

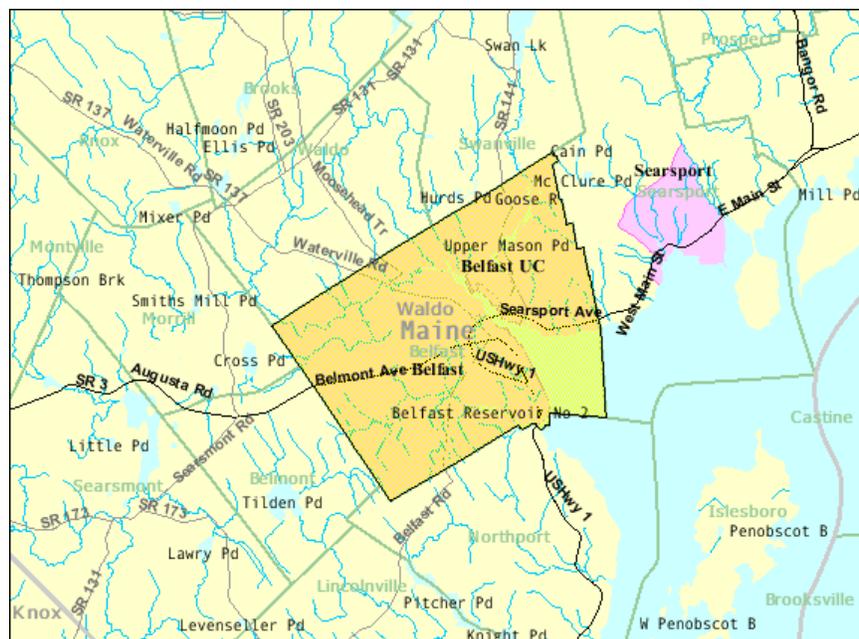
# BELFAST, ME<sup>1</sup>

## Community Profile<sup>2</sup>

### PEOPLE AND PLACES

#### Regional orientation

Belfast, ME (44.43° N, 69.01° W) is a city and shire town of Waldo County, situated on Penobscot Bay, about 20 miles from its mouth, and the Passagassawakeag River in the state of Maine. Its dimensions in an easterly and westerly line are about 8 miles, by 5½ miles north and south (Varney 1886). Belfast has a total area of 38.3 mi, of which 4.3 mi<sup>2</sup> (11.26%) is water (State of Maine 2007). Belfast is situated at the heart of coastal Maine, referred to as Upper Midcoast Maine (Hall-Arber et al. 2001), about halfway between the border of New Brunswick, Canada to the north and New Hampshire to the south. (*Note: This community was included in the profiling process because of its role in the seafood processing industry, rather than the importance of harvesting activities to the community.*)



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

#### Historical/Background information

The first settlers in Belfast purchased their lots in 1769 at a price of twenty-five cents an acre. The founder of Belfast was a surveyor named John Mitchell. In 1773, the population was 200 and the town was incorporated under the name of Belfast, at the wish of a Mr. Miller whose native town in Ireland bore that name. The first settlement in Belfast was on the eastern side of

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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](mailto:Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov)."

the river, but the greater convenience for communication with the country southward diverted business to the site of the present city (Varney 1886). The harbor and waterfront were bustling commercial centers with over 1,200 vessels arriving in local ports in 1887 (Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce 2007). Belfast's location on the western shore of the calm Penobscot Bay was far enough from the open ocean to be sheltered but close enough to Bangor (the US lumber capital in the 1800s) to make for an ideal shipbuilding location (State of Maine 2004). The center of the City is also located on the west side primarily because the channel runs closer to the west side of the harbor in the inner harbor where it is more protected, and deeper water was imperative, especially during the ship building era.<sup>3</sup> With the advent of technology, shipbuilding declined into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 1940s, both shoe and poultry businesses were its replacement in Belfast (Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce 2007). Between the 1950s to 1970s Belfast was home to the chicken broiler industry and two of Maine's larger processors: Maplewood and Penobscot Poultry companies (State of Maine 2004).

