# Fishing and Hunting Workers

## **Snapshot**

2017 Median Pay: \$28,530 per year, \$13.72 per hour

Typical Entry-Level Education: No formal educational credential

Work Experience in a Related Occupation: None

On-the-job Training: Moderate-term on-the-job training

Number of Jobs, 2016: 27,000

Job Outlook, 2016-26: 11% (Faster than average)

**Employment Change, 2016-26:** 2,900

## CAREER OVERVIEW

## What Fishing and Hunting Workers Do

The fish and wild animals that fishers and hunting workers catch and

trap are used for food, bait, and other purposes.

Fishing and hunting workers catch and trap various types of animal life. The fish and wild animals they catch are for human food, animal feed, bait, and other uses.



#### **Duties**

Fishers and related fishing workers typically do the following:

- Locate fish with the use of fish-finding equipment
- Steer vessels and operate navigational instruments
- Maintain engines, fishing gear, and other onboard equipment by making minor repairs
- Sort, pack, and store the catch in holds with ice and other freezing methods
- Measure fish to ensure that they are of legal size
- Return undesirable or illegal catches to the water
- Guide nets, traps, and lines onto vessels by hand or with hoisting equipment
- Signal other workers to move, hoist, and position loads of the catch
- Hunters and trappers typically do the following:
- Locate wild animals with the use of animal-finding equipment
- Catch wild animals with weapons, such as rifles or bows, or with traps, such as snares
- Sort, pack, and store the catch with ice and other freezing methods
- Follow hunting regulations, which vary by state and always include a safety component
- Sell what they catch for food and decorative purposes

#### Fishers and related fishing workers

Fishers and fishing workers work in deep or shallow water. In deep water, they typically perform their duties on large fishing boats that are equipped for long stays at sea. Some process the catch on board and prepare the fish for sale.

Other fishers work in shallow water on small boats that often have a crew of only one or two. They might put nets across the mouths of rivers or inlets; use pots and traps to catch fish or shellfish, such as lobsters and crabs; or use dredges to gather other shellfish, such as oysters and scallops.

Some fishers harvest marine vegetation rather than fish. They use rakes and hoes to gather Irish moss and kelp.

The following are types of fishers and related fishing workers:

Fishing boat captains plan and oversee the fishing operation including the species of fish to be caught, the location of the best

fishing grounds, the method of capture, trip length, and sale of the catch. They also supervise the crew and record daily activities in the ship's log. To plot a ship's course, fishing boat captains use electronic navigational equipment, including Global Positioning System (GPS) instruments. They also use radar and sonar to avoid obstacles above and below the water and to find fish.

*Fishing deckhands* perform the everyday tasks of baiting; setting lines or traps; hauling in and sorting the catch; and maintaining the boat and fishing gear. Deckhands also secure and remove mooring lines when docking or undocking the boat.

Fishers work in commercial fishing, which does not include recreational fishing.

Aquaculture—raising and harvesting fish and other aquatic life under controlled conditions in ponds or confined bodies of water—is a different field.

## **Hunters and trappers**

Hunters and trappers locate wild animals with GPS instruments, compasses, charts, and whistles. They then catch or kill them with traps or weapons. Hunters and trappers sell the wild animals they catch, for either food, fur, or decorative purposes.

## **WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Fishing and hunting workers work under various environmental conditions, depending on the region, body of water, and the kind of species sought.

Fishing and hunting workers held about 27,000 jobs in 2016. The largest employers of fishing and hunting workers were as follows:

Self-employed workers	61%
Fishing, hunting and trapping	35

Fishing and hunting operations are conducted under various environmental conditions, depending on the geographic region, body of water or land, and kinds of animals sought. Storms, fog, and wind may hamper fishing vessels or cause them to suspend fishing operations and return to port.

Although fishing gear has improved and operations have become more mechanized, netting and processing fish are nonetheless strenuous activities. Newer vessels have improved living quarters and amenities, but crews still experience the aggravations of confined quarters and the absence of family.

