

**Attachment I**  
OSWP Advisory Group Summary



# Offshore Wind Port Early Engagement Final Report

July 26, 2023

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## Maine's Offshore Wind Initiative

The State of Maine's Offshore Wind Initiative is aimed at the thoughtful development of clean, renewable offshore wind energy and long-term job creation in balance with maritime heritage, existing marine uses, and natural resources in the Gulf of Maine. Led by the Governor's Energy Office (GEO) and supported by state agencies including Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), the multi-faceted initiative involves: an economic development plan for the offshore wind energy industry; an offshore wind research project; and participation in the Gulf of Maine Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force. In support, MaineDOT is planning for a deep-water port to serve the offshore wind industry.

## Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group

In early 2022, the State assembled an Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group and established an engagement program and website (<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/oswpag/>) to provide the structure for the start of a robust and transparent stakeholder and public engagement process. This process was intended to help learn from one another and highlight issues and concerns to inform project development in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 404 of

the Clean Water Act, and many other federal and state regulations governing the consideration and protection of the environment, including people.

The Port Advisory Group was charged to provide advice to the State on the potential impacts of offshore wind port development. This advice will help to ensure that future offshore wind port site selection, development, and permitting decisions by federal and state agencies consider potential outcomes in determining what action would achieve the most benefit and the least adverse impacts.

Port Advisory Group member responsibilities were two-fold: to provide advice on potential impacts of offshore development on the economy and the environment based on personal and professional knowledge; and to liaise with the organization or community from which they were appointed about potential impacts of offshore wind port development and sharing the state's advancements in the port planning process. The Port Advisory Group was not assembled to make decisions regarding the location and operation of the offshore wind port.

Representatives from 19 organizations and towns were invited to serve as members of the Port Advisory Group. Advisory group members were selected for their diverse viewpoints on port development including the environment, ports and marine transportation, fishing, labor and construction, and local concerns.

## The Engagement Program

MaineDOT and its consultants (the project team) developed and executed the engagement program—a series of six day-long facilitated meetings. Meetings were designed to educate members about the rapidly evolving offshore



## Port Advisory Group Members

Beth Ahearn, Director of Government Affairs, Maine Conservation Voters, Co-Chair

James Gillway, Town Manager, Town of Searsport, Co-Chair

Matt Cannon, Campaign & Policy Associate Director, Sierra Club Maine

Joshua Conover, President, Islesboro Marine Enterprises

Habib Dagher, Ph.D., P.E., University of Maine College of Engineering

Dennis Damon, Maine Port Authority

Eliza Donoghue, Director of Advocacy & Staff Attorney, Maine Audubon

Francis Eanes, Director, Maine Labor Climate Council

James Guerrette, Citizen, Town of Searsport

David Gelinas, Capt., Penobscot Bay & River Pilots Association

Jessie Gunther, Retired Judge, Public At-Large Member

Ben Lucas, Government Relations Specialist, Maine Chamber of Commerce

Sean Mahoney, Executive Vice President, Conservation Law Foundation

Matt Marks, Chief Executive Officer, AGC Maine

Paul Mercer, Consultant to Governor's Office

Steve Miller, Executive Director, Islesboro Islands Trust

Rolf Olsen, Vice President, Friends of Sears Island

Mac Smith, Town Manager, Town of Stockton Springs

Jim Therriault, Vice President, Sprague Energy

wind industry; to present the most recent port design concepts at alternative locations in Searsport and Eastport; and to solicit advice on the potential impacts to the natural, social, and economic environments of the alternative locations from members.

Meetings were conducted in-person in the Searsport area, at the University of Maine in Orono, and at MaineDOT headquarters in Augusta. All meetings included an option for members to participate virtually. Meeting notices were distributed to members and posted on Maine's Port Advisory Group website. Meeting agendas and materials were shared with members in advance. Following each meeting, presentations, a summary of meeting outcomes, and detailed meeting notes, were posted on the Port Advisory Group website.

