

CHILMARK, MA¹

Community Profile²

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Regional orientation

Chilmark (41.34° N, 70.74° W) is located on the island of Martha's Vineyard in Dukes County in the state of Massachusetts. The town is situated in the southwestern part of the island about 10 miles from Falmouth on Cape Cod and 25 miles from the port of New Bedford (USGS 2008).



Map 1. Location of Chilmark, MA (US Census Bureau 2000)

Historical/Background

Chilmark was first settled in 1671 and officially incorporated on 1694. Chilmark was the first town to separate from the two original towns of Tisbury and Edgartown. Chilmark was named for the ancestral home of the family of Governor Thomas Mayhew in Tisbury, England. In the mid 1800's the town was once known for its high percentage of deaf citizens with one in every 25 people being deaf. The fishing village of Menemsha is located on the northern end of town along its border with the town of Aquinnah. Chilmark has had an irregular but steady decrease in population since 1800 (Banks CE 1911). Although the Port of Edgartown was one of the most important whaling ports on the coast, all of the Vineyard was involved in whaling in the 1850s, and Vineyard ships could be found at this time on every ocean around the world (Norton

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."

1923). In 2004, Chilmark was reported to have the highest average property value of any city or town in Massachusetts. Today the town is mostly residential, with a small working harbor along the Vineyard Sound side of the town (Massonline.com nd).

Demographics³

According to Census 2000 data, Chilmark had a total population of 843, down 11.1% from the reported population of 937 in 1990 (US Census Bureau 1990). (However, the town has down its own census each year to determine year round population, and finds the population to be higher than this, with 1060 residents in 2006)⁴. Of this 2000 total, 49.0% were male and 51.0% were female. The median age was 45.6 years and 77.9% of the population was 21 years or older while 21.7% was 62 or older.

Chilmark’s age structure (see Figure 1) shows the largest segment of the population between the ages of 40 to 59 years old, with more females than males in these age groupings. The number of males is greater than females in the youngest age brackets, then with females exceeding males in number from 20 to 59 years old.

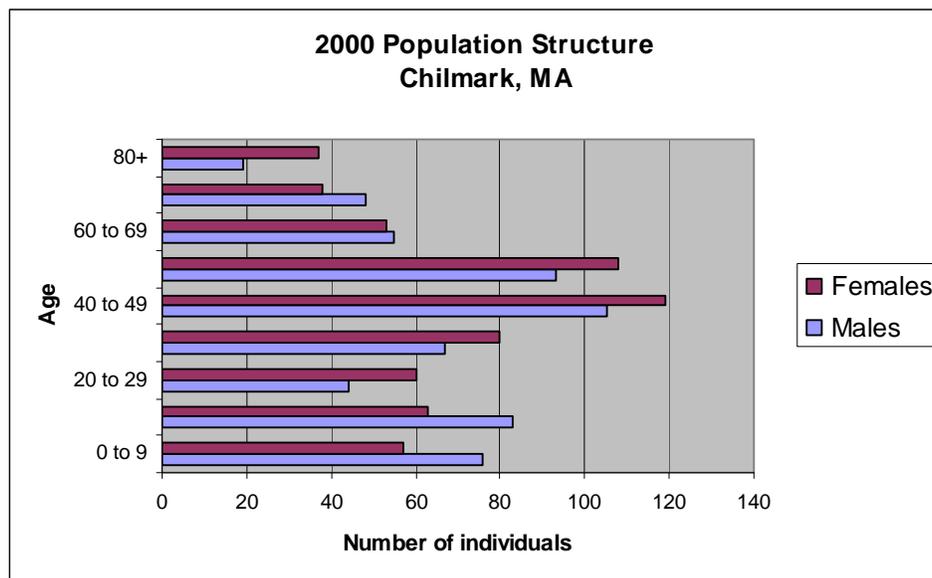


Figure 1. Chilmark’s population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