## **Injuries and Illnesses**

Commercial fishing and hunting can be dangerous and can lead to workplace injuries or fatalities. Fishing and hunting workers often work under hazardous conditions. Transportation to a hospital or doctor is often not readily available for these workers because they can be out at sea or in a remote area.

And although fatalities are uncommon, fishing and hunting workers experience one of the highest rates of occupational fatalities of all occupations.

Most fatalities that happen to fishers and related fishing workers are from drowning. The crew must guard against the danger of injury from malfunctioning fishing gear, entanglement in fishing nets and gear, slippery decks, ice formation, or large waves washing over the deck. Malfunctioning navigation and communication equipment and other factors may lead to collisions, shipwrecks, or other dangerous situations, such as vessels becoming caught in storms.

Hunting accidents can occur because of the weapons and traps these workers use. Hunters and trappers minimize injury by wearing the appropriate gear and following detailed safety procedures. Specific safety guidelines vary by state.

#### **Work Schedules**

Fishing and hunting workers often endure long shifts and irregular work schedules. Commercial fishing trips may require workers to be away from their home port for several weeks or months.

Many fishers are seasonal workers, and those jobs are usually filled by students and by people from other occupations who are available for seasonal work, such as teachers. For example, employment of fishers in Alaska increases significantly during the summer months, which constitute the salmon season. During these times, fishers can expect to work long hours. Additionally, states may only allow hunters and trappers to hunt or trap during certain times of the year depending on the type of wild animals sought.

## HOW TO BECOME A FISHING OR HUNTING WORKER

Fishing and hunting workers usually learn on the job. A formal educational credential is not required.

#### **Education**

A formal educational credential is not required for one to become fishing or hunting worker. However, fishers may improve their chances of getting a job by enrolling in a 2-year vocational—technical program. Some community colleges and universities offer fishery technology and related programs that include courses in seamanship, vessel operations, marine safety, navigation, vessel repair, and fishing gear technology. These programs are typically located near coastal areas and include hands-on experience.

#### **Training**

Most fishing and hunting workers learn on the job. They first learn how to sort and clean the animals they catch. Fishers would go on to learn how to operate the boat and fishing equipment.

## **Other Experience**

Many prospective fishers start by finding work through family or friends, or simply by walking around the docks and asking for employment. Aspiring fishers also can look online for employment. Some larger trawlers and processing ships are run by big fishing companies with human resources departments to which new workers can apply. Operators of large commercial fishing vessels must complete a training course approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Most hunters and trappers have previous recreational hunting experience.

## Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations

Captains of fishing boats and hunters and trappers must be licensed.

Crewmembers on certain fish-processing vessels may need a merchant mariner's document. The U.S. Coast Guard issues these documents, as well as licenses, to people who meet specific health, physical, and academic requirements.

States set licensing requirements for boats operating in state waters, defined as inland waters and waters within 3 miles of the coast.

Fishers need a permit to fish in almost any water. Permits are distributed by states for state waters and by regional fishing councils for federal waters. The permits specify the fishing season, the type and amount of fish that may be caught, and, sometimes, the type of permissible fishing gear.

Hunters and trappers need a state license to hunt in any land or forest. Licenses specify the hunting season, the type and amount of wild animals that may be caught, and the type of weapons or traps that can be used.

## **ADVANCEMENT**

Experienced, reliable fishing boat deckhands can become boatswains, then second mates, first mates, and, finally, captains. Those who are interested in ship engineering may gain experience with maintaining and repairing ship engines to become licensed chief engineers on large commercial boats. In doing so, they must meet the Coast Guard's licensing requirements as well.

Almost all captains are self-employed, and most eventually own, or partially own, one or more fishing boats.

## **Important Qualities**

*Critical-thinking skills*. Fishing and hunting workers must reach conclusions through sound reasoning and judgment. They determine how to improve their catch and must react appropriately to weather conditions.

*Detail oriented*. Fishing and hunting workers must be precise and accurate when measuring the quality of their catch or prey. They must also pay attention to detail when working with various fishing and hunting gear to guard against injury.

