Fisheries Technical Working Group (F-TWG) Meeting Summary

Friday, September 11th, 2026 from 1:00pm- 3:00 pm EST
Virtual Meeting

Background

As part of New York State's efforts to responsibly develop offshore wind (OSW) energy, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) convened the Fisheries Technical Working Group (F-TWG) in 2018 to provide input to the state. The F-TWG held a virtual meeting via video conference on September 11, 2026. This summary is intended to capture the key points of discussion and action items identified during the meeting. For topics where there were differences of opinion among F-TWG members, this summary identifies areas of agreement as well as the different perspectives offered during meeting discussions.

There were 21 F-TWG members and other stakeholders in attendance through the Zoom meeting/conference call line. Staff from NYSERDA, Tetra Tech, the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), and the Cadmus Group, were also present to provide technical, facilitation, and logistics support.

This summary is organized to align with the structure of the meeting agenda (Appendix A). Opinions are generally not attributed to specific F-TWG members. Attendees are referred to interchangeably in the summary as stakeholders, participants, or F-TWG members. This summary provides an overview of the presented information about the Draft Regional Compensation Framework, the Regional Surfclam Monitoring Plan Specialist Committee, and updates on recent research projects including a habitat suitability model for sea scallops, projects funded in Massachusetts by the Offshore Wind Mitigation Fund, and Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) research efforts.

Action Items

The following key next steps resulted from the meeting:

- The next F-TWG meeting will take place virtually in late October or early November 2026. Members are encouraged to respond to the scheduling poll which will be sent by support staff and to attend the meeting.
- Members are encouraged to submit comments on the Draft Regional Compensation Framework through November 3, 2026. Members with additional questions or input about the Regional Fund Administrator Draft Framework are encouraged to contact the Regional Fund Administrator at Contact@RFAInfo.com.

Important Links

Draft Regional Compensation Framework

https://www.rfainfo.com/pdf/Draft%20Regional%20Offshore%20Wind%20Fisheries%20Compensation%20Framework.pdf#page=1

Comment on the Draft Regional Compensation Framework

https://www.rfainfo.com/Home/ContactUs

ROSA Regional Research & Monitoring: Awarded Projects

https://www.rosascience.org/awarded-projects/

ROSA FishFORWRD Database

https://www.rosascience.org/fishforwrd/

Welcome and Introductions

Morgan Brunbauer (NYSERDA) thanked all F-TWG participants and introduced the meeting. The meeting is intended to provide an overview of the Draft Regional Compensation Framework for compensatory mitigation, share an update on the work of the Regional Surfclam Monitoring Plan Specialist Committee, and present recent research efforts related to offshore wind and fisheries.

Bennett Brooks (CBI) provided an overview of the ground rules for the meeting:

- Contribute – Your perspectives are important.
- Share time – There is a lot to cover and many people around the table.
- Integrate ideas and pose questions.
- Stay focused on the agenda.
- Avoid multitasking and other distractions.
- We all have our unique challenges in a virtual environment – it will take all of us being mindful to make this work.

Draft Regional Compensation Framework Update

Orran Brown (BrownGreerPLC) and Olivia Burke (Carbon Trust) provided an update on the Draft Regional Compensation Framework which was published on September 4, 2026. BrownGreer PLC and The Carbon Trust serve as the Regional Fund Administrator (RFA) for the Fisheries Compensation Program for Atlantic Coast Offshore Wind. They have been tasked with developing a fair and equitable financial compensation process to address potential economic losses incurred by the fishing industry due to offshore wind development off the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic coasts. Eleven East Coast states have been working with commercial and recreational fishing communities and offshore wind developers for over five years to create this compensation program.

The Draft Framework was developed with comprehensive stakeholder engagement, with participants representing these eleven states, commercial fishing, for-hire fishing, federal agencies, offshore wind developers, subject matter experts, and members of the public. Two advisory committees, the Design Oversight Committee and the For-Hire Committee, met regularly over two years to shape the Draft Framework. Each committee included stakeholders from the fishing industry (commercial for the Design Oversight Committee, Recreational for the For-Hire Committee), states, and the offshore wind industry. Outreach to additional stakeholders was also conducted throughout the development process through public webinars, management councils, federal engagement, and dockside. Orran Brown emphasized that the Framework is a draft, and there will be a public comment period and opportunities for engagement before the final version is published.

