



# New England Fishery Management Council

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## Council Elects Eric Reid as Chair, Rick Bellavance as Vice Chair; Welcomes Four New Members to the Table

The New England Fishery Management Council held its annual election of officers at the start of its [September 28-30, 2021](#) webinar meeting. It voted in Eric Reid as chairman and Rick Bellavance as vice chairman to lead the Council in the year ahead. Both are from Rhode Island.

Eric was the Council's vice chair for the past two years and then became acting chairman in mid-August when Dr. John Quinn, who chaired the Council for the [past five years](#), became ineligible for reappointment after serving three consecutive three-year terms on the Council.

Chairman Reid is a fisheries consultant based in North Kingstown, RI. Over his 47-year career in commercial and recreational fisheries, he has been actively engaged in all facets of the industry both at sea and shoreside. He previously owned and operated his own business, Deep Sea Fish of Rhode Island, for 11 years and worked for numerous other companies, including Seafreeze Shoreside Inc., Seafresh USA, and The Town Dock. He was the past president of the Rhode Island Seafood Council and the American Seafood Institute, and he was a founding member of both the East Coast Fisheries Association and the New England Seafood Producers Association. He served as the New England Council's liaison to the Mid-Atlantic Council and has represented the New England Council on several Mid-Atlantic Council committees.

Chairman Reid also is on the board of directors of RODA, the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance, and serves as the alliance's treasurer. He is a U.S. Commissioner to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) and serves as Rhode Island State Senator Susan Sosnowski's proxy on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC).



*Newly elected Council Chairman Eric Reid (right) and Vice Chair Rick Bellavance (left) flank former Chairman Dr. John Quinn (center), who served three consecutive three-year terms on the Council. – photo courtesy of J. Quinn*



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After being elected unopposed and by acclamation, Chairman Reid said of his new position, “I appreciate everyone’s support. It’s certainly an honor and a very humbling experience.”

**Rick Bellavance** is the owner/operator of Priority Charters, LLC, a charter fishing business located in Point Judith. A lifelong Rhode Island resident, he has engaged in a variety of recreational and commercial fishing industries for over 30 years. Rick currently serves as the president of the Rhode Island Party and Charter Boat Association. For more than a decade, he has represented the recreational for-hire fishing industry on state, regional, and federal panels, committees, and commissions. He has worked steadily to help develop electronic reporting tools that can improve recreational catch estimates, and he strongly supports improvements to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). Rick represents the Council on the NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section of ICCAT. He has represented the New England Council on several Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Council committees.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** The Council’s Executive Committee is made up of the Council chair, vice chair, and three elected members. To fill out the slate this year, the Council elected **Melanie Griffin** and **John Pappalardo**, both of Massachusetts, and **Megan Ware** of Maine to serve on the committee.

The Executive Committee oversees the Council budget, appoints advisory panel members, addresses administrative matters, and provides Council leadership and direction on numerous policy matters. The committee works closely with the Council’s executive director and meets prior to each Council meeting.

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**NEW MEMBERS:** The Council welcomed four new members to its table – Geoff Smith, Togue Brawn, Mike Pierdinock, and Mark Alexander. All four were sworn in as new Council members by NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator Mike Pentony at the start of the meeting, as was Eric Reid, who was reappointed to his third consecutive term on the Council. Here are the new members.

**Geoff Smith** is the marine program director for the Maine Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, a position he has held since 2006. Prior to that, he was the regional fish conservation manager for The Ocean Conservancy. He currently serves on the Maine Coast Community Groundfish Sector Board of Directors and previously served on the Maine Department of Marine Resources Advisory Council. Before becoming a Council member, he served on the Council’s Groundfish Advisory Panel and Habitat Advisory Panel. Geoff replaces Terry Alexander, who served three consecutive three-year terms on the Council and was not eligible for reappointment. This is Maine’s obligatory seat on the Council.

