

State of Maine Blue Economy Task Force Meeting
Thursday, December 12, 2024, 11:00AM to 2:00PM EST
University of Southern Maine 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

- Finalize definition of the blue economy.
- Share outline of legislative report and schedule for completion.
- Discuss and come to agreement on the initial set of recommendations.
- Continue to meet the requirements of the [statute](#).

In Attendance (in person & via Zoom)

Task Force Members: Tim Agnew (Bold Ocean Ventures), Jeff Auger (Atlantic Aqua Farms), Nick Battista (Island Institute), Sebastian Belle (Maine Aquaculture Association), Dan Berger (Maine International Trade Center), Deborah Bouchard (Aquaculture Research Institute), Alison Feibel (Acadian Sea Plants), Blaine Grimes (GMRI), Audrey Hodgdon (Hodgdon Yachts), 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), Beth Orcutt (Bigelow Laboratory), Brendyn Sarnacki (Maine Maritime Academy), Nina Scheepers (Maine Venture Fund), Charles Tilberg (UNE), Jake Ward (University of Maine)

Others: Michael Conathan, Laura Singer, Charles Colgan, and Dana O’Brien (Project Consultants), Emerson Goodrich (Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association), Anne Schlitt (Maine Development Foundation), Ian Voparil (EnergyOcean LLC)

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:** Laura Singer (Project Consultant) shared the agenda, highlighted meeting logistics, and referenced the shared Google drive where Task Force materials are housed.

- **Review and agree on Maine’s Blue Economy Definition:** Mr. Conathan led a thoughtful discussion regarding a proposed definition of Maine’s Blue Economy and will incorporate Task Force member feedback into a new draft definition.
- **Review draft Legislative Report:** Dana O’Brien and Charles Colgan (Project Consultants) provided an overview of the draft [Legislative Report outline](#) which was presented to the Task Force in advance of the meeting. Task Force members provided high level thoughts on the draft.
- **Breakout Sessions:** The Task Force split into three groups to review the draft Legislative Report outline, specifically focusing on the report’s proposed opportunity areas and recommendations. Task Force members were asked to provide feedback on whether what was proposed in the draft is on the right track, to identify any gaps, and how best prioritize recommendations to best help the State Legislature identify immediate opportunities to advance the Blue Economy.
- **Discussion:** Rapporteurs from each breakout group provided a readout of each discussion. Mr. Conathan and Ms. Singer noted common themes and opportunities to enhance the draft Legislative Report outline.
- **Next Steps:** Mr. Conathan provided an overview of work to be completed in the next few weeks.

Discussion

- Task Force members offered various suggestions regarding the proposed draft definition of Maine’s Blue Economy. After much discussion, it was agreed that the definition should a) be clear and crisp to help lawmakers and the public understand what the Blue Economy is compared to the broader Ocean Economy; b) capture sustainability, equity, and innovation themes essential to the Blue Economy; and c) acknowledge the value of Maine’s unique marine heritage, research strengths, and location. Consultants subsequently crafted the following revised definition of Maine’s to be included in the draft report:
 - *In Maine, the Blue Economy means a sustainable and equitable ocean economy that optimizes innovation to generate new economic opportunities in our coastal communities and to solve pressing societal needs. It is grounded in Maine’s unique marine heritage, research expertise, and location.*

*For purposes of this description, the Task Force further defines “**sustainable and equitable**” to mean practices that support long-term economic growth while maintaining or enhancing the health of marine ecosystems and reflecting communities’ socio-cultural priorities.*

- Task Force members generally supported the three proposed opportunity areas identified in the draft Legislative Report outline: a) Innovation; b) Collaboration; and c) Investment. Members recommended thoroughly explaining each opportunity area and providing specific examples and data that show why each plays to Maine's strengths.
- Task Force members offered suggestions regarding possible recommendations to include in the Final Legislative Report. Many ideas fell into a few broad categories, including a) establishing a state-supported Blue Economy cluster in Maine; b) leveraging state government capabilities to support growth of Maine's Blue Economy; c) building support and capacity for blue economic development across coastal communities; d) increasing funding for R&D, infrastructure, and workforce; and e) refining Maine's Blue Economy investment strategies.
- Consultants will distill and organize ideas presented by Task Force members and include a set of recommendations in the Draft Final Legislative Report.

Next Steps

Consultants will create a Draft Final Legislative Report and share it with the Task Force no later than January 6, 2025. The final report will be delivered to DECD by January 27 and to the Legislature by January 31.

Upcoming Meetings:

- January 10, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM, via Zoom - no in-person meeting
 - Working session to review and make final editorial suggestions to the Draft Final Legislative Report.
- February (and beyond) TBD