

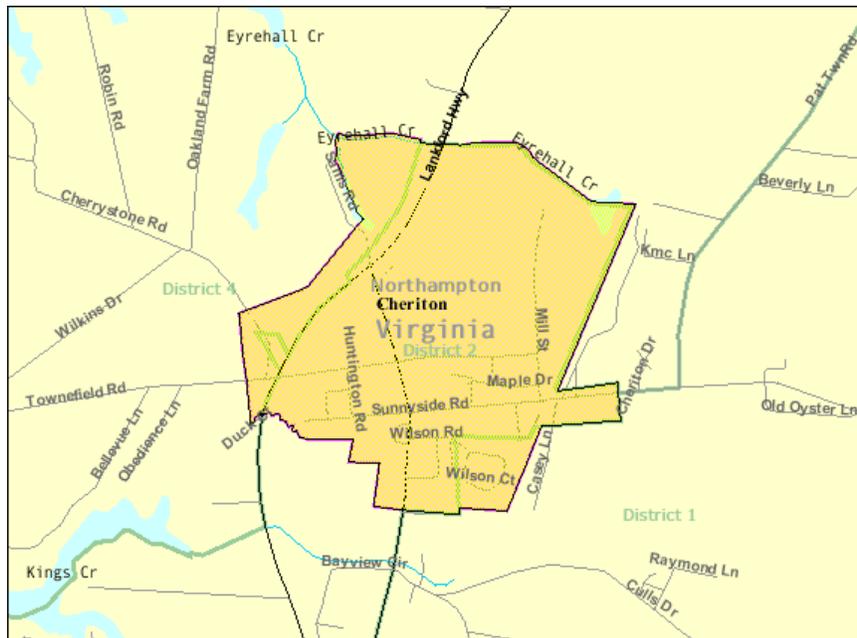
CHERITON, VA¹

Community Profile²

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Regional orientation

Cheriton, Virginia (37.29°N and 75.97°W) is found in Northampton County which is the southern 35 miles of a 70-mile long stretch of the Delmarva Peninsula known as Virginia's Eastern Shore. “The Shore” is sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay, and is divided into the Bayside and the Seaside (Northampton County nd).



Map 1. Location of Cheriton, VA (US Census Bureau 2000a)

Historical/Background

The name of Cheriton name is a shortened version of “Cherry Stones”. The Eastern Shore of Virginia is a place that has somehow managed to remain relatively unchanged through over time. Its pristine condition is mainly a result of the surrounding waters of the Chesapeake Bay and the County's isolation to large East Coast metropolises such as Virginia's Tidewater Area (Virginia Beach & Norfolk). Generations of families maintain a traditional livelihood through farming and fishing.

Cheriton, Virginia is known for a historic mansion located within its territory. In about 1670, John Custis II built an extravagant mansion along the shores of Old Plantation Creek, one

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.”

unique in the Virginia Colony. In 1676 during Bacon's Rebellion, Virginia's royal governor William Berkeley fled from the capitol at Jamestown, taking refuge temporarily with John Custis II, making the town the capitol of the Virginia Colony for a short period of time (Northampton County n.d.).

Demographics³

According to Census 2000 data, Cheriton had a total population of 499 down 3.1% from the reported population of 515 in 1990. Of this 2000 total, 44.3% were male and 55.7% were female. The median age was 38.9 years and 72.6% of the population was 21 years or older while 20.7% was 62 years or older.

Cheriton's age structure (see Figure 1) shows the highest percentage of the population between 40 and 49 years of age, with a sharp decrease between the ages of 20 and 29. This statistic may suggest that professionals (post-graduates) are moving out of Cheriton to live and work.