## Meeting 1— May 26, 2022, Searsport: The Port Advisory Group Purpose and Foundation

At this meeting, the project team:

- defined MaineDOT's role in Maine's Offshore Wind Initiative;
- introduced the NEPA and permitting processes and requirements associated with the development of major infrastructure projects;
- described the role and responsibilities of the Port Advisory Group in the port planning and development process; and
- aimed to build rapport among the project team and Port Advisory Group members.

Members' questions during this meeting reflected their interest in understanding the offshore wind market, its costs and timeline for development, including needed public infrastructure and improvements, and its operations and physical connections to the mainland.



## Meeting 2—July 7, 2022, Orono: Offshore Wind Port Planning

The project team:

- characterized the technical requirements known to date for an offshore wind port;
- compared fixed-bottom and floating offshore wind turbine technologies; and
- explored the opportunities and constraints to future development on Sears Island through the Sears Island Planning Initiative and the associated Joint Use Agreement and Buffer Conservation Easement.

An optional tour of the Advanced Structures and Composites Center at the University of Maine preceded this meeting to learn about VolturnUS – the floating concrete foundation (hull) technology for offshore wind turbine generators (WTGs) – developed at the University of Maine.

## Meeting 3—September 29, 2022, Augusta: Conceptual Wind Port Alternatives and Analysis Introduction

At this meeting, the project team:

- presented draft purpose and need statements for an offshore wind port;
- outlined the requirements for alternatives and analysis;
- identified five build (or action) alternatives; and
- introduced the Alternatives Evaluation Matrix as the primary product of the engagement program.

Additionally, the Port Advisory Group viewed a video describing the historical and present uses of Sears Island. Members offered suggestions to strengthen the purpose and need statements and suggested modifications to the conceptual design alternatives. Members were asked to advise the project team of additional criteria and

environmental features for the Alternatives Evaluation Matrix.

## Optional Field Tours, Searsport and Eastport—November 10 and 18, 2022

Optional field tours of Estes Head (Eastport) and Mack Point and Sears Island (Searsport) were conducted on November 10 and November 18, 2022, respectively.

## Meeting 4—December 12, 2022, Virtual: Conceptual Port Alternatives

At this virtual-only meeting, the project team:

- reported that no additional criteria or additional environmental features were suggested by members;
- detailed two options for launching the foundations (hulls), a barge vs. a ramp; and
- presented updates to the conceptual design alternatives.

## Meeting 5—March 29, 2023, Augusta: Conceptual Port Alternatives and Preliminary Analysis

The project team:

- presented information requested by members on:
  - MaineDOT contracts for consultant services to advance the offshore wind port;
  - patents related to offshore wind energy held by the University of Maine; and
  - vertical wind turbines.
- provided updates on the activity of the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Gulf of Maine Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force and the foundation launching study, and further refinements to the conceptual design alternatives.
- presented a preliminary alternatives evaluation matrix, which identified potential



impacts to natural, social, cultural, and economic resources.

Members requested clarifications and suggested additional sources of data and information for the Alternatives Evaluation Matrix.

## Meeting 6 – June 26, 2023, Augusta: Conceptual Port Alternatives, Analysis-to-Date, and Final Comments

At the final meeting of the Port Advisory Group, the project team:

- reported on recent meetings with federal and state regularly and resource agencies to help identify requirements and potential issues and concerns;
- presented further refinements to the conceptual design alternatives;
- reviewed the updated alternatives evaluation matrix; and
- received final comments from each Port Advisory Group member.
  - A summary of final comments is included as **Attachment 1**.
  - Written comments from Advisory Group members and the public are also available on the website.

## Member Interest & Inquiry

Throughout the meetings, Port Advisory Group members sought to understand the offshore wind industry and how its development and operations might affect a wind port community, surface transportation infrastructure, and the local and statewide economy. Additionally, members asked about the viability of floating offshore wind energy technology and its market potential across the Northeast. While many questions about port requirements, design, and operations were answered by iterations of conceptual design alternatives and related studies, others were not able to be answered by the project team at this early planning stage. Members were referred to the Offshore Wind

Initiative website for meeting summaries and products of other working groups.

