2026 National Future Fishermen Summit

Date: Friday, November 20, 2026
Time: 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Location: Ballroom, Pacific Marine Expo

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Time	Session	Format
11:00 - 12:00	*Welcome & Connections*	Drop-in registration, informal networking, and resource tables
12:00 - 1:00	*Opening Session*	NFFC welcome, opening remarks, and Steering Committee lightning presentations
1:00 - 2:00	*Navigating a Long-Term Career in Fishing*	Podcast-style interview of young fishermen and audience Q&A
2:00 - 3:00	*Challenges, Solutions & Resources*	Interactive resource roundtables
3:00 - 4:30	*Navigating Federal Policy for the Future of Fishing*	Panel and audience Q&A
4:30 - 5:00	*Connectivity in Action*	Facilitated networking

PROGRAM DETAILS

SESSION 1: *Welcome & Connections*

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Drop in to connect with fellow fishermen, industry partners, and organizations from across the country. Explore NFFC and Summit resources, meet participating organizations, and make new connections before the formal program begins.

SESSION 2: *Opening Session*

12:00 - 1:00 PM

Kick off the Summit with a welcome from the NFFC, opening remarks on the future of commercial fishing, and lightning presentations from NFFC Steering Committee organizations highlighting their regional work, programs, and shared national vision for supporting the next generation of commercial fishermen.

Roles	**Speakers**
NFFC Welcome	Maité Duquela, NFFC Coordinator
Opening Remarks	Dustin Delano
NFFC Steering Committee Lightning Round Presentations	• New England Young Fishermen's Alliance • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island • Gulf of America Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance • Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance • Maine Coast Fishermen's Association

SESSION 3: *Navigating a Long-Term Career in Fishing*

1:00 - 2:00 PM

Hear directly from young fishermen about what it takes to build a lasting career in commercial fishing. Through a podcast-style conversation, they'll share early challenges, lessons learned, memorable stories from the water, and what they wish they'd known when starting out. The discussion will offer practical insights for new entrants and fishermen looking to take the next step in their careers.

Roles	**Speakers**
Interviewer	Hannah Heimbuch
Fisherman speaker	George Hilser
Fisherman speaker	George Beyer

Fisherman speaker	Nicole Fel'Dotto
Fisherman speaker	Alex Varner
Fisherman speaker	Ezekial Brown
Fisherman speaker	Sam Linell
Fisherman speaker	Jon Pabody
Fisherman speaker	Janelle Anastacio

SESSION 4: *Challenges, Solutions & Resources*

2:00 - 3:00 PM

Explore the challenges, opportunities, and practical resources shaping the future of commercial fishing through interactive, topic-specific stations. Connect directly with experts and practitioners on business and financing, health and safety, fishing access, seafood processing, and getting started in the industry. Participants will have opportunities to ask questions, exchange experiences, and visit multiple stations throughout the session.

Roles	**Facilitators**
Session facilitators	Ashford Rosenberg, GARFSA Hannah Heimbuch, GARFSA

Stations	**Focus**	**Stationed Experts/Facilitators**
Business, Financing & Insurance	Business planning, financing options, insurance, and resources for starting or growing a fishing business	● Alaska Sea Grant ● CFCRI
Health, Wellness & Safety	Safety practices, training opportunities, and physical and mental health resources for commercial fishermen	● AMSEA ● Oregon Sea Grant
Fishing Access & Succession	Access to permits, quota, and fishing assets, including opportunities and resources for business succession planning	● ALFA/ASFT LFF2 member ● GARFSA Quota Bank ● CCCFA Quota Bank

Seafood Processing	Opportunities, business considerations, infrastructure, and pathways to seafood processing	• Seafood Processors Cooperative
So, You Want to Be a Deckhand?	Getting started as a deckhand, finding and negotiating opportunities, building skills, and navigating early career expectations	• Nick Rahaim (National Fisherman) • Caitlin Townsend

SESSION 5: *Navigating Federal Policy for the Future of Fishing*

3:00 - 4:30 PM

Explore how federal policies, programs, and resources can support the next generation of commercial fishermen. Bringing together representatives from federal agencies and fishing organizations, this panel will discuss opportunities for business financing and assistance, ways fishermen can engage in fisheries management and advocacy, and the importance of protecting working waterfronts and infrastructure. The conversation will highlight practical resources, challenges, and opportunities for fishermen to strengthen their businesses and have a voice in decisions affecting their livelihoods and communities.

Roles	**Speakers**
Moderator	Aubrey Church (Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance)
Panelist	Apollo Fuhriman (U.S. Small Business Administration)
Panelist	Mike Illenberg (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Seafood)
Panelist	Linda Behnken (Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association)
Panelist	Noah Oppenheim (Fishing Communities Coalition)
Panelist	Andrea Tomlinson (New England Young Fishermen's Alliance)

SESSION 6: *Connectivity in Action*

4:30 - 5:00 PM

Close out the Summit by putting new connections into action! Through facilitated networking rounds, participants will meet fishermen and industry partners from different regions and career stages, exchange experiences, explore opportunities for collaboration, and build relationships that extend beyond the Summit.