

Changes in the East Coast migrant stream

Changes in the East

Below is a brief summary of the current status of the east coast migrant stream and some of the most prominent changes that have occurred over the past 10 years. The information was obtained from the ECMHP, Inc. field staff reports and health center demographic surveys, both of which are completed yearly.

ECMHP, Inc. does not attempt to collect comprehensive data for each state nor are the data collected using scientific methodologies.

- ◆ Roughly 25 percent of the farmworkers on the east coast migrate to and from the mid-west (Texas and Michigan primarily).
- ◆ The majority of farmworkers along the east coast are still **Mexican**. Approximately 15 percent of the Mexican farmworkers migrate exclusively between Mexico and one U.S. state.
- ◆ The largest increase recorded has been among indigenous **Guatemalans**. Of these individuals, roughly 40 percent speak *only* a local dialect. Additionally, of the Guatemalans working in New Jersey, about 20 percent migrate solely between New Jersey and Guatemala.

Special Problems:

- Extremely low literacy level
 - Translation difficulties--hard to locate individuals who speak the local dialects, Spanish, and English
 - Most individuals have never heard about, nor know how to protect themselves, from communicable diseases such as TB, HIV, STDs.
 - Guatemalans are known for carrying large amounts of cash on them and have increasingly become the victims of robbery.
- ◆ The number of **African American** farmworkers has decreased but appears to have stabilized at about 2-3 percent of the total population. What is unique among this group is that they continue to travel almost exclusively with the same crews and follow the same migration patterns. The areas with the heaviest concentrations of African American crews include: Northeast Florida (Palatka); Northeast North Carolina (Elizabeth City); Virginia's Eastern Shore; and Delaware (for only 6 to 8 weeks).
- Special Problems:*
- Aging farmworkers (50+); many with severe, untreated chronic health conditions
 - Involuntary Servitude
 - Very hard to penetrate the crews

◆ There has been little change in the number of **Haitian** farmworkers who continue to make up approximately 10 percent of the stream. Haitians consistently work themselves out of farmwork very quickly, many moving on to the Service industry. Most of the Haitian farmworkers are concentrated in: central Florida (Belle Glade); central North Carolina (Newton Grove area); and West Virginia (Winchester).

◆ Other Ethnic Groups

Native Americans-have traditionally migrated down from Canada to harvest blueberries in northeastern Maine. Not only is the harvest a source of income for the tribe, it plays an important role in their cultural traditions. Over the past 5 years, tensions have increased and problems have arisen within the Native American community over the increasing number of Mexican farmworkers who have been hired to harvest the blueberries.

Puerto Ricans- continue to comprise 35-45 percent of the farmworkers in Southern New Jersey--*however*, the NJ Department of Labor no longer has a contract with Puerto Rico for farmworker labor, thus all the current crews are now run by independent crew leaders. Of this population, almost 90 percent migrate between New Jersey and Puerto Rico.

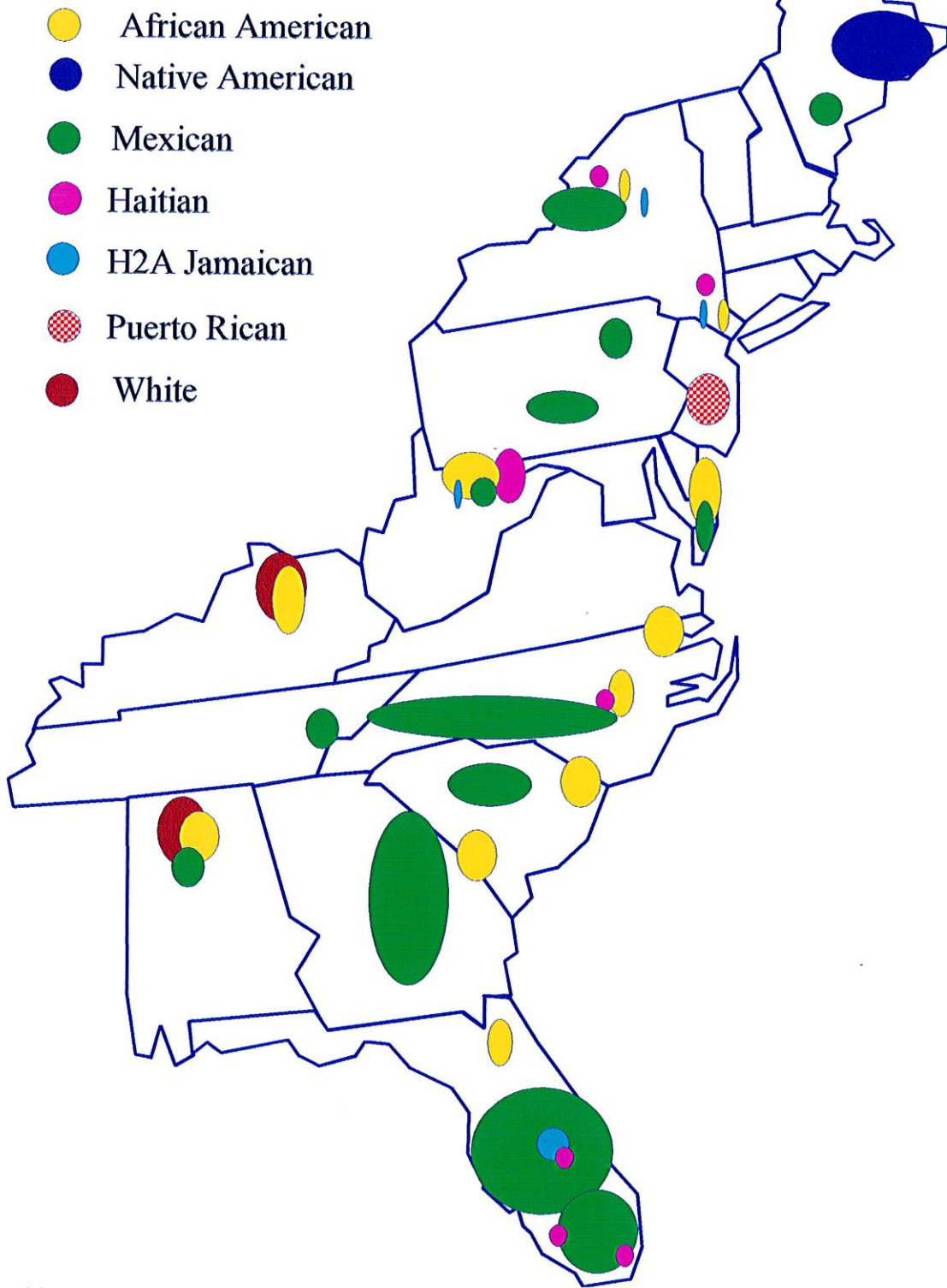
Laotians- there is a core group of about 500 working in the fern industry in the Crescent City area of Northeast Florida.

