

Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium Advisory Board

Meeting Summary

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

12:00PM – 2:00 EST

Virtual Meeting

Meeting materials are available [here](#).

MEETING OBJECTIVES

On February 27, 2024, the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium (Research Consortium) Advisory Board (AB) held its sixth meeting virtually. The objectives of this meeting were to:

- Receive brief updates on Research Consortium activities and upcoming research
- Share draft Research Strategy and initial approach to securing additional funding
- Discuss 2024 Research Consortium timeline
- Provide an overview of next steps in research reprioritization process for 2024 RFP

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Laura Singer, SAMBAS Consulting, introduced Katy Bland as the new, part-time program manager of the Research Consortium.

Opening remarks were given by Alison Bates, co-chair of the Advisory Board and professor at Colby College. She thanked everyone for attending virtually. She acknowledged the pivot currently underway with the Consortium between the handoff to Maine Sea Grant and the research projects just getting underway and the upcoming prioritization process. She mentioned the upcoming Fishermen's Forum and hopes to see some people there.

Katy Bland, Maine Sea Grant, introduced herself and thanked Laura and Carbon Trust for their work so far and for making the transition period as smooth as possible. Katy reviewed the meeting guidelines, meeting objectives, and the meeting agenda.

A list of AB members participating in the meeting and meeting observers is in Appendix A.

Program Management 2024

Katy Bland outlined that Maine Sea Grant has stepped into the role of Program Manager and that Katy is the primary point of contact for the Advisory Board and Steering Committee. Carbon Trust and Laura Singer will stay on as expert advisors. GEO alongside DMR and MDIFW will manage the state RFP and contracting process and continue to participate on AB/SC.

Discussion:

- Question: Maine Sea Grant is on AB, will they continue to serve in that role? Response: Yes, Gayle Zydlewski will remain on the Advisory Board.

PROGRAMMATIC & RESEARCH UPDATES

Meghan Suslovic and Stephanie Watson, Governor’s Energy Office, and Carl Wilson, Department of Marine Resources, provided updates on the following topics:

- Meghan Suslovic provided an update on RFP#1: ERM, partnered with Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), is the awarded bidder for the fisheries coexistence project and Karp Strategies, partnered with Dr. Alison Bates’ lab at Colby College, is the awarded bidder for the fishing communities baseline socioeconomic inventory. Both contractors will present a project overview at the Maine Fishermen’s Forum on February 29. Advisory Board members have a chance to review each of the contractors Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Karp Strategies’ Plan will be submitted for review in early March and ERM’s Plan will be submitted in early April. Reviewers, who will need to commit to providing comments within one week of receiving the plan, should reach out to Meghan if you’d like to participate.
- Stephanie shared that GEO has been maintaining a list of topics/questions raised by the Advisory Board.
- Carl Wilson provided a status update on the benthic mapping project:
 - DMR and GEO signed a MOU in December 2023 to conduct the benthic mapping research topic that was identified by the Advisory Board last fall
 - The Maine Coastal Mapping Initiative has been working their way down the coast and Jesse Minor is leading the effort
 - The partnership with GEO is a contract for 2 additional commercial fishing vessels for sonar surveys, staffing 3 sonar-equipped vessels with hydrographer and wildlife observers (hiring 7 temporary/seasonal positions), and rapidly fill data gaps relevant to potential offshore wind development
 - RFP should be published within one week, honing in on areas to be mapped and looking to incorporate BOEM’s upcoming commercial lease areas. Anticipating 800 square nautical miles will be mapped through this effort

Discussion:

- Question on speed of sonar mapping. Response: 7 knots

CONSORTIUM TIMELINE FOR 2024

Katy Bland (Maine Sea Grant) presented an overview of the proposed 2024 timeline. Next Advisory Board meeting is May 6, 2024 at UMaine Orono’s campus that includes a tour of the Advanced Structures and Composite Center. April 3, 2024 will be the next floating wind technology presentation focused on mooring and anchoring technology.

The first RFP and benthic mapping projects are just starting and will wrap up over the course of 2024.

Looking to hold small group discussions to determine the next research priorities that will be discussed and voted on at the May 6 meeting which will lead to the drafting and awarding of a second RFP.

Discussion:

- Question about how this timeline overlaps with UMaine Monhegan project and the Research Array. Response (Stephanie Watson): UMaine would need to provide update on Monhegan project but Research Array lease update is expected shortly from BOEM and survey work would kick off after a lease is awarded. DMR will communicate with BOEM and Research Array developer on surveying efforts.

- Question on RFP#2 and potential for conflict of interest. Response (Stephanie Watson): All discussions at this stage are public so no competitive advantage but will make it clear when people might want to step away as more details on the scope of work are identified
- Comment that multiple simultaneous surveys are common for offshore wind, but that communication will be key and worth discussing in this group and utilizing regional partners
- Comment that RFP#1 was open for a short amount of time for larger institutions to respond so asking that the next RFP remain open for longer (2-3 months)

UPDATE: RESEARCH STRATEGY & FUNDING STRATEGY

Olivia Burke (Carbon Trust) provided an update that a funding strategy is being created that will work to utilize multiple funding sources to continue funding Advisory Board identified topics. As the Funding Strategy document is further developed, Olivia will provide further details.