Listening skills. Because they take instructions from captains and other crewmembers or hunters, fishing and hunting workers need to communicate well and listen effectively.

*Machine operation skills*. Fishing and hunting workers must be able to operate and perform routine maintenance on complex fishing and navigation machinery, as well as weapons and traps.

*Physical stamina*. Fishing and hunting workers need endurance. They must be able to work long hours, often under strenuous conditions.

*Physical strength*. Fishing and hunting workers must use physical strength, along with hand dexterity and coordination, to perform difficult tasks repeatedly.

## Famous First

Fishing as a means of obtaining food for survival as well as a business venture has existed since the Mesolithic period. Fishing and the fisherman influenced Ancient Egyptian religion where mullets were worshipped as a sign of the arriving flood season. Bastet was often manifested in the form of a catfish. In

ancient Egyptian literature, the process that Amun used to create the world is associated with the tilapia's method of mouth-brooding

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fisherman



## WAGES

## Median annual wages, May 2017

Total, all occupations: \$37,690

Fishing and hunting workers: \$28,530

Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations: \$24,390

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

The median annual wage for fishing and hunting workers was \$28,530 in May 2017. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$18,710, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$48,170.

Fishers are typically paid a percentage of the boat's overall catch, commonly referred to as a crew share. The more fish that are caught, the greater the crew share becomes. This can lead to unpredictable swings in pay from one season to another, as the overall catch can vary. More experienced crewmembers often receive a greater share compared to entry-level workers.

Trappers are typically paid per pelt, and the amount received can vary depending on the species and the quality of the fur. For example, trappers typically receive more for coyote pelts than for smaller species, such as muskrats.

Fishing and hunting workers endure strenuous outdoor work and long hours. Commercial fishing trips may require workers to be away from their home port for several weeks or months.

Many fishers are seasonal workers, and those jobs are usually filled by students and by people from other occupations who are available for seasonal work, such as teachers. For example, employment of fishers in Alaska increases significantly during the summer months, which

constitute the salmon season. During these times, fishers can expect to work long hours. Additionally, states may only allow hunters and trappers to hunt or trap during certain times of the year.

## JOB OUTLOOK

# Percent change in employment, projected 2016-26

Fishing and hunting workers: 11%

Total, all occupations: 7%

Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations: 0%

Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Employment of fishing and hunting workers is projected to grow 11 percent from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all occupations. Fishing and hunting workers depend on the ability of fish stocks and wild animals to reproduce and grow. The demand for seafood should increase, as it is widely seen as a healthy choice of protein.

Governmental efforts to replenish fish stocks have led to some species being regulated under fishing quotas or catch shares. These quotas dictate how many fish each fisher may catch and keep. Additional quotas or catch shares can typically be purchased, but they are often very expensive. The implementation of additional catch share programs may reduce demand for fishers. However, new programs must undergo several years of research and public review before being approved.

Animal pelts will continue be used to manufacture fur coats, hats, and gloves, which may increase demand for trappers. However, the majority of fur used in clothing comes from ranches or farms that breed, maintain, and harvest desirable species, such as mink.

## **Job Prospects**

Many job openings will result from the need to replace fishing and hunting workers who leave the occupation. Many workers leave because of the strenuous and hazardous nature of the job and the lack of a steady year-round income. The best prospects should be with large fishing operations and for seasonal employment.

## Employment projections data for Fishing and hunting workers, 2016-26

Occupational	soc	Employment,	Projected Employment, 2026	Change, 2016-26	
Title	Code	2016		Percent	Numeric
Fishing and hunting workers	45-3000	27,000	29,900	11	2,900

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

## **Fast Fact**

The North American Game Warden Museum, located near the U.S./Canadian border, shares the story of these professionals and honors those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. The museum is located in the International Peace Garden near Dunseith, North Dakota and Boissevain, in Manitoba province.

Source: gamewardenmuseum.com.

## SIMILAR OCCUPATIONS

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of fishing and hunting workers.

OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2017 MEDIAN PAY
Water Transportation Workers	Water transportation workers operate and maintain vessels that take cargo and people over water. The vessels travel to and from foreign ports across the ocean and to domestic ports along the coasts, across the Great Lakes, and along the country's many inland waterways.	High school diploma or equivalent and on- the-job training for 6 months to a year	\$55,590
Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	Farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural managers operate establishments that produce crops, livestock, and dairy products.	High school diploma or equivalent	\$69,620

# Conversation With . . . JESSICA CONLEY

Park Ranger, 9 years

## 1. What was your individual career path in terms of education/training, entry-level job, or other significant opportunity?

I first became interested in environmental education through internships and programs I did growing up in middle school and high school, such as through the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. I knew I wanted to be in the environmental ed field, I just wasn't sure how. I earned a B.A. in environmental science from Messiah College in Pennsylvania, and had a number of jobs—from research biologist to managing a fish farm — when I was trying to decide what I wanted to do with my career. Then I started a family and earned a Master's of Education from American Intercontinental University. While I was working on my master's, I took a seasonal position as a naturalist. I worked for one year as a naturalist, then was hired as a civilian park ranger.

## 2. What are the most important skills and/or qualities for someone in your profession?

First and foremost, being clearheaded and calm in the face of emergency and crisis. We can literally be showing a 5-year-old leaves and how a tree grows and get a call for a medical emergency like heatstroke, then an hour later be telling someone to put dog on a leash. You also need to be flexible. You can't predict what will happen: a tree coming down, someone getting lost, or someone walking in and wanting information. Finally, it's important to be well-spoken and to have public speaking skills. You're interfacing with the public every single day.

#### 3. What do you wish you had known going into this profession?

I wish I had realized it's more a way of life than a job. I'm on call a lot, and willing to jump in and help my co-workers. That's been a big adjustment for my family; they have to be the family of a park ranger.

## 4. Are there many job opportunities in your profession? In what specific areas?

I see turnover with retirement, for one, so while there are always positions coming open, they tend to come in waves. Also, I don't think everyone in the field realizes they are cut out for this before they begin. They usually figure out very quickly if it doesn't work out. There's not a lot of middle ground — you either love this, or figure it out quickly and leave.

## 5. How do you see your profession changing in the next five years? What role will technology play in those changes, and what skills will be required?

We're continually challenged with the resources necessary to manage the various needs of the park including operations, maintenance and programming. We must be creative with the funds we are given. Regarding technology, I think it can help us deliver services at lower cost. For example, we are offering trail maps online. Or, through the Dept. of Natural Resources app, you can make a reservation or learn to learn what's going on at a park at any given moment. Technology's important to get the word out to our visitors and help us do our job more effectively.

## 6. What do you enjoy most about your job? What do you enjoy least?

I love the unpredictable aspect of it. I love that if it's a gorgeous day I get to be outside. I get to work in place that people come to play, and be in one of Maryland's most beautiful places. What I like least is a harder question to answer. My family would certainly like it if I made more money; we don't get into this for the pay at all. I think a lot of people would complain about that. I don't have a lot of challenges to say about job; I love my job.

## 7. Can you suggest a valuable "try this" for students considering a career in your profession?

I think the best thing for someone to try would be a seasonal position. That gives you such a good idea of what goes on day in and day out in a park. Also, we recruit heavily from the Maryland Conservation Corps; its part of Americorps, a national program, so anyone should be able to access the program.

*This conversation was originally published in* Careers in Environment & Conservation (Salem) in 2014.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

For more information about licensing of fishing boat captains and about requirements for merchant mariner documentation, visit

National Maritime Center, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters https://www.dco.uscg.mil/ national\_maritime\_center/

For more information about hunting licenses, visit

Where to Hunt https://www.nssf.org/hunting/ where-to-hunt/

#### Sources

 $\label{thm:condition} \textbf{Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, } \textit{Occupational Outlook Handbook}, \textbf{Fishing and Hunting Workers}$