

## MA Fisheries Working Group on Offshore Wind

*Convened Virtually and In-person | MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Westborough, MA*

*June 27, 2025 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM*

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### DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the meeting. Presentations shared can be accessed on the [Fisheries Working Group website](#).

#### State Updates

**The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) shared the following updates:**

DMF shared status updates for the five offshore wind projects currently under operation or construction: South Fork, Vineyard 1, Revolution, Sunrise, and Empire. More information can be found in the slides, this [map](#) of existing projects, and on the [NROC Data Portal](#).

The Massachusetts (MA) Fisheries Innovation Fund (FIF) is a \$1.75 million mitigation fund created by Vineyard Wind to “support programs and projects that ensure safe and profitable fishing continues” as current and future offshore wind projects are developed. Other developers will add mitigation funds to FIF in the future. DMF is working to finalize the request for proposals solicitation and will begin accepting proposals this summer for fishing innovation, community, and safety projects.

#### Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):

**Q:** Is funding limited to MA industries?

**A:** Not necessarily, but all projects must include a benefit to MA fisheries, whether commercial or for-hire.

**Q:** Will future solicitations for this fund occur annually?

**A:** It is not yet determined. The FIF Advisory Panel will make a recommendation. The focus and scale of the projects might shift depending on the money added. DMF is working with the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) and MA Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) to ensure projects funded are not duplicative with their efforts.

The Empire Wind 1 Fisheries Compensation Program application is open through October 13, 2025. Details are available on the [program website](#). Empire Wind 1 compensation eligibility is based on fishing in the lease area during the 2020-2024 window. Questions can be shared with the program administrator at [offshorewind@demaximis.com](mailto:offshorewind@demaximis.com) or 865-691-5052.

#### Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):

**Q:** Can the 2020-2024 timeline be altered? During that time, the Mid-Atlantic fishery was reduced and might not represent the potential landings of that area.

**A:** Reach out to the developer’s fisheries liaison to share details. The timeline is set by BOEM.

**Q:** What happens to any unissued compensation funds? Could it get transferred to the innovation fund?

**A:** Reach out to the developer of Empire Wind for that information. In some cases, developers can receive leftover money but the Equinor program does not include that stipulation.

**Q:** The developer should have talked to the fishing industry when determining the timeline and location to learn about the variability. Did they consult with BOEM?

**A:** There were numerous factors to consider, e.g., available funds, project description as best understood before review. Developers are encouraged to consult with fishers to get feedback on program design, but it is not required. It is worth discussion about how to better use the FWG to elicit feedback.

**Q:** We should use the pause on offshore wind development to improve these compensation funds. **A:** There are multiple efforts to learn from these early fund processes. For example, the regional fund administrator (RFA) process—the creation of one regional fund rather than developer-specific ones—is learning a lot from early fund processes. The oversight committee includes fishermen. This is one effort that tries to lay out an approach with input as it goes along.

The MA Commercial Fisheries Commission convened for the first time this spring. The legislatively-established Commission is charged with drafting recommendations to the Governor about increasing the sustainability of the state's commercial fishing industry.

**The Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) shared the following updates:**

The European Consortium for Ocean Research Drilling began a study off of Rhode Island in May: the New England Shelf Hydrogeology Project - Expedition 501. They are drilling for fresh water under the seafloor near wind lease areas and using water chemistry analysis, sedimentology, microbiology, and micropaleontology to analyze their core samples. The project will end in August.

**Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** What are the core samples for? What happens if they find precious metals? Ocean mining is a large concern.

**A:** While the initial prospectus mentioned minerals, our interpretation of the daily reports coming from the researchers is that the study is just looking for water, water chemistry, and sediment grain size.

**Q:** If they find water, will they backfill or leave it open?

**A:** They are drilling into sediment, not bedrock, so it would backfill as they drill. They are leaving sensors at at least one site. We advised them that it will likely not last long due to fishing activity.

**Boulder Relocation**

DMF presented details of the ongoing partnership between CZM/DMF and Rhode Island SeaGrant, RI Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) and Commercial Fisheries Center of RI (CFCRI). This partnership was born out of an April Boulder Relocation workshop and had met once in May and June to develop ideas, determine possible projects and leads, and discuss potential future funding sources.

**Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** Are there research ideas coming out of this collaborative work?

**A:** The MA-RI collaboration is informal at this point. There have not been specific collaborative ideas at this point.

**Resilient Coasts Plan**

The MA ResilientCoasts Plan is a [statewide initiative](#) to develop strategies and make recommendations for a consistent framework for resilience. The plan was released for public comment this spring. CZM staff are reviewing and incorporating feedback and finalizing the plan.

**Ocean Management Plan Review**

CZM is conducting a formal review of the 2021 Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan in 2025, with a possible update to be released in 2026. The public comment period is expected to take place this winter.