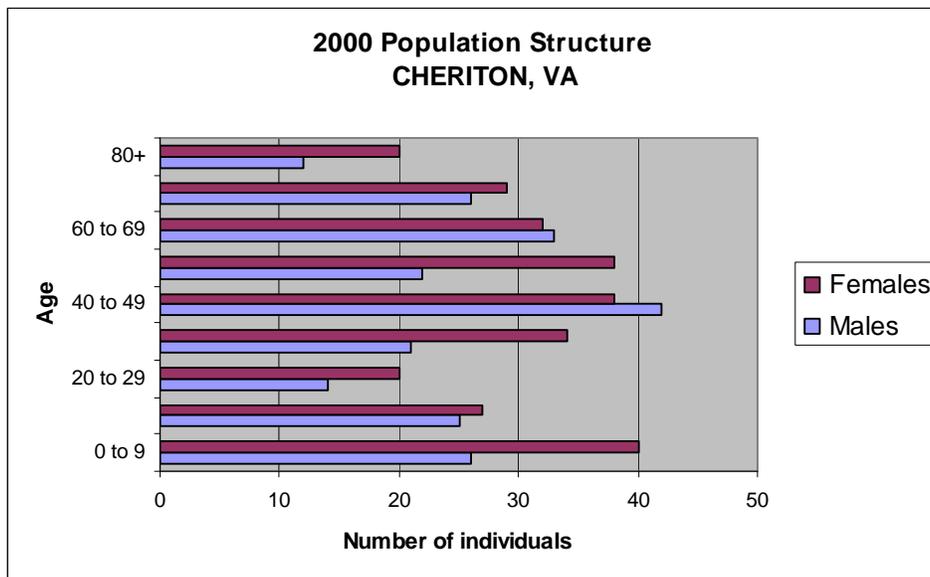


Figure 1. Cheriton's population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000a)

The majority of the population was white (70.3%) with 27.1% of residents black or African American, none Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islander/Hawaiian (see Figure 2). Only 1.6% of the population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (see Figure 3). Residents linked their backgrounds to a number of different ancestries including: English (16%), German (7%), and African (6.4%). With the regard to region of birth, 69.6% were born in Virginia, 30% were born in a different state and 0.4% were born outside of the U.S. (with no residents 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.