The Framework was designed with several core principles in mind, including fairness, alignment of compensation with those experiencing impact, and the need for a user-friendly, intuitive process. It includes three tracks:

- Offshore Export Cable Corridor Claim Track
    - Includes an optional path for fishermen to accept compensation in advance, in exchange for not fishing in the cable corridor during construction
- Expedited Construction Disruption Claim Track
    - One-time advance payment for disruption incurred during construction
- Individual Review Claim Track
    - Pathways to compensation for those experiencing individualized harm during construction and/or operations phase
    - Claim would be paid after harm is proven
    - Eligibility for for-hire and commercial fishermen are the same

Eligibility is consistent across all three tracks. Fishing within a project area at least 1 day of any 3 of the past 10 years before funding is allocated to an OSW project makes a fishing entity eligible to apply. More details about the tracks and eligibility are included in the Draft Framework.

The comment period for the Draft Framework is open through November 3, 2026, and F-TWG members are encouraged to submit comments here. There will also be a recorded webinar held on September 30, 2026, which will provide an overview of the Draft Framework, which participants can register for here. The Final Framework is anticipated to be published in early January 2027. F-TWG members are encouraged to submit comments to provide feedback on the Draft Framework.

Discussion and Questions

- A member asked if claim evaluations consider a business' history of fishing within the OSW project area only or their entire fishing history within the prescribed timeframe.
    - Orran Brown (BrownGreer) responded that the entire fishing history, both during and prior to lost revenue, would be accounted for in the evaluation, not just fishing within the project area.
- A member who was involved in the development of the Draft Framework added that the reader notes included in the Draft Framework are helpful for understanding where some of the stakeholders held different perspectives and emphasized that there was not unanimity on everything included in the document.

Regional Surfclam Monitoring Plan Specialist Committee Update

Matt Nixon (Tetra Tech) provided an update on the recent work of the Regional Surfclam Monitoring Plan Specialist Committee. With support from staff, the committee is developing a Regional Monitoring Plan to evaluate the potential impacts of offshore wind development on surfclams along the Atlantic Coast.

Atlantic surfclams are among the Mid-Atlantic's highest value single-species fishery, but face compounding environmental and spatial shifts. Surfclams already have a robust body of research, and there is a strong monitoring history in the Mid-Atlantic Region, but no single monitoring program sees the whole picture, and key data streams don't connect at a regional scale.

The Regional Monitoring Plan aspires to collect an appendix of existing research, provide a roadmap to guide survey efforts, list best practices, and assist in research coordination such as by providing suggestions for standardized monitoring protocols, methodologies, and data interoperability. The goal is to better coordinate research efforts and to develop a scientific framework for harmonizing lease-level data into regional stock and habitat understanding. The plan does not replace federal surfclam surveys, is not a sampling mandate, and is not a regulatory directive.

The plan is structured to:

- Establish foundational context about surfclams and surfclam monitoring in the region
- Assess existing monitoring gaps
- Ground survey methods in species biology and ecology
- Define actionable implementation across regional offshore wind lease areas
    - Set clear monitoring objectives and the tiered, interoperable design principles that carry the plan
    - Establish standardized monitoring objectives, gear configurations, data standards, and multi-agency coordination workflows

The plan is currently in the drafting process, with a goal of completing a first rough draft by the end of September 2026 for specialist committee review and a final draft by early 2027. The full F-TWG will have the opportunity to review the draft Plan and provide input before the final version is released.

Discussion and Questions

- Morgan Brunbauer (NYSERDA) added that developers with offshore wind contracts with New York are contractually obligated to set aside $5,000 per PW for regional monitoring of commercially important fish stocks. The goal is for the funds associated with the Sunrise project to be used to implement these regional frameworks. The committee is a forum for the surfclam industry to continue conversations around monitoring and OSW, and is comprised of surf clam researchers, commercial surfclam industry representatives, and federal and state members.

Scallop Habitat Suitability & Offshore Wind Overlap in the Mid-Atlantic Bight

AJ Mabaka (Stony Brook University) presented his research on Scallop Habitat Suitability and Offshore Wind Overlap in the Mid-Atlantic Bight.

The Atlantic Sea scallop fishery is the largest and most valuable wild scallop fishery in the world. Scallops are a benthic, long-lived species with a broad distribution in the Mid-Atlantic Bight. They're highly influenced by habitat quality, making them a good representation of environmental conditions across long timeframes. The Atlantic scallop fishery also has robust datasets going back several decades.

This study created a model to help identify where scallop habitat might overlap with proposed or existing OSW lease areas in the region. A habitat suitability index was used to quantify environmental suitability for scallops at a particular location and time, ranging from 0 (unsuitable) to 1 (optimal), using data from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Sea Scallop Survey from 1979-2022. The map of predicted sea scallop habitat was overlain with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) OSW lease areas to identify areas of overlap. The study found that 64% of BOEM lease and planning areas in the Mid-Atlantic Bight coincide with highly suitable sea scallop habitat, with several lease areas in the

northern section of the Mid-Atlantic Bight showing 90-100% overlap. Habitat suitability is not a metric or abundance, presence, or fishing activity but rather habitat that could be important for scallops and is an important distinction not to be taken out of context. Rather, this information can help support planning by identifying areas of potentially overlapping interests which may require further discussion and mitigation efforts to reduce potential impacts.

