

State of Maine Blue Economy Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, September 11, 2024, 10:00 am to 11:30 am EDT
Gulf of Maine Research Institute and Virtual via Zoom

Meeting Summary

Legislative Expectation

“The Blue Economy Task Force (BETF) aims to support Maine's emergence as a center for blue economy innovation and opportunity in the 21st century. *Blue economy* means business sectors that rely on the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic health, improved livelihoods, jobs or ecosystem health.” ([LD 1286](#))

Meeting Objectives

- Introduce the consultant team and roles
- Review the deliverable and how the task force will work together
- Review and refine the work plan
- Gain greater collective understanding of the global blue economy and Maine’s role in it
- Initiate discussion to define the blue economy
- Continue to meet the requirements of the statute

In Attendance (in person & via Zoom)

Task Force Members: Tim Agnew (Bold Ocean Ventures), Nick Battista (Island Institute), Dan Berger (Maine International Trade Center), Keith Bisson (CEI), Debbie Bouchard (Aquaculture Research Institute), Kristen Danaher (Washburn-Doughty), Alison Feibel (Acadian Sea Plants), Bill Keleher (Kennebec River Biosciences), Blaine Grimes (GMRI), Audrey Hodgdon (Hodgdon Yachts), Sean Ireland (Windward Development Group), Nathan Johnson (ORPC), Liz MacDonald (Atlantic Sea Farms), Charlotte Mace (DECD), Ben Martens (Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association), Beth Orcott (Bigelow Laboratory), Brendyn Sarnacki (Maine Maritime Academy), Nina Scheepers (Maine Venture Fund), Tom Sorby (Kingfish), Charles Tilberg (UNE), and Jake Ward (University of Maine)

Others: Michael Conathan, Laura Singer, Charles Colgan, and Dana O’Brien (Project Consultants), Yellow Light-Breen (Maine Development Foundation), Nathaniel Shehata (Eimskip USA), Ian Voparil (EnergyOcean), and Gayle Zydlewski (Maine Sea Grant)

Meeting slides are available [here](#).

Agenda and Summary

- **Welcome/Introductions:** Michael Conathan (Lead Project Consultant) welcomed the Task Force and introduced the consulting team.
- **Review Agenda/Principles of Engagement:** Laura Singer (Project Consultant) shared the agenda, presented and sought input on the [principles of engagement](#),

and referenced the shared Google drive where Task Force materials, including Roadmaps and other state planning documents, are housed.

- **Work Plan Overview:** Mr. Conathan reviewed the legislatively required deliverable, a [draft work plan](#) for creating the deliverable, and how we will work to get the information needed to create the deliverable. Mr. Conathan noted that the legislature is seeking a well-informed *assessment* to help it better understand Maine's unique opportunities and challenges related to the blue economy. He also noted that the Task Force will need to adjust meetings from 60-minutes to 90-minutes and schedule several stakeholder consultation sessions outside of the monthly meetings to satisfy the legislative requirements by the February 1, 2025, report deadline. Mr. Conathan walked through the proposed work plan and solicited feedback from Task Force members.
- **Deep Dive on the Blue Economy:** Charles Colgan (Center for the Blue Economy and Project Consultant) provided the Task Force with an overview of the global blue economy, including the definition of the blue economy and suggestions for where Maine might make strategic investments to accelerate its blue economy strengths. Dr. Colgan noted that the definition of the blue economy is generally some combination of 1) *economic activity connected to the ocean*; 2) *sustainable use of the ocean*; and 3) *technology innovation in ocean industries*. He challenged the Task Force members to think about Maine's unique blue economy opportunities in the context of these three categories – what is the right mix for Maine?

Dr. Colgan recommended **eight areas where Maine might consider accelerating its blue economy** – four of them based on Maine's current blue economy strengths: 1) *living resources*; 2) *boats and propulsion*; 3) *marine construction*; and 4) *research*; and four of them based on the United States' current blue economy strengths: 5) *ocean measurement technology and data*; 6) *renewable energy*; 7) *fish-based animal feed*; and 8) *marine pharmaceuticals*.

Dr. Colgan noted that successful global blue economy clusters are co-located with or near major engineering educational institutions. He also noted several underlying factors that will need to be considered as the Task Force does its work, including 1) *coastal habitat and wetlands construction efforts*; 2) *coastal resilience investments to reduce shoreland flooding and damage caused by ocean storms*; 3) *sustainability of coastal-based tourism and recreation, including large amounts of Maine coastal real estate owned for tourism or seasonal living*; and 4) *macro-level issues like workforce, housing affordability, and infrastructure*.

Discussion

- Task Force members reaffirmed that the blue economy report should draw on existing roadmaps and plans, avoiding redundancy by referencing existing

resources and evolving plans (e.g., Aquaculture Roadmap, Offshore Wind Roadmap, SEA Maine reports, ME 10-year Economic Development Strategy, Maine Climate Council, Maine Infrastructure Resilience and Rebuilding Commission, etc.).

- Task Force members stressed the value of transparency, particularly to help the members understand with which groups consultations are occurring and what questions are being asked of key stakeholders.
- Task Force members acknowledged that the legislature is seeking through this process an initial well-informed assessment but that our work product may inspire additional legislation in 2025.
- It was recommended that the Task Force consider overlaying Maine's unique blue economy opportunities with where venture capital, philanthropy, and government money are going as it would be very helpful to the state legislature.
- It was noted that the Task Force would benefit from active engagement by its members; more talking and feedback makes the final work product richer.

Next Steps

Consultants will refine the work plan and schedule consultations with key stakeholders before the October meeting. Upcoming monthly meetings will be offered both in-person and via Zoom and members are encouraged to participate in-person whenever practical.

Upcoming Meetings:

[October 10](#), 11:00 AM – 1:00 AM, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

[November 19](#), 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM, Island Institute, Rockland

December TBD

January TBD

February TBD