

Chairman's Report

November 2025 Quarterly Business Meeting

Documents

State Ethics Education Reminder

2026 Annual Meeting Calendar

MFC Workplan

MFC Nominating Committee Memo

MFC Nominating Committee Meeting
Minutes

MAFMC Obligatory Seat
Nominee Bios



EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS

Public Servants must complete the Ethics and Lobbying Education program provided by the N.C. State Ethics Commission within **six months** of their election, appointment, or employment. We recommend that this be completed as soon as possible, but the training must be repeated every two years after the initial session.

Our new 90-minute on-demand online program is available on our website under the Education tab. For your convenience, here is the [link](#). The new program is compatible with portable devices such as phones and tablets.

Live webinar presentations are also offered every month. These presentations are 90 minutes in length and give the opportunity to ask questions of the speaker. Registration information for those can be found [here](#).

For questions or additional information concerning the Ethics Education requirements, please contact Tracey Powell at (919) 814-3600.

Marine Fisheries Commission 2026 Calendar

Dates are subject to change

January						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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31						

June						
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November						
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29	30					

December						
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20	21	22	23			26
27	28	29	30	31		

2026 MFC Meeting Dates

MFC Business Meetings	Northern Regional AC	Southern Regional AC
February 18-19	January 6	January 7
May 20-21	March 10	March 11
August 19-20	June 9	June 10
November 18-19	September 8	September 9
Shellfish/Crustacean	Finfish Standing AC	Habitat and Water Quality
January 13	January 8	January 14
March 17	March 12	March 18
June 16	June 11	June 17
September 15	September 10	September 16

Calendar Key

	MFC		Shellfish/Crustacean Standing AC
	Northern Regional AC		Habitat and Water Quality Standing AC
	Southern Regional AC		State Holiday
	Finfish Standing AC		Federal Commission or Council Meeting
	Joint Meeting of ACs for MFC Review and Presentation of Action Items		
	Joint Meeting of Northern, Southern, and Finfish AC		

Marine Fisheries Commission Workplan - November 2025

Orange = Action Item		Green = No Action Necessary				
Topic	Aug 2025	Nov 2025	Feb 2026	May 2026	August 2026	Nov 2026
Active Management Plans						
Southern Flounder FMP Amendment 4	Final Adoption					
Southern Flounder FMP Amendment 5	MFC Discussion	Information Presented	In Progress	In Progress	In Progress	Send Draft for AC/Public Review
Blue Crab FMP Amendment 3 - Adaptive Management	Information Presented	Vote on Adaptive Management				
CSMA Striped Bass Amendment 2 Adaptive Management	Information Presented	Information Presented				
Kingfish FMP Amendment 1		Preliminary Information Presented				
Red Drum FMP		Preliminary Information Presented				
Rulemaking						
Permit-Related Rules	In Progress	Final Approval				
Franchises and Shellfish Leases	In Progress	Final Approval				
Atlantic Bonito Management	Background Information Presented	Rule Language Presented	Select Preferred Option	Notice of Text	In Progress	Final Approval



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

October 24, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Chris Batsavage, Special Assistant for Councils
N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries

SUBJECT: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Obligatory Seat for North Carolina

Issue

The N.C. General Statutes require the Marine Fisheries Commission to approve nominees for federal fishery management council seats for the governor's consideration, and that the statutes allow the governor to consult with the commission regarding additions to the list of candidates. The governor must nominate no fewer than three individuals for a federal fishery management council seat.

Findings

The Marine Fisheries Commission's Nominating Committee forwarded the following individuals to the Marine Fisheries Commission for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Obligatory Seat:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Obligatory Seat

- Robert Ruhle, a commercial fisherman and vessel owner from Dare County.
- Mary Ellon Balance, a commercial fishery industry member from Dare County.
- Thomas Newman, a commercial fisherman from Martin County.

Action Needed

The Commission Needs to approve nominees for the N.C. Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Obligatory Seat.

For more information, please refer to:

- The draft minutes from the October 20, 2025 Nominating Committee Meeting
- The nominees' biographies



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

October 21, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission
Marine Fisheries Commission Nominating Committee

FROM: Chris Batsavage and Coral Sawyer
N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries

SUBJECT: Meeting of the Marine Fisheries Commission's Nominating Committee, October 20, 2025

The Marine Fisheries Commission's (MFC) Nominating Committee held a meeting on October 20, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. via webinar.

The following were in attendance:

Committee members: Sarah Gardner – Chair, John Mallette, Tom Roller.

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Staff: Chris Batsavage, Alan Bianchi, Jesse Bissette, Tina Moore, Brandi Salmon, Coral Sawyer.

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The agenda was approved without modification.

Motion by Commissioner Roller to approve the October 17, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Mallette.

Member	ROLL CALL VOTE				
	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Mallette	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roller	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gardner	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Motion passed, 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public present via webinar or in person to provide comments.

REVIEW OF STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Chris Batsavage briefly reviewed the N.C. General Statutes pertaining to the selection of nominees for federal fishery management council seats. He stated that the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission must approve a slate of candidates for the governor's consideration, and that the statutes allow the governor to consult with the commission regarding additions to the list of candidates. Batsavage also described the federal statutes and regulations pertaining to qualification of candidates and notes that the governor must submit a list of no less than three nominees for an appointment. The commission will review the list of candidates approved by the committee at its business meeting on Nov. 19-20, 2025.

SELECTION OF CANDIDATES

Chris Batsavage reviewed the bios of the candidates for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council obligatory seat, briefly describing the background and qualifications of each: Robert Ruhle, Mary Ellon Ballance, Thomas Newman.

There was no discussion of the candidates.

