MA Fisheries Working Group on Offshore Wind

Convened virtually

February 14, 2025, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

MEETING SUMMARY

State Updates

Dan McKiernan, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) welcomed participants to the meeting and introduced Brad Schondelmeier, who joins DMF as the Offshore Wind and Fishery Specialist. Alison Brizius, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Management (CZM) and Brad Schondelmeier shared the following updates:

The state acknowledges the impact of recent federal actions and emphasized that CZM continues to support the development of offshore wind, economic development, and local jobs. The state remains committed to collaboration with fishing and advocacy partners.

Four projects are currently under operation or construction: South Fork, Vineyard Wind 1, Revolution Wind, Sunrise Wind. Brad then provided greater detail on existing work around OSW.

The permitting and construction status of offshore wind projects adjacent to MA can be found here. A map labeled with the project names can be found below. Greater details can be found on the NROC data portal.

Direct Compensation Funds

- Seven projects have signed Fisheries Compensatory Mitigation agreements with the Commonwealth; South Fork Wind, Vineyard Wind 1, Revolution Wind, Sunrise Wind, New England Wind 1, New England Wind 2, and SouthCoast Wind
- Compensation is calculated on a project-by-project basis, and generally falls into three categories: 1) Shoreside fishing compensation, 2) In-Windfarm Footprint Losses, 3) Downstream Impacts
- *Community Funds (Ørsted):* Ørsted projects have made $600,000 available in Community Funds.
- *Direct Compensation:*
  Vineyard Wind 1 Program: Eligibility is determined by ability to show past/present fishing in the Vineyard Wind 1 footprint. Vineyard Offshore does not ask for proof of loss. Vineyard Offshore also offers a shoreside fishing program, which makes compensation funds available for eligible shoreside fishing businesses.
  Ørsted Program: No compensation requests have been rejected so far. Nine vessels have applied for direct compensation funds from South Fork Wind, and eligibility is still being assessed.
- Eligibility for both the Vineyard Offshore and Ørsted programs is administered through a third party administrator, not the developers directly.

Navigational Enhancement and Training Program (NETP)

- Eligibility requirements have been relaxed in the past year so more fishermen can apply and receive funds and at the same time not have to go through the more time-consuming process for assessing fishing loss. Details can be found here: https://cdn.orsted.com/-/media/www/docs/corp/us/mariners/202501_netp_one-pager_digital.pdf?rev=57c6af3557d449cbb7bc3d765c219de3&hash=FA9C08DC50D9F215A0C7730C998A543A
- The third-party administrator for this program is the Paratus Group (POC: Paul Lattanzi, Paul.R.Lattanzi@paratusgroup.org). Paul is available to help fishers through the process.
- So far $74,0000 in vouchers have been distributed for South Fork, and $174,000 from Revolution Wind (as of 2/7/25).

Boulders Updates

- CZM and DMF are working with developers to highlight the importance of relocating and recording the locations of boulders according to new and established guidelines.
- CZM and DMF continue to work with fishers to identify a process that could be used to deconflict moved boulders with towable bottom, to remedy cable installation berms, and improve communication between fishers and developers.

Fishing Industry Updates

Fred Mattera, from the Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island, provided updates on a collaborative project to assess boulder locations based on Revolution Wind's data. The project

found that 95% of boulders are on glacial bottom rather than towable bottom. This has mitigated some concerns about needing to move boulders. The Commercial Fisheries Center is currently working on a collaborative proposal to RI Sea Grant for funding to review the locations of towable bottoms, and to identify boulders that need to be moved. The goal is to create guidance for boulder relocation.

Bill Amaru, from Chatham Commercial Fisherman, named concerns about floating offshore wind development amongst fishers on Cape Cod, particularly related to turbines and anchor lines. Amaru expressed the desire for transparency around where turbines are going to be located.