The majority of the population was white (98.4%), with 0.4% of residents black or African American, 0.4% Asian, 0.1% Native American, and none Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (see Figure 2). Only 0.8% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (see Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: English (31.8%), German (16.2%), Irish (15.7%), and Scottish (7.6%). With regard to region of birth, 41.8% were born in Massachusetts, 51.3% were born in a different state and 5.4% were born outside of the U.S. (including 1.9% who were not United States 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 Profile review comment, Rusty Walton, Planning Board member, PO Box 119, 401 Middle Road, Chilmark, MA 02535-0119, November 9, 2007

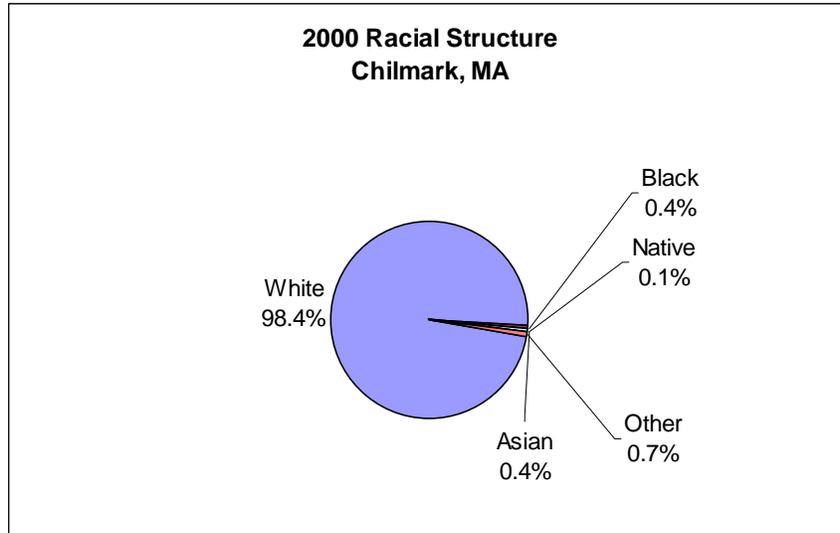


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

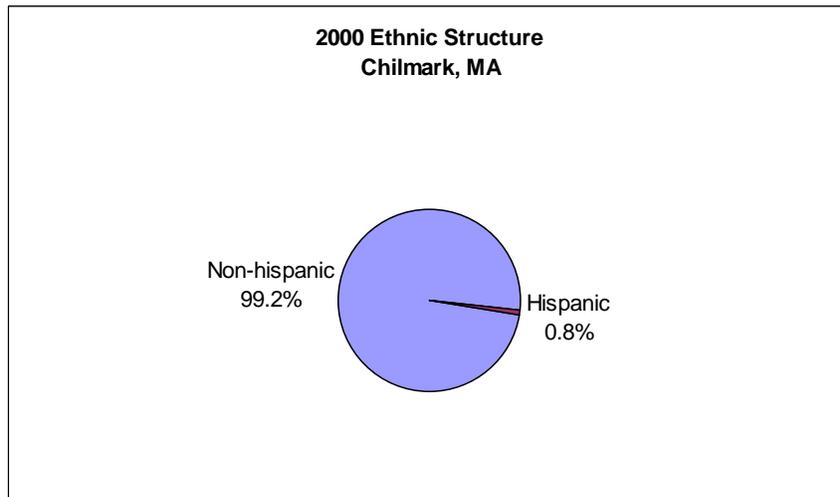


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 96.5% of the population, only English was spoken in the home, leaving 3.5% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, and including 0.9% of the population who spoke English less than 'very well' according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 97.7% were high school graduates or higher and 57.2% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 0.3% did not reach ninth grade, 2.0% attended some high school but did not graduate, 19.0% completed high school, 16.0% had some college with no degree, 5.5% received their associate's degree, 36.0% earned their bachelor's degree, and 21.2% received either their 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 Dukes County was the Catholic Church with 3 congregations and 9,951 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were: Episcopal Church (3 with 608 adherents), The United Methodist Church (5 with 524) and American Baptist Church (3 with

461 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was up 69.7% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

Issues/Processes

The town of Chilmark's Board of Selectmen annually reviews the definition of 'commercial fishermen', as the town gives certain privileges relating to properties which support and enhance commercial fishing. The 2006 definition includes a minimum number of landings, income generated from fishing, and time spent fishing (Town of Chilmark 2006).

