

Commercial Fisheries Commission
Final Business Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2026
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA

Attendees

Commercial Fisheries Commission: Daniel McKiernan, co-chair; Alison Brizius, co-chair; Edward Barrett; Gordon Carr; Hollie Emery; Tim Brady; Eric Hansen; Beth Casoni; Aubrey Church; Albert Cottone. Virtually: Vito Giacalone; Roger Berkowitz; Katie Almeida. Absent: Pamela LaFreniere; Jackie Odell; Kevin Stokesbury; Angela Sanfilippo.

Division of Marine Fisheries: Story Reed; Brad Schondelmeier; Bradlie Morgan. Virtually: Bob Glenn, Melanie Griffin, Kelly Griffin, Nichola Meserve, Wendy Mainardi

Office of Coastal Zone Management: Sam Haines

Department of Fish and Game: Tom O'Shea; Sefatia Romeo-Theken

Consensus Building Institute: Patrick Field; Abby Fullem

Members of the Public: Julia Logan; John Regan; J.J. Bartlett; Susanna Altenberger. Virtually: Valerie Nelson, Ellen Cebula, Patti-Ann Page, Shelley Edmundson, Christine Delisio.

Welcome and Introductions

Pat Field of the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) and Commercial Fisheries Commission (CFC) co-chairs Daniel McKiernan, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), and Alison Brizius, Director of the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM), welcomed the group to today's meeting. Field outlined the meeting's agenda.

Field then asked if there were any requests to amend the December 2025 business meeting minutes. There were no amendments. **A roll call vote was conducted, and the minutes were unanimously approved.**

Updates

State Updates

Story Reed then provided updates on recent seafood marketing events attended by DMF. The Seafood Expo of North America was recently held in Boston, where DMF's Seafood Marketing Program supports local Massachusetts businesses as part of Mass. Ave., a section of the Expo featuring only Massachusetts businesses.

Reed also shared that the next round of the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) opportunities was recently released. He added that between \$7 – 8 million will be awarded this round. DMF will also distribute an email about this opportunity, and applications are due May 4.

Hollie Emery provided an update on the Ocean Management Plan review process currently underway. Upcoming meetings of the Ocean Advisory Commission and Ocean Science Advisory Council (two bodies that oversee the Plan) will focus on a variety of topics including one meeting focusing on how fisheries resources are currently protected via the Ocean Plan from impacts due to ocean development, and proposed improvements for those protections.

Commission Updates

Abby Fullem invited CFC members for any updates. There were none.

Fullem then provided updates on the CFC's 2025 annual report, which will be shared for CFC review at a future meeting.

Offshore Wind Focus Group

Brad Schondelmeier updated the CFC on recent developments to offshore wind (OSW) in New England. Late last year, the Department of the Interior (DOI) suspended five active leases due to concerns with radar interference and security. This suspension resulted in multiple lawsuits against the federal government by developers, and the five lease areas were granted preliminary injunctions by federal courts. Regarding the radar interference concerns, Schondelmeier added that a Wind Turbine Radar Interference Mitigation Working Group exists to discuss and address any potential issues.

Additionally, the DOI and TotalEnergies, a French energy developer, renounced two OSW lease areas. The funds allocated to the development of the lease areas will be reinvested into oil and natural gas projects, and TotalEnergies will be reimbursed by the federal government. This may impact how future OSW areas are addressed.

Schondelmeier then provided updates on the existing projects throughout New England. These projects are at varying levels of completion. Vineyard Wind 1 is fully built and installed its final wind turbine blade replacements in mid-March. Empire Wind is under development and expects to begin turbine installation in 2026. Revolution Wind has 60 of its 65 turbines installed and has started delivering power to Rhode Island. Sunrise Wind has about half of their monopiles installed, is installing its export cable, and will begin turbine installation in the spring. Schondelmeier added that there are resources for mariners to be aware of where the cable mattresses will be located. There is some uncertainty regarding Gulf of Maine lease area development given the federal climate around OSW.

Schondelmeier then highlighted recent OSW milestones. Vineyard Wind installed their final turbine, and Revolution Wind began delivering electricity to the regional grid. The

same day, there was the record level of wind power generation for the New England region.

Gordon Carr spoke on the fate of rescinded lease area funds. He wondered if these could become available in the future for potential fishery mitigation funds. Carr, Pat Field, and Schondelmeier discussed this possibility and potential funding sources. Abby Fullem added that this can be discussed in more detail as it develops in the future.

Director McKiernan then asked whether all Vineyard Wind turbines are active. Schondelmeier offered to find more information on what percentage of these turbines are fully functional and delivering energy to the grid.

Dan, Schondelmeier, and Carr then discussed how Revolution Wind appeared to be completed more quickly than Vineyard Wind, largely due to the turbine manufacturer delay. Carr suggested that this timing may have been impacted by the threat of future OSW lease area suspensions by the federal government, as well.

