

Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium – Advisory Board

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction & Background

Maine passed legislation in 2021 to create a Research Consortium to coordinate, support and arrange for the conduct of research on floating offshore wind power projects in the Gulf of Maine (Title 35-A, §3406). PL 2023 Chapter 481 (LD 1895), passed in 2023, expanded the Research Consortium Advisory Board and allows for the Research Consortium’s fund to be used to support conservation actions.

The Research Consortium, a collaboration of the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO) the Department of Marine Resources (DMR), and the Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife (MDIFW), is overseen by an Advisory Board to develop and execute a research strategy to better understand the local and regional impacts of floating offshore wind power projects in the Gulf of Maine (GOM). This includes:

- Opportunities and challenges to existing uses in the GOM, including how to best support co-existence with the fishing industry;
- Methods to avoid and minimize impacts on ecosystems and existing uses; and
- Ways to realize cost efficiencies in commercialization.

These Terms of Reference outline the objectives and scope of the Advisory Board, based on legislative requirements, review of similar research consortia and input from a range of stakeholders.

2. Role of the Advisory Board

The Advisory Board serves to create an open forum for dialogue among a broad cross-section of stakeholders and allow for co-generation of ideas, prioritization of research and joint learning **to support responsible development of this nascent industry in the Gulf of Maine.**

The specific objectives include:

- Advise the state on the development and execution of the components of the research strategy for the Consortium.
- Understand and identify which data gaps and research questions are most important to address for Maine and prioritize projects accordingly.
- Identify projects that are most likely to address data gaps and research priorities in a suitable way.
- Support and clearly influence the project selection and prioritisation process.

- Ensure projects meet one or more of the Consortium objectives, including supporting co-existence with the fishing industry, avoiding and minimizing impacts to Maine’s ecosystem and ocean users, and/or contributing to the cost reduction of floating offshore wind in Maine.
- Provide advice on defining the scope and requirements of studies.
- Share knowledge, data or outcomes of existing studies in order to have an accurate reference for the Consortium’s work.
- Offer input and guidance on ways to communicate research findings, data and outcomes of Consortium-supported research to key constituencies and the public.
- Guide projects by providing review and comments on project deliverables.

3. Advisory Board Membership

Specific members of the Advisory Board (12) are defined through the enabling legislation. Additional categories of members have been identified to include expertise and advice from a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds.

Required by legislation:

- Two individuals from organizations that represent commercial lobster harvesting interests
- At least one individual from an organization that represents commercial fisheries interests (non-lobster)
- Commissioner of DMR (or designee)
- Commissioner of MDIFW (or designee)
- Two individuals, not represented by an organization, that represent the interests of the commercial lobster harvesting industry and commercial fisheries
- One individual from the recreational charter fishing industry
- At least one individual who is a member of one of the federally recognized Indian tribes in Maine
- Two individuals with expertise in marine wildlife and habitats
- At least one individual with experience in commercial offshore wind power development.

Additional representation for broad stakeholder perspective:

- Director of GEO (or designee)
- Representatives from Public and Private Research Institutions
- Community Representatives

- Maine-based Environmental groups
- At large representatives

Collaborators (invited observers):

- NH and MA representatives
- Federal partners (e.g., USFWS, NEFMC, NOAA Fisheries, BOEM)
- Regional entities (e.g., National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium, Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative, Regional Offshore Science Alliance, NERACOOS)
- National NGOs (e.g., National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon)
- The public

4. Responsibilities of Advisory Board Members

The work of the Advisory Board will help inform the responsible development of the Maine Research Array and commercial scale floating wind farms in the Gulf of Maine by directing scientific studies to understand the ecological, economic and social impacts of offshore wind.

Members of the Advisory Board will influence and review the prioritization process of projects to be delivered and will benefit from influencing and guiding scope development of studies and review of deliverables.