## Themes From Member Advice

Port Advisory Group members expressed broad support for clean, renewable energy from offshore wind development, in principle, and for swift action to serve the industry and the people of Maine. Major themes from member advice to the State consisted of the following:

1. Use land as efficiently as possible. Developed lands, however small, that can be re-used or redeveloped for wind port activity or supporting infrastructure reduces the need to convert greenfields to development.
2. Consider the direction of wind port berths in relation to the water's fetch (the unobstructed distance that wind can travel over water in a constant direction) to maximize the safety of port operations. Fetch is an important characteristic of open water because longer fetch can result in larger wind-generated waves.
3. Maximize the use of existing deep waters and minimize the need for dredging. Dredging is known to be impactful to marine life and habitat and time-consuming to plan and permit by federal and state agencies.
4. Give equal consideration and evaluation to all port location alternatives.
5. Begin tribal consultation as soon as possible. A lack of information-sharing puts the offshore wind initiative at risk for delay.
6. Execute a public information campaign about wind port planning as quickly as possible.
7. Develop clear definitions and estimates of port costs, both capital and operational.
8. Develop a clear understanding of all modes of port traffic—water, highway, and rail—for freight delivery and workforce transportation.



9. Incorporate the most recent investigations of environmental features, including upcoming field surveys, into decision-making and environmental documentation.

Four members submitted written comments to MaineDOT at the conclusion of the Advisory Group meetings. These statements are available on the Port Advisory Group website as “June 26 Comments (PDF)”.

## Themes from Public Participants

Port Advisory Group meetings were open to the public and announced on the offshore wind Port Advisory Group website. Public attendance averaged 23 per meeting, including in-person and virtual participants.

Each meeting provided an opportunity for public comment. Comments were documented in each meeting summary, which are available on the Port Advisory Group website.

Comments and questions from the public spanned the range of topics listed below:

- Economic viability and focused port design on a single, not-yet-commercialized floating offshore wind technology.
- Relative importance of rail access to the wind port in comparison to other modes.
- Clarity of capital costs and operations costs
- Opportunities for federal funding for port redevelopment and improvements; programs for the remediation of brownfields; programs for port improvement.
- Need to consider local economic impacts to tourism and small businesses.
- Impacts to the host community (e.g., new jobs and housing needs).
- Traffic increases to/from a wind port during construction and operation.

- Potential construction and operation impacts to birds (e.g., habitat displacement, towers as flight obstacles, lighting as migration disruptions).
- Potential impacts and mitigations to coastal habitats (e.g., eelgrass restoration, particularly as a means for blue carbon/sequestration).
- Long-term effects of dredging on marine habitat.
- Results to date of Governor Mills’ technology sharing agreement with the United Kingdom.
- Development of a greenfield site versus redevelopment of a grayfield or brownfield site.
- How the port development process will comply with Maine’s Climate Action Plan and its strategy to protect the state’s environment and working lands and waters.