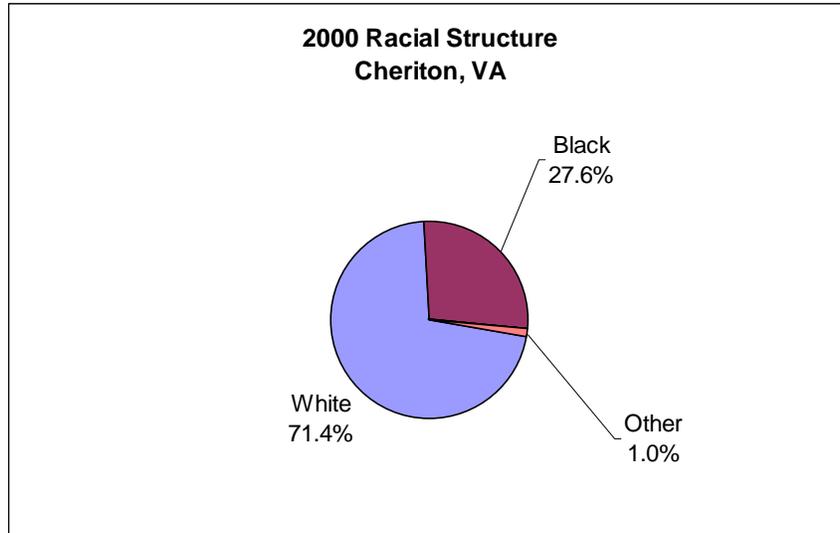


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

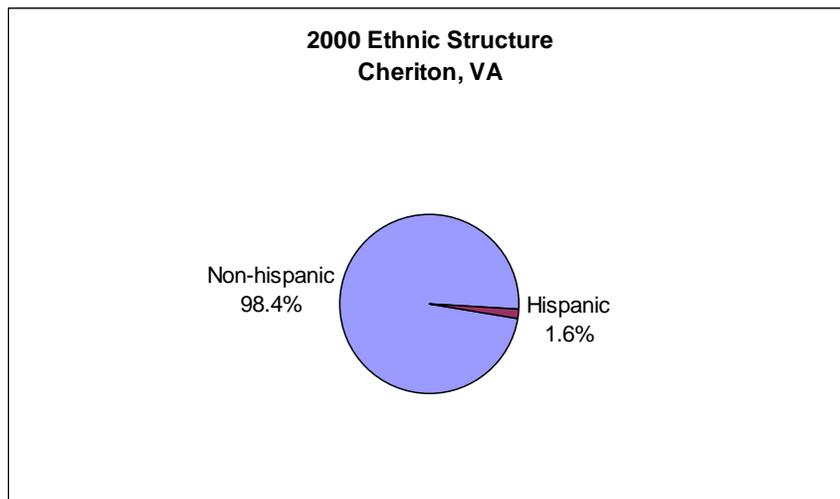


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 98.1% of the population, only English was spoken at home, leaving 1.9% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, including none of the population who spoke English less than ‘very well’ according to the 2000 Census.

Of the population 25 years and over, 71.8% were high school graduates or higher and 12.4% had a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 13% did not reach ninth grade, 15.3% attended some high school but did not graduate, 40.9% completed high school, 13% had some college with no degree, 5.4% received their Associate degree, 8.8% earned their Bachelor’s degree, and 3.6% 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 Northampton County was United Methodist with 8 congregations and 1,825 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were Southern Baptist (7 with 1,212 adherents), and Catholic (1 with 209 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was down 19.9% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

Issues/Processes

A 2000-acre planned community, Bay Creek Golf and Marina Resort, is under construction near Cheriton (May 2004). With a total of 2,200 homes planned, if each of these is occupied it will increase the population of Northampton County, now at 12,929, by more than one third. The owners of Cherrystone Aqua-farms are concerned about the effect that the 225 boat slips built as part of the development might have on water quality where the clams are raised. There may be future conflicts between the new residents to the area and the clambers and aquaculture business, if those moving to this development don't wish to see clam harvesting taking place outside their windows. In addition, many of Northampton County's low income residents, particularly African Americans, have been forced out of the area by rising home prices and rents as others move here to commute to jobs in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, etc.

Cultural attributes

Information on cultural attributes in Cheriton is unavailable through secondary data collection.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current Economy

The Eastern Shore contains the last undeveloped coastal wilderness left on the Atlantic Coast, which provides an abundance of research opportunities. More than \$7.5 million has been invested in the University of Virginia's [Long Term Ecological Research Center](#) located in Oyster, since 1987, generating an additional \$10 million in other research-related spending. The center plans to build a \$2.5 million state-of-the-art laboratory in Oyster. The Nature Conservancy spent \$3 million to renovate the Cobb Island Station in Oyster for use as an educational center. In Accomack County, the Marine Science Consortium, a group of 18 universities, operates an educational facility that hosts about 6,000 college and high school students each year (ESVAnet nd).

Revenue from the sale of cultured clams on the Eastern Shore of Virginia rose from less than \$1 million per year in 1991 to more than \$15 million in 2000, with a local economic impact of more than \$40 million. The 2005 estimate of clams sold in Virginia was over 178,000,000 at \$0.149 each, most of which were from the Eastern Shore (VIMS 2006).

Cultured oysters are a fast growing part of the aquaculture industry due to the recent availability of sterile (triploid), disease-resistant strains of the local oyster.⁴ As for clams, one grower estimates that one acre of clam beds could generate an average of \$65,000 to \$75,000 per year. There is one processing plant found in Cheriton, Virginia that currently employs 75 full-time workers (Estuarine Research Foundation 2005). [Cherrystone Aqua Farms](#) is the world's largest producer of hard clams (AquaGuide Aquatic Forum 2002). Cherrystone produces more than 63 million clams annually, and they generate more than \$10 million in annual revenue. The company is also known for using a large number of contract part-time employees, or "co-ops", to meet seasonal labor demands. They pack and ship clams exclusively from their Cheriton facility.⁵

⁴ Community Review Comments, Michael Peirson, Managing Director, Cherrystone Aquafarms, PO Box 347, Cheriton, VA 23316, September 9, 2007

⁵ Personal communication, Cherrystone Aqua Farms, Cheriton, VA, June 20, 2006

According to the US Census 2000⁶, 54.7% (229 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age or over were in the labor force (see Figure 4), of which none were unemployed, none were in the Armed Forces, and 54.7% were employed.