Ed Barrett asked about the source of energy output data. Schondelmeier shared that the grid operator, an Independent System Operator (ISO), reports on daily energy source usage. Barrett asked whether energy production can be split by state, or by wind source (offshore vs. land-based). Schondelmeier responded that the data is made available for all of the New England region, and combines offshore and land-based wind, creating some data limitations. However, the OSW output can be estimated based on recent data of land-based wind outputs.

Barrett, Director Brizius, and Schondelmeier discussed this further. Data is available monthly for offshore wind, though is released with a 6-month lag.

Field added that more detailed data is collected, though may not be publicly available. He offered to look into how these might be made available.

Port Profile Focus Group

Story Reed shared updates on the Port Profile Focus Group. DMF is working with Urban Harbors Institute to analyze and compile survey data and fisheries data to develop updated port profiles throughout the state. Urban Harbors Institute will also redesign the document for readability and accessibility. The Port Profile Report is scheduled for a late-spring release and will be shared with the CFC at a future meeting. With the report's publication, the Focus Group will sunset. Reed added that the Focus Group was particularly helpful in refining survey questions to be distributed to harbor masters and fishermen.

Flounder Processing Focus Group

Story Reed then shared updates on the Flounder Processing Focus Group. The Focus Group met in early December. Since this meeting, DMF staff have been making strides towards marketing goals set out by the Focus Group. Wendy Mainardi of DMF has identified potential public relations firms to work with on this project. DMF is awaiting

project proposals for projects such as 3-month engagement plans and collaborations with chef ambassadors. Mainardi has also been working to better understand seafood processing and infrastructure needs, which appear to be led primarily by market and demand. The Focus Group will meet in the spring to discuss a marketing plan.

Aubrey Church asked about potential initiatives to bring flounder into schools, which has been done in Maine. Reed noted that there is interest in bringing underutilized fish species into school systems, adding that one of the goals of working with Massachusetts Farm to School is to explore how this can be done. Beth Casoni gave insight on how other states approach seafood marketing and expanding markets into schools, such as through innovative fish recipes.

Commercial Fishing Safety

J.J. Bartlett, founding president of the Fishing Partnership Support Services, shared a presentation on improving commercial fishing safety and potential opportunities for the CFC to endorse. The presentation was especially meaningful to bring to the CFC's attention in light of recent fishing vessel incidents in early 2026.

The Fishing Partnership Support Services (Partnership) is involved in commercial fishing safety, from prevention to family support in tragedy. Bartlett emphasized the importance of fishermen to the economy, and highlighted issues facing the industry, such the aging of the fleet, environmental conditions, and regulations. Bartlett described the risks of the commercial fishing profession, such as injury and job instability. For these reasons, commercial fishermen and their families need additional support, which is not provided through the profession, to ensure they're safe, healthy, and financially secure.

Bartlett then outlined the Partnership's various responsibilities, including providing healthcare and screenings, substance use prevention, educating fishermen to be first responders at sea, and leading fishermen safety trainings, wellness initiatives, and economic support programs. The Partnership also provides support services and interventions following fishing incidents and tragedies.

Aubrey Church thanked Bartlett for the Partnership's work. She remarked on the importance of safety training and mental health support, especially for families following tragedies. Beth Casoni echoed Church and thanked the Partnership for their safety trainings.

Al Cottone and Vito Giacalone spoke on the incredible work of navigators supporting the families of those lost with the Lily Jean.

Sefatia Romeo-Theken thanked the Partnership for their work. She spoke on the active risks of the fishing industry and emphasized that DMF and DFG can support these efforts led by the Partnership. She expressed support for additional funding towards these trainings and mental health resources for fishing communities.

Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner Tom O'Shea spoke on the interest of the Healey-Driscoll administration to offer support to the industry's safety training efforts wherever possible. He recognized the community beyond the Partnership and opportunities to bolster their efforts.

Ed Barrett spoke on the stress associated with this industry, such as weather, maintaining a vessel, infrastructure, and regulations. He called for regulations to better support fishermen and safety measures. Director McKiernan recognized Barrett's concerns and responded that DMF is sensitive to the economic impact of regulations. He added that he is open to additional conversations about how to ease this pressure.

Eric Hansen thanked the Partnership for their work, emphasizing the importance of collaboration within the industry. He expressed interest in the CFC helping with this work.

Church, Casoni, and Director McKiernan discussed how this support can be brought to the legislature as targeted requests for funding. Field, Commissioner O'Shea, and Romeo-Theken spoke on how these efforts can be incorporated into a budget.

Dan encouraged Bartlett and Commissioner O'Shea to discuss how to best advocate for additional funding.

Economic Development Focus Group

Fuller noted that the next goal for the Economic Development Focus Group will be to invite the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) to an upcoming meeting to present the polished version of this discussion.