**Togue Brawn** owns and operates a direct-to-consumer seafood company, Downeast Dayboat, that sources scallops from the Maine dayboat fleet. Prior to starting Downeast Dayboat, Togue was a resource management coordinator for the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR). While at DMR, she worked on several fisheries, including scallops, groundfish, and urchins, and led a complete revision to Maine’s state waters scallop fishery management plan. Togue also works as an independent fisheries



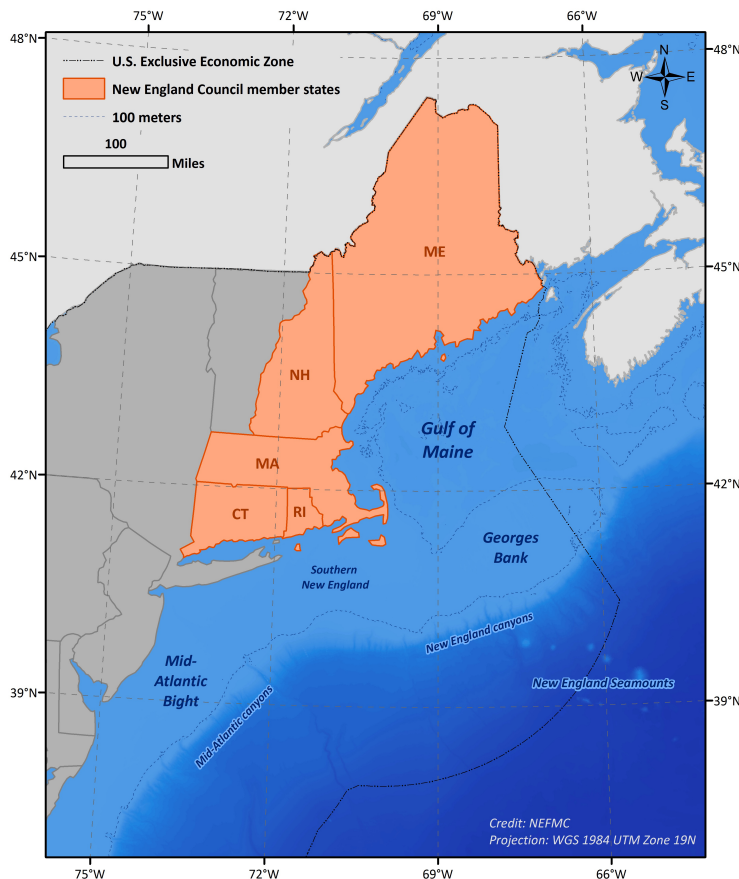
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consultant. She is the current chair of the DMR Advisory Council and serves on the Maine Fishermen's Forum Board of Directors. She was appointed to an at-large seat that was held by Vincent Balzano, who served three consecutive three-year terms on the Council and was not eligible for reappointment.

**Mike Pierdinock** is the owner/operator of the charter boat *Perseverance*, which has targeted various inshore, offshore, and groundfish species since 2003. He currently is vice chair of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission and president of the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association. He also serves on the National Marine Fisheries Service's Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel, as well as on the Executive Committee of the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance's Advisory Council. Mike is a member of the Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section of ICCAT. He was a U.S. delegate at the annual ICCAT meetings in Morocco (2017), Croatia (2018), and virtually in 2020 due to COVID-19. Before being appointed to the Council, he served on the Council's Recreational Advisory Panel. He assumes the obligatory seat for Massachusetts, which was previously held by Dr. John Quinn, who completed nine years of service on the Council.

**Mark Alexander** retired from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) in 2018. He served as Connecticut's designee to the New England Council from 2008 to early 2018 and played an especially key role as the Council's designee to the Northeast Ocean Plan's Regional Planning

Body. He began his career in 1982 in the Marine Fisheries Program of the Fisheries Division and became assistant division director in early 2017, overseeing that program. Mark was instrumental in many initiatives at DEEP that became the foundation for the agency's recreational and commercial fisheries statistics and assessment monitoring program. He also worked on the redesign and implementation of Connecticut's online licensing system to accommodate marine waters and commercial fishing licenses. For part of his time at DEEP, he served as Connecticut's administrative commissioner on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Mark assumes the obligatory seat for Connecticut that previously was held by Dr. Matt McKenzie, who was ineligible for reappointment.



*The New England Fishery Management Council's member states are Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The Council has 18 voting members and four non-voting members. Visit [nefmc.org](http://nefmc.org).*