

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES COMMISSION

Business Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2025

100 Cambridge St, Boston, MA

In attendance:

Commercial Fisheries Commission: Dan McKiernan, co-chair, Director of Division of Marine Fisheries; Alison Brizius, co-chair, Director of Office of

Coastal Zone Management; Hollie Emery; Katie Almeida; Ed Barrett; Roger Berkowitz; Tim Brady; Gordon Carr; Beth Casoni; Aubrey Church; Al Cottone; Eric Hansen; Jackie Odell; Kevin Stokesbury. Absent: Vito Giacalone; Pamela LaFreniere; Angela Sanfilippo

Consensus Building Institute (Facilitators): Pat Field and Abby Fullem

Division of Marine Fisheries Staff: Brad Schondelmeier, Bradlie Morgan, Jared Silva, Story Reed, and Bob Glenn

Department of Fish and Game Staff: Sefatia Romeo-Theken, Deputy Commissioner

Coastal Zone Management Staff: Todd Callaghan and Tyler Soleau

Members of the Public: Senator Bruce Tarr, Julia Logan, Lisa Engler, and John Regan

Legislators or Their Proxies: Savannah Roth, Steve T., Matt McCormick, Chris, and Will

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Dan McKiernan and Alison Brizius—the Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) and the Director of the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) and co-chairs of the Commercial Fisheries Commission (CFC)—welcomed the group and expressed excitement for the potential work to be done. Dan emphasized the value of bringing this diverse group of stakeholders and state agencies. He anticipated interesting future meetings, visions for addressing commercial fishery concerns, and developing pathways for the administration and state legislature to support commercial fishing and the seafood industry.

Dan then introduced Abby Fullem and Pat Field of the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) who have been retained under state contract to facilitate CFC meetings. Abby outlined today's meeting's agenda, and invited each Commission member, DMF staff member, and members of the public to introduce themselves.

Senator Bruce Tarr provided some introductory remarks regarding how this public body came to be and his hopes that it would provide a unified voice to support the commercial fishing and seafood industry.

Commission members introduced themselves and shared their hopes for the CFC. Goals included: creating a unified voice for the industry, identifying and addressing issues proactively, creating a platform for economic support, connecting with legislature and state agencies, developing vision for fisheries to coexist with offshore wind energy development, and addressing critical infrastructure needs.

PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE COMMISSION AND INITIAL INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Pat Field provided an overview of the legislation relevant to the CFC's work and expressed hope to develop and recommend tools to address sustainability of the fishing industry, responsible development of fisheries, and infrastructure. He then reviewed his findings from scoping interviews with individual Commission members. These findings included how to coordinate responses to and influence outcomes across a diversity of fishery related issues. He reflected on the potential scope of the CFC, including synthesizing issues across the industry to bring a clear focus to issues of critical concern and acting as a liaison to bring a variety of adjacent stakeholders to the table. Potential projects included economic development, infrastructure, large scale offshore wind considerations, representing fishing interests in regulation, sustainable gear and technology, science of fisheries management, and adaptive management. However, he noted that the CFC's purpose was not to address specific regulatory and management issues, and the CFC needed to be cognizant of its relation to other existing groups whose purview it is to weigh in on these matters.

Jackie Odell asked about the role of the Massachusetts Seaport Economic Council. Director Brizius noted that this would be discussed during the meeting.

STATUS OF RELATED EFFORTS

Abby then introduced the speakers who would share statuses of various relevant efforts.

Designated Port Area (DPA) Assessment

Tyler Soleau of CZM presented on the Designated Port Area (DPA) Assessment. The project was meant to promote the use and development of ports and prevent loss of key characteristics such as navigable waterways, industrial operation areas, and land-based infrastructure. CZM, along with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), initiated the DPA Assessment in 2023 and are expected to complete the work this summer. The DPA development process included stakeholder outreach, geospatial economic analysis, and a review of existing data. The project focuses on key categories, including infrastructure and land use, funding, regulations, community engagement, coastal resilience, and criteria of Mass Leads Act. Ed Barrett and Beth Casoni asked about the purpose and scope of DPAs. Tyler noted that DPAs create areas dedicated to specific uses to protect and preserve industries and water access. Senator Tarr added that DPAs help protect working waterfronts and fishing industry, but relevant funding is

limited to the scope of the DPA's purpose. Alison noted that part of the DPA Assessment aimed at addressing these issues. A discussion between Aubrey Church, Tyler Soleau, Eric Hansen, and Senator Tarr followed about the number and location of DPAs. Tyler and Director Brizius noted that although there are currently 10 DPAs in the state, these can be modified through an existing boundary review process and ports can apply to become a DPA.

