

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROY COOPER  
GOVERNOR

March 15, 2023

Ms. Janet Coit  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 14636  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Coit:

Thank you for your agency's letter of Jan. 12, 2023, requesting that I nominate a slate of qualified candidates for consideration by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for an obligatory appointment to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 113-260 charges the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) with the responsibility of compiling a list of nominees for consideration by the Governor for Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council appointments. The Commission provided the names of Mr. Jess Hawkins, Mr. Thomas Newman, and Mr. Robert Ruhle for my consideration as nominees for an obligatory appointment to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. I concur with the Commission recommendations and am forwarding these names to you as North Carolina's nominees. The nominees are presented without order or preference.

Due to the statutory makeup of the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (please see enclosed list), compilation of the list of nominees by that body meets the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1852(b)(2)(C), that each nomination be made in consultation with the commercial and recreational fishing interests of the state. The Commission makes every effort to encourage and seek out qualified women and minority candidates during this process. All the nominees are residents of North Carolina. All nominees, by reason of their occupational or other experience, scientific expertise or training, are knowledgeable regarding the conservation and management of the commercial or recreational harvest of the fisheries resources of North Carolina.

Following is a brief summary of the experience that qualifies each nominee to serve as a member of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council:

**Mr. Jess Hawkins (Other).** Mr. Hawkins has a M.S., degree in biology and retired as a fisheries scientist with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) in 2006 after 30 years of service. He served as Chief of Fisheries Management (the main research/management section of DMF), studying and conserving both state and federally managed species. The last 12 years of his career, Mr. Hawkins was the Executive Assistant to the Director, working as the liaison with the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC), developing rules and policies for North Carolina with extensive stakeholder input (approximately 100 meetings per year with advisors and MFC members). He became quite familiar with fisheries issues facing North Carolina, including management of species occurring in federal jurisdiction. Mr. Hawkins represented the state in numerous meetings during controversial and difficult circumstances. He also worked with many of the leading fisheries scientists in our state.

After retiring from DMF, Mr. Hawkins was appointed to the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission (NCMFC) from 2007-2009, serving in an at-large seat. He also received the Governor's Award of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine in 2006 and the Governor's Award as Wildlife Conservationist of the Year in 1994.

Since his retirement he has served as an educator at the North Carolina Aquarium, teaching the public about ecology and conservation and was an instructor of marine fisheries ecology at Duke Marine Laboratory for three years. Mr. Hawkins currently co-teaches marine fisheries ecology at NC State University CMAST facility and has done so for six years. Mr. Hawkins also consulted on scientifically based issues involving fisheries conservation for stakeholder groups.

Mr. Hawkins is also president and owner of Crystal Coast Ecotours for the last 12 years in the Morehead City area. He holds a Master's Captain License from the US Coast Guard. He is also an avid saltwater angler who fishes along much of the North Carolina coast, both inshore and offshore.

**Mr. Thomas Newman (Commercial).** Mr. Newman is the owner/operator of the 40' F/V Gotta Go with his homeport in Hatteras, NC. He has been commercial fishing for 25 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 Marine Fisheries Commission), 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, Atlantic croaker, 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. He 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.

Mr. Newman received a B.S. in biology from Furman University in 2008. His focus was towards wildlife management, but he also did a study abroad marine biology program in the Florida Keys and Belize directly observing habitats and multiple aquatic species.

**Mr. Robert Ruhle (Commercial).** Robert Ruhle owns and operates the F/V Darana R along with his father, James Ruhle, who served three consecutive terms as a Mid-Atlantic Council member for North Carolina. His uncle, Phillip Ruhle, also served on the New England Fishery Management Council. His proximity to the council was highly educational to both the process and function of the councils, as well as provided insight to the innerworkings of Fisheries Management.

Robert is a member of Commercial Fisherman of America and the NC 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 a North Carolina 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, Atlantic herring, Atlantic Croaker, and Butterfish.

He also participates in the Summer Flounder, Black Sea Bass, and Scup fisheries, landing in both North Carolina and Virginia.

Mr. Ruhle has served multiple terms and currently is an Advisor for the Mid-Atlantic Council serving on Atlantic Mackerel/Squid/Butterfish, Summer Flounder/Scup/Black Sea Bass, River Herring/Shad, Ecosystems and Ocean Planning, and Sturgeon. 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

March 15, 2023

Page 4

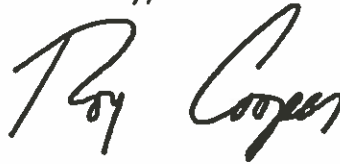
ASMFC advisor for the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) and a member of the NTAP working group.

