

NC Marine Fisheries Commission

Preliminary Matters

February 2026 Quarterly Business Meeting

Documents

Meeting Agenda

Draft November 2025 Meeting Minutes

Marine Fisheries Commission Business Meeting

MEETING AGENDA

Hilton Garden Inn; Kitty Hawk, NC

February 18-19, 2026

N.C.G.S. 138A-15(e) mandates at the beginning of any meeting of a board, the chair shall remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest under Chapter 138. The chair also shall inquire as to whether there is any known conflict of interest with respect to any matters coming before the board at that time.

N.C.G.S. 143B-289.54.(g)(2) states a member of the Marine Fisheries Commission shall not vote on any issue before the Commission that would have a "significant and predictable effect" on the member's financial interest. For purposes of this subdivision, "significant and predictable effect" means there is or may be a close causal link between the decision of the Commission and an expected disproportionate financial benefit to the member that is shared only by a minority of persons within the same industry sector or gear group. A member of the Commission shall also abstain from voting on any petition submitted by an advocacy group of which the member is an officer or sits as a member of the advocacy group's board of directors. A member of the Commission shall not use the member's official position as a member of the Commission to secure any special privilege or exemption of substantial value for any person. No member of the Commission shall, by the member's conduct, create an appearance that any person could improperly influence the member in the performance of the member's official duties.

Commissioners having questions about a conflict of interest or appearance of conflict should consult with counsel to the Marine Fisheries Commission or the secretary's ethics liaison. Upon discovering a conflict, the commissioner should inform the chair of the commission in accordance with N.C.G.S. 138A-15(e).

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

6:00 p.m. Public Comment Period

Thursday, February 19, 2026

9:00 a.m. Public Comment Period

9:30 a.m. Preliminary Matters

- Commission Call to Order* – *Sammy Corbett, Chairman*
- Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance
- Conflict of Interest Reminder
- Roll Call
- **Approval of Meeting Minutes ****

9:45 a.m. Chairman's Report

- Letters and Online Comments
- Ethics Training and Statement of Economic Interest Reminder
- 2026 Proposed Meeting Schedule

10:00 a.m. Director's Report – *Kathy Rawls*

- Red Snapper EFP Update – *Trish Murphey*

10:45 a.m. Rulemaking – *Catherine Blum*

- 2024-2025 Rulemaking Cycle Update
- 2025-2026 Rulemaking Cycle Update

** Times indicated are merely for guidance. The commission will proceed through the agenda until completed.*

***Probable Action Items*

Marine Fisheries Commission Business Meeting Agenda

- 2026-2027 Rulemaking Cycle
 - **Vote to select preferred management option and associated proposed language for rulemaking for Atlantic Bonito Management issue paper ****

- 11:30 a.m. Fishery Management Plan Updates – *Dan Zapf, Jeff Dobbs*
- Implementation of Adopted FMPs
 - Upcoming FMPs
 - Red Drum FMP Amendment 2
 - Kingfishes FMP Amendment 1
- 11:45 a.m. 2025 Spotted Seatrout Cold Stun Update – *Lucas Pensinger*
- 12:00 p.m. Information on the ESA Section 10 Incidental Take Permit – *Jason Rock*
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch Break
- 2:00 p.m. Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules – *Catherine Blum*
- **Vote to approve initial determination of rules and proceed to public notice, per N.C.G.S. 150B-21.3A:**
 - **15A NCAC 03Q .0100 ****
 - **All other rules in 15A NCAC 03 ****
 - **15A NCAC 10C .0100 ****
 - **15A NCAC 18A .0100, .0300-.0900, and .3400 ****
- 2:30 p.m. Update on Mandatory Harvest Reporting – *Jesse Bissette*
- 2:45 p.m. Issues from Commissioners
- 3:15 p.m. Meeting Assignments and Preview of Agenda Items for Next Meeting – *Jesse Bissette*
- 3:30 p.m. Adjourn

* *Times indicated are merely for guidance. The commission will proceed through the agenda until completed.*

***Probable Action Items*

Marine Fisheries Commission Business Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

Holiday Inn Resort Lumina

Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina

November 19-20, 2025

The Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) held a business meeting November 19-20, 2025, at the Holiday Inn Resort Lumina in Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. In addition to the public comment sessions, members of the public submitted public comment online or via U.S. mail. The written comments, briefing materials, presentations, and full audio from this meeting are available [here](#).