Alison explained that DPAs were initially created in 1978 to protect heavy waterfront industry areas like Boston and New Bedford and do not encompass all valuable working waterfronts in the state.

Katie Almeida suggested long-term leases from the state could help protect working waterfronts, similar to what is being attempted in Rhode Island. Senator Tarr and Gordon Carr discussed the challenges of mixed uses in ports and how DPAs can protect relevant heavy industries.

Director McKiernan and Senator Tarr then discussed the role of municipalities in port management and infrastructure. From this discussion, the CFC supported contacting the Massachusetts Municipal Association to attend a future meeting to discuss the municipalities' role in supporting port infrastructure needs.

Jackie Odell then asked about impact on transmission lines from offshore wind projects. Gordon Carr noted that DPAs have been used to protect energy transmission in New Bedford and were repurposed for offshore wind needs.

Ed Barrett then asked about the interface between DPAs and DEP's authority under Chapter 91. Director Brizius suggested coordinating with DEP present on Chapter 91 at a future meeting.

Lisa Engler of Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and Beth Casoni discussed sharing previous port assessment work with the CFC.

Massachusetts Ocean Advisory Commission

Todd Callaghan of CZM introduced the Massachusetts Ocean Advisory Commission, which was created alongside the Science Advisory Council through the Oceans Act to better understand resource prevalence and conflicts. The Oceans Act of 2008 required an Ocean Management Plan to be developed. The purpose of the Ocean Management Plan is to protect critical marine habitat and water-dependent uses through management frameworks for ocean-based projects. It considers 12 sensitive habitats, including important fish resource areas identified by DMF, and six water-dependent uses, such as commercial fishing and vessel paths, to inform developers. He noted that the ocean planning area begins three-tenths of a mile from shore.

Todd then introduced the Ocean Development Mitigation Fee Structure. Fees are placed in a trust fund — authorized by the Oceans Act and funded by developers — to support management, protection, restoration or enhancement of marine habitats, resources, and specified uses. The Fee Structure is managed by CZM and the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA).

Katie Almeida asked if any funds are used to study habitat changes after a cable is installed. Todd explained that this is the responsibility of the developers. A discussion followed between Jackie Odell, Al Cottone, and Todd about requirements governing the depth at which cables are to be buried. Todd noted that, under state law, developers must bury their cables and are required to monitor them to ensure that their cables remain buried.

Todd then described some relevant future developments and applications of the Ocean Plan, such as potential offshore sand resource identification, biodiversity initiatives, and adjusting fishery resources maps to consider vulnerability of species.

Kevin Stokesbury asked about offshore sand as a free resource. Todd noted that in addition to state and federal permit fees, sand extraction for beach nourishment may include an Ocean Development Mitigation Fee. Beth and Ed discussed challenges associated with beach nourishment projects.

Seaport Economic Council

Director Alison Brizius discussed the Seaport Economic Council (SEC). SEC invests in coastal communities and working waterfronts through grants focused on innovation, marine economic development, public education, coastal infrastructure, and dredging.

Barrett and Carr expressed support for these grants and called for expanded resources.

Sefatia Romeo-Theken, Deputy Commissioner of DFG, voiced support and shared the use of SEC grants to promote fisheries and pursue harbor infrastructure development projects. Sefatia then noted that compliance with Section 3A of the MBTA Communities Act is required to qualify for SEC grants, which creates a unique set of challenges.

Director McKiernan asked if CFC could pursue SEC grants or similar grants. Pat Field noted that there may be limitations, including the small size of SEC grants and restrictions on private entities. Alison added that these grants can be used alongside federal grants to leverage them and may be appropriate for small communities.

Sefatia called for MassDevelopment to be part of this conversation.

ResilientCoasts Initiative

Director Brizius introduced CZM's *ResilientCoasts* initiative. The project's goal is to develop a comprehensive statewide strategy for coastal resilience to create consistency and provide greater support. Stakeholder engagement informed a draft of analyses this spring. This will create 15 districts across the state and provide strategies and best practices for coastal resilience projects. A draft of this report is being released this spring for public comment. Brizius noted its relevance to the CFC with specific strategies necessary for working waterfronts. She highlighted key features of the plan, including its consideration of areas of housing or economic development, areas of industry at risk, and opportunities for investment. These considerations will inform recommendations for state action.