Motion by Commissioner Roller to forward the names of Robert Ruhle, May Ellon Ballance, and Thomas Newman to the Marine Fisheries Commission for consideration for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council obligatory seat. Seconded by Commissioner Gardner.

	ROLL CALL VOTE				
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Mallette	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roller	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gardner	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Motion passed, 3-0.

ISSUES FROM COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Gardner opened the floor to commissioners for any comments and questions.

Commissioner Roller moved to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Gardner. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

The meeting ended at 5:15 p.m.

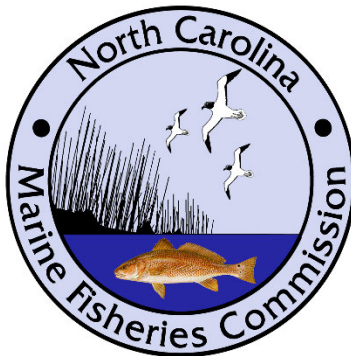
N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission Nominating Committee Meeting

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Applicants for Obligatory Seat

Robert Ruhle

Mary Ellon Ballance

Thomas Newman



October 2025

Robert L. Ruhle

Wanchese NC

Robert Ruhle owns and operates the F/V DARANA R. His father, James Ruhle, served 3 consecutive terms as a Mid Atlantic Council member for NC, and his Uncle, Phillip Ruhle, also served on the New England Council. His proximity to the council was highly educational to both the process and function of the councils, as well as provided insight into the inner workings of Fisheries Management. Robert is a member of Commercial Fisherman of America and North Carolina Fisheries Association (NCFA).

He has been fishing commercially since 1994 and a Captain since 2001 although his fishing career began in 1983 when he first went to sea with his father aboard the family's 90' trawler. He has held an NC commercial fishing license since 1988.

Over the course of his career, he has been active in numerous Mid Atlantic and New England fisheries and has fished from Hatteras to Canada. Primarily focusing on Illex squid, Longfin squid, Atlantic Mackerel, Sea herring, Atlantic Croaker and Butterfish. He also participates in the Fluke, Black Sea Bass, Scup fisheries, landing in both North Carolina and Virginia.

Mr. Ruhle has served one term on the Mid-Atlantic Council and served multiple terms as on the Mid Atlantic Council's Atlantic Mackerel/Squid/Butterfish, Summer Flounder/Scup/Black Sea Bass, River herring/Shad, Ecosystems and Ocean Planning, and Sturgeon advisory panels. Mr. Ruhle has been very active in his capacity as an advisor and always made himself available to attend meetings as well as work with the council staff on many different issues. Robert is also an ASMFC advisor for the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) and a member of the NTAP working group.

Robert has participated in all 3 Marine Resources Education Program (MREP) modules, (Management, Science 1 and Science 2) and has had over 20 yrs experience in co-operative research. He has worked on projects ranging from Gear selectivity to bycatch reduction with academic partners from, URI, Cornell, Managment, Scimfish, Rutgers, NOAA and VIMS. He has been a participant in the NOAA Study Fleet program since 2008.

Mr. Ruhle has been very active and a primary component in the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP) trawl survey since 2006. Alongside VIMS, NEAMAP is conducted onboard the F/V DARANA R biannually during the spring and fall of each year. During his association with the survey, Mr. Ruhle has gained in depth knowledge of Fisheries/Scientific data collection methods as well as its use in Fisheries management practices. Over the course of NEAMAP, Mr. Ruhle has been a party to a multitude of outreach programs associated with the trawl survey.

Mary Ellon D. Ballance

Hatteras, NC

Since moving to Dare County, North Carolina in 1998, Mary Ellon Ballance has been actively involved in the commercial fishing community alongside her husband. Over the past 20 years, their family has participated in multiple fisheries, including gill net, drop net, pound net, and crabbing. Her direct experience in these fisheries has given her a strong understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing both harvesters and managers.

In addition to her on-the-water experience, Mary Ellon has worked closely with fishing organizations to support and advocate for North Carolina's commercial fishing industry. She has been actively involved with North Carolina Watermen United and the North Carolina Fisheries Association, contributing to efforts that represent fishermen's voices at the state and regional levels.

Mary Ellon is currently a member of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) South Atlantic Advisory Panel, which includes the following ASMFC FMPs: Red Drum, Black Drum, Spot, Atlantic Croaker, Spotted Sea Trout, Cobia, Spanish Mackerel. She has also served as a community advisor during the development of Amendment 3 to the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries' Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan. Through this work, she gained valuable insight into the fishery management process and the importance of balancing sustainable resource management with the economic and cultural needs of fishing communities.

Mary Ellon is currently a member of the Dare County Board of Commissioners representing District 4, Hatteras Island. With her background in both fisheries participation and stakeholder engagement, she brings a grounded perspective, strong community ties, and a commitment to fair and effective fishery management.

Mr. Thomas Newman**Williamston, NC**

Mr. Newman is the owner/operator of the 40-ft. F/V Gotta Go with his homeport in Hatteras, NC. He has been commercial fishing for 30 plus years, mostly in North Carolina but ranging as far north as scalloping in New York and has fished many seasons in Virginia gill netting for monkfish.

He is currently serving on the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel (South Atlantic Fishery Management Council), the Northern Regional Advisory Panel (North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries), and the Weakfish and Coastal Sharks Advisory Panels (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission). Mr. Newman holds permits and fishes for Spanish mackerel, bluefish, spiny dogfish, smooth dogfish, king mackerel, croakers, large and small coastal sharks and monkfish, species which are mainly managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Mr. Newman also works part-time for the North Carolina Fisheries Association, is a member of the Coastal Carolina River Watch, serves on the Citizen Science Projects Advisory Team (SAFMC), and is involved in state and federal fisheries management issues working directly with fisheries managers and industry groups.