MassCEC Research Announcements

MassCEC has finalized seven research awards focusing on filling scientific gaps in offshore wind development, with project budgets ranging from $150,000 to $650,000. The projects include thematic focuses on fisheries, habitat, and technology:

The grantees are as follows:

- **Inspire Environmental** (PI: Annie Murphy): Promoting Beneficial Colonization of Offshore Wind Infrastructure
- **National Audubon Society** (PI: Jill Deppe and William DeLuca): Safe Passage - Mapping Songbird Migration Routes and Altitudes over the Atlantic to Determine Potential Impacts of Offshore Wind
- **New England Aquarium** (PI: Orla O'Brien): Comparative Analysis of Marine Mammal Density and Detection Rates from Aerial Surveys
- **Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute** (PI: Tim O'Donnell): Evaluating the Effects of Offshore Wind Development on Fisheries Using Environmental DNA
- **Gulf of Maine Research Institute** (PI: Hannah MacDonald): Understanding Fishing Interactions - Gulf of Maine Fisheries and Floating Offshore Wind
- **New Bedford Port Authority** (PI: Blair Bailey): Modeling Fishing and Fishing Vessel Behavior and Assessing Access in and Around Wind Energy Areas
- **Predyct, Inc.** (PI: Himanshu Maheshwari): WINDSENSE - Wireless Intelligent Nano-Devices, A Sensor Network for Sustainable Energy

The following question (Q) and (A) were shared by the working group:

Q: A question for the Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute - How does eDNA last in the environment? I.e. Can you determine if a codfish was there a day or a week ago? A: eDNA lasts 24 to 48 hours. It can show the presence of fish in the last couple of days.

Q: How is eDNA used for stock assessment? A: This would be a next jump in the technology. The technology is not yet in a place where it can be used for stock assessment. It more indicates presence or absence, and not abundance.

Vineyard Offshore 2 - Draft Fisheries Monitoring Plan Presentation and Review

Steve Cadrin (UMass Dartmouth) presented draft recommendations for fisheries monitoring in the Vineyard Offshore 2 lease area (OCS-A 0522). This work is in collaboration with Vineyard Offshore 2. Following guidance from the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA), the plan incorporates commercial fishing data from multiple sources (2015-2024) and recreational fishing information. The assessment identified predominant species in the area including spiny dogfish (26%), scup (19%), little skate (16%), red hake (8%), and silver hake (6%). The primary objective is to detect any substantial changes in abundance of commercially important species (including Jonah crab, longfin squid, skates, and summer flounder) and recreational species (bluefin tuna and tropical pelagics) using before and after control-impact analysis (BACI). Secondary objectives include monitoring spatial distribution, size, diet, and larval density changes. The proposed methodology combines NEAMAP protocol trawl surveys with environmental monitoring, supplemented by fisher logbooks, ventless trap surveys for lobster and Jonah crab, drop camera surveys for scallop recruitment, and plankton surveys. This approach is currently facing some challenges with NMFS and BOEM limiting types of fisheries surveys due to Endangered Species Act concerns. Steve Cadrin and Crista Bank (Vineyard Offshore fisheries liaison), invite feedback on this plan. Fishers can reach out to Steve or Crista Bank, Vineyard Wind, for a 1-1 conversation on the plan. Vineyard Offshore 2 is offering renumeration for these conversations.

The following question (Q) and (A) were shared by the working group:

Q: When do these recommendations need to be finalized? A: No exact deadline has been established. Vineyard Wind 2 will communicate when a specific date is determined.

Q: Why aren't surf clams and ocean quahogs included in the monitoring plan? A: The fisheries data doesn't show clam dredge effort in area 522. Similar to tilefish, this involves a relatively small number of permit holders. This is being confirmed through conversations with permit holders. Drop cameras don't typically detect clams.

Q: How will habitat changes be monitored, especially around turbine structures? A: Habitat monitoring is required and will need to adapt for pre/post-construction changes. Benthic habitat sampling will occur near turbines and at varying distances. Additional monitoring plans specifically focused on habitat are in development.

Q: How will the plan adapt to observed changes during construction? A: A regular peer-reviewed process will be implemented to ensure monitoring plans remain sensitive to changes and can be adapted as needed.

Q: What about summer flounder and clam fisheries that were historically present? A: Summer flounder appeared in limited numbers in the surveys. Regarding clam fisheries in area 501, it was noted that the majority of fishermen there are from Rhode Island.

Q: Are there workarounds for conducting surveys during closures? A: For lobster and Jonah crab, which aren't well-monitored by trawl surveys, alternative monitoring methods are needed. Ropeless gear would likely be required for lobster/crab surveys due to vertical line restrictions. For trawl surveys interacting with endangered species, the team is exploring permitting options before Endangered Species Act consultations begin. NMFS noted their staff are available to discuss permitting requirements.

Q: How will juveniles be monitored, especially those in rocky environments? A: There's an ongoing NYSERDA project in partnership with Stony Brook University developing sampling methods for juveniles in rocky environments.