### Demographics<sup>4</sup>

According to Census 2000 data (US Census Bureau 2000), Belfast had a total population of 6,381, up 0.41% from the reported population of 6,355 in 1990 (US Census Bureau 1990). Of this total in 2000, 53.4% were female and 46.6% were male. The median age was 43.3 years and 75.8% of the population was 21 years or older while 23.0% was 62 or older. Belfast's age structure (see Figure 1) shows the highest percentage of the population between the ages of 40-49 years old, with a higher portion of females over 20 years old. The presence of credit card company MBNA might explain the greater number of older age classes, with more professional/administrative jobs available to those with either advanced degrees or specific training. This could also explain the higher ratio of females, who tend to work in administrative occupations.

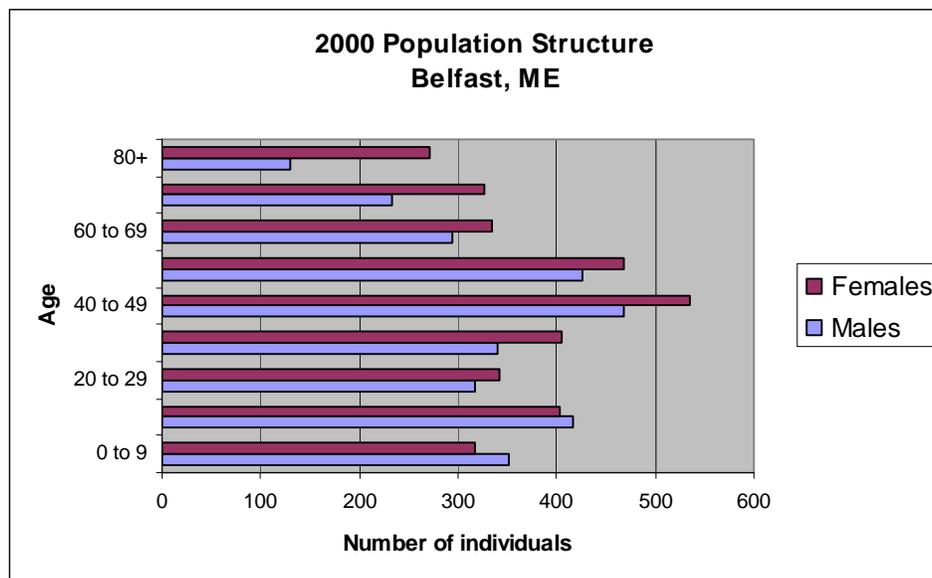


Figure 1. Belfast's Population Structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

<sup>3</sup> Community Review Comments, Katherine Messier, City of Belfast, Maine, 131 Church Street, Belfast, ME 04915, September 23, 2007

<sup>4</sup> 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.

The majority of the population of Belfast is white (98.8%), with 0.3% of residents black or African American, 0.3% Native American, 0.3% Asian, and 0.02% Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). Only 0.7% of the total population is Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of ancestries including: English (25.7%), Irish (15.3%), United States or American (8.7%), German (7.1%), Scottish (6.6%), and French (except Basque) (6.6%). With regard to region of birth, 63.2% were born in Maine, 34.1% were born in a different state and 2.2% were born outside of the US (including 0.8% who were not US citizens).

