ports are the ones landing their catch here.

Landings by Species

Table 1. Dollar value of Federally Managed Groups of landing in Islesford

	Average from 1997-2006	2006 only
Lobster	1,292,620	0
Other¹⁰	22,231	0

⁶ Personal Communication, Cranberry Isles Fishermen’s Co-op, Box 258, Islesford, ME 04646, 8/26/05

⁷In reviewing the commercial landings data several factors need to be kept in mind. 1) While both federal and state landings are included, some states provide more detailed data to NMFS than others. For example, shellfish may not be included or data may be reported only by county and not by port. 2) Some communities did not have individual port codes until more recently. Before individual port codes were assigned, landings from those ports were coded at the county level or as an aggregate of two geographically close small ports. Where landings were coded at the county level they cannot be sorted to individual ports for those earlier years, e.g., prior to 2000. 3) Where aggregated codes were used, those aggregate codes may still exist and be in use alongside the new individual codes. Here the landings which are still assigned to the aggregate port code cannot be sorted into the individual ports, so port level data are only those which used the individual port code. 4) Even when individual port codes exist, especially for small ports, landings may be coded at the county level. Here again it is impossible to disaggregate these to a port level, making the port level landings incomplete. 5) In all these cases, the per port data in this profile may under report the total level of landings to the port, though all landings are accounted for in the overall NMFS database.

⁸ Personal Communication, Cranberry Isles Fishermen’s Co-op, Box 258, Islesford, ME 04646, 8/26/05

⁹ Personal Communication, Cranberry Isles Fishermen’s Co-op, Box 258, Islesford, ME 04646, 8/26/05

¹⁰ “Other” species includes any species not accounted for in a federally managed group

Vessels by Year¹¹

Table 2. All columns represent vessel permits or landings value combined between 1997-2006

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)	Level of fishing home port (\$)	Level of fishing landed port (\$)
1997	19	20	5,883	1,261,243
1998	18	18	10,090	1,770,826
1999	17	17	0	1,721,033
2000	18	18	0	2,006,630
2001	17	17	0	2,895,120
2002	17	16	211	3,493,655
2003	17	14	0	0
2004	17	16	7,704	0
2005	18	16	92,662	0
2006	18	16	67,661	0

Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport

Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence¹²

Level of fishing home port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries associated with home ported vessels

Level of fishing landed port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries landed in location

Recreational

Information on recreational fishing in Cranberry Isles is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Subsistence

Information on subsistence fishing in Cranberry Isles is either unavailable through secondary data collection or the practice does not exist.

FUTURE

The town of Cranberry Isles recently purchased 3 acres of waterfront property for \$2.4 million and built a ferry terminal, dock, and parking lot in the village of Manset on Mount Desert Island, ensuring dock space, parking, and storage for residents traveling to and from the island (Noble 2003). Despite the need to raise taxes by as much as 30% for residents to pay for this purchase, town officials believe this move was necessary to preserve this island community, with a disappearing population, by ensuring them parking on Mount Desert Island and maintaining their connection with the mainland. This property also provides dock space for the many islanders who commute to Mount Desert Island by boat, and provides parking and boat space for both seasonal residents of Cranberry Isles and for mainland residents who work on the islands (Conkling 2003).

Purchasing the Manset Dock and parking was considered a gamble aimed at retaining the year-round population of Cranberry Isles, but there are many who are concerned that this plan may not succeed and that putting the town into debt was not a smart plan (Conkling 2003).

¹¹ Numbers of vessels by owner's city and homeport are as reported by the permit holder on permit application forms. These may not correspond to the port where a vessel lands or even spends the majority of its time when docked.

¹² The Owner-City from the permit files is technically the address at which the owner receives mail concerning their permitted vessels, which could reflect the actual location of residence, the mailing address as distinct from residence, owner business location, or the address at which a subsidiary receives mail about the permits.

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