Aubrey Church voiced support for the program and wished there had been more engagement with fishery stakeholders in its development. Beth Casoni noted she was part of the development process. Alison agreed that more voices can always be involved.

As part of the draft public scoping comment, CZM committed to presenting the initiative to the CFC later this spring.

Seafood Marketing Commission

DMF Deputy Director Story Reed presented on DMF's Seafood Marketing Steering Committee and Seafood Marketing Program. The program was initiated through legislation about 10 years ago with a \$250,000 annual budget. It is advised by a 19-member steering committee made up of diverse industry members and chaired by Director McKiernan. The steering committee meets twice annually. The program's mission is to increase consumer demand for local seafood products and support local fisheries through education and awareness.

In 2024, the program placed an advertisement on Steamship Authority ferries in response to anti-lobster industry advertisements by PETA. Story described the programs' strategies. Strategic partnerships are crucial for the program and are developed through meetings at events like the Boston Seafood Expo. The program also funds social media posts like culinary recipes and mini documentaries on local seafood industry, as well as small grant programs focused on education, video, and outreach. The Program also published a comprehensive Port Infrastructure Report in 2021.

Dan and Story noted how Wendy Mainardi of DMF has taken on a role with Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to support seafood industry opportunities to apply for grants, such as Food Security Grants. She also attends the Food Policy Council meetings to advocate for seafood member inclusion. Al Cottone added that seafood traceability would be beneficial to advertise to increase transparency and awareness. Story agreed and voiced interest in DMF pursuing this. Beth thanked the Seafood Marketing Program for supporting the MLA in education and outreach grants.

Jackie Odell praised the DMF for their work to promote commercial fishers and the seafood industry during the pandemic.

Ed Barrett advocated for fishery and seafood industry representation at the Food Policy Council.

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission

Dan McKiernan introduced the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC). The MFAC was originally established as a public body in 1961 to inform the legislature of marine fishery issues. Later in the 1960s, it would be permanently codified as a nine-member body with regulatory oversight body of DMF.

Dan noted that while there may be some overlap between MFAC and CFC interests his intention is to keep these bodies separate and distinct but informed of the others work.

Ed Barrett asked about the body's composition. Dan noted that the legislature only specifies that it contains exactly nine members that are knowledgeable about fisheries and individual members are appointed by the Governor on staggered three-year terms with no term limits.

IDENTIFICATION OF TOPICS FOR DELIBERATIONS BY COMMISSION AT A FUTURE MEETING

Pat Field introduced a real-time Mentimeter poll to identify priority topics for the CFC. Polling responses presented the following priorities:

1. Fishery Economics
 - a. Economic development and stability and port infrastructure were highest priority.
 - b. Seafood marketing issues were identified as the next priority.
 - c. Shoreside processing was the lowest priority.
2. Offshore Wind
 - a. Enhanced input in wind energy policy was the highest priority.
 - b. Developing best practices for mitigation (including DMF-managed funds) and improved communication on wind energy policy and mitigation were identified as the next most important priorities.
3. State Management
 - a. Supporting and involving the fishing and seafood industry in the development of state-wide plans and management programs was identified as the highest priority.
 - b. Other priorities included supporting improved and innovative fisheries management and science programs.

Pat then led the discussion to determine which projects could be pursued by the CFC under each topic of interest.

Director McKiernan identified potential overlap among some of these priorities with other public bodies. This included the Seafood Marketing Steering Committee, the Massachusetts Fisheries Innovation Fund Panel, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission, and the New England Fishery Management Council.

Carr and Barrett supported approaching the legislature to increase funding for seafood marketing. Carr and Berkowitz then discussed using marketing to support sales of less popular species.

Field suggested asking MDAR to discuss expanding markets for local sustainable seafood with the CFC. Abby Fullem asked about involving seafood representation in the Food Policy Council. Story noted that this may be possible through coordination with MDAR. In response to this, and Barret's earlier comment, there was consensus support among the CFC to draft a letter to

MDAR requesting this action. Port infrastructure was discussed next. Pat suggested the SEC as a source of grants for small ports and asked about additional projects of interest.