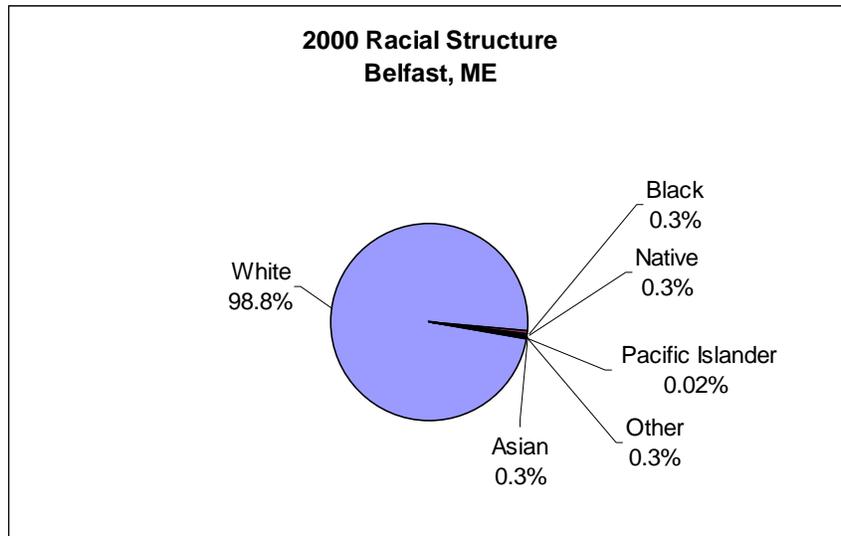


Figure 2. Belfast's Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

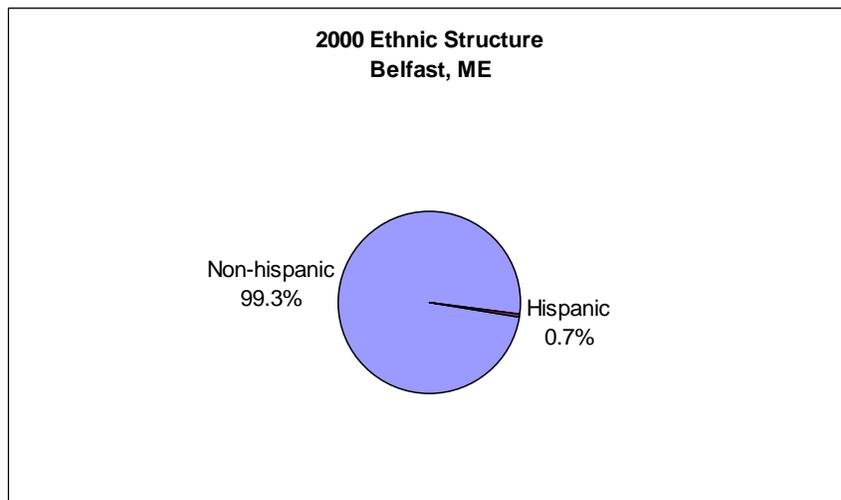


Figure 3. Belfast's Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 97.2% of the population 5 years old and higher, only English is spoken in the home, leaving 2.8% in homes where a language other than English is spoken, and including 0.1% of the population who speak English less than “very well.”

Of the population 25 years and over, 82.0% are high school graduates or higher and 29.1% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 7.9% did

not reach ninth grade, 10.1% attended some high school but did not graduate, 28.6% completed high school, 17.9% had some college with no degree, 6.4% received an associate's degree, 18.4% earned a bachelor's degree, and 10.7% received a graduate or professional degree.

Although religious 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 Waldo County was Catholic with 2 congregations and 1,187 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were American Baptist (5 with 710 adherents), United Methodist (6 with 688 adherents) and the United Church of Christ (8 with 522 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was down 12.8% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

### **Issues/Processes**

The presence of MBNA has had major impacts in Maine, providing alternative job opportunities for young professionals and contributing scholarships, internships, and grants to communities. Belfast's improved image has attracted tourists and retirees, raising property values and provided stability for a community that once depended on herring and chicken processing. MBNA gave the city a restored boathouse that is used for some official functions and is also rented out for weddings, parties and private events (Murphy 2003). Some Belfast residents note negative impacts from the company's presence as well, including the ability to out-compete small local companies for employees, attracting outsiders with different values, and the potential link with rising real estate prices (Hall-Arber et al. 2001).

Much debate has ensued about what to do with the run-down former herring cannery, closed since 2001, and located on a valuable piece of waterfront. One proposal is to turn the cannery into a retail and residential development with a large marina attached (Murphy 2003). Residents and officials are concerned that new developments will alter the character of Belfast. However, residents are also looking forward to new development, which will enhance public and fishermen access between the adjacent City-owned property and the newly built footbridge with a walkway along the entire length of the harbor.<sup>5</sup>

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 (State of Maine 2005).