Robert has participated all 3 MREP modules, (Management, Science 1 and Science 2) and has had over 20 years of 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 staff, 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the nomination process for a North Carolina obligatory seat to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roy Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roy Cooper

Enclosures

RAC/swh

cc: Elizabeth S. Biser  
Rob Bizzell  
Kathy Rawls  
Hayes Griggs

---

## **N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission**

### **Rob Bizzell**

***Chairman***

*Recreational Fisherman*

[R.Bizzell.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:R.Bizzell.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Doug Cross**

***Vice-Chairman***

*Commercial Industry*

[D.Cross.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:D.Cross.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Robert McNeill**

*Recreational Fisherman*

[Robert.B.McNeill.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Robert.B.McNeill.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Doug Radar**

*Scientist*

[D.Rader.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:D.Rader.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Sarah Gardner**

*At-Large*

[S.Gardner.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:S.Gardner.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Mike Blanton**

*Commercial Fisherman*

[M.Blanton.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:M.Blanton.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Ana Shellem**

*Commercial Fisherman*

[A.Shellem.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:A.Shellem.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Donald Huggins**

*At-large*

[D.Huggins.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:D.Huggins.MFC@ncdenr.gov)

### **Tom Roller**

*Recreational Industry*

[Tom.Roller.MFC@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Tom.Roller.MFC@ncdenr.gov)



WES MOORE  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 15, 2023

Janet Coit  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 14636  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Attention: Morgan Corey

Dear Ms. Coit:

Thank you for the notice announcing the Maryland obligatory seat and the At-large seat on the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council that will become available August 2023. The State of Maryland recommends the following three qualified nominees listed in order of preference for the Maryland obligatory seat:

1. Mr. Earl "Sonny" Gwin, Commercial Sector
2. Mr. David Blazer, Other Sector
3. Mr. Robert Tworkowski, Commercial Sector

The provided nominees share many years of experience with conservation, management, commercial, and recreational fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic region. They are also committed to promoting long-term viability and sustainability of our natural resources and ensuring that our conservation goals are met.

The Department has met all of the National Marine Fisheries Service criteria regarding solicitation for a broad spectrum of applications. Outreach included announcements to the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Departments email distribution lists for Check Stations, Coastal Commercial Fisheries, Coastal Recreational Fisheries, Commercial Fisheries, HMS- Permits 2022 and Tidal Recreational Fishing and Crabbing (26,699 recipients). Our advisory group members and email recipients represent the broad spectrum of conservation, commercial, and recreational interest groups in Maryland, which may include minorities, women, tribal members, subsistence users, and underserved communities.

In that, the State of Maryland is represented on the Council by Mike Luisi (Council chairman and designated state official), the Maryland obligatory appointed member (currently Earl "Sonny" Gwin), and an at-large seat is already held by Marylander, Scott Lenox, we are not offering any qualified nominees for the at-large seat vacancy currently held by Danny Farnham (NY).



STATE OF MARYLAND  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

WES MOORE  
GOVERNOR

If you have any questions during your review of the enclosed applications, please feel free to contact Michael Luisi, Assistant Director of Fishing and Boating Services. Mr. Luisi can be reached by phone at (443) 758-6547 or via e-mail at [Michael.Luisi@Maryland.Gov](mailto:Michael.Luisi@Maryland.Gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wes Moore'.

Wes Moore  
Governor



STATE OF NEW YORK  
**EXECUTIVE CHAMBER**  
ALBANY 12224

**KATHY HOCHUL**  
GOVERNOR

March 15, 2023

Janet Coit  
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 14636  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Via Email: [Council.Appointments@noaa.gov](mailto:Council.Appointments@noaa.gov)

Dear Janet Coit:

I am writing to submit New York State's recommended candidates to be considered for appointment to fill the "Obligatory" and "At Large" seats on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) which are currently held by Paul Risi and Danny Farnham respectively. Both are completing their first term on MAFMC and are eligible to seek reappointment.

As in previous years, the process we used to identify candidates included discussions with leaders of commercial and recreational fishing organizations in New York and with individuals who have attended and provided input at management meetings, including the New York Marine Resources Advisory Council (MRAC) and public meetings on individual Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). This collective process resulted in the consideration of several candidates. In addition, we utilized the Department of Environmental Conservation's "Gov Delivery" service to advertise the opportunity to our vast networks across the state, specifically distribution lists for Saltwater Fishing and Boating; Environmental Justice; Wildlife, Fish, and Marine Life; and Region 1, 2, and 3 News. This year, no women or minority candidates expressed an interest in either position, despite our recruitment efforts. Nomination kits for the qualified candidates identified below are enclosed with this correspondence.

**Obligatory Seat Recommendations**

I am pleased to recommend Paul Risi for re-appointment to the "Obligatory" seat. With forty years of experience working in the recreational fishing industry and decades of active engagement on fisheries management, Paul would continue to be an incredible asset to MAFMC. In addition to Mr. Risi, I am submitting the names of two other candidates who are worthy of



your consideration. These candidates are Patrick Augustine, and Charles Witek, both of whom would bring a wealth of experience and expertise on fishery management issues.

The following, in order of preference, are New York State's 2023 nominees for the "Obligatory" seat on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council:

**Paul Risi (Recreational)** – Mr. Risi's knowledge and experience balancing recreational and commercial interests is an asset in the capacity of this position. Having served as a recreational fishing member of MRAC and most recently in his first term with MAFMC, Mr. Risi's understanding of federal marine fisheries management processes will continue to be valuable to MAFMC discussions.