Q: Could optical surveys be used instead of drop cameras? A: Drop cameras have the advantage of existing baseline data, enabling pre-development comparisons. However, there may be HABCAM data from 2017 that could be utilized.

Q: Could closed areas like Nantucket be used as control areas? A: Yes, already closed areas could serve as control sites for comparison.

Q: How will the plan account for temperature changes affecting species composition? A: The recommendations aim to integrate lease area monitoring with broader regional trends to differentiate between wind development impacts and larger regional changes. Oceanographic data will be collected. Areas 501 and 522 are known to be vulnerable to changing water temperatures.

Q: What requirements do these recommendations fulfill? A: These recommendations are designed to meet BOEM requirements for lease area monitoring while also addressing broader regional monitoring needs.

Vineyard Wind 1 - Boulder Update

Crista Bank (Vineyard Wind) presented an update on boulder relocation activities along a 35 nautical mile cable corridor to shore. Initial surveys began in 2018 to identify and avoid rocky areas. Boulder relocation work started in 2022 with environmental inspectors and fisheries liaisons present, resulting in 51 boulders being moved. The project maintained a 66-foot cleared path, with the goal of minimizing boulder movement whenever possible. All bottom disturbance activities required permits from state authorities and the Army Corps of Engineers. Plotter files with boulder locations are available in 20 different formats for fishers to use. It continues to be important to involve fishers in this process, to work with developers to accurately identify towable ground.

The following question (Q) and (A) were shared by the working group:

Q: Some boulders are much smaller than 440 lbs. Were these boulders not relocated because they weren’t found, or weren’t considered necessary to move? A: They didn't need to be moved.

Q: Has there been awareness of fisheries trawl surveys experiencing interactions not only with boulders but also with cables and berms created by cables? A: Crista wasn't aware of these issues and indicated that she would follow up on this question.

Q: Are specific boulder sizes available? A: Vineyard Wind has weight information but needs to confirm if size measurements are available.

Developer Updates Q&A

The facilitators shared that Developer Updates had been sent around a head of time to save time in the meeting. Participants were encouraged to read those updates ahead of the meeting and then the facilitators provided time for participants' questions.

Q: What type of protection is being installed over cables for the Ørsted projects? A: Mattresses are currently planned, with all locations available on the developer's website. When asked specifically about regular concrete versus ECOncrete, Claire Hodson (Ørsted) said they would need to follow up with that information. It was noted that cable protection near Spindle Rock on the Vineyard Wind 1 cable uses ECOncrete.

Q: In reference to the fish kill at Old Dominion, is there a mechanism for developers to follow up on the cause of such events? Are there provisions in the Construction and Operations Plans (COPs) to respond to these occurrences? A: Crista Bank (Vineyard Wind) explained that protected species observers are present during operations, conducting monitoring before and after pile driving, and would be required to report any fish kills. The response involves two issues: the regulatory scheme and determining who has authority to act. Thomas Moorman and Alex Schneider from BOEM OREP were identified as primary contacts for the CVOW croaker kills investigation and offered to answer questions if available (contact: thomas.moorman@boem.gov, alexandra.schneider@boem.gov).

Q: What is the size of scour pads around towers? A: The maximum scour protection footprint, including the scour pad and radius is 175 feet. This may change in the future as scour protection is part of the engineering design specific to each turbine and project. Developers need to permit for the maximum size, though actual sizes may vary within an area. It was suggested that specifying these details would be helpful for fishers.

Q: Should someone from Carbon Trust representing the Regional Fund Administration for Compensatory Mitigation for OSW be invited to the next meeting? A: This was suggested, with a note that the Design Oversight Committee had met for the first time shortly before Christmas.

FWG Business, Work Plan

The Fisheries Working Group Work Plan was briefly discussed, with Pat Field (Consensus Building Institute Facilitator) mentioning two topics for further discussion and follow up:

- Regional Fund Administrator

- Bubble Curtains and impacts on fisheries

Next Steps and Action Items

Vineyard Wind 2

- Follow up on deadline for accepting feedback on the draft fisheries monitoring plan
- Confirm availability of boulder size measurements versus only weight

Ørsted:

- Confirm whether concrete mattresses installed over cables are regular concrete or ECOncrete

CBI

- Revise work plan for the remainder of the year, incorporating suggested topics

Next Meeting:

- June 27th, 2025, Westborough, MA