

GCFI79

First Announcement
& Call For Abstracts



GCFI79 | CURAÇAO | 2 - 6 NOVEMBER, 2026

About GCFI

The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), founded in 1947, is a leading regional organization dedicated to advancing the sustainable use, conservation, and management of marine resources across the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. Guided by a strategic vision of resilient fisheries, healthy ecosystems, and thriving coastal communities, GCFI's mission is to connect science, policy, and practice through knowledge exchange, capacity building, and inclusive collaboration. By convening a diverse network of scientists, fishers, managers, policymakers, and partners, GCFI strengthens evidence-based decision-making, fosters regional cooperation, and amplifies local and traditional knowledge. The Institute's work delivers lasting benefits to the region by supporting sustainable livelihoods, informing fisheries governance, building the next generation of marine leaders, and ensuring that critical marine ecosystems continue to provide economic, cultural, and ecological value for generations to come.

GCFI79: Curaçao

GCFI is pleased to announce that the 79th Annual Meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI79) will be held in Curaçao from 2 – 6 November, 2026. GCFI is partnering with the Government of Curaçao, Federashon Kooperativanan Uní di Produkshon (FKUP), Fundashon Ekonomia Sosial Kòrsou (FESK), Piskabon Bonaire, and the Caribbean Cetacean Society (CCS) to host GCFI79 which is an Endorsed Decade Action Program with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Conference Theme

The theme for the Conference is **Future-Proofing Fisheries: Resources, Resilience, and Tradition**. This theme calls for a forward-looking, solutions-oriented approach to ensuring that Caribbean fisheries can withstand environmental, economic, and social pressures while continuing to provide food security, livelihoods, and cultural identity. It recognizes that sustainability is no longer just about conservation, it is about adaptation, innovation, and inclusive governance. The three pillars: Resources, Resilience, and Tradition, represent interconnected priorities.



Conference App

GCFI will be once again utilizing Whova, our Conference App, which will help improve networking and facilitate connections between in-person and virtual participants. Attendees can create profiles, communicate with and schedule meetups with other attendees (in-person or virtually) whilst also being able to create personalised agendas, take notes, share documents, and much more.

Call for Abstracts: Technical, Special and Poster Presentations

Abstracts for GCFI 79 are due **1 July 2026**. Abstracts will be accepted in English, French, and Spanish. Abstracts are only required in one of the three languages; titles **must** be in all three languages. Abstracts must not exceed 250 words (275 for Spanish and French). Abstracts must be submitted using the secure online [Abstract Submission Form](#).

Acceptance to present within an oral or poster session requires submission of an extended abstract. Extended abstract preparation guidelines are available online. Members of GCFI are encouraged to submit full manuscripts or short communications based on presentations given at GCFI meetings to Gulf and Caribbean Research for peer review. Accepted manuscripts will be published open access at no charge to the authors through the GCFI-GCR partnership. Full manuscripts will also be accepted for publishing in the GCFI Proceedings.

Authors of accepted presentations will be notified via e-mail in August 2026. Submissions intended for the oral presentation, but not granted a slot, would automatically be accepted as a poster presentation. Regardless of the format, we encourage everyone who is interested in participating to submit an abstract.



Call for Special Sessions & Workshops:

Special sessions and workshops provide an informal setting where participants have the opportunity to discuss technical topics in an atmosphere that fosters the active exchange of ideas. A special session/workshop should offer professional development/educational opportunities for conference participants. Workshops may be research-focused (e.g., insights on new methodologies in research) or specific topic or species-base studies (e.g. Nassau grouper, spawning aggregations, megafauna etc).

Timeline

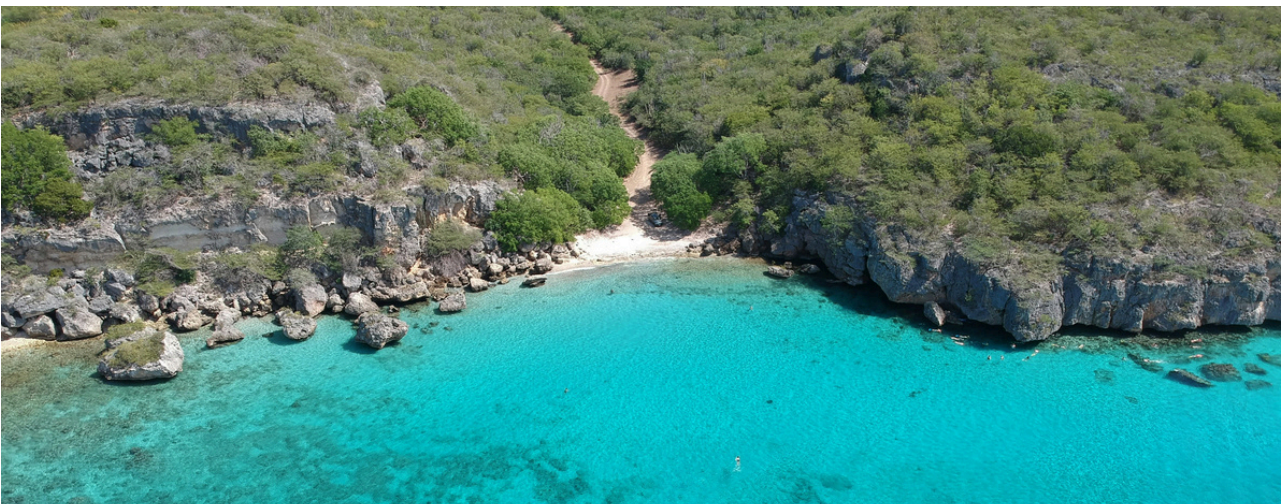
April 30, 2026	Special Session/Workshop Proposal Submission deadline
May 29, 2026	Acceptance notification.
June 15, 2026	Deadline for submission of finalized session description for publication on the website.
July 1, 2026	Deadline for special session presenters to submit abstracts via the online abstract submittal form.
September 30, 2026	Session Organizer to email GCFI the final agenda for your session, including speaker names, talk titles and order of presentation, detailed request for room setup, including AV requirements.
November 23, 2026	Special Session / Workshop Organizer to email GCFI Program Committee a Summary Report as an MS Word document.