**Patrick Augustine (Recreational)** – With his significant experience on New York and east coast marine fisheries management and organizations, Mr. Augustine has been an asset to both MAFMC and ASMFC. In 2014, he won the ASMFC Captain David Hart award, the highest honor an ASMFC Commissioner can receive. Mr. Augustine also has been active with the New York Sportfishing Federation and NOAA Fisheries, and a recreational fisherman for many years.

**Charles Witek (Recreational)**- Mr. Witek's experience is extensive, including MRAC, Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission Advisory Panels and MAFMC. He also is a former Coastal Conservation Association NY Chapter Chairman and has served on the NOAA Fisheries/ICCAT Advisory Committee as well as being an outdoor writer. Mr. Witek is a strong supporter of conservation priorities.

### **At-large Seat Recommendations**

I am pleased to recommend Danny Farnham for re-appointment to the "At-Large" seat. With over forty years of commercial experience, Mr. Farnham is highly knowledgeable about all aspects of commercial and recreational marine fishing and would continue to be a tremendous asset to MAFMC. In addition to Mr. Farnham, I am submitting the names of two other candidates who are worthy of your consideration. These candidates are George Jackman and James O'Brien, both of whom have the requisite expertise to provide meaningful contributions on fishery management issues.

The following, in order of preference, are New York State's 2023 nominees for the "At-Large" seat on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council:

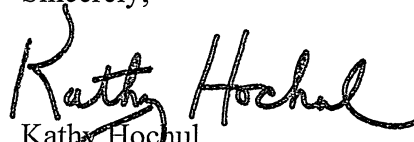
**Danny Farnham (Commercial)** – Mr. Farnham is a partner in the ownership and operation of three commercial fishing vessels and has over forty years of experience in the commercial fishing industry. In addition, his previous service on advisory panels for both the MAFMC and the New England Fisheries Management Council, as well as his membership on several New York commercial fishing associations, exemplifies Mr. Farnham's depth of knowledge on marine fisheries issues. With the completion of his first term in this capacity, Mr. Farnham would continue to be a valuable asset to the MAFMC.

**George Jackman (Other - Ecologist)** – Dr. Jackman is a professional aquatic ecologist and Senior Habitat Restoration Manager at Riverkeeper, an organization which works to protect and restore the Hudson River, its tributaries and watershed. Dr. Jackman brings a wealth of marine fisheries conservation and management experience and an extensive academic research background on migratory fishes. Dr. Jackman’s diverse knowledge and expertise would be of clear value to MAFMC. He is also a recreational fisherman, holding a recreational marine fishing registration with New York State for many years.

**James O’Brien (Recreational)** – Mr. O’Brien has many decades of recreational fishing experience and extensive knowledge of the commercial fishing industry, and has participated in tagging efforts as part of his interest in conservation. He is familiar with the recreational boating and fishing industry from New York to Florida, and previously had sport fishing businesses in North Carolina.

I highly recommend Paul Risi and Danny Farnham and respectfully request your consideration of their re-appointment to the “Obligatory” and “At-large” seats on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Sincerely,



Kathy Hochul  
Governor

Enclosures:  
Candidate Nomination Application Kits



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

April 5, 2023

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries  
NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 14636  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to nominate the following candidates for Pennsylvania's obligatory seat on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAMFC): Michelle Duval, Derek Eberly, and Jeremy Hancher.

Dr. Duval is well-acquainted with the work of MAFMC, as she is currently serving as Pennsylvania's representative. Before serving she had professionally consulted on the council's strategic plan. Her education in biology and marine ecology, her career and public service experience in fisheries management, and her recreational fishing are well-suited in continuing to promote the council's mission. I highly recommend that Dr. Duval be reappointed to represent Pennsylvania.

Mr. Eberly has spent his career working on environmental, conversation, and outdoor recreation issues. He has previously worked on elevating environmental justice issues in the fishing community in Pennsylvania and worked on securing additional dollars state funds through legislation for outdoor recreation. Mr. Eberly currently serves as the director of the Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation. In this role he continues to support and advocate for sportsmen and conservationists across the commonwealth.

Mr. Hancher is an ardent advocate environmental sustainability and climate and energy issues. He has over 15 years of experience working for the Environmental Management Assistance Program in southeastern Pennsylvania. Mr. Hancher has served on numerous boards and commissions representing Pennsylvania's interests, He also has knowledge of MAFMC's mission per his role on numerous advisory panels since 2021.

The Governor's Office of External Affairs handles appointments to boards and commissions. In seeking candidates, External Affairs consulted with Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and with Timothy Schaeffer, Executive Director for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Pennsylvania's lack of ocean coastline compels our priorities to recreational fishing and ecology and conservation efforts over commercial.

Thank you for your dedication to preserving our fisheries and their environments. Should you have questions, please contact the Office of External Affairs at 717-787-2500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Josh Shapiro'.

JOSH SHAPIRO  
Governor