



IN THE GULF OF MAINE

MAY 13TH, 2022 OFFSHORE WIND CONFERENCE – BOSTON, MA

The following Key Pillars were affirmed by the Massachusetts commercial fishing industry, in conjunction with representatives of Maine and Rhode Island fisheries, regarding ocean industrialization in the form of offshore wind energy development.

1. ECONOMY

In Massachusetts, commercial fishing is a historic eight hundred million dollar industry¹ that supports over one hundred and forty thousand well paying, dignified lifelong jobs² that do not require a degree, can be learned with limited technical training, and form the foundation of many of our communities.

“I have concerns about the impacts of thousands of miles of electrical lines on modifying habitat for lobsters and lobster larvae. I have heard that high energy transmitting lines on land crackle and make noise. What would be the impact for any crustacean and larvae? What about right whales? I know how much my industry has gone through to protect them, and now offshore wind developers are authorized to have 25 interactions, but what does that mean? In sum, there are too many ways that offshore wind could harm the lobster industry. The process needs to slow down and have some real research.” - Massachusetts Harvester

“There will be more fisherman in smaller areas, leading to more conflicts and gear interactions.” - Massachusetts Harvester



2. COMMUNITY

Coastal communities throughout the Bay State depend on the commercial fishing industry as a cultural foundation around which their local economies are built. It is difficult to imagine communities like Gloucester or Scituate maintaining their charm without our boats unloading fresh fish on the town piers.

Commercial fishing throughout the northeast is an industry made up small businesses, of which are many multi-generational, family owned and operated. They do not have the time, expertise, or resources to protect their businesses and communities from multinational energy corporations. It is crucial that we maintain the cultural heritage of fishing that belongs to all coastal residents, by ensuring our communities and ports remain fishery-centric.

“We need to entice the next generation into this before it’s over. But who in their right mind would enter this industry? Would I want my kids getting into this, and sitting gin these meetings, wondering if their life’s investment is constantly at risk?” - Massachusetts Harvester

“Wind and fishing are not compatible. They’re not going to be compatible. The fishing industry is getting pushed out by this ‘gold rush’ or as I call it, ‘fool’s gold.’ Offshore wind will be the most destructive thing that’s ever happened to the ocean. It’s never going to be restored. It’s going to completely change the ecosystem, and it’s all for money.” - Massachusetts Harvester

“I run an apprenticeship program. Some of these kids are so damn eager, they just want to be on the ocean. But they ask me ‘is there a future? Is there a pathway for me o become a captain like you?’ I don’t know what to say. Our ports might become ghost towns, museums.” - Massachusetts Harvester



3. PROCESS CONCERNS

The process for offshore wind development has catered to fast tracking the bids of multinational energy companies to industrialize the ocean. With limited levels of transparency, input from fisheries stakeholders has seemingly been ignored instead of valued and used to make decisions, and yet plans that will directly impact our ability to do our jobs are moving forward.

There has been no true accounting for the environmental, ecological, economic, or navigational concerns we have raised, nor have there been any robust studies or serious reports on those matters. We maintain that impacts should be addressed using the NEPA step-wise approach (40 CFR §1508.20):

1. Avoid the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action
2. Minimize impacts by limited the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation
3. Rectify the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment
4. Reduce or eliminate the impacts over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action
5. Compensate for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

The commercial fishing industry should be directly involved in any discussions or decisions throughout every step of the process. Mitigation plans should be developed through an inclusive process, they should take a regional approach, and should be based on the best available scientific and economic data.

“Offshore wind isn’t a climate change solution, it’s a political solution.” - MA Harvester

“One concession to the industry could be for the wind industry to buy every fishing vessel an electric boat which gets plugged into the grid for free. If they’re going to be taking something, they need to give something.” - MA Harvester



4. ENVIRONMENT

The commercial fishing industry is a steward of the ocean. For many years, the fishing industry has fought hard against human activities such as offshore oil and gas drilling and mining that threaten the health of our ocean. We are passionate advocates for keeping our seas clean and productive. The fishery follows stringent regulations under the MSA, MMA and ESA put in place to ensure the future sustainability of fish species, marine mammals, and ocean habitats.

Offshore energy development is playing by a different set of priorities and rules and comes at a cost. Now, we must also fight to prevent the environmental damage of ocean industrialization, which if left unchecked, will certainly occur.

The commercial fishing industry is on the front line of the effects of climate change, and will be among the most impacted by warming oceans. We appreciate that alternative energy sources must be explored and considered under a changing environment. However, there are many other ways to solve the climate challenge that do not involve giving away our oceans for offshore wind energy development to multinational energy companies, harming the ocean environment, displacing the commercial fishing industry, and trading away our food security. Offshore wind is not the silver bullet to protect our nation from climate change. The unknowable dangers ocean industrialization poses to fish and whales, physical oceanography, and avian species entwined with the marine ecosystem are serious and must be confronted.

America must address climate change in the most fishery-friendly way possible, by uplifting technologies and policies that work for fisheries and not at their expense. The climate solutions toolkit is constantly expanding, and we must lead with solutions like solar, tidal and water energy, land based wind, or safe new nuclear facilities. These other technologies that pose little risk to ocean and watershed ecosystems and food producers.



"In 2005, New Bedford put up solar panels. It is not one of the top ten cities for solar generation nationwide. This was done because fishermen are the top environmentalists. Everybody understood that it was out responsibility." - MA Harvester

"Offshore wind as the only solution to climate change is like when we dammed up all the rivers in New England, the benefit of which lasted about twenty years. Now, were still living the damages." - MA Harvester

5. FOOD SECURITY

It is of entirely equal and valid importance for the United States to protect our food security and independence, as it is to diversify and expand our energy sources. Under a changing climate, it is also critical to support and invest in opportunities that assist our commercial fisheries as they evolve under a new environmental regime.

Domestically, the commercial fishing industry provides a critical local food source for our nation. As we brace for global disruptions such as pandemic, war, fractured supply chains, and climate change, seafood security becomes even more vital.

6. THE HEALTHY CHOICE

The commercial fishing industry provides a healthy choice for society, for the environment, and for the economy which ocean industrialization threatens to displace or harm.

There is broad scientific consensus that seafood is among the healthiest foods, as the UN calls it “nature’s superfood.” It benefits all body systems and reduces the risk of some of the deadliest diseases.



Harvesting seafood³ is considerably more environmentally friendly than many other sources of food. Carbon emissions associated with wild seafood are six times lower than that of beef, five times lower than that of mutton, and more than two times lower than that of cheese.

The health of the Massachusetts economy benefits from commercial fishing, accounting for nearly 3% of our economic activity. The renewable bounty of the sea guarantees commercial fishing will be an important part of the foreseeable future.

Notes

1. <https://www.mass.gov/news/massachusetts-seafood-value-reaches-an-all-time-high-in-2021#:~:text=Massachusetts%20Seafood%20Value%20Reaches%20an%20All%2DTime%20High%20in%202021,-1%2F11%2F2022&text=For%20comparison%20to%20the%20%24800,value%20was%20approximately%20%24600%20million>
2. <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2022-03/FEUS-2019.pdf>
3. <https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.aag0216>