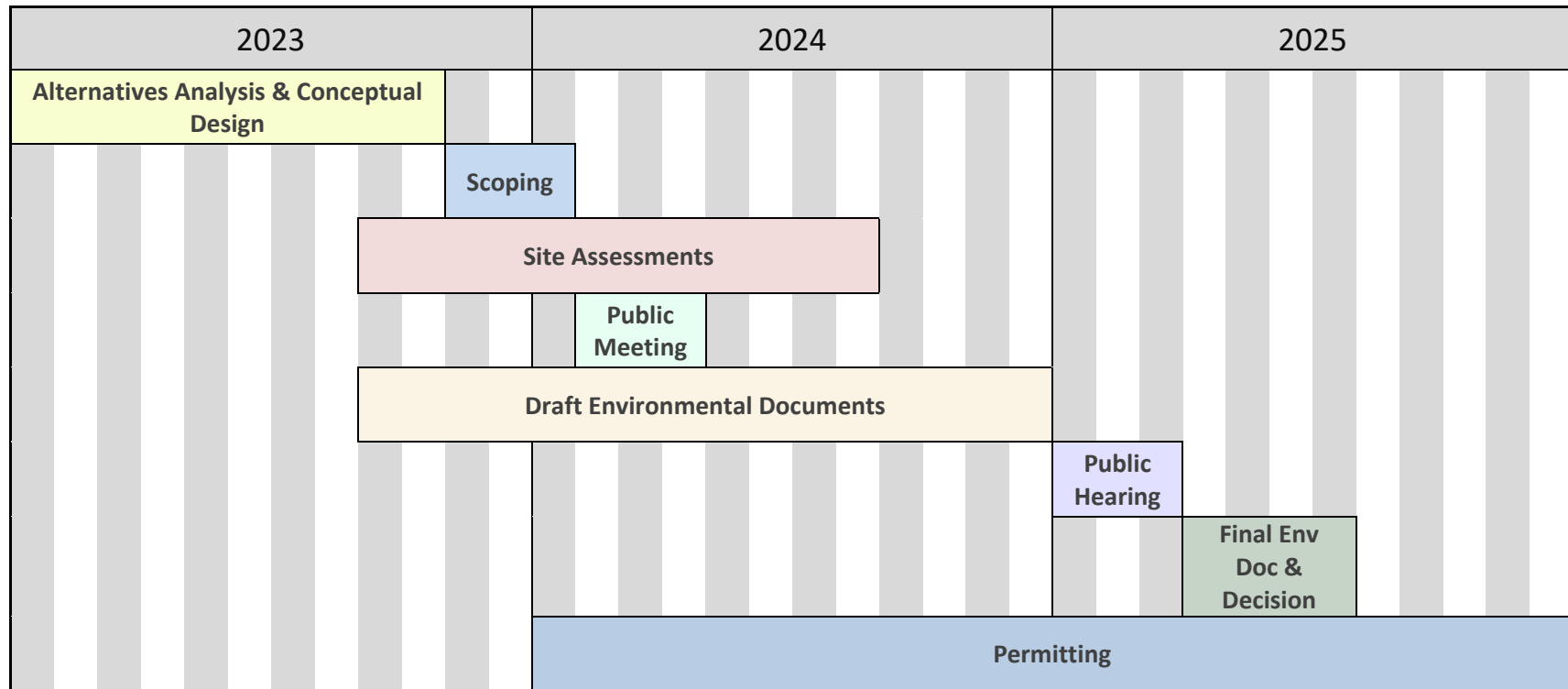
Three members of the public submitted written comments to MaineDOT at the conclusion of the advisory group meetings. These statements are available in the Meeting 6 meeting summary on the Port Advisory Group website.

## Next Steps

MaineDOT submitted a Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) Grant Application in April 2023 that included the advancement of planning, design, and permitting for the Maine Offshore Wind Port. Award announcements are expected in Fall 2023. In the meantime, MaineDOT is advancing environmental surveys and site assessments to help establish baseline conditions at alternative site locations. Simultaneously, alternative designs are being tested and refined. A draft environmental document and permitting timeline is included on page 6.



*Maine Offshore Wind Port Environmental Document and Permitting Approvals Timeline\**



*\*This timeline is draft and subject to change.*





## Attachment 1

### Summary of Advisory Group Final Comments

The State requested that Advisory Group members present closing thoughts, comments, ideas, concerns, and questions at the final Advisory Group meeting 6. The following is excerpted from the Meeting 6 Summary (pp.15-19; available in full on the Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group website, <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/oswpag/>) and summarizes the oral comments received at Advisory Group Meeting 6 on June 26, 2023, in Augusta.