Laura Singer (SAMBAS Consulting) provided an update on the draft Research Consortium Research Strategy that was sent to the Advisory Board prior to the meeting. It is intended to capture the Advisory Board's process to identify research topics and will be a living document. The feedback to incorporate which topics are already being funded in an appendix. The draft Research Strategy was submitted in response to DOE's RFI for R&D topics.

Discussion:

- Question on what types of feedback is requested, how this relates to what needs to be reported to the legislature, and if this will be on the OSW website. Response: Can share it on the website (keeping in mind that it will be a living document). GEO is still responsible for an annual report to the legislature at the end of every calendar year and this Research Strategy will be incorporated into that annual report.

RESEARCH PRIORITIZATION NEXT STEPS

Olivia Burke (Carbon Trust) summarized the research prioritization process that the Advisory Board completed in 2023 and the goal to build off of that process to identify topics for RFP#2 and to have a longer list of research questions that can be used to proactively seek funding. Advisory Board identified 13 research topics last year, but the topics need more detail before they are specific enough to be included in an RFP.

Step 1 will be to have informal small group working sessions that will align with the four research areas to develop project ideas that align with the priority research topics. Step 2 will be to have the small group sessions guide the development of more detailed one-page summaries for potential projects in the areas of highest priority. Looking to develop ~10 of these one-page summaries to feed into an RFP and be ready to respond to and seek out other funding opportunities.

Additional conservation action task has been added to bottom of list of 13 research topics under the "Impact on ecosystems" category, to keep it in mind. Additional task required by amendment to [Title 35-A §3406\(4\)\(B-1\)](#): "Supporting conservation actions and projects that support species and habitats impacted by offshore wind power development."

Discussion:

- Comment on whether conservation topics gets into state and/or federal regulations or obligations
- Comment that the conservation topic should be restated as a research topic
- Comment that habitat conservation is on the scale of millions of dollars for a singular, meaningful project and that it needs a separate conversation because the scope is so large
- Comment echoing agreement that it needs to be a separate conversation as a singular developer can mitigate for the loss of a species
- Comment that the Consortium can offer value to the conservation and mitigation topic, realistic topic would be to research what conservation measures could be taken instead of funding the conservation work
- Comment that a potential webinar topic on possible conservation measures
- Comment that net benefit/positive framework exists in European market, but metrics aren't fully defined so that could be a research topic appropriate to the Consortium. No regulatory hook on the federal side for conservation benefits
- Comment that the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik would like to see a more diverse and productive ecosystem to be able to have increased sustenance and interaction with the environment
- Comment that the color coding the research areas into the four categories creates unnecessary silos. Response: Color coding is more administrative tool and meant to help people select which small groups they participate in and the research questions that come out of the small group discussions are intended to be cross cutting.
- Comment that it will be important to factor in how the refinement of the draft Wind Energy Area will be taken into account in this next round of prioritization. Noting that the Research Array is closer to shore and therefore may have different impacts than the commercial scale development further offshore. Response: Research Consortium scope is floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine so makes sense that the Consortium will be involved in the Research Array, noting that different research topics are at different scales so some will be more appropriate for a specific site whereas some across the full Gulf of Maine.
- Comment about worry that small group discussions could limit the scope of the resulting questions and unintentionally lead to siloed questions, and recommendation to balance the small groups so they are well rounded and represent multiple backgrounds

Olivia suggests removing support conservation from the “Impact on ecosystem” category, while keeping it on the list of research topics. People can participate in multiple small group discussions and Steering Committee will help make sure the groups are balanced.

Action: All members of the AB are encouraged to send their availability to participate in the small group session they are interested in

REGIONAL UPDATES OF INTEREST

- Maine Fishermen’s Forum: Offshore wind session on Thursday from 10-3:30pm, free to attend
- NOWRDC (Julian Fraize)- working on a program for small businesses and startups called the ocean repower accelerator
- ROSA (Tricia Perez) working on a funder coordination meeting, and updating Fish FORWRD database over next couple of months

- NYSERDA (Morgan Brunbauer)- “[Regional Fund Administrator for an Offshore Wind Fisheries Mitigation Fund](#)” RFP open, State of the Science will be in July and the topic is identifying an ecosystem approach to offshore wind

Laura provided update on Advisory Board membership and that the Steering Committee identified additional areas of expertise (economics, highly migratory species, technical OSW supply chain) that would be useful to have, GEO will be putting out open call to participate and fill those areas of expertise. Please reach out to Laura if no longer interested in participating on Advisory Board.

