



MEMBERSHIP VOTE:

GCFI BOARD

NOMINEES 2026





DR. MEGAN DAVIS

Megan Davis, Ph.D. is a Research Professor and the Director for FAU's Harbor Branch Queen Conch Lab program. For more than 45-years she has been studying the queen conch life cycle and innovating ways to save the species. She has become the world's foremost expert on queen conch aquaculture and has designed, implemented, and operated community-based queen conch hatcheries throughout the Caribbean region. Her philosophy is to work in the communities with the fisherfolk and citizens to empower them to grow their own conch for restoration and conservation. She has served on several boards over the years and currently serves as a Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum Trustee. Megan has been involved with Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute since 1982. She previously served on the GCFI Board from 1986 – 1998. Megan is a current GCFI Board Member since 2021, and the Board's Vice Chair since November 2024.

GCFI CHAIR NOMINEE



DR. JEREMY HIGGS

Jeremy Higgs is the Assistant Director of the Center for Fisheries Research and Development at the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. Currently, his work focuses on the life history, distribution, post-release survival, and movement of Highly Migratory Species and long-term fisheries monitoring. Jeremy works with the commercial fishing and recreational angling communities throughout the Western North Atlantic and Eastern Pacific Oceans to foster a cooperative approach for fisheries development, management, and sustainability. He first attended GCFI in 2012 as the Schmied Scholarship awardee and joined the Board in 2025.

GCFI VICE CHAIR NOMINEE



DR. ALEJANDRO ACOSTA

Alejandro worked for the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in Marathon. He was the team leader and research coordinator for the FWC/SFRL finfish program in the Florida Keys. His interests include fish biology and community ecology, especially the relationships between habitat structure and the distribution, abundance and connectivity of reef fishes. His work has examined tropical reef fisheries, community structure, fish spawning aggregations and stock assessment of reef, mangrove and estuarine fishes. He is actively involved in an annual multi-species visual censuses and juvenile seine surveys in near shore waters of the Florida Keys. Alejandro is actively involved in regional programs in the Caribbean region. Previously he has work in Venezuela and in the Pacific. Alejandro has been Chairman and Vice-chairman of GCFI and has been the Chair of the Program Committee for more than a decade

GCFI BOARD NOMINEE



DR. KELLY KINGON

Kelly Kingon is an Assistant Professor of Marine Science and Sustainability at the University of The Bahamas North in Freeport, Grand Bahama. She is also a Director and the Incorporator of the nonprofit organization, Conserve Habitats and Protect Organisms (CHaPO) in Trinidad and Tobago. She has a passion for conservation and pursues research on rebuilding threatened species populations, limiting habitat destruction and managing overfished species. She has worked on studies to identify shark nursery areas, understand seagrass pollinators, use sargassum for commercial purposes, track introduced species and their effects, and more. Kelly enjoys travelling, gardening, snorkelling and hiking. She has been a part of the GCFI family since 2009 and joined the Board of Directors in 2022.

GCFI BOARD NOMINEE



GABRIELA OCHOA

Gabriela Ochoa is a Honduran marine biologist, shark conservationist, and PhD candidate at Florida International University whose work bridges science, fisheries management, policy, and community engagement across the Caribbean. She is the founder and Executive Director of ilili, a Honduran nonprofit advancing shark and ray research and conservation. Gabriela works alongside fishers, government agencies, local organizations, and international partners to strengthen fisheries monitoring, inform management, build local capacity, and advance community-led conservation. An active participant in GCFI meetings, she brings experience in nonprofit leadership, governance, fundraising, and regional partnerships, alongside a strong commitment to collaborative and inclusive marine conservation.

GCFI BOARD NOMINEE



DR. HENRI VALLÈS

Henri is currently a Senior Lecturer in Ecology at the University of the West Indies (UWI) at Cave Hill, Barbados. He pursued a BSc in Biology at the University of Oviedo (Spain), a MSc in Natural Resource Management at the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) of UWI (Barbados) and a PhD in Biology at McGill University (Canada). He is a versatile marine biologist interested in applied ecology and marine resource management and conservation with focus on coral reefs and artisanal fisheries in the Caribbean. He is also committed to strengthening research capacity in the Caribbean in disciplines underpinning biodiversity conservation and has supervised more than a dozen postgraduate students. He has participated in most GCFI meetings since 2009.

GCFI BOARD NOMINEE