

**Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan**  
**Stakeholder Workshops**  
**February 2009**  
**Saturday 2/7 & Tuesday 2/10**

The MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EEA) held two Stakeholder Workshops (with identical agendas) on the development of the Ocean Management Plan. The purpose of the meetings was to enable stakeholders to review technical materials prepared to date as part of the Ocean Management Plan development process. The first was held on Cape Cod on February 7<sup>th</sup> and the second on February 10<sup>th</sup> in Boston. Both were well attended and many Mass Ocean Coalition members attended and participated - including:

- Mass Audubon
- Conservation Law Foundation
- New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance
- New England Aquarium
- MA Chapter of Surfrider's Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Whale Center of New England
- Three Bays Preservation
- Ocean Rivers Institute
- Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2)
- MA Marine Trades Association
- Sailors for the Sea
- MA Association of Conservation Commissions
- MA Fishermen's Partnership
- Gloucester Fishermen's Wife's Association

Deerin Babb-Brott, Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Coastal Zone Management, reviewed the Ocean Management Plan in broad strokes and discussed the task of each of the six Working Groups and their efforts of collecting data, identifying data gaps, and recommending what other data is needed. Deerin reviewed the "Oceans 15" - the fifteen items specifically identified in the Oceans Act that the plan must address (number 6 being, "identify and protect special, sensitive or unique estuarine and marine life and habitats" also known as SSU's). He also discussed the Goals, Strategy, and Outcomes for the Ocean Management Plan. The PowerPoint presentation can be found at: <http://www.massocceanpartnership.org/documents/EEAStakeholderWorkshopPresentationFeb2009.pdf>

Presentations on each of the six Work Groups were given by the team leaders. The Working Groups consisted of Habitat; Fisheries; Transportation, navigation, and infrastructure; Sediment; Recreation and cultural services; Renewable Energy. Each group produced a map(s) focusing on their use area (summaries of these reports can be found at: <http://www.massocceanpartnership.org/calendar.html#0210>). After the presentations, there was a break for attendees to view the maps and speak one-on-one with staff from each of the six Work Groups about the maps, the data collecting process, and to ask specific question.

With over fourteen Mass Ocean Coalition organizations attending the EEA Stakeholder meetings, we reinforced the importance of identifying and protecting SSU estuarine and marine life habitats. Responding to the Mass Ocean Coalition's four letters to EEA commenting on the Ocean Management Plan and stating the importance of identifying and protecting SSUs – the state has identified SSUs as a key "Outcome" of the plan. Identifying SSUs in Massachusetts' ocean waters will be important as other uses (renewable energy facilities, sanding mining, etc.) are identified in the planning area. In this regard, providing all the six Working Group map(s) in a GIS format, so that overlapping can be conducted and competing uses can be identified will be important. Additionally, Coalition members noted the importance of "appropriate scale". Emerging uses such as offshore renewable energy must be designed at a scale appropriate to the habitat and resources defining the area of impact.

Other Coalition comments included recognizing the state's efforts in collecting the massive amount of scientific data necessary to compile the Working Groups Reports. Coalition members went on to state that, to date, the open and transparent nature of the process was to be commended. These Stakeholder meetings, to present the information collected to the public, is an essential step in creating an Ocean Management Plan that includes the residents of the Commonwealth as the protection of critical habitat and varied uses are identified in our ocean waters - which are in all our "public trust". We recommended that the state hold another Stakeholder meeting prior to the release of the draft Ocean Management Plan to allow the public to be briefed on further information collected, key terms that the state has identified, and updated maps.

Coalition comments also addressed the issue of the 3 mile (the "Planning area") boundary and the fact that aquatic life (fish, whales, etc.) do not conform to lines drawn on maps. Additionally, areas on the Habitat Work Group map identified as "low use" were questioned – in many cases these areas were identified as low because of lack of information (the summary of the Habitat Work Group report and maps can be found at <http://www.masscoceanpartnership.org/documents/Habitat-Work-Group-Report%20Summary.pdf>).

The close link between Habitat data and Fisheries (Fisheries Work Group summary and maps can be found at <http://masscoceanpartnership.org/documents/Habitat-Work-Group-Report%20Summary.pdf>) data was also brought up. The state is establishing the Ecological Valuation Index (EVI) to synthesize data from the Habitat and Fisheries Work Groups and construct a compatibility matrix.

MOP recorded these Stakeholder meetings and the can be found at:

Saturday 2/7 meeting: <http://masscoceanpartnership.org/calendar.html#0207>

Tuesday 2/10 meeting: <http://masscoceanpartnership.org/calendar.html#0210>

For those unable to attend the Stakeholder meetings comments can still be submitted at:

<http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/mop/commentonline.aspx>

The next meeting of the Ocean Advisory Commission will be held on March 4<sup>th</sup> at UMass Boston from 1-4 PM.