

Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium Advisory Board

Round 2 Research Project Updates Webinar*

Webinar Summary

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

3:00-4:15pm

Webinar materials are available [here](#).

*Webinars are optional opportunities for Advisory Board members to provide feedback

WEBINAR OBJECTIVES

On January 20, 2026, the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium (Research Consortium) Advisory Board (AB) held a virtual “Project Updates” webinar for three Research Consortium-funded research projects currently underway. The objectives of this webinar were to:

- Receive brief updates on Research Consortium Round 2 projects
- Provide feedback on work conducted to date on the Baseline secondary entanglement risk assessment and technology feasibility study

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Katy Bland (Maine Sea Grant), Research Consortium Program Manager, reviewed the webinar agenda and objectives, and gave a brief overview of the webinar guidelines. She reminded attendees that these projects were identified as priorities by the AB, Steering Committee (SC), and fishing industry. These research projects -- some of which aim to collect critical baseline data -- would not only inform offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine but has broader implications beyond offshore wind. Meghan Suslovic (Maine Department of Energy Resources [DOER]) introduced the speakers and provided context around project topic selection for the Round 2 projects underway. The AB, Collaborators, and Program Management (PM) team met throughout 2024 to review existing research priorities, discuss ideas in mini-workshops, conduct small group follow ups, and draft 1-page summaries of potential projects. The AB discussed and ranked the projects, after which the Steering Committee (SC) used the ranking to make a formal recommendation to the State to advance the three projects related to potential socioeconomic impacts, secondary entanglement risk, and offshore bat monitoring. DOER (formerly the Governor’s Energy Office) then issued a competitive solicitation to select the researchers that presented on the projects below.

A list of AB members who attended the webinar can be found in Appendix A.

A summary of the Zoom chat can be found in Appendix B.

PROJECT UPDATE (RFA#2 TOPIC: POTENTIAL SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS)

GULF OF MAINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Project title: “Assessing Social, Cultural, and Economic impacts of Floating Offshore Wind on Maine’s Fishing Communities: Baseline Offshore Wind Livelihood Impact Needs Exploration (BOWLINE)”

Presenter: Dr. Kanae Tokunaga (Gulf of Maine Research Institute [GMRI])

Timeline: Fall 2025 - Fall 2026

Dr. Kanae Tokunaga began with a reminder that the study's primary objective is to conduct a baseline assessment of potential social, economic, and cultural impacts of floating offshore wind development on Maine's fishing communities. She reviewed the research team's recent activities, particularly around their research and engagement strategies.

The team's first task began with a literature review on socioeconomic and sociocultural impacts. This task included a review of how sociocultural assessments have been performed and of federal guidance and guidelines in the northeast US.

The second task was to form the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and to host a hybrid workshop at GMRI. The first part of the workshop was open to the public and focused on gaining feedback on proposed methods and planned activities. The second part of the workshop was a closed session reserved for PAC members to discuss assessment approaches and provide feedback on assumptions made in previous assessments. This discussion highlighted the challenges associated with defining Maine's fishing community and/or particular communities within specific fisheries. The research team is using this feedback to develop the research method, which will be a product of this study.

Currently, Dr. Tokunaga and her team are evaluating potential adaptations to fishery disturbances and will soon be conducting surveys to understand how development may impact fishing choices. Next steps for the project include finalizing the survey design, working with PAC members to identify most appropriate methods, and finalizing the project webpage and fact sheet to be shared publicly.

For more detailed information from their presentation, see the webinar slides on the meeting archive page.

PROJECT UPDATE (RFA#2 TOPIC: OFFSHORE BAT MONITORING)

BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Project Title: "Baseline offshore bat monitoring assessment in the Gulf of Maine"

Presenter: Merra Howe (Biodiversity Research Institute [BRI])

Timeline: Field seasons from mid-April to end-of-October in 2026 and 2027. Data analysis through 2028.

Merra Howe outlined the project's objectives, which are to characterize bat activity in the Gulf of Maine in the offshore environment, as well as characterize bat species assemblages to understand how those activities relate to environmental and temporal factors. Since the Round 2 Project Kickoff meeting in October, the research team has made progress in their planning for the 2026 acoustic monitoring season. This draft plan has been reviewed by DOER and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), and it will also be shared with the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC) Bird & Bat Subcommittee Coordinator and the Consortium AB for review (likely around mid-to-late February). The team is working to solidify site locations and adequate technology (i.e., microphones, buoy detectors, etc.) for each particular site. They have also been in discussion with the Canadian Wildlife Service to coordinate complementary efforts.

The research team has received first results from buoy station E01 (Central Maine Shelf), located about 4 miles from Monhegan Island, where monitoring occurred for 15 nights. The team identified 8 acoustic passes from three different bat species, including a Hoary bat. These results indicate proof of concept around the team's proposed methods. She also shared data collected from fishing vessel F/V Marissa

Julie (based out of Gloucester, MA) that detected 143 acoustic passes from bats. One pass was from a Silver Haired bat that was 168 km from shore, which is the furthest east such a pass has been recorded.

Currently, the team is working to develop scripts that can automate a snapshot of data products using 2024-2025 data to inform these processes and occupancy methods. They are aiming to kick-off their 2026 field season in April.