Aubrey Church suggested working with federal efforts to develop working waterfront infrastructure bills and wondered if a similar approach could be taken at the state level. Dan asked if there would be interest in bringing the Harbor Masters Association and CZM working waterfront personnel to brainstorm potential solutions. Aubrey and Dan discussed the importance of informing harbormasters on the Port Profile Project. Ed, Beth, and Dan noted the differences in capacity and potential involvement of harbormasters. Aubrey added that communities should be included in these conversations to create support and foster collaboration. Al, Aubrey, and Beth then discussed how to share these ideas with coastal communities. Dan noted that community polls have been a helpful part of Port Profile Project.

Pat, Dan, and Story discussed creating a CFC focus group to review the last Port Profile Project and make recommendations for renewing the project. In response, Carr, Church, Casoni, and Barrett volunteered to work on a focus group with DMF-staff on this issue.

Pat noted that the CFC should monitor groups that support port and waterfront infrastructure for future potential projects. Gordon Carr then asked about the Ports Strategic Plan that was led by Mass DOT in 2016. Field committed to sharing this report with the CFC.

Fishermen's training programs were discussed next. Dan suggested planning training programs in community colleges and vocational schools and noted the collaboration currently occurring between the Cape Cod Fishermen's Alliance and Cape Cod Community College.

Jackie Odell and Ed Barrett expressed support for the idea but also concern for the obstacles facing young people as they enter the industry. They suggested waiting to push for training programs until the uncertainty and instability in the field can be addressed. Kevin Stokesbury added that cuts to federal fisheries staff may produce further uncertainty for the industry in the immediate future but may open doors for alternative and collaborative research projects as NOAA Fisheries is likely going to be challenged to do more with less.

Sefatia added that people with technical skills like mechanics, welders, and SCUBA divers can be a valuable part of the fishing industry.

Aubrey advocated for fisherman training. Pat asked if there was an exhaustive list of offered trainings for fishermen. Tim Brady said he would investigate this through the Maritime Academy where he teaches. Ed Barrett reiterated his concern about the value of bringing young people into the industry with no guarantee of success.

Pat and Beth discussed sending the Mentimeter poll questions shared today to Commission members and their constituents to be discussed in the future. CBI and DMF staff would collaborate to accomplish this.

Pat then introduced the topic of offshore wind energy development. Field noted there was substantial uncertainty regarding how projects would proceed under the new administration given their various development statuses.

Pat then discussed the polling results for CFC interest in offshore wind issues.

Katie Almeida asked about the DMF-managed funds. Pat noted that these funds were already negotiated. The Regional Plan Administrator is continuing its state-led effort funded by offshore wind developers, states, and foundations with design oversight committee. Dan McKiernan noted that the CZM Federal Consistency documents, which allow MA to ensure that projects in adjacent federal waters meet state standards and provide mitigation when an impact is anticipated, lacked fishing industry representation, and this could have helped with some of the details of the mitigation.

Ed noted that the fishing industry feels powerless in the offshore wind mitigation process and suggested that mitigation should be the primary focus. He voiced a need for political support for fishery mitigation. Potential mitigation strategies were discussed.

Roger Berkowitz suggested placing responsibility on developers to expand mitigation to the dismantling process. Beth Casoni agreed, noting that mitigation should be considered during both the construction and decommissioning timeline. She suggested the CFC provide guidelines to help fishermen file claims to prove losses due to offshore wind development.

Kevin Stokesbury then noted the immense ecological and environmental impacts due to offshore wind energy that are not yet fully understood.

Eric Hansen added that long-term effects could provide ample mitigation opportunities and suggested using this pause in development to better understand potential impacts and for the state to address these impacts through mitigation.

Beth then added that she is meeting with lobstermen in the next few weeks regarding training on the use of electronic logbooks, allowing fishermen to provide more clear reporting on real time catch data. Ed Barrett called for state legislature to push back on wind energy companies to honor power purchase agreements under the Green Communities Act.

A discussion followed regarding how this group can most effectively address these concerns. Dan suggested developing CFC focus group to discuss how to address offshore wind impact mitigation and minimization and distinguish the role of the CFC from the work being done by the Fisheries and Habitat Working Groups for Offshore Wind. Casoni and Carr suggested this group could bring issues up from the Fisheries Working Group for Offshore Wind and follow up on them for the full CFC. In response, Carr, Barrett, Odell, and Almeida volunteered to form a CFC focus group to work with CZM and DMF on relevant issues.