For more information please review the [Call for Special Sessions & Workshops](#) document or the [GCFI79 Conference Page](#)

Technical Sessions:

The conference program features multi-disciplinary thematic sessions. Each session may have a mix of natural and social science, management, and technology related to the ecosystem or fisheries, highlighting the conference theme. Papers and posters are invited in the following areas (other subjects not listed below will also be considered):

- Governance, livelihoods, and organizations
- Socio-economics
 - Ecological and socio-economic impacts on the fisheries sector
 - Cooperation in the Caribbean: Large and small actions, results, and challenges.
 - Gender in fisheries
- Reefs and associated ecosystems fisheries
 - Shallow and deep reef fishes
 - Snapper and grouper fisheries
 - Fish spawning aggregations
 - Lionfish and other invasive species
 - Queen conch, spiny lobster, and other invertebrates
- Marine protected areas science and management
- Pelagic ecosystem and recreational fisheries
- Continental shelf ecosystem fisheries
 - Shrimp and demersal trawl fisheries
- Habitats, climate change, and coastal management
 - Essential fish habitats
 - Integrated coastal management
 - Climate change science and adaptation
 - Sargassum
- Aquaculture
- Marine Litter/Debris
- Science and Innovation
- UN Ocean Decade: 10 Challenges on the road to 2030



GCFI Student Awards

Student Awards for Academic Achievement

GCFI is awarding \$1,500 scholarships to the best oral and poster presentations. The content of the presentation is typically related to final research done by the student related to their thesis or dissertation. If the work is already completed and the student graduated, the thesis or dissertation must not have been defended prior to 1 November 2025. For students with “near complete” projects it is recommended that they should apply for an oral presentation for the award, while those students not quite as far along should apply for a poster presentation for the award. It is recommended that the research should be at least 50% complete in order to be eligible for the awards. Oral presentations competing for the award must be presented in-person at the conference. Virtual poster presentations are eligible for the award. The award winners will receive their scholarship at the following year’s conference, to help support their participation in this meeting. Complete instructions and eligibility requirements are on the [Outstanding Student Achievement Awards web page](#).

GCFI Travel Awards

GCFI will offer two travel awards of US\$750 each to eligible students to help offset travel costs to GCFI79. The deadline for students to apply for this award is **July 1, 2026**. Complete instructions and eligibility requirements are on the GCFI Student Travel Awards web page. Students will be notified of acceptance/rejection of their application by August 2026. Students may apply for a travel award and for consideration for the Student Achievement Award in the same year. Students who received the GCFI78 Student Achievement Award are not eligible for a travel award.

Ron Schmied Scholarship

The Ron Schmied Scholarship, a GCFI initiative supported by the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) and private individuals is in the amount of US\$1,500, and graduate students with an interest in social, economic, biological, ecological, or management perspectives on recreational fisheries are eligible to apply. The deadline for students to apply is **July 1, 2026** and students will be notified of acceptance/rejection by August 2026. Instructions and eligibility requirements are on the Ron Schmied Scholarship page. Students may apply for the Scholarship and be considered for the Student Achievement Award in the same year. Students may also ask to be considered for the Ron Schmied Scholarship and a GCFI Travel Award but will only receive one award.

Dr Clarence P. Idyll Scholarship

The Clarence P. Idyll Scholarship, a GCFI initiative supported by the Devon Creek Foundation is in the amount of US\$2,000 and aims to provide encouragement to the next generation of students and young professionals interested in marine fisheries. Graduate students interested in any aspect of Marine Fisheries (biology, ecology, socioeconomics, management, aquaculture) who might otherwise not be able to attend GCFI79 are eligible to apply. The deadline for students to apply for this award is **July 1, 2026**. Complete instructions and eligibility requirements for the Dr. Clarence P. Idyll Scholarship can be found [via this link](#). Students may apply for the Scholarship and for consideration for the Student Achievement Award in the same year. Students may also ask to be considered for the Dr. Clarence P. Idyll Scholarship and a GCFI Travel Award in the same year but will only receive one award.