In recent years, Belfast has experienced problems with the outbreak of the wood-boring Teredo worm, which usually lives in warmer southern waters. The worms are tunneling through many of Belfast's new pilings (Maine Coast Guide 2002).

### **Cultural attributes**

For over 55 years, the popular Belfast Bay Festival (once called the Belfast Broiler Festival) has been held in the city park, celebrating the once thriving poultry industry, providing live entertainment and events in the summer (Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce 2007). The

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<sup>5</sup> Community Review Comments, Katherine Messier, City of Belfast, Maine, 131 Church Street, Belfast, ME 04915, September 23, 2007

[Belfast Co-op](#) was formed in 1977, a few years before the demise of the broiler chicken industry, and is a meeting place for community idea exchange among young college grads, artists, etc. Additionally, Belfast hosts the National Boat Building Challenge in conjunction with a Classic Small Boat Show in the summer. The Boat Building consists of teams of two that compete against each other to build the same skiff design and are graded on time, quality, and speed of the vessel on the water (Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce 2007).

Four state parks – Fort Knox State Park in Prospect, Moose Point State Park in Searsport, Lake St. George State Park in Liberty, and Warren Island State Park near the island of Islesboro – are located in Waldo County. The closest museum is on Church Street in Belfast, run by the Historical Society open June through Labor Day and by appointment in the off-season. The Museum In The Streets – a heritage walking tour of the City is also quite popular.<sup>6</sup> The Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport which displays aspects of the counties rich maritime history is the largest and best-known museum in Waldo County (Hall-Arber et al. 2001).

In September 2006, the Belfast Footbridge was renovated and reopened, marked by a celebration for the whole community (Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce 2007). Before the Veterans Memorial Bridge was completed in 1962, Route 1 crossed the Footbridge and headed east (Village Soup 2006). Now the bridge is restricted to foot traffic only.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### Current Economy

According to the U.S. Census 2000<sup>7</sup>, 61.3% (3,187 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over were in the labor force (see Figure 4), of which 3.8% were unemployed, 0.2% were in the Armed Forces, and 57.3% are employed.



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

Belfast has changed since the departure of poultry and fish processing plants and the arrival in 1996 of credit-card issuer MBNA. The company, which employs 3,000 workers, is

<sup>6</sup> Community Review Comments, Katherine Messier, City of Belfast, Maine, 131 Church Street, Belfast, ME 04915, September 23, 2007

<sup>7</sup> 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.

one of Maine's biggest employers and provides a quarter of the city's property tax revenue. MBNA has attracted young professionals to the area, causing some to move from communities like Stonington to be closer to work (Hall-Arber et al. 2001).

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 63 positions or 2.1% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 360 positions or 12.1% of jobs. Educational, health and social services (20.0%) is the industry grouping that accounts for the most employment. Additionally, finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing (14.6%), manufacturing (13.6%), and retail trade (12.5%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Belfast was \$32,400 (up 62.9% from \$19,884 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and per capita income was \$19,276. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 9.8% more per year than females.

The average family in Belfast consists of 2.77 persons. With respect to poverty, 10.0% of families (down from 14.8% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 13.2% 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, 40.5% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Belfast had a total of 3,121 housing units of which 88.6% were occupied and 55.0% were detached one unit homes. Nearly half (41.8%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes, boats, RVs and vans accounting for 16.3% of the total housing units; 98.8% of detached units have between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$108,200. Of vacant housing units, 4.4% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units 32.3% were renter occupied.

## **Government**

Belfast is a city in Waldo County and its county seat that was incorporated as a town in 1773 and as Maine's eighth city in 1852 (State of Maine 2004). The city is managed by a mayor, manager and city Councilors (City of Belfast 2007).