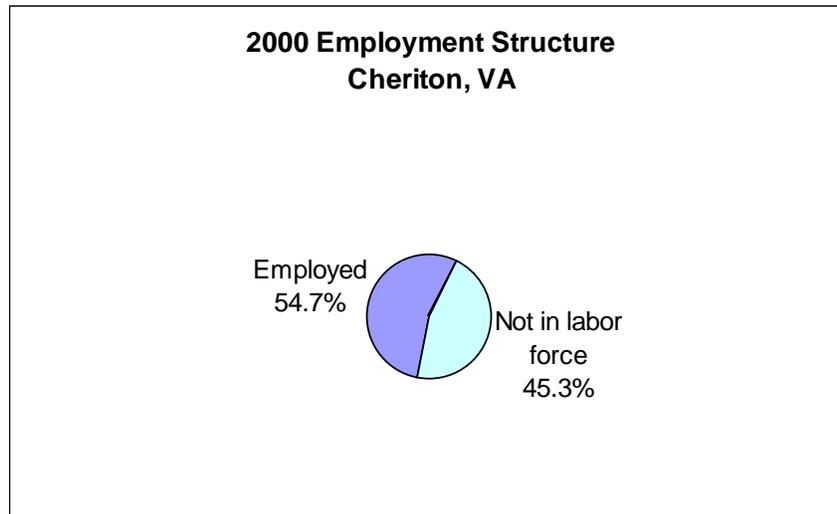


Figure 4. Employment structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to the Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 16 positions or 7.0% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 6 positions or 2.6% of jobs. Education, health and social services (17.9%), manufacturing (16.6%) construction (4.8%), and retail trade (14%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Cheriton was \$26,429 (up 32.8% from \$19,894 in 1990) and median per capita income was \$20,457. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 32.1% more per year than females.

The average family in Cheriton consists of 2.28 persons. With respect to poverty, 5.1% of families (down from 6.2% in 1990) 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). In 2000, 20.9% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000.

In 2000, Cheriton had a total of 239 housing units of which 91.6% were occupied and 92.9% were detached one unit homes. Less than two percent (1.3%) of these homes were built before 1940. Mobile homes accounted for 6.6% of the total housing units; 94.2% of detached units had between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$77,300. Of vacant housing units, 2.1% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units, 29.2% were renter occupied.

⁶ 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.

Government

Cheriton is overseen by a County Board. The Board of Supervisors consists of six representatives, one from each of the County's six voting districts. Supervisors are elected for four-year terms (Northampton County nd).

Fishery involvement in government

The Virginia Fish Commission, established in 1875, is one of the state's oldest Governmental agencies. However, shellfish regulations (one of the Commission's key responsibilities) have not been a major factor in the agency's activities until this past decade. This was due to Virginia's economic and cultural dependency on the oyster industry. With the assistance of the Virginia Fish Commission, the Virginia General Assembly enacted a state fishery management policy in 1984. This policy had a goal to successfully manage fisheries using the best available economic, scientific, biological and sociological information available. This allowed fisheries and their communities to be controlled by effective plans and regulations of the Virginia Fish Commission and away from State legislation (Virginia Marine Resources Commission n.d.). State regulations protect "productive shellfish grounds". The County government is currently looking at storm water management and sewage management to protect tidal waters and the aquaculture industry.⁷

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) is a State Agency established in 1875 to preserve Virginia's marine and aquatic resources, including all tidal waters. The VMRC's Fisheries Management Division aids in the planning of state, interstate, and federal management organizations. Its Fisheries Advisory Council helps agencies create and implement management plans for both commercial and recreational fishery species. The Commission's headquarters are located in Newport News (VMRC nd).

Institutional

Fishing associations

Information on fishing associations in Cheriton is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Fishing assistance centers

Information on fishing assistance centers in Cheriton is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Other fishing related organizations

Information on other fishing related organizations in Cheriton is unavailable through secondary data collection.