In 2005, the town held special town meetings to decide whether to authorize the Board of Selectmen to purchase six parcels of land in Menemsha, commonly known as "The Home Port." The area includes a deep water dock and waterfront. There is concern that since the town did not purchase the property, the complexion of Menemsha could change and could contribute to the eventual demise this fishing village (Town of Chilmark 2005).

Menemsha Basin Seafoods, the major shoreside facility for commercial fishing in Chilmark, closed a few years ago. The operation sold ice and bait, and purchased catch from the fishermen. The facility was located next to the island's major gasoline and fuel depot, and required significant and costly upgrades to meet Homeland Security requirements after September 11; they were forced to close their doors instead.⁵ Vineyard fishermen once commonly fished for cod; however, many fishermen were unable to qualify for permits under Amendment 13 because of a lack of participation in the fishery in previous years, largely because of decreased stocks. A number of Vineyard fishermen have partnered with members of the Aquinnah Wampanoag tribe to appeal their exclusion from the fishery with the New England Fisheries Management Council.⁶

Chilmark's summer flounder fishermen are petitioning the Massachusetts Department of Marine Fisheries and the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Council to allow them to hold a week's worth of fish, giving the fleet flexibility to choose between selling to the buy boat or taking their catch to New Bedford or Falmouth. This will solve issues of ice and price Menemsha a more viable fishing port. The isolation of the island and the difficulties in attending fisheries meetings contribute to some of the difficulties felt by the fisheries here.⁷

As with most places on Martha's Vineyard and the Islands off Cape Cod, property values are making it difficult for middle class citizens to afford a home. Chilmark is part of the MA State's Smart Growth initiative which seeks to advance environmental equity and, through enhanced local land use plans and regulations, achieve development that is consistent with the smart conservation and smart growth (State of Massachusetts 2007). The town has an active housing committee, and has developed bylaws to provide affordable housing to young people of Chilmark and other residents with low to moderate income. Thus far there are twelve housing units in advanced planning stages, and more in the works.⁸

⁵ Profile review comment, Tom Osmer, West Tisbury Shellfish Constable, PO Box 278, West Tisbury, MA 02575, September 12, 2007

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Cultural attributes

Chilmark has a lively arts scene, represented in part by [The Yard, A Colony for Performing Arts](#). In addition to dance and musical events, they bring multicultural performances into the schools and offer a place for dancers to explore and practice their art. There are also a number of art galleries, both in town and in neighboring towns.⁹

In 1972, the [Wampanoag Tribal Council of Gay Head, Inc.](#), was formed to: promote self-determination; to ensure preservation of Wampanoag history and culture; and to achieve federal recognition for the tribe. The group is based in adjacent town Aquinnah and also offers affordable housing for tribal members.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Economy

There are several aquaculture operations on the island, and development has begun on offshore mussel culture opportunities, with test sites in Chilmark, Aquinnah, and West Tisbury. Oyster aquaculture has proven successful as an employment option for many fishermen and is expected to increase.¹⁰

According to the U.S. Census 2000¹¹, 65.3% (449 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (see