## **Fishing Industry Updates**

Bill Amaru shared a written comment that was distributed at the meeting.

Gordon Carr of the New Bedford Port Authority provided an update on its offshore wind vessel transit and notification system. The port is coordinating vessel escorts with harbor masters to clear paths for transits. Around 450 people have signed up to receive text notices when transit will occur. Transit typically takes 10-15 minutes and fishing vessels sit off to the side until the transit is complete. Another challenge is the potential for overcrowding at the shoreside. New Bedford has benefitted from a combination of marine commerce terminals by state and private facilities that preserve and protect commercial fishing infrastructure. New Bedford is expanding its commercial fishing infrastructure by expanding Leonard's wharf, 300 ft of berthing space, as part of an ongoing process to deconflict transit.

Beth Casoni of the MA Lobstermen Association (MLA) shared that they have a project funded by Vineyard Wind that will help the lobster industry make compensation estimates. This project is in response to the challenges that lobstermen face identifying their fishing footprint as required for compensation plans. Fishers can request their fishing footprint data from MLA.

### **Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** How is the fishing footprint calculated?

**A:** MLA matches the price a catch was sold for with geoeconomic data to calculate a heatmap. When a vessel enters a lease area, the technology monitors how long they fish there. The intention is to show the overlap of fishing areas and lease areas.

**Q:** Does this project just apply to the Vineyard Wind lease area?

**A:** It is currently just in the Massachusetts and Rhode Island lease areas. MLA intends to conduct a similar effort in the Gulf of Maine and New York.

**Q:** Is this tool available for MLA members only?

**A:** No.

**Q:** What species are you focused on when calculating the footprint?

**A:** The process can be used for any species and multiple species.

**Q:** How do you verify the data?

**A:** Fisher's mitigation entries must match the amount they sell. Data submitted to MLA stays with the organization. MLA is trying to incorporate vessel trip reporting with this collection process to minimize the number of times fishermen have to enter information. MLA is open to suggestions to improve the process.

**Q:** How does the system account for fishing trips that are only partly in a wind lease area?

**A:** A geofootprint shows when a vessel crosses into or between leases.

**Q:** Is the data continuous?

**A:** It captures data from the start of a trawl to the end.

**Q:** Is the funding for a certain number of vessels? Or the cost of the program?

**A:** The collection process would need to be tailored to each fishery. MLA would like to expand the technology to make it available to all fisheries but does not want to be the keeper of all fishery data.

Fred Mattera of the Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island (CFCRI) shared an update on the Ørsted-funded project to enhance fishing around boulders. A science technician from the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF) plotted towable and non-towable areas. Around 85% of boulders are located in non-towable grounds. For boulders within towable grounds, CFRF is developing a strategy to relocate them and avoid snags for mobile fishers. A report will be developed about this process.

CFCRI is hoping that MA and RI will partner to create a working group of mobile gear and fixed gear fishers to examine pathways for export cables and boulder conflict. This group can make recommendations on cable layout and habitat creation, and mitigating potential hangs in the future.

CFRF is seeking funding for a project to collaborate with mobile gear fishers to orient mattresses in a favorable way for tows. CFRF is looking to redesign existing mattresses so that fishers can tow over them.

## **South Fork Wind Benthic Story Map**

Annie Murphy, Inspire Environmental, presented the [South Fork Wind Benthic Story Map](#) which illustrates the results of Ørsted's comprehensive benthic monitoring program. Benthic surveys have not detected demonstrable changes in the biological communities or benthic functions associated with soft sediments surrounding offshore wind structures, soft sediments along the export cable, or boulders relocated during seafloor preparation.

### **Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** It is interesting that the benthic monitoring captured a video of a barrel fish, which has not previously been seen in this area.

**Q:** How does Ørsted deal with steel structure and steel fishing vessels to avoid fouling? Good electrical current is necessary which requires growth removal.

**A:** Inspire Environmental and Ørsted monitor the steel structures and electrolysis regularly. Ørsted has not used this process in the United States. Ørsted will follow-up on this question.

**Q:** How frequently will Inspire Environmental conduct these surveys? Will future surveys be posted online as well?

**A:** The survey will happen in year 1, 2, 3, and 5 of post-construction.

## **Ørsted Updates**

Claire Hodson, Østed, gave a construction update on Sunrise and Revolution Wind. She encouraged participants to review the [Information for Mariners webpage](#) which is the primary avenue for mariner communication on matters related to projects, boulder locations, programs, and on-the-water activities. For Rhode Island fishermen in the Revolution Wind lease area, the fisheries direct compensation program can be accessed at [revwindfisheriescomp.com](#). All other fishermen should visit [fisheriescompensationprogram.com](#).

