



2025 Agenda

Water Quality For Fisheries Symposium

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27

9:00 – 9:30 AM

Networking Café

Kick off the symposium with coffee, fruit, and conversation. The Networking Café is a dedicated time to meet fellow coastal leaders, from fishermen to legislators, planners to university researchers. This is a unique opportunity to connect across sectors, share local insights, and help shape the conversations that will guide the next two days.

9:30 – 10:00 AM

Welcome & Symposium Overview

Facilitator: Monica Gibbs

Brief introduction to symposium goals, schedule, and how participants can engage.

The opening session sets the stage for two days of collaboration at the intersection of science, policy, and community. Monica Gibbs will provide an overview of the symposium's goals, highlight pressing water quality and fisheries issues across coastal North Carolina, and introduce ways participants can actively shape discussions. There will be an opportunity to participate and provide input on priorities that will help us make sure you get the most out of the event.

10:00 – 11:15 AM

Keynote & Panel - Dr. Joel Fodrie, UNC-IMS

From the Estuary to the Legislature: Coastal Fisheries & Water Quality: A science-based look at what's next for protecting water quality, marine habitats, and fisheries.

Dr. Fodrie, one of North Carolina's leading marine scientists, will open with a keynote on the state of our estuaries and what the latest research tells us about sustaining fisheries in the face of water quality challenges, habitat loss, and climate pressures. His talk will highlight how science can inform both community practices and legislative decision-making.

Following the keynote, there will be a facilitated conversation and Q&A that will include a discussion on how research translates into policy and how policy impacts those on the water and in coastal communities.



11:15 – 11:45 AM

Interactive Breakout: Why Water Quality for Fisheries Matters to You

This session turns the spotlight on participants. Through small-group reflections and a collaborative “sticky-note wall,” attendees will share why water quality for fisheries matters from their unique perspectives. The ideas and challenges raised here will shape dialogue throughout the symposium and provide real-world context for researchers, policymakers, and advocates.

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Lunch Break

Enjoy a relaxed lunch while connecting with fellow participants. For those who want a deeper dive, optional **networking topic tables** will be hosted on themes like research collaboration, fisheries policy, community outreach, and student opportunities. These conversations are designed to foster cross-sector partnerships in an informal setting.

12:45 – 2:25 PM

Session: Agricultural Runoff, Pesticides, and Fish Consumption Risk

This session explores how agricultural practices and chemical runoff affect fisheries, water quality, and community health. Presenters will share new research on risks in coastal watersheds, with attention to the cultural, social, and agricultural contexts shaping these impacts.

Featured Presentations:

- **Dr. Lisa Satterwhite (Duke University):** Pesticide and soil runoff, how chemicals move from fields to waterways, and what this means for fish health and aquatic ecosystems.
- **Chiara Klein and Megan Hoert Hughes (Duke Superfund Research Center):** Fish consumption advisories in the Cape Fear River, understanding risks to public health, especially in communities that rely on fish as a food source.

2:25 – 2:45 PM

Stakeholder Spotlight

The Stakeholder Spotlight brings the lived experience of coastal communities directly into the room. Local farmers and fishermen will share their perspectives on how water quality challenges, from runoff to flooding, impact their work, traditions, and way of life. This candid conversation grounds the science and policy discussions in the realities of those most affected. All participants are invited to the conversation.



2:45 – 3:00 PM

Break & Poster Viewing

Open gallery of student, community, and research partner posters.

Take a mid-afternoon break to recharge while exploring an open gallery of posters presented by students, community partners, and research teams. These displays highlight innovative projects, local case studies, and practical solutions being developed across North Carolina's coast. Presenters will be available to answer questions and exchange ideas.

3:00 – 4:45 PM

Session: Coastal Storms, Flooding, Stormwater Pollutants, Advocacy and Resiliency Best Practices

North Carolina's coast faces intensifying storms, flooding, and stormwater challenges, each carrying heavy impacts for water quality, fisheries, and communities. This session brings together leading researchers, advocates, and state managers to examine pollutants carried by stormwater, showcase lessons from coastal advocacy efforts, and highlight resiliency strategies already in action across our state.

Featured Presentations:

- **Dr. Imari Walker-Franklin (RTI International):** Case studies of stormwater and flooding impacts on water quality, including plastics, agricultural runoff, and wastewater.
- **Riley Lewis (CCRW Waterkeeper) & Advocacy Working Group:** Lessons from community advocacy, how partnerships are building local solutions and influencing policy.
- **Kasen Wally & Jennifer Fickler (NC Division of Coastal Management):** Resiliency in action, state-level initiatives that support coastal towns and fishing communities adapting to a changing climate.
- **Madison Haley (NC Plastics Coalition Update):** Overview of state and national plastic policy, research, and advocacy updates

Policy and Funding Workshop

- **Bob Taylor, DEQ (Facilitator):** Guide participants in exploring practical strategies and collaborative solutions to address the growing impacts of storms and flooding on water quality and fisheries.



4:45 – 5:00 PM

Daily Reflection + Open Mic

Attendees share key takeaways or questions heading into Day 2.