Discussion and Questions

- Morgan Brunbauer (NYSERDA) asked what habitat suitability models can show in terms of what's occurring with fishing on the ground.
    - AJ Mabaka (Stony Brook) responded that the models provide a snapshot in time of how a species might use a particular space, and aren't a reflection of fishing history or landings, biomass, etc. They provide a likelihood that scallops might be found in a particular time and place.
- A member asked if there have been similar studies looking at other species.
    - AJ Mabaka replied that there has been some similar work done with surfclams, looking at species distribution relative to OSW, but not necessarily using suitability modeling. Focus has historically been placed on large marine mammals, and there hasn't been much work done on benthic organisms, especially shellfish.

Offshore Wind Mitigation Fund Progress

Brad Schondelmeier (Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, or MA DMF) shared an update on work funded through Massachusetts' Mitigation Funds. There are two funds which were established in 2020 and 2023, respectively:

- Fisheries Innovation Fund (FIF)
    - Supports programs and projects that ensure safe and profitable fishing as Vineyard Wind and other offshore wind projects are developed
    - Funded by Vineyard Wind
- Coastal Community Fund (CCF)
    - Provides grants for initiatives supporting coastal communities in Massachusetts (ie. Marketing, training, infrastructure, and supporting the productivity of the commercial fishing industry)
    - Funded by Ørsted

Both funds are structured similarly, with a nine-member Advisory Panel (FIF) or Advisory Council (CCF) appointed to 3-year terms by the MA Department of Fish and Game Commissioner and led by the MA DMF Director. The councils include representatives from the fishing industry, port authorities, wholesale seafood dealers, the MA Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission, for-hire and line fishery, mobile gear fishery, and in the case of FIF, offshore wind developers.

The FIF recently announced funding for 6 projects totaling $1.7 million in funding, while the CCF is still in the process of appointing its first Advisory Council. The funded FIF projects are:

- Fishermen Led Gear Innovation in Southern New England

- Advanced Mechanical Jigging to Strengthen Squid Fishery Resilience Amid Offshore Wind Development
- Novel Fish Potting with Lights for Black Seabass and Scup: Developing Innovative Fishing Gear for Safe and Efficient Operation in Offshore Wind Farm Areas
- Resilience: Strengthening Markets for Massachusetts Seafood through Video and Public Engagement
- New Bedford Seafood Study, Marketing, and Promotional Campaign
- Evaluating the Hazard of Trawling Over Cable Protection Mattresses

More information about these projects and the funds can be found on MA DMF's offshore wind webpage.

Discussion and Questions

- A member asked what the timelines are in general for this portfolio of projects.
    - Brad Schondelmeier (MA DMF) responded that most projects were proposed as one-year projects, with an additional 4-6 months to compile final reports. These projects are expected to have final reports in March-June of next year (2027). Two-year projects can be expected to be completed the year after (2028).
- A member commented that it's nice to see Massachusetts and Rhode Island collaborating on projects that benefit both states, and that it would be great to see more collaborations that can save money and avoid duplication of effort.
    - Morgan Brunbauer (NYSERDA) added that the next meeting will cover the comments and feedback from the recent NYSERDA Request for Information (RFI) about the environmental research agenda. The theme of collaboration between funders and states came up frequently. ROSA and RWSC have already been doing work to better coordinate funding and research.
    - Brad Schondelmeier (MA DMF) added that the advisory panel understands that the OSW impact for Massachusetts and Rhode Island is comparable and that the two states can collaborate. The goal of these projects is to directly benefit the fishing industry.

Updates on ROSA Research Efforts

Reneé Reilly shared an update on recent research efforts at the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA). ROSA is a nonprofit organization that advances regional scientific research, monitoring and understanding of fisheries and the interactions with blue economy activities, including offshore wind, in U.S. state and federal waters. Region-wide, more than 40 new research projects have begun multi-year modeling, field, and analysis work in late 2025 and early 2026 across state, federal, regional, and non-governmental organization funders. ROSA convenes funders in collaboration with the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC) to coordinate work, avoid duplication of effort, and use research funds more effectively.

ROSA tracks regional research through FishFORWRD (Fish and Fisheries Offshore Wind Database), a centralized database of projects that users can filter by location, sector, method, and other categories. ROSA also conducted an analysis to identify key research gaps, which underwent peer review last year. ROSA mapped 240 projects against 70 summarized research needs, which were put into 11 research categories. ROSA found that 7 summarized research needs remain full research gaps, meaning no

published work was found on those topics. ROSA is continually updating the database and the gaps analysis as new research is published.

