



North Carolina
Coastal Federation
Working Together for a Healthy Coast

2026 Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project: Call for Working Watermen Assistance for District 3

Applications Accepted Until February 15, 2026

The North Carolina Coastal Federation currently is accepting applications for “on-water” cleanup assistance relating to its annual Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project. This project is open to commercial watermen and women in North Carolina. This project is funded by the N.C. Commercial Fishing Resource Fund Grant Program and is intended to improve habitat and water quality, as well as support coastal economies.

Eligible participants are selected for involvement in this program to help the Coastal Federation and N.C. Marine Patrol remove lost fishing gear from coastal waters during the annual blue crab harvest closure. A total of 50 commercial watermen and women collected 2,136 crab pots in early 2025 as part of the grant-funded project in the northeast, central, and southeast coasts. The 2026 project occurred in Districts I and II in January, and will take place in District III, during the closed season:

- March 4-15 south and west of the Highway 58 bridge

Compensation is \$600 per boat per day; a captain and mate are required. Captain refers to the individual who is in charge of the vessel, as a merchant mariner credential is not required for this project. To be considered, **captains must have a valid North Carolina standard commercial fishing license (SCFL). A copy of the license must be submitted with this application.** While there are no eligibility requirements for crewmen, priority will be given to applicants whose crew also have a SCFL. All crewmen will be held to the same violation criteria (listed below in the Selection Process section) as boat captains.

This project requires applicants to adhere to the following conditions:

1. Agree to guarantee availability for work during the specified closed season listed above.
2. Complete a minimum of three working days, following the hours of 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.
3. Use an electronic data collection tablet (provided) to document recovered gear.
4. Communicate daily via text or call with the field coordinator.
5. Attend a **mandatory** training session to learn use of project equipment and protocol scheduled for 3 p.m. on February 25, 2026 at the New Hanover County Public Library - Northeast Branch.
6. Follow project guidelines for disposing and turning in crab pots.

Selection Process

All applicants will be screened for their violation history by N.C. Marine Patrol and will not be eligible to participate in the project if they have had any significant violations. Applicants will also be reviewed with the state’s vendor list and will be ineligible if debarred or suspended from doing business with the state.

The Federation anticipates requiring assistance from five, two-man boat crews, but reserves the right to accept fewer participants if circumstances warrant. If more boats are available than are needed for a particular project area/timeframe, watermen will be selected at random based on the project needs and location requested. Equipment installed on an applicant's boat that may be of use to the retrieval effort (e.g., pot puller, pot rack) also will increase competitiveness of the application, as pot collection efficiency likely will be higher.

Application Process

When submitting your application, please read the directions and criteria carefully.

By submitting an application for this Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project, you are agreeing to the conditions put in place by the North Carolina Coastal Federation and N.C. Marine Patrol. If you are selected to assist with the project, you will be acting solely as an independent contractor and not as an employee of the State of North Carolina or the North Carolina Coastal Federation. The aforementioned groups are not liable for any incidents or accidents that occur as a result of this work. Project managers and/or Marine Patrol officers will be on-water and should be granted permission to board your boat at any time to ensure the work is being completed as outlined.

Please fill the form out completely before faxing, hand carrying, scanning and emailing, or mailing it to the North Carolina Coastal Federation's Southeast office in Wrightsville Beach. Please return forms as soon as possible. New applicants may be asked to submit references, upon request.

When submitting your application please include copies of:

1. Your North Carolina Standard Commercial Fishing License (SCFL)
2. Merchant Mariner Credential (if applicable)
3. Certificate of Liability (if applicable)

Send or drop off all completed forms to:

North Carolina Coastal Federation
ATTN: Ted Wilgis
309 W. Salisbury St.
Wrightsville Beach, NC 28480

Or fax to: 252-393-7508

Or attach in an E-mail to: tedw@nccoast.org

Please contact Ted Wilgis with any questions at: 910-509-2838

Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project Application Form

Please read the form carefully and fill it out completely before submitting.

I wish to be considered for the following locations (select two):

District 3

- White Oak River/Queens Creek/ICW/Bear Creek
- New River/ICW/Chadwick Bay
- Stump Sound/Topsail Sound/ICW to Figure 8 Island bridge
- Middle Sound/Masonboro Sound/Myrtle Grove Sound
- Upper Cape Fear River
- Lower Cape Fear River
- Lockwood Folly River/Shallotte River/ICW Southport to SC line

CAPTAIN NAME (FIRST AND LAST)		DATE OF BIRTH	
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (optional)		COMMERCIAL FISHING LICENSE NUMBER	
MAILING ADDRESS		CITY	STATE
HOME PHONE NUMBER	CELL PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS (IF APPLICABLE)	
VESSEL NAME	VESSEL LENGTH	VESSEL EQUIPMENT *	
VESSEL POWER **	HOME PORT	RESIDENT COUNTY	
PLEASE INDICATE WHAT DATES YOU ARE UNAVAILABLE FOR WORK DURING THE SPECIFIED CLOSED SEASON: March 4-15			

*This could include pot pullers, pot racks, etc. ** Gas/diesel, inboard/outboard

Can you send and receive text messages on your cell phone? YES _____ NO _____

First and Last Name of potential mate: _____

I will adhere to all applicable fishing rules and those practices outlined in the project orientation. I also acknowledge that the North Carolina Coastal Federation and the N.C. Marine Patrol/Division of Marine Fisheries are not liable for any accidents, injuries or property damage incurred in the performance of this work.

Applicant signature

Date