



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
21 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0021

CARL J. WILSON
COMMISSIONER

SEAWEED FISHERIES ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
May 13, 2026
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Seaweed Fisheries Advisory Council (SFAC) was held at 32 Blossom Lane in Augusta on the date listed above.

Council members in person: Shep Erhart, Jake Wilson, Micah Woodcock and Jaclyn Robidoux. Council members attending remotely: Sara Redmond and Jake Patryn.

Council member absent: Nichole Price.

DMR Staff present: DMR Commissioner Carl Wilson, Deirdre Gilbert, Katie Tilton, Jen Harris, LT. Troy Dow.

Audience in person: Bree George, Bonnie Tobey, Allison Snow, Robert (Bob) Morse.

Audience attending remotely: Kalia Brodie, Robin Hadlock Seeley, Maya Pelletier, Annie Langston Noll, Severine von Tscharner Welcome, Aurora Burgess, Alison Feibel, Cortland Wolfe, Jeanne Christie.

1. Welcome and Introductions (3:04 pm): SFAC members, DMR staff and audience members introduced themselves.

2. SFAC 2025 Meeting Minutes: Minutes from the 2025 SFAC meeting voted and approved by council: 1st Shep Erhart, 2nd Micah Woodcock; all in favor of accepting meeting minutes as submitted.

3. SFAC Chair: S. Erhart appointed as Chair of council: 1st M. Woodcock, 2nd Jaclyn Robidoux; all in favor of S. Erhart continuing as SFAC chair.

4. DMR Updates

DMR RW Survey: Katie Tilton from the DMR discussed DMR's Nearshore program long-term seaweed monitoring program created in response to the "Maine Won't Wait," climate action plan. The program gathers baseline ecological and environmental data from Maine intertidal habitats, identifying potential linkages. The focus of the program is to evaluate changes over time related to climate change. 12 sites are sampled annually from Kittery to Eastport, chosen due to varying conditions and species assemblages. At each site three types of surveys are conducted; green crab, infaunal and rockweed. Rockweed surveys are conducted in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarters of each year. Rockweed survey methods were taken from Project ASCO at the Schoodic Institute: Five (0.25m²) quadrats are placed along a 30 meter transect, then rockweed length, weight, holdfast count, sediment type and other species of macroalgae and invertebrates are recorded within each quadrat. Data from the program is anticipated to be publicly available in the spring of 2027. The SFAC and public

in attendance at the meeting had questions regarding the length of the study, if any of the 12 sites showed signs of harvesting, if there were comparisons being made to project ASCO's findings, if DMR was collaborating with CEMAP and if this was part of a larger blue carbon legislative directive. In response, DMR staff responded that sampling would continue indefinitely as part of the Mills' administration's climate council work. K. Tilton was not aware of any of the 12 sites being harvested. Sampling has occurred for the last three years, but the first year was inconsistent. There is no current collaboration with CEMAP but it has been discussed. The DMR is currently focused on collecting baseline data and Project ASCO has been helpful in providing the DMR with materials. The survey focuses on rockweed and commercially important intertidal species.

DMR Commissioner Carl Wilson: C. Wilson introduced himself and asked to hear concerns from those in attendance. Jake Wilson of the SFAC and Bob Morse in the audience (both from North American Kelp), shared their concerns regarding intertidal ownership and how it has been addressed in Maine, citing statutes pre-dating the 2019 Ross vs. Acadian decision. S. Erhart asked if there was (or could be) DMR language clarifying a way for potential harvesters to communicate their harvesting actions with intertidal landowners (a recommendation from the 2014 rockweed Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)). C. Wilson provided that he has seen some example language in DMR Special Licenses. Deirdre Gilbert with the DMR stated there something could be drafted from the Department's perspective that is legally correct and could be reviewed by the Attorney General's office. Severine von Tscharner Welcome also shared her concerns with C. Wilson regarding Cooke Aquaculture operations in Cobscook Bay, related to potential salmon pen high nitrogen release rates and effluent.

Projected Timeline LD 1991 DMR Education Course:

Jen Harris from the DMR explained that LD 1991 was signed by Governor Mills on March 19th and would go into effect July 29th. This gives DMR authority to administer an education requirement for harvesters to obtain a seaweed permit, if they choose. DMR needed input and a vote from SFAC members at the meeting indicating if they were in favor of this course. If so, implementation for 2027 seaweed permits could begin, with a roll-out of November 2026; when 2027 permits begin to be issued by the DMR. J. Harris stated the SFAC could meet again in potentially late August 2026 to discuss the education course.

