

State of Maine Blue Economy Task Force Meeting
Thursday, October 10, 2024, 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM EDT
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences 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

- Review and refine an initial working definition of the blue economy.
- Share updates on the consultation process and schedule.
- Share perspectives on Maine’s R&D efforts and where Maine could have greater impact.
- 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), Sebastian Belle (Maine Aquaculture Association), Dan Berger (Maine International Trade Center), Keith Bisson (CEI), Debbie Bouchard (Aquaculture Research Institute), Chris Cary (New England Ocean Cluster), Kristen Danaher (Washburn and Doughty), Eliza Donoghue (Maine Renewable Energy Association), Meghan Dwyer (Aquaculture Research Institute), Alison Feibel (Acadian Sea Plants), Blaine Grimes (GMRI), Audrey Hodgdon (Hodgdon Yachts), Sean Ireland (Windward Development Group), Nathan Johnson (ORPC), Scott Kleiman (Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future), Annie Langston Knoll (Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center), Liz MacDonald (Atlantic Sea Farms), Charlotte Mace (DECD), Ben Martens (Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association), Allison Melvin (Greenhead Lobster), Beth Orcutt (Bigelow Laboratory), Brendyn Sarnacki (Maine Maritime Academy), Nina Scheepers (Maine Venture Fund), Chip Terry (Blue Trace), Charles Tilberg (UNE), Jake Ward (University of Maine), Robert Vanmeter (Portland Fish Exchange)

Others: Michael Conathan, Laura Singer, Charles Colgan, and Dana O’Brien (Project Consultants), Katrina Armstrong (University of Maine), Anne Schlitt (Maine Development Foundation)

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, reminded everyone on the principles of engagement, highlighted meeting logistics, and referenced the shared Google drive where Task Force materials are housed.
- **Defining/Describing Maine's Blue Economy:** Mr. Conathan reviewed and solicited input from the Task Force on differing definitions of the blue economy, including the definition included in the state legislation establishing the Task Force, the World Bank definition, and the definition shared by Dr. Colgan during the October meeting.
 - **Legislative definition:** “business sectors that rely on the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic health, improved livelihoods, jobs or ecosystem health”
 - **World Bank definition:** “sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem.”
 - **Dr. Colgan's definition:** some combination of 1) economic activity connected to the ocean; 2) sustainable use of the ocean; and 3) technology innovation in ocean industries.

To prompt conversation, Mr. Conathan asked Task Force members the following question: “Based on what we have learned and read, are there elements missing from the current legislative definition to capture the full scope of the Task Force’s vision for Maine’s blue economy?”

- **Deep Dive on Research and Development:** Four Task Force members shared information on the focus of current research and where their institutional research may go into the future. Presenters included Beth Orcutt (Bigelow Laboratory), Jake Ward (University of Maine), Charles Tilberg (University of New England), and Blaine Grimes (Gulf of Maine Research Institute).
- **Next Steps – Consultations:** Mr. Conathan provided an overview of legislatively required consultations to occur during the next month.

Discussion

- Task Force members participated in robust discussion about the definition of the blue economy. In general, members noted there is a benefit to using a broad, widely known definition of the blue economy, such as the World Bank definition.
- Members expressed a view that if a broad, widely known blue economy definition is selected, the Task Force must narrow the scope of the definition for the purpose of the report to be delivered to the state legislature, pointing to where Maine has unique strengths or competitive advantage within the broad blue economy.

- Members noted the absence of innovation in both the World Bank and Maine legislative definition of the blue economy and encouraged the inclusion of innovation in whatever definition the Task Force chooses.
- Members stated that the Task Force should lend Maine’s interpretations of specific words within the broad, widely known definition. For example, the Task Force should define words like “sustainable,” “livelihood,” and “economic growth” through the lens of Maine’s history, culture, and values.
- Members underscored values that might reinforce the Task Force’s work, including 1) elevation of environmental stewardship and climate resilience; 2) uplifting rural (and Indigenous) communities; 3) accelerating diversity and equity; and 4) promoting the concept of “Good Jobs.”

Note: On the day of the meeting, Washburn & Doughty and Bigelow Laboratory conducted facility tours for Task Force members who were interested and available to attend.

Next Steps

Consultants will refine the definition of the blue economy based on Task Force feedback and schedule consultations with key stakeholders before the November 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:

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

[December](#) 12, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM, University of Maine, Orono

[January](#) 10, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM, via Zoom

February TBD