

NC Marine Fisheries Commission

Preliminary Matters

November 2025 Quarterly Business Meeting

Documents

Meeting Agenda

Draft August 2025 Meeting Minutes

Marine Fisheries Commission Business Meeting

MEETING AGENDA

Holiday Inn Resort Lumina; Wrightsville Beach, NC
November 19-20, 2025

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, November 19, 2025

1:00 p.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 Agenda ****
- **Approval of Meeting Minutes ****

1:15 p.m. Chairman's Report

- Letters and Online Comments
- Ethics Training and Statement of Economic Interest Reminder
- 2026 Proposed Meeting Schedule
- MFC Nominating Committee – *Chris Batsavage*
 - **Vote on slate of nominees for obligatory seat for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council ****

1:45 p.m. Director's Report – *Kathy Rawls*

- Rule Suspensions – *Jason Rock*

2:15 p.m. License & Statistics Annual Report – *Brandi Salmon*

2:45 p.m. Information about the R/V Carolina Coast/Program 195 – *Jason Rock*

3:45 p.m. Stock Assessments 101 – *Matt Damiano*

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

***Probable Action Items*

Marine Fisheries Commission Business Meeting Agenda

- 4:30 p.m. Break
- 6:00 p.m. Return for Public Comment Period

Thursday, November 20, 2025

- 9:00 a.m. Public Comment Period
- 9:30 a.m. Remarks by Secretary of Department of Environmental Quality – *Secretary Reid Wilson*
- 9:45 a.m. Rulemaking – *Catherine Blum*
- 2024-2025 Rulemaking Cycle Update
 - 2025-2026 Rulemaking Cycle Update
 - **Vote on Final Approval to amend 15A NCAC 03I .0101, .0114, 03O .0501-.0503 for permit requirements**
 - **Vote on Final Approval to amend 15A NCAC 03I .0101, 03O .0201, .0207, .0208, .0210 for conforming changes to franchise and shellfish lease requirements**
 - 2026-2027 Rulemaking Cycle
 - Preliminary Atlantic bonito proposed rulemaking language
- 10:15 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
- 10:30 p.m. Coastal Habitat Protection Plan Update – *Charlie Deaton*
- 10:45 a.m. Blue Crab FMP Amendment 3 Adaptive Management– *Robert Corbett, McLean Seward, Dan Zapf*
- **Vote to select Amendment 3 adaptive management options ****
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch Break
- 1:45 p.m. History of Southern Flounder Management through Amendment 5 – *Jeff Dobbs*
- 2:45 p.m. Indicators for the North Carolina Southern Flounder Stock – *Matt Damiano*
- 3:45 p.m. Estuarine Striped Bass FMP Amendment 2 Adaptive Management – *Dan Zapf, Charlton Godwin, Todd Mathes*
- Tar-Pamlico/Neuse Rivers Harvest Management Plan
- 4:15 p.m. Mandatory Harvest Reporting Demonstration – *Jesse Bissette*
- 4:45 p.m. Issues from Commissioners
- 5:15 p.m. Meeting Assignments and Preview of Agenda Items for Next Meeting – *Jesse Bissette*
- 5:30 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

Hilton Raleigh North Hills

Raleigh, North Carolina

August 20-21, 2025

The Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) held a business meeting on August 20-21, 2025, at the Hilton Raleigh North Hills in Raleigh, 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

August 20, 2025

Preliminary Matters

Swearing In of New Commissioners

Prior to the business meeting, new MFC member John Mallette, was sworn in. Commissioner John Mallette replaced Ryan Bethea, whose term ended June 30, 2025, and is holding the Commercial Industry seat.

Chairman Corbett called the August 20-21, 2025, business meeting to order.

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) MFC Liaison Jesse Bissette read into the record Commissioner John Mallette's Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) for actual and potential conflicts of interest pursuant to Chapter 138A of the N.C. General Statutes.

For John Mallette:

"We did not find an actual conflict of interest but found the potential for a conflict of interest. The potential conflict of interest does not prohibit service on this entity... Mr. Mallette would fill the role of a member who is a commercial dealer or processor from the Coastal Region."

The evaluation of statement of economic interest for each appointee to the MFC is kept on record at the DMF.