Other Southeast Asians-roughly 300-400 are bused daily into the Hammonton area of Southern New Jersey from Philadelphia; making it extremely difficult to access or provide care to these workers.

Filipinos- about 600 travel between California and northern Maine to harvest broccoli. This group has essentially replaced the African American crews.

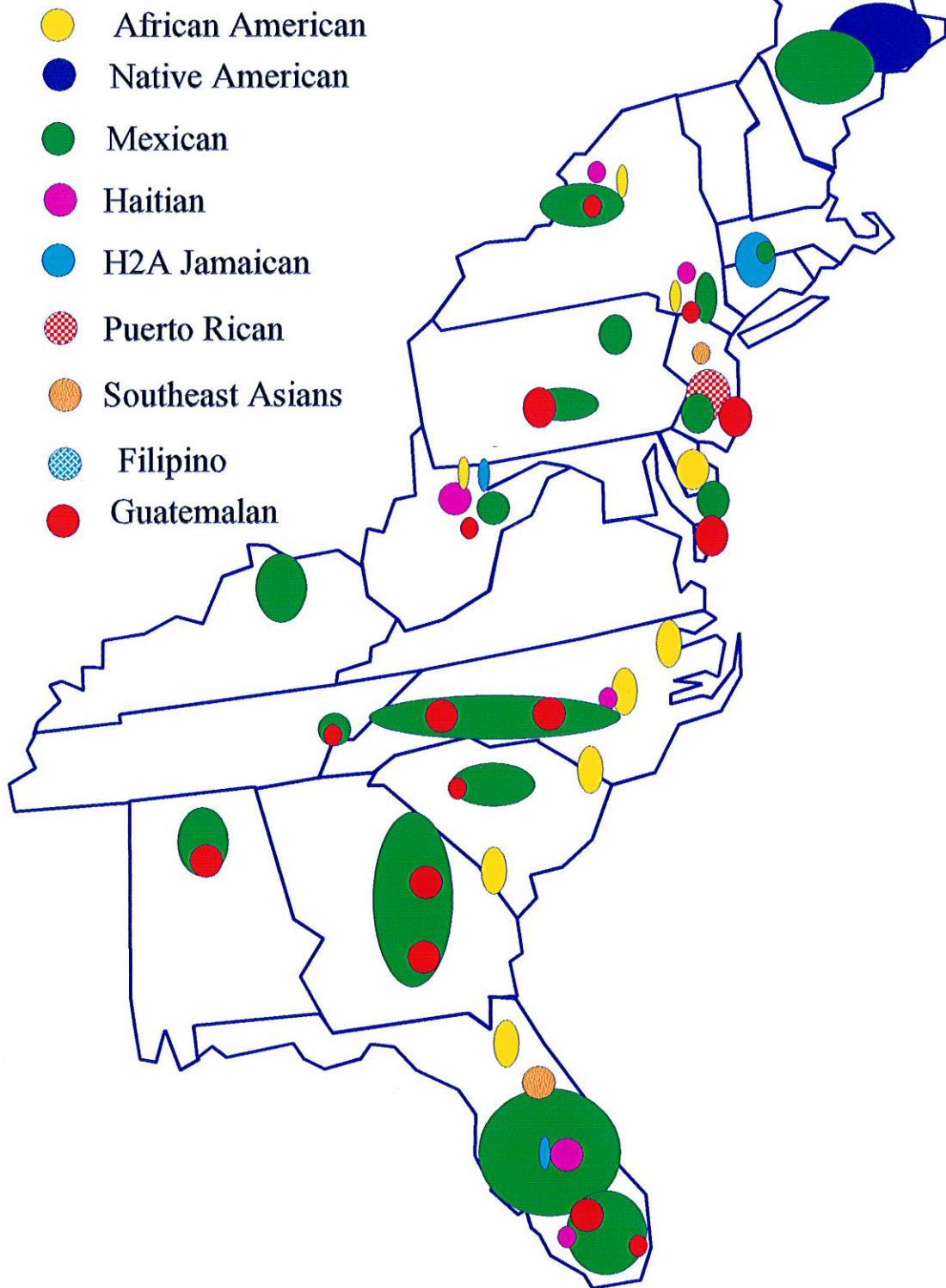
Jamaicans- currently make up 80-90 percent of the farmworkers in Massachusetts and Connecticut. All are H2A workers.

East Coast Migrant Stream--Late 1980s



Produced by East Coast Migrant Health Project, Inc.
Washington, DC (202) 347-7377

East Coast Migrant Stream--1996



Produced by East Coast Migrant Health Project, Inc.
Washington, DC (202) 347-7377