Discussion:

- Question about adding new people and what would go into onboarding/training to catch them up to speed
- Comment that if we’re opening Advisory Board to new membership to be transparent about the needs so that those who have expressed interest in joining are clear about the areas of expertise the Advisory Board is seeking

Comment from observer Peter Stein: developing a proposal for integrated fishing and marine science proposal, will be attending Maine Fishermen’s Forum and looking forward to discussing

NEXT STEPS

Katy Bland (Maine Sea Grant) described the next steps for AB Member (and Collaborators):

- Sign up for small group content discussions
- Provide feedback on Draft Research Consortium Research Strategy
- Continued conversation on conservation theme

REFERENCES

Title 35-A §3406(4)(B-1): <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/35-a/title35-Asec3406.html>

APPENDIX A: ATTENDANCE

Advisory Board Members

Terry Alexander, F/V Jocka, Co-Chair
Alison Bates, Colby College, Co-Chair
Damian Brady, University of Maine
Dave Cowan, Diamond Offshore Wind
Jack Cunningham, Maine Lobstering Union Local 207
Wing Goodale, Biodiversity Research Institute
Sarah Haggerty, Maine Audubon
Bob Humphrey, Sport-Ventures
Ben Martens, Maine Coast Fishermen's Association
Patrice McCarron, Maine Lobstermen's Association
Laura Morse, Invenergy
Bill Needelman, Portland Waterfront Coordinator
John Perry, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Jocelyn Runnebaum, The Nature Conservancy Maine
Daniel Salerno, Fisheries Scientist, Limington, Maine
Graham Sherwood, GMRI
Anthony Viselli, University of Maine
Stephanie Watson, Governor's Energy Office
Carl Wilson, Department of Marine Resources
Gayle Zydlewski, Maine Sea Grant
Sean Todd, College of the Atlantic

Collaborators

Morgan Brunbauer, NYSERDA
Doug Christel, NMFS, GARFO
Julian Fraize, NOWRDC
Tom Shyka, NERACOOS
Ted Diers, NH DES
Fiona Hogan, RODA
Tricia Perez, ROSA
Libby Jewett, NMFS, NEFSC
Mike Pol, ROSA
Linda Welch, USFWS
Todd Callaghan, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management
Brandi Sangunett, BOEM

Tribes

Marvin Cling, Passamaquoddy - Pleasant Point (Sipayak)

Consultants, Advisors, and State Agency Staff

Olivia Burke and Jan Matthiesen, Carbon Trust
Laura Taylor Singer, SAMBAS Consulting LLC
Celina Cunningham, ME GEO
Meghan Suslovic, ME GEO
Erin Wilkinson, ME DMR
Casey Yanos, ME DMR
Beth Bisson, Maine Sea Grant
Katy Bland, Maine Sea Grant

Maine's Congressional Delegation, State Representatives

Zach Schmesser, Representative Jared Golden

Carol Woodcock, U.S. Senator Collins

Adam Lachman, U.S. Senator King

Additional observers attended in person and online.

APPENDIX B: ZOOM CHAT SUMMARY

Question: What was the coverage area you are hoping to achieve again?

Request for AB members: Please indicate your availability for the first set of sessions that you want to actively participate in. We will schedule follow-up calls after this initial round.

- Reduce co-use conflicts: [when2meet closed]
- Impact on ecosystems: [when2meet closed]
- Socio-economic impacts and community benefit: [when2meet closed]
- Technology development: [when2meet closed]

Conservation Topic:

- Comment: The conservation topic needs to be re-stated as a research topic.
 - Followup that this could be reframed to “research” what conservation could be taken, rather than actually doing the work. This would be valuable and would be more a desktop approach.
 - Followup that this conversation should incorporate RWSC. Some of our AB members are also on the RWSC subcommittees and your advice on how to best coordinate on this topic is most welcome.
- Question: Is there anyone on the call who wrote this into LD 1895 and could share more on that thinking? [no response]
- Comment: I think a follow up webinar for the advisory panel on the concept and how its defined elsewhere
- Comment: There was a symposium last spring held by TNC on Net Positive Benefit and recordings and materials can be found here: [Symposium: How Offshore Wind Development Can Enhance Biodiversity \(nature.org\)](#)

Comment: The Passamaquoddy at Sipayik would like to see a more diverse and productive Gulf of Maine. We are not sure how the offshore energy project will impact our ecosystem restoration efforts. We need more anadromous and sea-run fish species to be able to spawn and return to the marine environment. We know the ocean is becoming more acidic and warm. A more biodiverse and productive marine ecosystem will give the Tribe some time to practice much needed sustenance and interaction with the environment.

Comment (Regarding four Research Topics): I agree about the silo concern, that was a discussion point last year too. Response: The categories also reflect the mandate in the authorizing state legislation for the Consortium. They are there for clarity vs constraining the research approaches.

Comment: BOEM should be announcing the final Wind Energy Areas by the end of March for the Gulf of Maine.

Comment: Right to sustain, right to interact, right to food. Right to retain traditional ecological knowledge in case a tribal nation has to revert back to the old ways to survive.

Acronyms shared

- NOWRDC = National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium
- ROSA = Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (Rosascience.org)

Links shared:

- NYSERDA State of the Science conference <https://www.nyetwg.com/2024-workshop>
- NYSERDA Regional Compensation Fund Design and Development Phase on behalf of the 11-state led effort:
<https://portal.nyserderda.ny.gov/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?file=00P8z000003pQt1EAE>