Gladding Memorial Award (GMA)

As a component of the Fisheries for Fishers (F4F) Initiative, the GCFI Gladding Memorial Award (GMA) committee is requesting nominations of outstanding fishers for GCFI79.

This annual award is presented to select fishers (male or females) who demonstrate, as Peter Gladding did, significant commitment to the sustainable use and long-term conservation of marine resources in the Gulf and Caribbean region. The winner will be sponsored to attend GCFI79 in Curaçao.



You are invited to submit award nominations to the GMA committee at gma@gcfl.org. All nominations must be received by July 1, 2026 and nominators are welcome to request further information and guidance. Background information on the GMA, nomination forms with award criteria, and details of the process are available on the [Gladding Memorial Award webpage](#).

Fishers Forum & Fishers Field Trip

The Fisheries for Fishers Forum comprises a themed session in the main conference ending in the presentation of the Gladding Memorial Award and a field trip especially for fishers. Details of the Fisher Forum session and Fishers field trip will be provided in the second GCFI79 announcement.



Conference Field Trips

On the afternoon of November 4, 2026, you will have the opportunity to choose from various activities and tours that have been specially designed with GCFI members in mind. A contribution to some tours might be required from participants. Please check the GCFI website for updates on field trips

CINEFISH Film Festival

Are you interested in submitting a short film for this year's CINEFISH Film Festival at GCFI76? If so, please [complete this form](#) with the following information.

- Title of film
- Brief description of film (2-3 sentences)
- Film makers(s)
- Duration of film – Note: films should be a maximum of 15 minutes
- Image for film (png or jpg) – To be used for promotion
- Link to preview the film (YouTube, Vimeo, GoogleDrive etc)
- Type of film (Documentary, Animation or New Media)

For more information please contact: fadilah.ali@gcfi.org.

An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. A white boat with orange life rafts is in the turquoise water. The shoreline is covered in lush green vegetation, and a dirt path leads down to a small beach area.

Become a Sponsor of GCFI79

Sponsorship of the GCFI Annual Conference directly supports regional knowledge exchange, capacity building, and inclusive participation across the region. Your support helps to:

- **Expand access to science and knowledge** by supporting students & early-career professionals from across the region
- **Strengthen regional cooperation** by bringing together scientists, fishers, managers, policymakers to share solutions
- **Amplify diverse voices** through translation, interpretation, and inclusive participation initiatives
- **Advance science-based decision-making** through technical sessions, workshops, and conference proceedings
- **Foster the next generation of marine leaders** through networking, and professional development opportunities
- **Support lasting knowledge products** that inform fisheries management and marine conservation across the region

What you gain as a Sponsor?

- **Increased Brand Visibility & Exposure:** The annual GCFI meeting provides a platform to showcase your brand to a wide, global audience, potentially reaching new customers/stakeholders.
- **Targeted Audience Engagement:** Sponsoring events that align with your target audience allows you to connect with potential customers/stakeholders who are already interested in your industry or product/service.
- **Networking Opportunities:** The annual GCFI meeting offers valuable chances to connect with your target audience, potential partners, and clients, fostering valuable relationships.
- **Building Business Relationships:** Sponsoring events can help you build relationships with other organizations, leading to potential collaborations and partnerships.
- **Gaining Valuable Insights:** The annual GCFI meeting can provide valuable insights into customer/stakeholder views, trends and preferences, and other activities.

For more information on **Becoming a Sponsor of GCFI79**, please consult the [Sponsorship Prospectus](#) or contact gcfi@gcfi.org



Visas

Generally, tourists holding a valid passport may enter Curaçao without a written permit and remain with us for a period of maximum 30 consecutive days, with a maximum of 90 days in a 180-day period. However, several nationalities (e.g. Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela) must present a tourist visa. A visa should be applied for at least one month in advance

For more information on if you need a visa, [see this link](#)

For more information on entry requirements, [see this link](#)

Travel Insurance

For your convenience and peace of mind while attending GCFI79 in Curaçao, we strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance, especially considering unexpected events like cancellations or medical emergencies.

Where to Find Travel Insurance:

- **Online Travel Insurance Providers:** Websites like Allianz, Squaremouth, and CoverTrip offer a wide range of travel insurance plans.
- **Travel Agencies:** Your travel agency can often help you find and purchase travel insurance policies.
- **Credit Card Benefits:** Some credit cards offer travel insurance benefits, so check your card's terms and conditions.

Get in touch with GCFI

To stay informed of all GCFI79 updates, we encourage you to follow GCFI on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and use the Conference Hashtag #GCFI79.

Other helpful contact information:

GCFI Executive Director: [Fadilah Ali](#)

GCFI Program Director: [Alejandro Acosta](#)

Student Award Info: [Alfonso Aguilar-Perera](#)

Gladding Memorial Award Info: [GMA Committee](#)

We look forward to welcoming you to Curaçao for GCFI79!