5. LD 1991 DMR Educational Course

The SFAC discussed several suggested motions from the Chair, S. Erhart, and what an education course may include, focusing on content (type of seaweed, morphology, biology and regulations) and structure (open-book multiple choice exam vs. video or a combination). The council did not want the course to create a roadblock for those getting their seaweed permits. Discussions concluded with the education course focusing on rockweed, and then potentially branching out to other seaweeds in the future. The council also discussed "grandfathering," i.e. not requiring harvesters with a certain number of years harvesting to take the course. Members concluded this could be tricky to accomplish and the course was mainly for harvesters to demonstrate to the public that they had gone through an educational process, in efforts to improve public relations. In addition, it could be a one-time course for everyone, pass/fail open book test, and if major legislative

changes were to occur the course could be updated for harvesters to take again. It wouldn't be difficult for the DMR to implement because a similar course already exists for non-commercial lobster licenses. The council determined they would wait to vote on grandfathering and frequency of taking the course at their next meeting, but the best structure for the course would be an open-book, multiple choice exam. Any video content would be supplemental. The public in attendance at the meeting stated an open-book, multiple choice exam would be easier for harvesters to take and including different harvesting methods would be ideal.

J. Harris and D. Gilbert clarified LD 1991 had built in that an endorsement could be placed on seaweed licenses, for rockweed harvesters. Meaning, when harvesters went to secure their 2027 seaweed permits, they would be asked if they planned to harvest rockweed and then prompted to take an exam in LEEDS. The DMR's non-commercial lobster license could be an example model of an open-book multiple choice exam. The course could be pass/fail with 80% correct answers to pass and multiple attempts. Accommodation could be made for people to take the test in person at the DMR Augusta licensing office, or it could be mailed to harvesters upon request. J. Harris stated the DMR could make an educational pamphlet to accompany the exam. Those in attendance could send content suggestions to J. Harris up to two weeks following the SFAC meeting. She had already received several suggestions. She anticipated the pamphlet would include best harvesting practices, knowledge of the resource, and knowledge of resource regulations. She would share a draft version with council members prior to the next SFAC meeting.

* The following motion was voted on by the SFAC: SFAC and educational and rockweed focused course. Scope/Format TBD through further SFAC input prior to implementation. J. Patterson 1st and S. Erhart 2nd. All in favor.

6. Other Business: M. Woodcock asked DMR LT. Troy Dow if enforcement complaints regarding rockweed theft had risen and what the DMR's stance was from an enforcement perspective. Lt. Dow shared that Marine Patrol handles complaints the same way. First, they send a Marine Patrol Officer (MPO) to document the complaint. The landowner can start taking pictures, etc., while the MPO is en-route and it is best if they can provide a deed to the MPO. Once they do this, the MPO can continue the investigation. Then, if it is clear the complainant owns the land based on the deed, the MPO may move forward with a theft charge and will try to ascertain the value of the product. The MPO puts together a case package for the District Attorney's (DA's) office. If the DA's office chooses not to move forward with the case, the landowner has the option to take civil action and the MPO will provide the landowner with their portion of the discovery that can be used in their civil suit. LT Dow also suggested that most harvesters already utilized basemaps on their phones to know where they were harvesting, and this has helped reduce complaints. For those who don't have this option uploaded yet, they could try to utilize an offline basemap such as OnX Maps as a starting point.

7. Meeting Adjourned (5:07 pm) Motion to adjourn. 1st S. Erhart, 2nd. J. Wilson. All in favor to adjourn.

Slideshow Presentation DMR:



Agenda

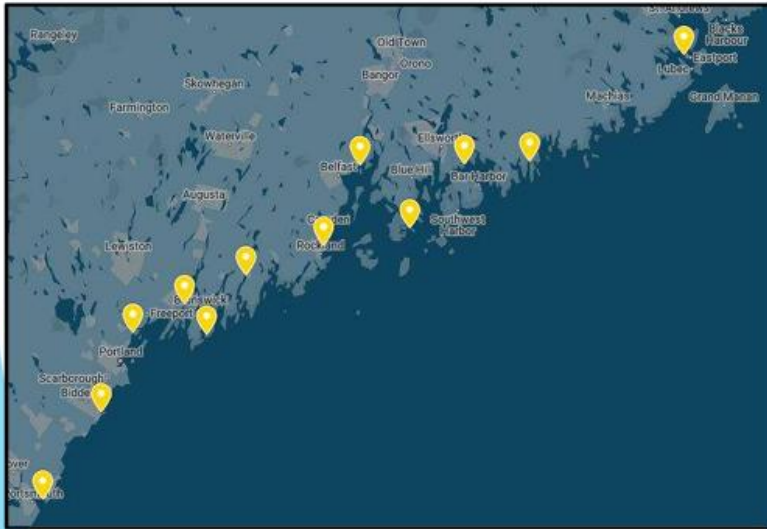
- ▶ 1. Welcome and Introductions - 3:00pm
 - ▶ Council member update - Jake Wilson, North American Kelp
- ▶ 2. SFAC 2025 Meeting Minutes - Action (Voting)
- ▶ 3. DMR Updates - 3:15pm
 - ▶ DMR RW Survey Update (K. Tilton)
 - ▶ Projected Timeline LD 1991 DMR Educational Course (J. Harris)
- ▶ 4. LD 1991 DMR Educational Course (SFAC Discussion) - 3:30pm
 - ▶ Implementation?
 - ▶ Structure of Course may include:
 - ▶ Multiple choice online questions with public materials?
 - ▶ Video component similar to elver training?
 - ▶ Content of Course may include: Best Harvesting practices, Knowledge of Resource, Knowledge of regulations surrounding the resource
 - ▶ Receive public comment on educational course structure and content
- ▶ 5. Other Business - 4:45pm
- ▶ 6. Meeting Adjourns (Voting) - 5:00pm