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 Rader to approve the meeting agenda.

Second by Commissioner Gardner.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Closs	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gardner	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hobgood	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mallette	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rader	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roller	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Service	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Corbett	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Motion passed unanimously.

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

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

Motion by Commissioner Roller to approve the May 21-23, 2025, business meeting minutes.

Second by Commissioner Hobgood.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Closs	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gardner	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hobgood	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mallette	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rader	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roller	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Service	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Corbett	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Motion passed unanimously.

[View the recording of the motion 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.

2026 Proposed Meeting Schedule

The 2026 proposed meeting schedule was provided in the briefing materials.

Elect Vice Chair

Chairman Corbett said the MFC elects its vice chair at its annual August meeting. He opened the floor for nominations for vice chair.

Commissioner Roller nominated Commissioner Hobgood for Marine Fisheries Commission Vice Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Service.

Commissioner Blanton nominated Commissioner Gardner for Marine Fisheries Commission Vice Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Mallette.

Votes for Commissioner Hobgood: 4

Votes for Commissioner Gardner: 5

0 abstentions.

Commissioner Gardner was elected as Marine Fisheries Commission Vice Chair.

Director's Report

Director Kathy Rawls began her report by welcoming DEQ Chief Deputy Secretary John Nicholson; she also welcomed Commissioner Mallette. Director Rawls provided an update on the CCA lawsuit, noting that the state has filed a motion for summary judgement, with a trial scheduled to begin in late January in Wake County. She then discussed updates to the Observer Trip Scheduling System (OTSS), explaining that some commissioners had expressed frustrations with the frequency of system notifications at the May meeting. Beginning September 1, Wednesday reminders will be discontinued, with Monday and Friday recall attempts for unanswered calls also stopping. All participants have received notifications of changes in the mail and were provided directions on how to opt out of reminders. Director Rawls reported that staff are making significant progress on implementation of the Oyster and Clam Fishery Management Plans, including the formation of an internal workgroup to quantify recreational users. She added that staff have nearly completed surveys for the Deepwater Oyster Recovery Areas and that the Division is seeking input for cultch-supported preseason sampling sites. Staff will be reaching out to oyster fishermen directly, and those who have not been contacted are encouraged to reach out to the Division. Regarding the upcoming flounder season, Director Rawls emphasized the importance of angler participation in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and the Carcass Collection Program, as participation is essential for improving data quality and reducing uncertainty. She noted that details for the commercial flounder fishery are being finalized, with proclamations expected soon. She also reported that the CHPP Steering Committee will meet on Thursday, September 25. Director Rawls provided an update on Program 195, explaining that the Pamlico Sound Trawl Survey's research vessel Carolina.Coast, in use since the 1980s, is no longer structurally sound. The Division is exploring alternative methods, including conducting smaller tows with smaller vessels and evaluating data priorities for possible new surveys. Additional updates included the impacts of the state budget on DMF operations, the hiring of a Program Manager for Mandatory Harvest Reporting, implementation of Session Law 2025-48 regarding manmade ditches, and the upcoming public hearing for proposed rules scheduled for next week.

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

Rulemaking

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Rulemaking Coordinator Catherine Blum provided updates on the 2024-2025 rulemaking cycle and 2025-2026 rulemaking cycle.

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

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

Independent Sampling Presentation

DMF Biologist Jacqui Deagan gave a presentation on the Independent Sampling programs used by the Division of Marine Fisheries.

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

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

Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan Amendment 3 Revision

DMF Biologists Robert Corbett and McLean Seward gave a presentation on the Blue Crab FMP Amendment 3 Revision.

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: Dennis Reynolds, Mark Boettger, Steve Brewster, and Donald Willis. With no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Corbett ended the public comment period at 06:12 p.m.

[View the video recording of the August 20, 2025, 6:00 p.m. public comment session.](#)

August 21, 2025

Chairman Corbett convened the MFC business meeting at 9:00 a.m. on August 21, 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: Timothy

Berthisol, Ron McCoy, Thomas Newman, Mary Ellen Hunter, Glenn Skinner, and Stuart Creighton. With no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Corbett ended the public comment period at 9:22 a.m.