The day closes with an open mic session where participants are invited to share reflections, questions, or takeaways from the first day. This is an opportunity for fishermen, students, community leaders, and policymakers to highlight the themes that resonated most, and to surface priorities that should carry forward into Day 2.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28

9:00 – 9:30 AM

Networking Café

Start Day 2 with coffee, fruit, and informal conversations. This is a valuable time to reconnect with contacts from Day 1, meet new participants, and set intentions for the day's sessions. By design, the Networking Café brings together fishermen, scientists, policymakers, students, and community leaders in a relaxed environment before diving into technical discussions.

9:30 – 11:10 AM

Session: Industrial Runoff & Emerging Contaminants

This session examines the impacts of industrial activities on coastal water quality, with a focus on emerging contaminants like PFAS, heavy metals, and landfill leachate. Presentations will highlight the latest research, community monitoring efforts, and state-level regulatory responses.

Featured Presentations:

- **Caroline Zuber (Duke University):** Advances in monitoring PFAS and heavy metals in coastal ecosystems, what the data reveal about risks to fisheries, habitats, and human health.
- **Sherri Stanley (NCDEQ Division of Waste Management):** Landfill leachate and state response, how DEQ is addressing threats from industrial waste to protect downstream communities and fisheries.

11:10 – 12:00 PM

Stakeholder Feedback Wall + Poster Spotlight

Participants post ideas and feedback for DEQ and researchers.



This interactive session gives every participant a chance to directly influence next steps. Using the **Stakeholder Feedback Wall**, attendees can post ideas, priorities, and questions they want researchers, regulators, and policymakers to consider. Alongside, selected poster presenters will spotlight projects that connect science to action.

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Lunch Break

Take a break to recharge and connect with fellow attendees. This informal lunch hour offers space to continue conversations from the morning sessions, compare perspectives across sectors, and build connections that may lead to future collaborations. Optional topic tables will again be available for those who want guided discussions around policy, fisheries, and community engagement.

1:00 – 1:30 PM

Workshop: Coastal Heritage, Student Engagement & Resilience

Facilitator: Dr. Liz DeMattia, Duke University

Panel includes DukeEngage alumni, local fishermen, and CCRW partners.

This interactive workshop highlights how student engagement and community partnerships strengthen both water quality and coastal heritage. Panelists will share real-world projects that connect students with fishing communities to preserve cultural traditions, restore habitats, and build resilience against environmental threats.

1:30 – 2:40 PM

Session: Wastewater Systems, Septic Failures & Public Health

Failing septic systems and vulnerable wastewater infrastructure are among the most pressing threats to coastal water quality. This session highlights cutting-edge research and practical management strategies to protect public health and fisheries. Presenters will explore how storm events and sea level rise stress wastewater systems and what best practices communities can adopt.

Featured Presentations:

- **Emma Dempsey (UNC IMS):** Impacts of storm events on rural wastewater systems, how flooding and sea level rise amplify risks to water quality and fisheries.
- **Conner Twiddy & David Ryan (Town of Nags Head):** Best management practices for septic health, lessons from local government leaders addressing



these challenges in coastal communities.

2:40 – 3:00 PM

Community Mapping Activity

In this interactive session, participants will work together to identify areas where septic and wastewater failures are creating risks for water quality, fisheries, and public health. Using large coastal maps, attendees will pinpoint problem sites, share local knowledge, and highlight priority areas for future research, planning, and advocacy. The results will feed directly into CCRW's advocacy and partner initiatives.

3:00 – 3:30 PM

Public Comments & Testimonials

This open mic session provides a platform for fishermen, advocates, and community members to share their experiences, concerns, and ideas about water quality and fisheries. Testimonials will highlight the real-world impacts of policy decisions, storm events, and environmental change, grounding the symposium in lived experience.

3:30 – 4:00 PM

Featured Presentation- David Cerino, Carteret Community College
Engineered Aquatic Habitats: exploring how innovative design can enhance water quality, fisheries, and community resilience.

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Raffle

Be sure to join the raffle for a chance to win great prizes, including hotel stays, luggage, and CCRW goodies. Winners will be drawn during the program's closing.

Roundtable: Industry Working Group Regular Meeting

The symposium concludes with a facilitated **Industry Working Group (IWG) roundtable**. This standing working group brings together fishermen, industry leaders, researchers, policymakers, and community advocates to identify priority issues that will guide advocacy and action for the next two years.

Participants will engage in an open, solutions-focused conversation about how to strengthen fisheries, protect water quality, and ensure a sustainable coastal economy. The session also serves as an entry point for new stakeholders who want to get involved in shaping the future of coastal resilience.



Shuck Reception

A community gathering featuring fresh local oysters from three White Oak River Basin farms. Presented by **Array Community Development Corporation, Carteret Community College Aquaculture Research & Development, Changing Tide Oyster Co., Duke Aquafarm, NCIDEA, and Wells Fargo**. Enjoy oyster samplings, brief remarks from hosts and sponsors, and plenty of time to meet neighbors and partners. This reception offers a chance to relax, connect, and celebrate.

Thank you, Sponsors

