

Estimates of the Seasonal Population of the Greater Topsail Island Area¹

Executive Summary

The Topsail Chamber of Commerce requested estimates of the summer population of the Greater Topsail to quantify their seasonal population growth. The Greater Topsail area includes three incorporated areas — North Topsail Beach, Surf City, and Topsail Beach — as well as Sneads Ferry, a Census Designated Place (CDP). Topsail Beach and the majority of Surf City are located in Pender County. Sneads Ferry and North Topsail Beach are located in Onslow County.² Estimates developed for the 2014 season.

Estimate of the Greater Topsail Summer Population

The Greater Topsail summer population = Permanent Population + Vacation Home Renters + Hotel/Motel/B&B Guests + Campers/RVs + Guests of Permanent Population is 61,353 (Table 1).

Table 1. The Greater Topsail Summer Population

Component	People (no.)
Permanent Population	5,988
Vacation Home Renters	49,193
Hotel/Motel/B&B Guests	903
Campers/RVs	3,772
Guests of Permanent Pop.	1,497
Total Summer Population	61,353

Estimate of the Greater Topsail Housing Units

As of 2014, there were an estimated 5,972 total units available for seasonal use in the Greater Topsail Area (Table 2).

Table 2. Estimated Housing Units in Greater Topsail Area and Availability for Rental

Town	2014 Housing Units		
	Occupied by Permanent Residents	For Seasonal Use	Vacant
North Topsail Beach	412	2,152	59
Sneads Ferry	1,213	300	102
Surf City	922	2,413	257
Topsail Beach	191	1,107	29
Total	2,738	5,972	446

Estimate of the Greater Topsail Rental Units Housing³

In total, the Greater Topsail region’s rental units can house 49,193 visitors (Table 3).

Table 3. Estimated Seasonal Population by Unit Type and Area

Unit Type	North Topsail Beach	Sneads Ferry	Surf City	Topsail Beach	TOTAL Greater Topsail Area
Beach Houses	8,434	2,076	14,102	7,801	32,414
Duplexes and Townhomes	3,592	0	2,088	537	6,217
Condos	6,737	137	1,673	393	8,941
Mobile Homes	215	148	1,229	30	1,621
Total	18,978	2,361	19,092	8,761	49,193

Estimate of the Greater Topsail Seasonal Population in Hotels/Motels/Bed & Breakfasts

In total, the hotels/motels of the Greater Topsail region can house 903 visitors (Table 4).

Table 4. Estimate of Seasonal Population in Hotels/Motels and Estimated Hotel/Motel Rooms

Facility	Rooms	Capacity
Breezeway Motel	94	282
Holiday Inn Express	68	204
Sea Scape Motel	9	27
Tiffany's Motel	48	144
Jolly Roger Inn	40	120
Island Inn	42	126
Total	301	903

Estimate of the Greater Topsail Seasonal Population in Campgrounds/RV Parks

There are four campgrounds in the Greater Topsail region. According to the owners of these sites, they average four persons per campsite. In total, the Greater Topsail region campsites can house 3,772 visitors.

Table 5. Estimate of Seasonal Population at Campgrounds

Campground	Campsites	Capacity
Blackbeard's Treasure Campground	68	272
Lanier's Campground	500	2,000
Topsail Sound RV Park	225	900
Virginia Creek Campground	150	600
Total	943	3,772

Estimate of the Greater Topsail Seasonal Population as Guests of Permanent Residents

Research from NC Commerce on tourism to North Carolina suggests that many individuals stay with family or friends on overnight visits, but the true volume of individuals who are staying with permanent residents in the Greater Topsail region is difficult to calculate. In its 2009 Land Use Plan, Dare County estimated that the seasonal population of visiting family and friends of permanent residents was equivalent to 25% of the permanent resident population.⁴

Applying this same increase to the Greater Topsail area yields $(0.25 \times 5,988)$ or **1,497 individuals** staying with family or friends⁴.

¹This analysis was conducted by *Carolina Demography* Carolina Population Center, UNC-Chapel Hill 206 W. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516; email: demography@unc.edu Ph: (919) 962-6151 website <http://demography.cpc.unc.edu>

²Population estimates for North Topsail Beach Town, Surf City Town, and Topsail Beach Town were obtained from: U.S. Census Bureau. 2014. Incorporated Places and Minor Civil Divisions Datasets: Subcounty Resident Population Estimates: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/cities/totals/2013/SUB-EST2013.html>.

²Sneads Ferry CDP July 1, 2013 population was estimated by Carolina Demography using linear extrapolation. First, we calculated the average annual numeric change in Sneads Ferry CDP population between the 2000 and 2010 census:

³NC Department of Commerce. 2014. "2013 North Carolina Visitor Profile." Retrieved from <http://www.nccommerce.com/tourism/research/visitation-research/visitor-profile-reports>.

⁴Dare County Board of Commissioners. 2010. "2009 Dare County Land Use Plan Update." Retrieved from <http://www.darenc.com/Forms/LUSE/LUP.pdf>.