[View the video recording of the August 21, 2025, 9:00 a.m. public comment session.](#)

Remarks from Chief Deputy Secretary John Nicholson

Chief Deputy Secretary John Nicholson provided remarks, noting that he previously worked with the Department of Environmental Quality from 2017 to 2022 and has recently returned to his position. He expressed concern regarding the Department's current budget and staffing challenges, stating that the Department has lost approximately 42.5 positions and nearly \$8 million in appropriated funds over the past 15 years. He explained that about two-thirds of the Department's funding comes from grants and receipts, while the remaining third is appropriated by the General Assembly. Nicholson highlighted that a major concern is the lack of sufficient funding to maintain appropriate working equipment and gear, noting a total reduction of approximately \$2.9 million in appropriated dollars, with DMF absorbing a portion of the impact. He also explained challenges regarding the uncertainty surrounding federal funding sources and referenced recent actions by Secretary Wilson to address these financial challenges within the Department.

[View the recording of the remarks from Chief Deputy Secretary John Nicholson and surrounding discussion.](#)

Atlantic Bonito Information Update

DMF Biologist Jacqui Deagan gave a presentation updating the Commission on Atlantic Bonito.

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

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

Standard Commercial Fishing License Eligibility Report

Motion by Commissioner Gardner to set the temporary cap on the number of licenses in the Standard Commercial Fishing License Eligibility Pool for fiscal year 2025-2026 at 500.

Second by Commissioner Blanton.

Motion passed with 8 votes in favor and 1 against.

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

Fishery Management Plan Annual Review

DMF Biologist Supervisor Charlton Godwin gave a presentation on the 2025 Fishery Management Plan Monitoring. The presentation included information about the collection, storage, and analysis of data that the DMF undertakes, which led into a summary of the FMP review process with examples, and concluded with an overview of how the FMP reviews inform management and the annual FMP Review Schedule.

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

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

Atlantic Bonito Motion

Motion by Commissioner Roller to ask the DMF to bring proposed rulemaking language for a five-fish recreational bag limit per person for Atlantic Bonito to the MFC at its November 2025 business meeting.

Second by Commissioner Hobgood.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Closs	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gardner	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Hobgood	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mallette	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Rader	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roller	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Service	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Corbett	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Motion passed 6-0, with 3 abstentions.

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

Sheepshead Information Update

DMF Biologist Anne Markwith gave a presentation updating the Commission on Sheepshead in North Carolina.

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

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

Black Drum Information Update

DMF Biologist Chris Stewart gave a presentation updating the Commission on Black Drum in North Carolina.

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

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

Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 4

DMF Biologists Jeff Dobbs, Anne Markwith, and Holly White gave a presentation on the Southern Flounder FMP Amendment 4.

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

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

Motion by Commissioner Roller for the MFC to approve final adoption of the N.C. Southern Flounder Fishery Management Amendment 4 with the following management option:

- **EXPEDITED ALLOCATION SHIFT:**
Expedite the sector allocation transition to 50% commercial and 50% recreational in 2025 rather than in 2026 as prescribed in Amendment 3.

Second by Commissioner Mallette.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
Closs	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gardner	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hobgood	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mallette	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rader	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
Roller	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Service	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Corbett	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐

Motion passed 6-2, with 1 abstention.

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

Southern Flounder Fishery Management Plan Amendment 5

DMF Biologists Jeff Dobbs, Anne Markwith, and Holly White gave a presentation on 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.](#)

Central/Southern Management Area Striped Bass Data Analysis

DMF Biologists Dan Zapf, Charlton Godwin, and Todd Mathes gave a presentation on the data analysis of the Central/Southern Management Area (CSMA) Striped Bass.

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.

Motion by Commissioner Blanton for the MFC Chair to send a letter to the NC General Assembly on behalf of the MFC to highlight the importance of the resources (funding) to the DEQ and the DMF to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the State's marine and estuarine resources, and potentially use the loss of Program 195 to highlight the importance of long-term sampling programs.

Second by Commissioner Hobgood.

ROLL CALL VOTE					
Member	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Blanton	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Closs	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gardner	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Hobgood	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mallette	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rader	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Roller	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Service	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Corbett	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐

Motion passed unanimously.

[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 November 2025 meeting items.

Having no further business to conduct, Chairman Corbett adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.