For more detailed information from their presentation, see the webinar slides on the meeting archive page.

PROJECT UPDATE (RFA#2 TOPIC: SECONDARY ENTANGLEMENT RISK)

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

Project Title: “Quantification of the Risk of Secondary Entanglement due to Derelict Fishing Gear for Floating Offshore Wind Turbines”

Presenters: Dr. Spencer Hallowell (University of Maine [UMaine], Advanced Structures and Composites Center) and Dr. Everett Rzeszowski (UMaine)

Timeline: Fall 2025 – Fall 2026

Dr. Spencer Hallowell explained that the purpose of their presentation was to first provide results of the literature review and then seek input on, and kickoff, the stakeholder engagement portion of the project. Over the next six months the team plans to meet with fisheries organizations in the region, agencies and NGOs, and relevant wind developers to check assumptions about different pieces of their proposed research framework. Specific questions related to fishing gear characteristics and loss rates can be found in the respective slides [see orange question mark icon on slides], and the team welcomes any feedback on these points.

Secondary entanglement refers to the entanglement of marine wildlife on marine debris that are ensnared on mooring lines, suspended cables, or other underwater infrastructure. Dr. Hallowell outlined that the secondary entanglement risk will be calculated based on the risk of entrainment (marine debris entering wind areas in the Gulf of Maine), the risk of ensnarement (marine debris getting caught on floating offshore wind subsea infrastructure), and the encounter rate (marine mammals moving through the wind lease areas), all three of which events must occur to result in a secondary entanglement event. Based on the findings in the literature review, the team has identified three types of fishing gear (bottom trawl, dredging, and pots/ traps) to focus on. Next steps for their modeling efforts will include consolidating information from the literature into the engineering models.

Dr. Rzeszowski will be leading the stakeholder engagement component of this project. He noted the primary form of engagement will be focus groups or small group discussions that will inform specific areas of the project.

For more detailed information from their presentation, see the webinar slides on the meeting archive page.

NEXT STEPS

- If an AB member has particular interest in any of these projects, reach out to Meghan Suslovic (meghan.suslovic@maine.gov) to stay involved.

- The PM team will be in touch with the AB about next steps for Round 3 project recommendations.
- The Project Update webinar summary and slides will be posted online.

APPENDIX A – ATTENDANCE

77 individuals attended the webinar, including:

Advisory Board Members

Damian Brady, UMaine
Sarah Haggerty, Maine Audubon
Ben Martens, MCFA
Fred Moore, Pleasant Point Passamaquoddy Reservation
Laura Morse, JASCO
Chris Payne, MLA
Becca Peters, DMR
John Perry, MDIFW
Graham Sherwood, GMRI
Anthony Viselli, UMaine
Stephanie Watson, DOER

Collaborators

MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
National Offshore Wind Research & Development Consortium (NOWRDC)
New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC)
Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems (NERACCOOS)
Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA)
Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA)
Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC)
US Fish & Wildlife Service (US FWS)

RFP#2 Awardees

Christine Beitzl, UMaine
Wing Goodale*, BRI
Spencer Hallowell, UMaine
Merra Howe, BRI
Everett Rzeszowski, UMaine
Kanae Tokunaga*, GMRI
Chas Van Damme, GMRI

*Denotes AB membership

Program Management, Advisors, and State Agency Staff

Katy Bland, Maine Sea Grant
Julia Hiltonsmith, Maine Sea Grant
Jessica Jansujwicz, Maine Sea Grant
Meghan Suslovic, DOER

Additional observers attended online.

APPENDIX B – ZOOM CHAT SUMMARY

- Link to the Research Consortium's website, which includes summaries of all completed and ongoing research projects:
<https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/offshorewind/researchconsortium>
- Related to Offshore Bat Monitoring Project
 - Comment that 3D radar could be used to collect target (bat) passage rate, height, and directional data at a few of the data collection points.
 - Comment that Hoary bats were detected in 2021 and 2022 on buoys deployed offshore in Maryland. Link to public domain:
https://remote.normandeau.com/remote_about.php
- Related to Secondary Entanglement Risk Project
 - Suggestion to cite the version of densities and year of abundance estimate used for the Secondary Entanglement project. Response that they have been cited within the literature review and will include in slides moving forward. Follow-on comment that any more detailed references about marine mammal abundance, especially within lease areas, would be welcomed by the research team.
 - Suggestion to include the Stranding Response Network (NOAA Fisheries) in the stakeholder map.
 - Suggestion to include the Center for Coastal Studies in future engagement.
 - Suggestion to include gillnet fisheries in analysis.
 - Suggestion to include ropeless/on demand gear in analysis, as they will fail and transport differently. Follow-up comment about data availability that could be included in analysis.
 - Comment that the maps shown do not reflect lobster gear density. Suggestion to reach out to zone councils for more information about what could be included in analysis.
- Link to register for the Fisheries Compensation for Atlantic Coast Offshore Wind - Public Webinar:
https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/uLj8urr_RC68VS6v80Mkjw?_x_zm_rtaid=rE83ohJPS_CbIKOH6DSHNg.1768213944886.533d74c89f9ee60dabb24991bac0cfa6&_x_zm_rhtaid=831#/registration