In order to have an effective and functioning Research Consortium, Advisory Board members should be able to:

- **Attend onboarding:** For any new Advisory Board members, attend an onboarding session to be brought up to speed on the Consortium's activities to date.
- **Attend meetings:** Attend Advisory Board meetings, expected to be no more than quarterly with teleconference options available.
- **Provide input in a timely fashion:** When materials are provided to Advisory Board members for review, it is expected that feedback will be provided within a reasonable time as requested to advance progression of the work.
- **Attend workshop(s):** Participate in workshop(s) (anticipated annually) for prioritizing topic areas and propose topics/project ideas in advance of this meeting.
- **Remain engaged:** Follow the progress of the Consortium and provide ad-hoc feedback to Research Consortium consultants/staff.
- **Complete term:** Fulfill a minimum one-year of an anticipated three-year term.
- **Provide technical expertise:** Support project scoping and provide technical review of project scopes through participation in project expert panels or other ad hoc committees (where relevant).

- **Represent broad interests:** Provide input and guidance to ensure projects deliver the greatest impact to Maine people.
- **Adhere to Consortium policies** (e.g., conflict of interest, confidentiality).

Advisory Board members will make formal recommendations to the Steering Committee and therefore will play a critical role in identifying the priority areas and feeding into the project selection process. These are the key activities for defining the strategic direction of the Consortium.

Advisory Board members are voluntary and will serve a three-year term. Limited travel reimbursement may be available.

The Advisory Board is subject to all applicable provisions of Maine’s Freedom of Access Act.

5. Advisory Board Selection

Members of the Advisory Board will be selected through an open call for interest and by inviting individuals or organizations that fulfill specific criteria outlined in legislation. The Advisory Board will be limited to no more than 30 members to ensure efficiency and a forum for discussion and represent a balance of the range of stakeholders listed in Section 3. All Advisory Board meetings will be open to the public and facilitated to incorporate additional stakeholder feedback.

The GEO, in collaboration with the Department of Marine Resources and the Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife, will establish the Advisory Board based on the on the following:

- Must be able to fulfill the Advisory Board responsibilities.
- Focused on Maine, including institutions or corporations with an interest in Maine.
- Experience with the fishing industry or other ocean-based businesses, scientific understanding of the fisheries, wildlife and ecosystem of the Gulf of Maine, and/or understanding of coastal communities and their economy.
- Knowledge and/or technical expertise with offshore wind, particularly floating technology.
- Provide a unique and valuable perspective to advance the objectives of the Consortium.

Individual Advisory Board members are not expected to meet all the above criteria. Selection of the members will consider how best to ensure a balanced representation of interests and relevant expertise.

The Advisory Board membership will be reviewed regularly, and additional members may be selected on an ad hoc basis by the Steering Committee, considering the above criteria.

The Advisory Board will elect a Chair and co-Chair by majority, who will work with consultants/staff on managing the meetings and who will serve on the Steering Committee (see Section 7). The Chair and co-Chair shall take a leading role in activities such as the financial management, fundraising, stakeholder engagement, and representation of the Advisory Board to external parties. The Chair and co-Chair shall be elected for a two-year term.

Ad hoc committees may be created to guide contractors/staff in executing projects. Committees are comprised of members of the Advisory Board and/or Steering Committee who have interest and expertise in the subject matter. Additional experts may also be recruited to participate or may volunteer.

6. Advisory Board policies

Conflict of interest policy: If members participate in scoping and conceptual approaches to research, they could be precluded from bidding on work or precluded in playing a role in final procurements and selection processes. A Conflict-of-Interest policy will be developed to address this issue.

Other policies: Information on additional policies may be included in an updated version. These could include information on confidentiality and data management.

7. Steering Committee

The Research Consortium will be guided by a Steering Committee to provide overall direction and oversight to the Consortium based on the input of the Advisory Committee. The Steering Committee provides general guidance to the Consortium consultants and/or staff in support of the objectives.

Specific functions include:

- Review budget and any associated changes, in accordance with fiduciary responsibilities for public funds.
- Ensure research portfolio meets Consortium's objectives.
- Approve final research portfolio.
- Be responsible for the effective operation including providing or hiring project management services.
- Provide advice and guidance on state, federal and private fundraising efforts for the Consortium.

The members of the Steering Committee include:

- Director of Governor's Energy Office or designee
- Commissioner of Department of Marine Resources or designee
- Commissioner of Department of Inland Fish & Wildlife or designee

- Two elected members from the Advisory Board (one representing fisheries and one representing environment & wildlife)
- One at-large, non-affiliated member designated by GEO