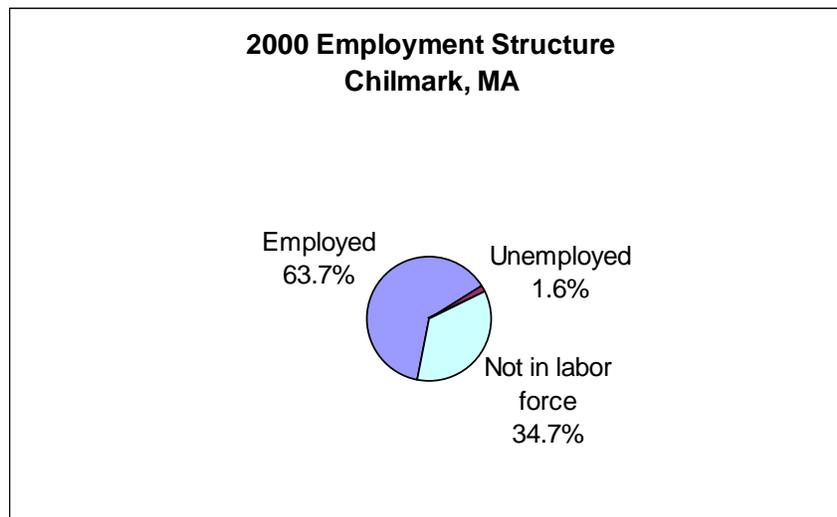


Figure), of which 1.6% were unemployed, none were in the Armed Forces, and 63.7% were employed.

⁹ Profile review comment, Rusty Walton, Planning Board member, PO Box 119, 401 Middle Road, Chilmark, MA 02535-0119, November 9, 2007

¹⁰ Profile review comment, Tom Osmers, West Tisbury Shellfish Constable, PO Box 278, West Tisbury, MA 02575, September 12, 2007

¹¹ 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.

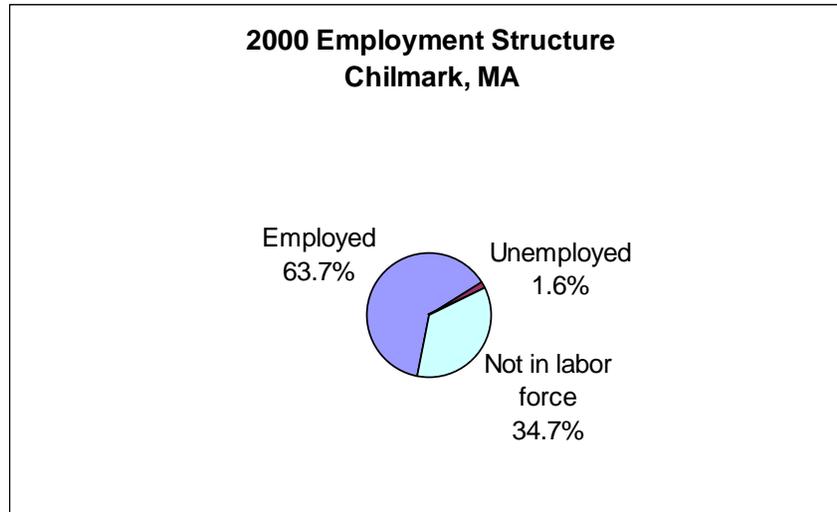


Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 29 positions or 6.6% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 123 positions or 28.1% of jobs. Construction (14.6%), finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing (13.2%), educational, health and social services (13.0%), and professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (11.4%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Chilmark was \$41,917 (up 29.6% from \$32,337 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and per capita income was \$30,029. For full-time year round workers, males made 6.2% more per year than females.

The average family in Chilmark consists of 2.71 persons. With respect to poverty, 5.7% of families (down from 7.9% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 7.6% of individuals earn below the official 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 2000b). In 2000, 22.6% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Chilmark had a total of 1,409 housing units of which 26.9% were occupied and 96.5% were detached one unit homes. About 15% (15.1%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes, boats, RVs and vans accounted for 0.3% of the total housing units; 84.4% of the detached units have between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$674,600. Of vacant housing units, 71.2% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units 24.9% were renter occupied.