Reed then shared updates from the Economic Development Focus Group, which is preparing to present to the EOED. He welcomed feedback from the CFC to help refine the presentation to be shared with EOED.

Reed started by speaking on the unique geography, processing and shipping opportunities, and historic importance of fishing in Massachusetts. He provided background on the economic impact of Massachusetts seafood as of 2023: the industry supports around 172,000 jobs (1st in the nation), is 3rd in the nation in sales impacts, 3rd in income impacts, 3rd in value-added impacts, and 3rd in total ex-vessel value. Further, in 2023, New Bedford was the highest valued port in the US, led by the impact of sea scallops. He then outlined the ex-vessel value trends and how they have changed overtime.

Reed then highlighted the lobster industry in Massachusetts as a potential sector to discuss with the EOED. The lobster industry impacts several ports of different sizes across the state.

Al Cottone asked whether this data reflected homeport or port of landing. Reed explained that this information is based on port of landing. Casoni and Carr discussed how out-of-state vessels can be reflected in these landings. The group discussed the impact of decreased scallop landings on Massachusetts' national rankings.

Reed added that the CFC may want to include other fisheries in this discussion, such as groundfish. He sought feedback on how to split the discussion, such as by species or by region, depending on the message to be shared with EOED.

Barrett voiced concern about the shrinking commercial fishing industry compared to other fast-growing sectors, such as biotechnology. Pat Field emphasized the value of the number of jobs supported by the commercial fishing industry. Fullem added that this can be a takeaway from the presentation to help inform how commercial fishing can better compete with other industries.

Gordon added that this work will hopefully lead to attention from the Legislature to better support the industry and recognize growth opportunities; however, he recognized that the sector will likely not surpass popular industries in Massachusetts like life sciences. He added that he's pursuing analyses to better understand the economic impact of commercial fishing statewide beyond the coasts.

Church suggested highlighting specific species and their economic importance in the presentation. She added that other infrastructure and sectors that benefit from commercial fishing should be considered in this valuation exercise.

Hansen added that there is substantial value in fish as a healthy protein. He wondered how this could be included in valuation. Roger supported this discussion.

Casoni wondered how the industry could be better supported to encourage young people to join the profession. She suggested additional educational opportunities, such as vocational schools.

Giacalone voiced concern about the shrinking fleet size. He spoke on the impact of regulatory changes on groundfish and called for improved data sources.

Commissioner O'Shea noted that there may be value in institutional demand, such as through prisons or schools.

Field provided additional insight into what opportunities the EOED looks to support. This effort will be further discussed at the Economic Development Focus Group's future meeting.

Offshore Wind Focus Group: Learning from [California Statewide Strategy](#)

Pat Field then shared a presentation on California's statewide strategy to approach collaboration and coexistence of commercial fisheries and OSW development. A similar strategy could be replicated in Massachusetts in the future. Field explained that a Working Group in California developed principles and guidelines to be followed by developers and other stakeholders. Although it did not have regulatory power, the guidelines did have influence over the developers' work. Highlights of the strategy include communication best practices, survey best practices, economic analyses, socioeconomic impacts, compensatory mitigations, and resiliency funds.

He outlined the socioeconomic analysis of the fisheries impacts, noting that this strategy could be replicated in Massachusetts. The strategy also outlined a compensatory mitigation framework, leaning into resiliency funds rather than entirely direct compensation. Field spoke on potential benefits of this type of strategy, including consistency and understanding across stakeholders.

Ed Barrett and Field discussed how to encourage developers to negotiate these topics. Field noted that guidance like this can allow the state a backstop and provide public clarity.

Aubrey Church wondered how to hold developers accountable and how to recognize appropriate stakeholders and representative communities, given the widespread impact of OSW development.

Carr added that this strategy shows some lessons learned following OSW development. He hoped this and similar guidance could help inform future development.

Katie Almeida added that Rhode Island developed a similar strategy, called the Ocean Special Area Management Plan (OSAMP). However, it ended up not having enough power over developers. Field noted that the California strategy did include a section outlining their authorities, and this could be used as a model in Massachusetts.

Public Comment

Field then welcomed public comment.

Susanna Altenberger spoke on the importance of improved vessel safety in the commercial fishing fleet.

Patti Ann Page of Gloucester Fishermen's Wives thanked JJ Bartlett for his presentation. She hoped that state support through state and federal subsidies, improved communications with federal entities, and technological support services would help support fishing communities.

Valerie Nelson emphasized the value of collaborating with local communities and bringing issues to EOED. She provided suggestions on how to effectively raise these issues to the legislature. She encouraged the state to reinvest in working waterfronts

and the industry. Finally, she emphasized the importance of a state-wide economic development strategy to better support the fishing industry.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

Upcoming Meetings

July 16, 2026

100 Cambridge St, Boston, MA

Meeting Materials

- CFC March 26, 2026 Business Meeting Agenda
- CFC December 12, 2025 Business Meeting Draft Minutes