Physical

The small town of Cheriton is accessible by State Route 13 (Charles M. Lankford Jr. Memorial Hwy). The town is situated near Chesapeake Bay, Mockhorn Bay, Outlet Bay, and Hog Island Bay, all of which give access to the open Atlantic. There is a railway line running from Machipongo (north of Cheriton) to Cape Charles (southwest of Cheriton on the Chesapeake

⁷ Community Review Comments, Michael Peirson, Managing Director, Cherrystone Aquafarms, PO Box 347, Cheriton, VA 23316, September 9, 2007

Bay). The closest airport is the Norfolk International Airport, which is 30 miles away. Cheriton is about 43 miles from Virginia Beach, 43 miles from Norfolk, 64 miles from Chincoteague, and 130 miles from Richmond (MapQuest 2005).

The [Bay Creek Resort & Club](#) in nearby Cape Charles (about 4 miles from Cheriton) offers a marina, but appears to tailor to yachts and high-end recreational boating interests. The marina is located in the harbor of King's Creek, offering a deepwater channel, 224 slips, full services, and a harbormaster. Cheriton Hardware also sells commercial and recreational fishing supplies and is located off Route 13 (VMRC nd).

INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES⁸

Commercial

[Cherrystone Aqua Farms](#) is the world's largest producer of hard clams (AquaGuide Aquatic Forum 2002), producing more than 63 million clams a year (ERF 2005), more than the entire wild harvest of clams for the state of Virginia (Virginia Sea Grant College Program 2002), and generating more than \$10 million in annual revenue. This business has become an industry leader and a model for others who want to pursue clam aquaculture (Virginia Sea Grant College Program 2002). There are also a number of seafood wholesalers and retailers found in Cheriton. [JH West Seafood](#) on the outskirts of Cheriton sells fresh crabs, oysters, and clams. JH West now has a clam hatchery in Oyster, VA and intends to become a major cultured clam producer.⁹ Atlantic Commodities in Cheriton is also a clam and oyster wholesaler. Bernie's Conchs in Cheriton sells fresh and frozen conch (Virginia Marine Products Board 2006). There is some pound netting that takes place in the waters around Cheriton (Harper 2006).

There were no commercial landings reported for Cheriton, however there were a few vessels reported whose owner's city was Cheriton between the years 1997-2006 (see Table 1).

⁸ 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.

⁹ Community Review Comments, Michael Peirson, Managing Director, Cherrystone Aquafarms, PO Box 347, Cheriton, VA 23316, September 9, 2007

Vessels by Year¹⁰

Table 1. 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	0	1	0	0
1998	0	0	0	0
1999	0	1	0	0
2000	0	3	0	0
2001	0	4	0	0
2002	0	2	0	0
2003	0	2	0	0
2004	0	0	0	0
2005	0	2	0	0
2006	0	1	0	0

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

Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence¹¹

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

There is one major Charter Boat Company found along the shores of Cheriton, Virginia. Patrons of the "Miss Jennifer" catch a wide variety a fish species around the waters of Cheriton, including croaker, spot, flounder, grey trout, bluefish and black drum (Virginia Tourism Corporation n.d.). Cherrystone Campgrounds, a 700-site campground in Cheriton, has a fishing pier and boat ramp for visiting recreational fishermen.¹²

Subsistence

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

FUTURE

The Northampton County Board of Supervisor's has begun to hold a series of seven public workshops designed to solicit input from county residents and business and property owners regarding the county's Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is the basic blueprint to guide the future policies and land uses of the county for the next 20 years. The current plan was adopted in September 2001, and Virginia law requires that plans be reviewed and updated as may be necessary at least once every five years. As part of this effort, public

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Community Review Comments, Michael Peirson, Managing Director, Cherrystone Aquafarms, PO Box 347, Cheriton, VA 23316, September 9, 2007

workshops are being held to understand the issues and concerns of citizens in each community. The input from these workshops will be used to develop basic policies and plans regarding the county's future (Northampton County nd).

Northampton County is also looking for additional ways to protect its tidal waters since its Real Estate, recreational and aquatic industries are intimately tied to the water.¹³

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¹³ Community Review Comments, Michael Peirson, Managing Director, Cherrystone Aquafarms, PO Box 347, Cheriton, VA 23316, September 9, 2007