ROSA was recently selected for a Mass Clean Energy Center (MA CEC) award to translate ROSA's research synthesis into decision-relevant communication products, targeting the fishing industry, state and regional fisheries and energy managers, and the research community. This responds directly to a research gap identified by ROSA, which found only 3 of 240 projects were related to fisheries engagement and capacity building. Additionally, $3.4 million from the Empire Wind 1 project was allocated to regional research and monitoring, and 10 projects were selected in 2025. This research is focused on priorities identified in the Research Gaps Analysis, and all resulting work products will be made publicly available in accordance with ROSA's Data Policy. More information on these projects can be found here.

Additionally, ROSA published their Data Governance Guidance last month, which is a practical reference for planning, publishing, and sharing OSW fisheries data. The Guidance was developed with extensive stakeholder input, including fisheries councils and indigenous groups. The guidance sets shared expectations for researchers, including sharing all data and metadata publicly within 1 year of the last collection and encouraging funders to require data sharing as part of their grants. Standardizing survey data can extend the reach of existing surveys, but data must be usable across projects and comparable to long-running time series.

Finally, ROSA is currently developing a new Fishing Industry Insights ("FINsights") platform, which aims to connect the fishing industry with researchers and gather insights about what's happening on the water. ROSA is interested in feedback and input on how to improve FINsights. Members with ideas can reach out to renee@rosascience.org.

ROSA's next Advisory Council meeting will take place September 24th from 1-3pm, and F-TWG members are encouraged to join.

Discussion and Questions

- Morgan Brunbauer (NYSERDA) asked what other regional frameworks are primed for work.
    - Reneé Reilly (ROSA) responded that a regional industry-based trawl survey went through Phase 1. Projects using environmental DNA (eDNA) in fisheries monitoring plans are going forward, as well as projects within the Empire Wind 1 portfolio that are integrating eDNA data from surveys that have already happened. Additionally, ROSA is working on federal survey integration with fisheries monitoring plans.
- A member shared that the New England Fishery Management Council will be hosting a presentation on the Regional Industry-Based Trawl Survey (RIBTS).
- A member asked if ROSA has capacity to be taking on non-OSW work, such as the recent request for information (RFI) on offshore mining off the coast of Virginia.
    - Reneé responded that ROSA did submit a comment to that RFI and is advocating for leveraging lessons learned from the OSW experience for mining, aquaculture, and other offshore industries. ROSA is paying attention to what's happening in the space, but capacity will depend on future priorities, funding, etc.
- A member reacted positively to the FINsights idea and asked how much outreach has been done and what the response has been so far within the fishing community.

- Reneé responded that the project is still in a beta testing phase, but there has been interest so far. The commercial industry has provided some feedback about the structure of how metadata is being used to catalogue information. ROSA is seeking funding for the project and is trying to design the system for ease of use, sensitivity of information, and provide options for both short and long submissions. ROSA is planning to do more outreach, including with the fisheries management councils and commission, and states.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The following additional next steps resulted from the meeting:

- The next F-TWG Meeting will be held sometime in late October through mid-November, 2026 (date TBD). The meeting will likely focus on:
  - NYSERDA's environmental research program RFI
  - Additional research updates
  - Review of the draft Regional Surfclam Monitoring Plan
- Members are encouraged to reach out to Morgan Brunbauer (morgan.brunbauer@nyserda.ny.gov) with any additional questions, comments, or topics they'd like covered at future meetings.

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

New York State Fisheries Technical Working Group (F-TWG)

11 September 2026, 1:00pm – 3:00pm EST

Zoom Link: https://cbi-org.zoom.us/j/86505401846

Time	Agenda Item
1:00 – 1:05 pm	**Welcome** ● Introductions ● Purpose of F-TWG ● Meeting agenda and ground rules
1:05 pm – 1:35 pm	**Regional Fund Administrator Framework Update** ● *Presentation by Orran Brown, BrownGreer* ● Questions
1:35 – 1:55 pm	**Regional Surfclam Monitoring Plan Specialist Committee Update** ● *Presentation by Jenessa Kay and Matt Nixon, Tetra Tech* ● Questions
1:55 – 2:15 pm	**Habitat Suitability Model for Sea Scallops** ● *Presentation by AJ Mabaka, Stony Brook University* ● Questions
2:15 – 2:30 pm	**Offshore Wind Mitigation Fund Progress** ● *Presentation by Brad Schondelmeier, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries* ● Questions

2:30 – 2:45 pm	**Updates on ROSA Research Efforts** ● *Presentation by Reneé Reilly, Responsible Offshore Science Alliance* ● Questions
2:45 – 2:55 pm	**Discussion** ● Questions
2:55 – 3:00pm	**Next Steps** ● Next F-TWG meeting