Actions and motions from the business meeting are listed in **bold** type.

BUSINESS MEETING

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Preliminary Matters

Chairman Corbett called the November 19-20, 2025, business meeting to order.

Chairman Corbett began the meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Next, Chairman Corbett reminded all commissioners of N.C. General Statute § 138A-15(e), which mandates at the beginning of any meeting of a board, the Chair shall remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest under Chapter 138. The Chair also shall inquire as to whether there is any known conflict of interest with respect to any matters coming before the board at that time. There were no stated conflicts of interest from any commissioner.

The following MFC members were in attendance: Sammy Corbett – Chairman, Mike Blanton, Willie Closs, Sarah Gardner, Alfred Hobgood, John Mallette, Doug Rader, Tom Roller, and William Service.

Chairman Corbett asked for any corrections or additions to the meeting agenda and then requested a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion by Commissioner Mallette to approve the meeting agenda.

Second by Commissioner Gardner.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Closs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gardner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hobgood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mallette	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rader	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roller	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corbett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Motion passed 6-1, with 2 abstentions.

Chairman Corbett asked for any corrections, additions or deletions that need to be made to the August 2025 MFC Quarterly Business Meeting minutes.

Motion by Commissioner Rader to approve the August 2025 business meeting minutes.

Second by Commissioner Hobgood.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Closs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gardner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hobgood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mallette	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corbett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Motion passed unanimously.

[View the video recording of the motions and surrounding discussion.](#)

Chairman's Report

Letters and Online Comments

Chairman Corbett referred commissioners to letters and comments provided in the briefing materials.

Ethics Training and Statement of Economic Interest Reminder

Chairman Corbett reminded commissioners to work with MFC Liaison Jesse Bisette to stay up to date on their ethics training and Statement of Economic Interest.

Committee Reports

Chairman Corbett referred commissioners to the committee reports provided in the briefing materials.

MFC Nominating Committee

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Assistant to Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) Chris Batsavage gave a presentation of the slate of nominees for the MAFMC obligatory seat.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

Motion by Commissioner Roller to approve the slate of nominees for the obligatory seat for the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council as presented in the November 2025 MFC business meeting materials: Robert Ruhle, Mary Ellon Ballance, and Thomas Newman.

Second by Commissioner Rader.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Closs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gardner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hobgood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mallette	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corbett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Motion passed unanimously.

[View the video recording of the motion and surrounding discussion.](#)

Director's Report

Director Rawls began her report with an update on the Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), noting that public comment will be open for 45 days, with an application response expected in January and details by February. She emphasized that this effort is focused on managing resources within the Division's capacity, and noted a potential two-month season with one fish per person per day, hook-and-line only. The Director provided a sheepshead management update, highlighting proposed changes including pound net trip limits, size limit increases, and bag limit reductions. A meeting with the public provided supportive feedback, and a proclamation is planned for December. Director Rawls thanked staff for their efforts surrounding Mandatory Harvest Reporting, scheduled to go into effect December 1, 2025.

Director Rawls provided an update on the ongoing CCA lawsuit, noting that the trial is scheduled to begin on January 20, 2026. She recognized the Habitat & Enhancement section for receiving the Pelican Award from the North Carolina Coastal Federation for their work on oyster sanctuary protection and restoration.

She highlighted heroic action on September 4, when staff sampling on the Perquimans River assisted a fisherman who was struggling in the water, safely returning him to his vessel. She thanked staff for their efforts and reminded the Commission of the inherent dangers of working on the water. Director Rawls solemnly noted the passing of DMF employee Marc Hamric on September 10 in a boating incident, remembering his 28 years of service. The Division continues to keep his family and coworkers in their thoughts and prayers. Finally, Director Rawls announced that Colonel Witten will be retiring on January 1 after more than 20 years of service, having served in all three Districts and made significant contributions to the Division.

[View the video recording of the Director's Report and surrounding discussion.](#)

License & Statistics Annual Report

DMF License & Statistics Section Chief Brandi Salmon gave a presentation demonstrating the new interactive License & Statistics annual report.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Information about the R/V Carolina Coast/Program 195

DMF Fisheries Management Section Chief Jason Rock gave a presentation about the R/V Carolina Coast and Program 195.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Stock Assessments 101

DMF Stock Assessment Biologist Matt Damiano gave a presentation on Stock Assessments, explaining how they work and the rationale behind the methodologies used.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Fishery Management Plan Updates

DMF Biologists Dan Zapf and Jeff Dobbs gave a presentation providing updates and recent activity related to recently reviewed Fishery Management Plans.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Mandatory Harvest Reporting Demonstration

MFC Liaison Jesse Bisette gave a presentation demonstrating how members of the recreational fishing public may report their harvest in compliance with the Mandatory Harvest Reporting regulations scheduled to take effect on December 1, 2025.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Public Comment Period

Chairman Sammy Corbett held a public comment session that began at 6:00 p.m. The following members of the public provided comments to the commission: Jerry Payer. With no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Corbett ended the public comment period at 6:04 p.m.