### *Fishery involvement in government*

Belfast has a Harbor Master which oversees the general operation of the waters in the municipality of Belfast. The Harbormaster also sells permits to set moorings and in 2005, there were 350 mooring permits issued (City of Belfast 2007). Most Belfast fishermen have moorings permitted through the City, and use municipal facilities for access to the working waterfront. Belfast has no shellfish ordinances. Other important government councils relating to Belfast are the Lobster Management Policy Council – Zone D District II and the Sea Urchin Management Council.<sup>8</sup>

## **Institutional**

### *Fishery associations*

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

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represents the interests of 1200 lobstermen. The MLA has Belfast lobstermen as members and occasionally holds meetings in the area (MLA 2007). There is also the Downeast Lobstermen's Association and the Belfast Fishermen's Association.<sup>9</sup>

### *Fishery Assistance Centers*

McMillan Offshore Survival Training (MOST), headquartered on Waterville Road in Belfast, provides training to individuals in the offshore petroleum, aviation and marine industries. The goals of the company are to teach skills that will help people survive potentially life-threatening situations. MOST has trained over 70,000 people since the 1970s.

Although not directly related to fisheries, the Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) was founded in 1965 as a charitable, educational, non-profit community action agency. Located in Belfast, the organization is designed to make use of and organize public and private resources to assist in the lessening of poverty and address its major causes (WCAP 2007). As fishery management evolves, the WCAP could become a valuable resource for struggling 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 institutions*

The MIT Sea Grant College Adopt-a-Boat program pairs school children with commercial fishermen and their vessels to teach children about the marine environment and the life of fishermen. At least one K-5 classroom in Belfast has participated in the program between 2004-2005 (MIT Sea Grant 2007).

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**

Belfast is situated at the north-western angle of Penobscot Bay, about 20 miles from its mouth, and 10 miles west of the mouth of the Penobscot, known as Belfast Bay. The city is bounded on the east by Searsport, north by Swanville and Waldo, west by Morrill and Belmont, and south by Northport (Varney 1886).

Belfast and Moosehead Railroad, which connects with the Maine Central at Burnham, used to have its terminus in the city. Belfast has a steamboat connection throughout the year with Portland and Boston, also to Castine and other towns eastward (Varney 1886).

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Reconstruction has been undertaken of the Belfast Municipal Airport (St. Peter 2004). The closest international airports include: Bangor International (about 37 miles), Brunswick (about 74 miles), and Portland International Jetport (about 100 miles) (Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce 2007). Waldo County Transportation offers fixed route scheduled bus service to Bangor, Augusta, Waterville, Rockland and towns within Waldo County from Belfast (Where in Waldo 2006).

Belfast is the homeport to the Penobscot Bay Area Pilots, who guide large tankers and freighters up the bay to Searsport and up the Penobscot River to Bangor (Maine Coast Guide 2002). The Fourniers currently own Penobscot Bay Tractor Tug Company in Belfast, which also take ships up the river to Bucksport. The Belfast Boatyard, located beyond the city landing and tugboats on the south shore, offers various services such as storage, fuel, repairs, and marine supplies (Maine Coast Guide 2002). Belfast commercial fishermen use facilities at the Belfast Public Landing for loading, unloading, and general water access. This is the only public commercial access in upper west Penobscot Bay.<sup>10</sup>

## **INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES<sup>11</sup>**

### **Commercial**

Belfast is the home office of “ContiSea LLC that has two wholly owned subsidiaries in Maine: Atlantic Salmon of Maine LLC, which produces about 7,000 tons of farmed salmon per year, and Ducktrap River Fish Farm LLC, which produces value-added seafood products” (Hall-Arber et al. 2001). One of the East Coast’s few remaining fish canneries is located near the bridge (Trails.com Inc. 2007). [Young's Shellfish Co., Inc.](#) is the largest Maine based seafood dealer, processing and distributing fresh, frozen, smoked and specialty seafood.