Carr also piggybacked on Hansen's earlier remark and expressed the need to use the pause in development to better understand various impacts and how best to involve the fishing and seafood industry in the process if and when offshore wind projects move forward.

Ed Barrett expressed his interest in the CFC inviting the Joint Chairs of the Legislature's Utilities Commission to a future meeting to better learn about the fishing and seafood industry's concerns, which could be a powerful tool in future negotiations. Jackie Odell echoed support for focusing on larger offshore wind policy issues related to fisheries rather than technical issues like boulder relocation.

Dan noted that the Fisheries Working Group for Offshore Wind has made great progress on technical issues like boulder relocation. That said, McKiernan and Field both felt there was a role for the CFC in determining if there are consensus positions among industry on this issue.

Odell asked who was responsible for boulder relocation and Field replied that it is managed under the Bureau of Offshore Energy Management's (BOEM) Boulder Relocation Plan and Massachusetts stepped into the issue recently because the state felt the guidelines were insufficient.

There was a discussion on the purpose of the Fisheries Working Group for Offshore Wind. John Regan from the New Bedford Port Authority suggested bringing together all the groups for a meeting to discuss expectations for each group. Pat said he can work with staff to distinguish these groups.

The next topic concerned consulting and engaging with the fishing and seafood industry on state-wide plans. Pat asked about the various plans produced under EEA. Director Brizius stated that CZM could bring plans, like *Resilient Coasts* and the Massachusetts Ocean Plan, to the CFC for discussion and feedback during the development phases.

Pat asked about the Ocean Plan timeline, and Todd and Alison responded that they're beginning outreach and hope to have a draft review later this year. Pat remarked that the CFC can have a role in reviewing plans for development elsewhere, as well, and while the Biodiversity Report is close to finish, there will be additional reports.

Todd and Aubrey discussed how to best include the fishing community in Ocean Plan feedback. Director Brizius indicated that DMF biologist Micah Dean will lead the Ocean Plan's Fisheries Work Group and will update Ocean Plan maps to incorporate more detailed fishing data. Alison suggested involving the CFC in that process. Barrett supported this suggestion.

The last topic dealt with improving fisheries science of fisheries management. Kevin Stokesbury said that with federal changes, data collection will be slower, which will increase uncertainty, and cause management delays. He noted that a potential way to triage this challenge would be through the identification of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) and using alternative approaches to management and science.

Roger Berkowitz noted innovative solutions point towards applications like eDNA and unmanned surface vehicles and added this will require additional collaboration between academics and state and federal researchers.

Aubrey Church added that there are opportunities to pursue more collaborative research with offshore wind during this pause. Todd added that the state recently passed a bill that requires research exploring eDNA as part of ocean management, which could be useful for the fishing industry.

Dan McKiernan suggested a strategy for the CFC may be to submit letters to Congress and the Administration to push for the federal government to prioritize more innovative and collaborative research.

Jackie Odell added that substantial uncertainty has come from aging fish in assessments as federal portside sampling was substantially cutback. She praised DMF for their efforts to supplement this critical loss but advocated for additional support for improving fisheries science. Barrett and Odell also noted Stokesbury's innovative research on open cod end surveys for groundfish. Casoni asked Stokesbury to present on this work in the future.

Jared Silva then reviewed various administrative issues related to finalizing CFC appointments and Conflict of Interest Law and Open Meeting Law training for public body members.

Field explained that CBI and state agency staff would work to develop a charter and workplan for the CFC to review. Fullem then reviewed the various entities the CFC identified as wanting to engage with at future meetings and other deliverables for state agency staff for future meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MEETING DOCUMENTS

- Commercial Fisheries Commission April 8, 2025 Meeting Agenda
- Primer of the Commercial Fisheries Commission and Procedures
- Commercial Fisheries Commission Interview Findings
- Enabling Legislation for Commercial Fisheries Commission
- Open Meeting Law Guidelines
- Open Meeting Law Certificate of Receipt
- Conflict of Interest Law Certificate of Receipt

UPCOMING MEETINGS

12:30 PM

June 27, 2025

Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Headquarters

1 Rabbit Hill Rd, Westborough, MA 01581