



2025 Agenda

Water Quality For Fisheries Symposium

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27

9:00 – 9:45 AM

Networking Café

Kick off the symposium with coffee, fruit, and conversation.

9:45 – 10:00 AM

Welcome & Symposium Overview

Facilitator: Monica Gibbs

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

10:00 – 11:00 AM

Keynote Speaker- 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, a facilitated conversation and Q&A session will take place, featuring a discussion on how research translates into policy and how policy affects those living on and in coastal communities.

11:00 – 11:30 AM

Ecosystem Interactions and Water Quality- Dr. James W. Morley, Coastal Studies Institute, ECU

Dr. Morley will share insights from his ongoing research on the impacts of invasive catfish in the Albemarle Sound and its tributaries. His work examines how shifts in predator-prey relationships, particularly catfish that prey heavily on clams, may impact water quality and ecosystem balance. This presentation expands the discussion from policy to ecology, illustrating how species interactions can indirectly shape the health of coastal waters and the resilience of North Carolina's fisheries.



11:30 – 11:45 AM

Voices of the Basin

Every perspective in this room represents a piece of North Carolina's coastal story. In this session, participants will introduce themselves and share their connection to the coast—whether through research, fishing, policy, education, or community work. Together, these introductions form the foundation for collaboration throughout the Symposium.

11:45 – 12:30 PM

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.

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

Lunch Break & Poster Viewing

Enjoy a relaxed lunch while connecting with fellow participants. As a part of your registration, lunch is provided at the Duke Cafe and there are options for all dietary restrictions mentioned in the registration process. There is also enough time during the break for those that wish to eat lunch off-campus.

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

1:30 – 3:15 PM

Session: Advances in Understanding Contaminant Impacts on Fisheries and Health

This session focuses on the intersection of water quality, contaminant monitoring, and public health in coastal ecosystems. Presenters will discuss new findings on fish consumption advisories in the Cape Fear River and advances in tracking PFAS and heavy metals, offering insight into how these contaminants affect fisheries, habitats, and community well-being.

Featured Presentations:

- **Dr. Frannie Nilsen (NC Department of Environmental Quality):** New findings on PFAS contamination in saltwater fish and its implications for coastal



ecosystem health. Drawing from recent monitoring and toxicological assessments, she will examine how PFAS compounds accumulate in marine species and the challenges they pose for fisheries management and public-health policy.

- **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.
- **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.

3:15 – 5:00 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:

- **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 Session

- **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.



Thank you, Sponsors

Together, we protect the quality of water and quality of life in coastal North Carolina.



2025 Agenda
Water Quality For Fisheries Symposium

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

Upstream Sources and Downstream Impacts: How Stormwater and Wastewater Shape Water Quality

This session explores the interconnected impacts of stormwater, flooding, and wastewater on water quality and community health. Dr. Imari Walker-Franklin (RTI International) will share case studies examining pollutants such as plastics, agricultural runoff, and wastewater. Sherri Stanley (NCDEQ Division of Waste Management) will discuss landfill leachate and the state's response to industrial waste, highlighting DEQ's work to protect downstream communities and fisheries.

Featured Presentations:

- **Dr. Imari Walker-Franklin (RTI International):** Case studies of stormwater and flooding impacts on water quality, including plastics, agricultural runoff, and wastewater.
- **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 provides every participant with the opportunity to directly influence the next steps. Using the **Stakeholder Feedback Wall**, attendees can post ideas, priorities, and questions they want researchers, regulators, and policymakers to consider. In addition, selected poster presenters will highlight projects that connect science to action.

12:00 – 12:30 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.

12:30 – 1:30 PM

Lunch Break

Take a break to recharge and connect with fellow attendees. This informal lunch hour provides an opportunity to continue conversations from the morning sessions, compare perspectives across sectors, and foster connections that may lead to future collaborations. Optional topic tables will again be available for those who wish to engage in guided discussions on policy, fisheries, and community engagement.

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 collaborate to identify areas where there are potential risks to 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 inform CCRW's advocacy and partner initiatives directly.



3:00 – 3:30 PM

Roundtable: Industry Working Group Regular Meeting

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 wish to contribute to shaping the future of coastal resilience.

3:30 – 4:00 PM

Public Comments & Raffle

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.

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.

4:00 – 4:20 PM

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

4:20 – 6:00 PM

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 provides an opportunity to unwind, connect, and celebrate.



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