As with many coastal communities in Maine, lobster is an important commercial species. Young’s Lobster Pound is located on the water and allows visitors to watch small day boat lobstermen ply the waters while they buy or eat the local catch (Acadia Vacations 2007). The active commercial fishing fleet in Belfast harvest primarily lobsters, crabs, scallops, sea urchins, shrimp, groundfish, and grown mussels.<sup>12</sup>

The federally managed species with the highest average dollar value in terms of landings between the years 1997 and 2006 in Belfast were: lobster; “other;” monkfish; skate; and largemesh groundfish. There were no landings of monkfish, skate, or groundfish in 2006,

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<sup>10</sup> Community Review Comments, Katherine Messier, City of Belfast, Maine, 131 Church Street, Belfast, ME 04915, September 23, 2007

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Community Review Comments, Katherine Messier, City of Belfast, Maine, September 23, 2007

however (Table 1). According to the Department of Marine Resources, lobster landings in Waldo County were nearly \$1.5 million in 2006.<sup>13</sup>

The number of federally permitted vessels whose home port is Belfast increased from a low of 1 to a high of 4 over the same year time period. However, the value of fishing for home ported vessels declined sharply from 2005 to 2006. The number of vessels whose owner's city is Belfast fluctuated between 1 and 3 vessels over the ten year period (see Table 2). However, according to the Belfast Harbormaster, commercial fishing vessels moored in Belfast range between 12 and 25, depending on the viability of other fisheries.<sup>14</sup>

### Landings by Species

Table 1. Rank Value of Landings for Federally Managed Groups

Species	Rank Value of Average Landings from 1997-2006
Lobster	1
Other <sup>15</sup>	2
Monkfish	3
Skate	4
Largemouth Groundfish <sup>16</sup>	5

(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 Year<sup>17</sup>

Table 2. Federal Vessel Permits Between 1997-2006

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)
1997	1	2
1998	1	1
1999	1	1
2000	2	1
2001	1	1
2002	4	2
2003	4	2
2004	4	3
2005	4	2
2006	3	2

(Note: # Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport  
# Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence<sup>18</sup>)

<sup>13</sup> Community Review Comments, Katherine Messier, City of Belfast, Maine, 131 Church Street, Belfast, ME 04915, September 23, 2007

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<sup>15</sup> "Other" species includes any species not accounted for in a federally managed group.

<sup>16</sup> Largemouth groundfish: cod, winter flounder, yellowtail flounder, American plaice, sand-dab flounder, haddock, white hake, redfish, and pollock

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

## **Recreational**

The old highway bridge at the head of Belfast Harbor is now a public right-of-way for pedestrians and a popular fishing spot for angler. Key species caught include mackerel, striped bass, smelt, bluefish. The bridge is also a place where tourists can watch local lobstermen haul their traps (Trails.com Inc. 2007).

Weed beds just offshore from Belfast Bay hold bait fish, which attract the ever-popular striped bass. Access is available at Belfast City Park, a scenic day-use picnic area on the shore (Trails.com Inc. 2007).

There are numerous other fishing sites near Belfast including: Fort Point State Park fishing pier, Goose River, and Damariscotta Lake, all with either boat or canoe access for anglers (Trails.com Inc. 2007).

Most of the fishing in Belfast Harbor is for Atlantic Mackerel and Striped Bass with the occasionally catch of bluefish, haddock, flounder, and pollock further out. No license is required for saltwater fishing but one is required for gathering shellfish (City of Belfast 2007).

## **Subsistence**

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

## **FUTURE**

One of the prominent issues facing Belfast's future is the development of the former Stinson Seafood plant. One proposal in 2003 involved hundreds of boating slips, retail space and a handful of time-share residential units. Since the factory building is in the flood plain, nothing permanent can be built on the first seven feet. The plan included opening the site up for greater public access to the waterfront and leaving some of the old processing machinery and fixtures in place to demonstrate and preserve the city's past (Murphy 2003).

There is great concern in Belfast over rising property taxes, especially for property near the coast where demand has pushed values upward. Although property values have gone up considerably, income of Belfast residents has not necessarily increased at the same rate (St. Peter 2004). There is also concern over maintaining the character of Belfast with any new waterfront developments, especially with the former Stinson Seafood processing plant. The biggest challenge to maintaining commercial fishing in Belfast, according to the Harbormaster, is protection of and access to a working waterfront for fishing activities.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Community Review Comments, Katherine Messier, City of Belfast, Maine, 131 Church Street, Belfast, ME 04915, September 23, 2007

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