Ørsted is conducting ongoing fisheries monitoring surveys at all of its projects. Benthic monitoring will proceed this summer at South Fork Wind and Revolution Wind. Sunrise Wind has completed all pre-construction monitoring and will begin post-construction monitoring in 2026, pending the construction

schedule. Starboard Wind completed the pre-development benthic characterization surveys in June 2024 in support of the project's construction and operations plan (COP) development.

**Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** Will Sunrise Wind have a conversion station and intake and outfall monitoring of larval transport?

**A:** Yes. Quarterly monitoring occurs at the target intake area and will continue through and a few years after construction.

**Q:** Quarterly sampling may not be enough to capture larvae suspended in water. They are typically only suspended for a few days.

**A:** There will be increased sampling December through April once the system is online.

**Q:** What is involved in the cod spawning research? Are you capturing presence/absence? How are you determining spawning?

**A:** This research consists of a glider-based survey on predetermined tracks through the lease areas. Passive acoustic monitoring captures male spawning grunts. Benthic monitoring also identifies tagged cod.

## **Responsible Offshore Science Alliance Update**

Tricia Perez, Research Project Manager at ROSA, reminded participants that the organization was founded in 2019 to serve as an objective resource for all sectors involved in offshore wind development and to facilitate the coordination of regional scientific research to collaboratively and efficiently deepen understanding. Among other projects, ROSA maintains FishFORWARD, a database for fisheries and wind research.

ROSA conducted a Gaps Analysis in 2024 to identify high priority regional research needs. ROSA awarded Equinor-funded research projects. Projects pertained to three of ROSA's main topic areas: supporting fisheries access; understanding potential offshore wind impacts to larval fish; and fisheries monitoring: data integration, evaluation, & analysis.

**Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** What is the estimated timeline for the research projects?

**A:** The larval studies will span three years; all other projects will span two years. Projects will be able to begin as soon as contracts are finalized.

## **Carbon Trust Floating Wind Technology Review**

Sam Strivens, Senior Manager at Carbon Trust, presented an overview of floating offshore wind technology, including considerations for turbine spacing and station divination; substation design types and power transmission; O&M procedures; and new technologies in development. His presentation synthesized the state of the technology and provided insights on array design.

**Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** In initial talks in the Gulf of Maine with BOEM, the intention was to establish a one-by-one mile grid of floating turbines to concentrate the technology and leave more space for fishing. But, with anchoring systems and dynamic cables, it seems the whole area is likely to be off limits to fishing. What can we learn from Europe? Are different anchoring technologies being tried? Is there talk about a standardized anchoring system?

**A:** There are a lot of factors at play, and water depth is a notable one. In shallow water, European turbines use a more robust mooring system to account for additional movement thereby extending the footprint more than in deeper waters. In California, the depth is over 1000 meters, which requires them to splay out at the seabed to account for tension lag.

**Q:** A daisy chain, or linear array, design would have less impact on fishing and be simple to run. Is there any technical reason to not do a linear array?

**A:** One factor is that there are higher wind speeds further offshore. Wind farms should be located in high energy zone potential areas. There have been discussions about this model but no examples to date.

## **Floating Offshore Wind Study Tour**

Jackie O'Dell, Northeast Seafood Coalition; Brad Schondelmeier, DMF; and Erin Wilkinson, ME DMR, Collaborators from the Maine Governor's Energy Office, Maine Department of Marine Resources, and Massachusetts DMF presented findings from their study tour of floating offshore wind (FOSW) in Scotland. The United Kingdom's decarbonization goals have broad public buy-in and are driving the offshore wind efforts. The success and viability of FOSW is very dependent on port and shipping infrastructure and further impacted by grid connection, shoreside infrastructure and development costs. The Scottish fishing industry has serious concerns with the environmental impacts, lack of monitoring, and spatial conflicts involved in FOSW developments. Both fishermen and developers desired more oversight and guidance from the government. Compared to Scotland, some felt that the Gulf of Maine lease siting process and state/federal involvement was better at facilitating mitigation and creating a more equitable process between developers and fishers.

### **Participants shared the following questions (Q) and answers (A):**

**Q:** How long does the wind farm need to be operational before it reaches carbon net zero?

**A:** Current costs per gigawatt are huge because of transport, size, materials, etc. The price of FOSW is still much larger than other forms of energy, so efficiencies will be needed to make it viable. I cannot speak to the carbon neutrality question.

**Q:** The Scottish Fishing Association seems to have the same concerns now as they did a few years ago; nothing has changed.

**A:** Yes, there are a lot of concerns about regulations, loss of spatial footprint, and a lot of ocean uses. Their perspective is less positive than anticipated.

## **Next Steps & Action Items**

Abby Fullem, Consensus Building Institute facilitation team, closed the meeting and reviewed the following next steps:

- CBI will compile a list of fisheries compensation programs and distribute to the FWG
- CBI will share Equinor contact for fisheries compensation program
- CBI will share links referenced during the meeting
- The next Fisheries Working Group meeting will be scheduled in Fall 2025