[View the video recording of the November 19, 2025, 6:00 p.m. public comment session.](#)

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Chairman Corbett convened the MFC business meeting at 9:00 a.m. on November 20, 2025.

Public Comment Period

Chairman Sammy Corbett held a public comment session that began at 9:00 a.m. The following members of the public provided comments to the commission: Lauren Burch, Jake Griffin, Sam Romano, Joe Romano, Donald Warren, Jot Owens, Stuart Creighton. With no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Corbett ended the public comment period at 9:23 a.m.

[View the video recording of the November 20, 2025, 9:00 a.m. public comment session.](#)

Comments from DEQ Secretary Reid Wilson

The DEQ Secretary Reid Wilson thanked the Marine Fisheries Commission for its service and commitment to managing North Carolina's fisheries and natural resources. He acknowledged the professionalism of DEQ's employees and expressed appreciation for the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Commission for carrying out their work in a challenging and often contentious environment, encouraging continued reliance on staff expertise.

The Secretary outlined DEQ's three primary priorities: recovery efforts in western North Carolina following Hurricane Helene, water quality, and resilience. He noted that Marine Patrol played an early role in storm response and that approximately \$685 million in federal disaster recovery funding has been allocated to North Carolina to support repairs and improvements to wastewater infrastructure. He emphasized the importance of protecting water quality, including efforts to prevent the discharge of harmful chemicals such as PFAS. He described DEQ's leadership role in resilience initiatives under Governor Stein, including the Flood Resilience Blueprint and related project funding.

Secretary Wilson also discussed ongoing state and federal budget uncertainties, noting staffing vacancies, reduced operational funding, and challenges with recruiting and retaining employees, particularly in coastal areas. He referenced the North Carolina Collaboratory's report on fisheries management, stating that the final report is expected later this year or early next year and will be reviewed for potential recommendations. The Secretary concluded by encouraging respectful public discourse and thanked the Commission for its time and dedication.

[View the video recording of the Remarks from DEQ Secretary.](#)

Rulemaking

DMF Rulemaking Coordinator Catherine Blum provided updates on the 2024-2025 rulemaking cycle, 2025-2026 rulemaking cycle, and 2026-2027 rulemaking cycle.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

Motion by Commissioner Roller to give final approval to amend:

- **15A NCAC 03I .0101, .0114, 03O .0501-.0503 for permit requirements; and**
- **15A NCAC 03I .0101, 03O .0201, .0207, .0208, .0210 for conforming changes to franchise and shellfish lease requirements.**

Second by Commissioner Hobgood.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Closs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gardner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hobgood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mallette	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corbett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Motion passed unanimously.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Update

DMF Biologists Charlie Deaton and Derek Detweiler gave a presentation on the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

History of Southern Flounder Management through Amendment 5

DMF Biologists Jeff Dobbs and Anne Markwith gave a presentation on the history of North Carolina's Southern Flounder management through the Southern Flounder FMP Amendment 5.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Indicators for the North Carolina Southern Flounder Stock

DMF Stock Assessment Biologist Matt Damiano gave a presentation on the stock indicators for the Southern Flounder stock.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan Amendment 2 Adaptive Management

DMF Biologists Todd Mathes and Charlton Godwin gave a presentation on the Estuarine Striped Bass Tar-Pamlico/Neuse Rivers Harvest Management Plan.

After the presentation, Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments and questions.

[View the video recording of the presentation and surrounding discussion.](#)

Issues from Commissioners

Chairman Corbett opened the floor to commissioners for comments, questions, and other discussion.

[View the video recording of the Issues from Commissioners.](#)

Meeting Assignments and Preview of Agenda Items for Next Meeting

The DMF's MFC Liaison Jesse Bissette reviewed meeting assignments and provided an overview of the February 2026 meeting items.

Having no further business to conduct, Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 1:10 p.m.