Government

Chilmark is governed by an open town meeting form of government, and is led by a Board of Selectmen. Selectmen are elected for 3 year terms and they function as the chief executive board of Chilmark. Selectmen appoint all town officials and members to boards that are non-election oriented (Town of Chilmark 2006). All of the town's facilities are centered at a location known as Beetlebung Corner (Town of Chilmark 2007).

Fishery involvement in government

There is a [Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group](#), a joint board, located in Chilmark that is involved in hatchery operations, oyster disease investigations, and various other shellfish aquaculture and education. There are also a Mooring Assignment Committee, Harbor Advisory Committee, and Beach Committee. Chilmark also has a Shellfish Constable that administers permits and monitors shellfishing activities in the area, as well as a harbor master (Town of Chilmark 2007). In 2006, to address the declining bay scallop populations, the town created a Chilmark Shellfish Restoration Committee. Major issues addressed by the Committee include access to shellfish beds for recreational harvest, and protection of ponds and waterways to help improve the future resource (Town of Chilmark 2007). In 2007 the town received a shellfish preparation grant to address these issues.¹² The Dukes County Soil Conservation District is concerned with water quality, ponds, and shellfish habitat.¹³ The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries operates a Martha's Vineyard field station in Vineyard Haven (State of Massachusetts 2007b).

Institutional

Fishing associations

There is mention in a 2006 Selectmen's meeting minutes of a commercial fishermen's co-op, with meetings held at the Town Hall. However, no further details were found using secondary sources. The Massachusetts Fisherman's Partnership focuses on issues for fishermen in different ports in Massachusetts. The Partnership responded to the need of health care for fishermen and their families by developing the Fishing Partnership Health Insurance Plan with federal and state aid. This plan has been in place since 1997 and reduces the amount of money that fishermen's families have to pay to be covered by health insurance (Hall-Arber 2001).

Fishing assistance centers

Information on fishery assistance centers in Chilmark is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Other fishing related organizations

Southeast Massachusetts Aquaculture Center conducted research which included surveys to assess why bay scallop populations have declined and to collect citizen input. Chilmark participated in the surveys, as bay scalloping has been an interest and activity in the past for the town (Town of Chilmark 2005). Chilmark is one of six towns involved in the [Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group](#), a nonprofit organization comprised of the shellfish departments of the island's towns. "The Group seeks to preserve and expand the Island's traditional shellfisheries, a very important renewable resource. This program of community resource management includes the application of innovative aquaculture technology for improvement of the Island's historically viable shellfish industry." The Shellfish Group operates a large hatchery in Vineyard Haven. They are engaged in aquaculture training programs for local fishermen, and public education of the island community about the biological, environmental, and economic importance of shellfish resources.

¹² Profile review comment, Rusty Walton, Planning Board member, PO Box 119, 401 Middle Road, Chilmark, MA 02535-0119, November 9, 2007

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Physical

Chilmark is located about 14 miles from New Bedford, MA (by water); about 70 miles from Boston, MA; and about 200 miles from New York City. The Wood's Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority provide year-round ferry service to the islands (State of Massachusetts 2007c). Martha's Vineyard Hospital is about 14 miles away in Oak Bluffs, with the next closest major hospital in Falmouth about 18 miles away. Martha's Vineyard airport is in West Tisbury and Edgartown on the town line, with regular flights to and from Cape Cod and the region. Other airports include the Barnstable Muni-Boardman/Polando Field in Hyannis, and the Nantucket Memorial airport on the island of Nantucket.

In Menemsha, there is a marina and mooring services, where fishing vessels come in and fresh seafood can be purchased. The harbor, in addition to a commercial pier where fishing vessels tie up, has a small yacht marina that is popular during the summer months. Menemsha is also the home of a Coast Guard station. Public access points to the water are located in: Chilmark, Great Rock Bight, Tisbury Great Pond, Nashaquitsa Pond, and Menemsha (State of Massachusetts 2005).

INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES¹⁴

Commercial

Commercial bay scalloping is important in Chilmark, with the 2005-2006 regulations limiting the activity to Monday through Friday, 7am- 5pm, with a limit of two struck bushels per license holder per day (Town of Chilmark 2006). As stated above, Menemsha is the name given to the fishing portion of Chilmark and there is a commercial pier and service station there. Some fish is offloaded in New Bedford or Falmouth by fishermen directly, while some fishermen sell their catch to a privately operated boat in Menemsha which takes them to New Bedford or Gloucester. Aqua-World Seafoods in Vineyard Haven takes some catch to off-island markets, but conch is their primary focus. Conch is the most significant fishery by volume on Martha's Vineyard at present. In the past, fishing for tuna and swordfish by harpoon and handline was an important fishery to Chilmark and other island towns; catch levels have declined sharply in recent years because of decreasing stocks. Fishing for cod with hook and line was also a traditional fishery on the island for hundreds of years, but stocks declined, and many Vineyard fishermen reportedly were unable to obtain groundfish permits under Amendment 13 because of a lack of participation in the fishery in previous years. Menemsha has an active hook and line fishery with less than twenty boats between 16-30 feet targeting striped bass, bluefish, bonita, and fluke. Chilmark also has a summer flounder fishery, governed by the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council.¹⁵

¹⁴ In 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.

¹⁵ Profile review comment, Tom Osmers, West Tisbury Shellfish Constable, PO Box 278, West Tisbury, MA 02575, September 12, 2007

Lobster was the highest landings in Chilmark for the ten year average, followed by species in the “Other” category and Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass (see Table 1). The number of vessels home ported in Chilmark and the number of vessels whose owner’s city was Chilmark did not vary over the ten year time period, staying around 20 vessels and 18 vessels respectively (see Table 2). The level of home port fishing value also stayed relatively consistent however, the level of fishing landed port values varied considerably.

Landings by Species

Table 1. Rank Value of Landings for Federally Managed Groups

	Rank Value of Average Landings from 1997-2006
Lobster	1
Other ¹⁶	2
Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass	3
Scallop	4
Bluefish	5
Largemouth Groundfish ¹⁷	6
Monkfish	7
Surf Clams, Ocean Quahog	8
Dogfish	9
Red Crab	10

(Note: Only rank value is provided because value information is confidential in ports with fewer than three vessels or fewer than three dealers, or where one dealer predominates in a particular species and would therefore be identifiable.)

Vessels by Year¹⁸

Table 2. Federal Vessel Permits Between 1997-2006

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)
1997	20	19
1998	19	17
1999	20	18
2000	20	18
2001	19	16
2002	21	18
2003	20	17
2004	18	15
2005	20	17
2006	20	16

(Note: # Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport, # Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence¹⁹)

Recreational

Menemsha Basin is used for fishing and Aquinnah fishermen and charter fishing boats access Menemsha Basin from [Wampanoag tribal lands](#) at West Basin, across from Menemsha village. Chilmark has a [large, seasonal charter fishing](#) component, with several companies operating out of Menemsha. Anglers target striped bass, bluefish, tuna, white marlin and sharks predominately.

Subsistence

Information on subsistence activity in Chilmark is either unavailable through secondary data collection or the practice does not exist.

¹⁶ "Other" species includes any species not accounted for in a federally managed group

¹⁷ Largemouth groundfish: cod, winter flounder, yellowtail flounder, American plaice, sand-dab flounder, haddock, white hake, redfish, and pollock

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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.

FUTURE

At a 2006 Selectmen's meeting, concern was raised that the lack of ice for commercial fishing boats was a problem. The possibility of the town getting a building and an ice machine to serve the fleet was raised and is still unresolved. A resident also suggested a Commercial Fish Board be created to address major issues affecting the local fleet however it is not known whether a Board was created to date.

In general, many people are interested in preserving Menemsha as a fishing port and fishermen are frequently present at Selectmen's meeting. Fishermen are also concerned, as are other residents of Chilmark, over rising prices to live in the town and how this will affect their futures on the island and in the fishery (Town of Chilmark 2006).

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