- Matt Cannon, Sierra Club Maine
  - Prepared comments were submitted in writing to the State before this meeting (and are attached to this summary).
  - Noting that difficult decisions still need to be made, some concerns include preservation of biological diversity, protection of Sears Island, compliance with the consensus agreement, and sufficiency of public involvement to date. More information is needed, and the lack of detail has made this process difficult at times.
  - There is a need for climate action, consistent with state and federal plans and goals and it should be done with urgency, equity, and with as few adverse impacts as possible. Preserving Sears Island is consistent with the State's plans and goals (e.g., Maine Climate Action Plan and 30-by-30).
  - Federal funding opportunities may be available for cleanup and conversion of the fossil fuel energy infrastructure at Mack Point to renewable energy infrastructure. This is the preferred approach; Mack Point should be given preference.
- Dennis Damon, former Maine Port Authority Director
  - Given historic involvement with the SIPI and JUPC, he came to this process with an open mind, but a predisposition that the transportation parcel at Sears Island was the appropriate location.
  - Based on this process, Eastport was evaluated but does not appear to be practical.
  - Sears Island appears to give the State the biggest bang for the buck, namely commercialization after the research array.
  - Hybrid alternative would be the second-best option because not convinced that Mack Point alone can support this project.
- Eliza Donoghue, Maine Audubon
  - Three guiding principles in mind throughout this process: (a) climate change is the greatest threat to wildlife; (b) infrastructure must not displace the most valuable environmental resources; and (c) appropriate mitigation will be required, following avoidance and minimization.
  - Strong support for floating OSW in the Gulf of Maine and agreed that a purpose driven port is required. No build is not an option.
  - Based on the information presented, Eastport does not appear to be a good option.
  - Lack of tribal coordination by the State is problematic.
  - While the principles outlined above tend to lean towards siting the project at Mack Point, the following factors contribute to the feeling that Mack Point is not the





preferred location: (a) lots of dredging and probable release of contaminants that would affect salmon, sturgeon, lobster fishing, etc.; (b) this portion of Sears Island was set aside for transportation use through a public process (i.e., SIPI); (c) costs; and (d) the Hybrid does not offer sufficient cost or environmental benefits. Sears Island is the preferred option.

- Wherever the port goes, mitigation of operational impacts will be required, and Maine Audubon will be interested in the impacts from lighting, sound/noise, and traffic. Impacts must be compensated and there are various options available.
- The State will need to get creative on funding, tapping into available federal funds, private financing, etc.
- There is a need to move quickly.
- Frances Eanes, Maine Labor Climate Council
  - No build is not an option. This project could be a game changer if we get it right, or a tragic misstep if we do not. Need to build a port as soon as possible.
  - Consultation with the tribes is a critical next step and represents a real risk to the project if not undertaken soon.
  - There is currently a funding window of opportunity. Federal monies are available until 2025. Equity, Justice40, Community Benefit Agreements (CBA), workforce development, and labor standards are all important considerations in the State's competitive pursuit of federal grant money.
  - Agnostic on the location of the port in Searsport but will remain committed to maximizing opportunities for labor agreements.
- James Guerrette, Citizen, Town of Searsport
  - Have heard concerns from Searsport citizens and others that are indifferent. Concerns are relative to the infrastructure, including but not limited to noise and lighting.
  - Mitigation should be a part of the plan and not an afterthought.
  - There is not a lot of information available publicly which leaves room for misinformation. There are some skeptics not convinced of the cost-benefit. An informational campaign is needed for the citizens of Searsport.
  - Job projections will be very important, and will new jobs benefit the community? How will this project affect the tax base? Is there a tax benefit?
- David Gelinas Captain, Penobscot Bay & River Pilots Association
  - Cost matters and is likely to continue to increase as time passes.
  - Mack Point presents risk for cost overruns simply because the State does not own it. Variables like rail relocation, relocation of existing tanks and associated permitting, potential for contamination, relocation of the liquid dock, dredging, and final lease costs contribute to a greater potential for cost overruns.
  - Dredging will be controversial and has a history of opposition in Searsport. Contaminants (e.g., mercury) associated with dredging will be important and will affect fisheries and lobsterman.
  - Sears Island is the only dredge free option; therefore, this is the preferred option.
- Jessie Gunther, Retired Judge, Public At-Large Member
  - Regrets that Eastport is not a practical option; economic activity and investment is needed in Washington County.