- ▶ Welcome and Introductions - 3:00pm
 - ▶ Jake Wilson - Representing North American Kelp (Appointed processor/buyer seat)
- ▶ SFAC 2025 Meeting Minutes - Action (Voting)
- ▶ SFAC Chair - Action (Voting)
- ▶ DMR Updates - 3:15pm
 - ▶ DMR RW Survey Update (K. Tilton)

The Department of Marine Resources Nearshore Program: Intertidal Long-Term Monitoring



Intertidal Long Term Monitoring Program



- Created in response to 'Maine Won't Wait' Climate Action Plan
- 12 sites along the coast ranging from Kittery to Eastport
- 3 surveys: Green Crab, Infaunal, Rockweed
- Sample once a quarter
 - RW and IF sampled in quarters 2, 3, and 4
- Collect ecological baseline data and monitor changes due to climate change

Rockweed Survey

- Survey methods from Project ASCO at Schoodic Institute
 - RW biomass
 - 30m transect, 0.25m² quadrat, 5 plots
 - Length, weight, holdfast count, sediment type
 - Other species of macroalgae and invertebrates within the quadrat are recorded
- *Data will be available to the public around late winter/early spring of 2027*



DMR Update - J. Harris

12 MRSA §6803, sub-56 is enacted to read:

6. Educational course. The commissioner, as the commissioner determines appropriate, may require an individual to complete an educational course prior to the issuance or renewal of a seaweed permit under this section. An educational course required under this subsection may be provided by the department or by any public or private sector association or organization authorized by the commissioner. If an educational course requirement under this subsection applies only to certain species of seaweed, the commissioner may require an endorsement on the seaweed permit for those species, which must be made available at no charge.

- ▶ Projected Timeline LD 1991 DMR Educational Course (J. Harris)
 - ▶ Governor Signed March 19, 2026
 - ▶ Becomes law 90 days after end of the legislative session: July 29, 2026
 - ▶ If a course moves forward:
 - ▶ DMR will work to create educational course Now - Fall
 - ▶ Implement Fall of 2026 for 2027 licenses

LD 1991: DMR Ed. Course -3:30pm (SFAC Discussion)

▶ Implementation

- ▶ Do we want an educational course associated with obtaining a seaweed license?
 - ▶ **Harvester licenses: Seaweed Permit and Supplemental Permit**
 - ▶ Anyone obtaining a seaweed license? Just rockweed harvesters?

Year	# SW Lic	% Harvested Rockweed
2021	155	27%
2022	141	33%
2023	159	31%
2024	147	29%
2025	124	29%

- ▶ Should existing license holders be grandfathered? i.e. the course would only apply to individuals who obtain their first license in 2027 and subsequent years.
- ▶ One time course requirement upon initial issuance of a seaweed license? OR every year upon renewal of the license?

LD 1991: DMR Educational Course Continued

- ▶ Structure of Course: What format should it be?
- ▶ Multiple Choice questions with online materials for test-taker?
 - ▶ DMR Materials can be used on the DMR website: [Maine Rockweed | Department of Marine Resources](#)
 - ▶ DMR's Website Key Sections of 2014 [DMR Fishery Management Plan for Rockweed](#)
 - ▶ Section 6 (Biology and Ecology), Section 8 (History of Fishery and Maine Fishery), Section 9 (Harvest Methods), Section 11 (Management Background in Maine)
 - ▶ **Maine Seaweed Laws**
 - ▶ DMR Chapter 29, §6803-C Cobscook Bay management Area, §6806 Seaweed management fund, §6807 Seaweed harvesting rules
 - ▶ **Brochure** - 2013 Brochure Maine Sea Grant and UMaine
 - ▶ Or a booklet, all in one place on DMR website specific to the course
- ▶ Should there be a video component?
 - ▶ E.g. Elver Training requirement has a video component.

LD 1991: DMR Educational Course Continued

- ▶ Content of the Course:
 - ▶ What Topics Should be Covered
 - ▶ Best Harvesting Practices
 - ▶ Sustainable harvesting
 - ▶ Safety responsibilities/practices for boats and harvesters
 - ▶ What to do with bycatch?
 - ▶ Knowledge of Resource
 - ▶ Morphology of seaweed
 - ▶ When is seaweed typically harvested during the year
 - ▶ Knowledge of regulations surrounding resource
 - ▶ Harvesting sectors
 - ▶ DMR Chapter 29 and statutes
 - ▶ Where can seaweed be harvested (Closed - Federal and State areas)
 - ▶ Reporting requirements
 - ▶ Public Comment on course discussion

- ▶ Other Business : 4:45pm

- ▶ Meeting Adjourns Action (Voting) - 5:00pm

- ▶ Questions during education course development:

- ▶ Jen: 207-458-9234, Jennifer.harris@maine.gov