- Studies need to advance before a decision may be made between Sears Island and Mack Point. Though, what is currently known regarding practicability and environmental impacts, Sears Island appears to be the better option today.
- Sean Mahoney, Conservation Law Foundation
  - Eastport and the Hybrid option should be taken off the table based on the information presented to date.
  - Dredging is a real source of controversy and should not be taken lightly. Do not make any unforced errors relative to the potential for dredge.
  - The State's failure to consult fully with Penobscot is an error that needs to be resolved as soon as possible.
  - There is a need to ensure the community benefits from the project.
  - Further clarification around the State's revenue stream is necessary.
  - Does not agree with the degradation of the process raised by Steve Miller and the Islesboro Island Trust (IIT) in writing prior to today's meeting.
  - Except that the Penobscot have not been engaged, Sears Island appears to be the best option.
  - The State may consider continuing this Advisory Group, in this form or another, with additional representative from the host community, Friends of Sears Island, the fishing industry, and Wabanaki (tribes) throughout project development.
- Steve Miller, Islesboro Islands Trust
  - Mack Point is the best option for business, the State, and the environment. Giving Mack Point preference is consistent with the consensus agreement. Build out at Mack Point consolidates infrastructure and replaces and remediates fossil fuel assets at Mack Point.
  - Sears Island's present benefits include, but are not limited to, ecological services, fisheries, public recreation, and carbon sequestration.
  - The State has communicated a preference for Sears Island and the IIT's FOIA request produced evidence of predetermination. This Advisory Group was convened to give the illusion of transparency and public involvement.
- Rolf Olsen, Friends of Sears Island
  - Cynical participant early on because there was the sense that a finger was on the scale in favor of Sears Island. By 2021, the State announced that Sears Island was the primary site under consideration. There are some concerns with the process.
  - Raised the potential conflict of interest for Dr. Dagher in the interest of transparency. This has since been resolved.
  - The State did not fulfill the Advisory Group's purpose and the commitment for a robust stakeholder process was not met. He has had to push for information and there is a lack of communication with Searsport residents and the public in general. Misinformation is circulating in the public. Could the State not conduct public surveys? One hundred seventy people attended the informational meeting FOSI hosted.
  - Some concerns that we are forwarding an experimental design. What if we build a port for technology that does not work?
  - There is enough land on Mack Point to accomplish the project, Sprague welcomes the prospect, and Mack Point is a brownfield site that could be repurposed. The 75 acres of



forest on Sears Island could be preserved. Sears Island will bring controversy; Mack Point will be accepted.

- Why does the State prohibit state waters (3 miles from shore) from OSW development? Recreation and lobsterman may be part of the reason.
- Jim Therriault, Sprague Energy
  - In favor of Mack Point. Sprague is committed to renewable energy.
  - No tank relocation or permitting will be required, only tank removal.
  - Shifting the design (wharf) to the east significantly reduces dredging.
  - Contends that the construction cost at Mack Point is not higher than Sears Island. The cost of the ground lease is an operational cost, not a construction cost, which will be passed onto a private operator.
- Habib Dagher, University of Maine College of Engineering
  - The OSW technology is tested, and it works. It was first installed in Norway about a decade ago, with several research arrays throughout Europe and Japan.
  - The clock is ticking.
  - What is the fatal flaw? Cost, dredging, etc.?
- James Gillway, Town of Searsport, OSW PAG Co-Chair
  - Making OSW affordable is important.
  - Does not accept that the costs are the same for Mack Point and Sears Island.
  - Mack Point would be a great site but does not believe it is permissible. What will be permissible?
  - Sears Island may be the only permissible option in Searsport.
- Beth Ahearn, Maine Conservation Voters, OSW PAG Co-Chair
  - Has found the advisory group process to be transparent and is surprised to learn others feel differently.
  - Prioritizing tribal coordination is critically important.
  - The decision of a site location will need to meet the LEDPA thresholds and support the commercialization of floating OSW in Maine, and elsewhere.
  - The State is in a race, there is some real urgency. The people of Maine will benefit, the workforce will benefit.
  - Cost is a real concern for the state and rate payers.

Dredging is hugely impactful and additional analysis needs to be done to determine the harm it may incur.