



Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Developed for the Regional Fund Administrator for Compensatory Mitigation
for Offshore Wind Impacts to Commercial and For-Hire Fishing Project

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

For over three years, eleven Atlantic Seaboard states (Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina collectively, the Participating Atlantic States) have been working together to advance and implement a consistent regional approach for the administration of financial compensation paid by developers to address adverse impacts of offshore wind (OSW) energy development on the U.S. Eastern Seaboard's commercial and for-hire recreational fishing industries.

The States received feedback as part of the stakeholder outreach process that, after a RFA was selected, there must be a dedicated entity to provide robust guidance and feedback regarding commercial and for-hire fishing. Based on this feedback, the States decided to initiate the formation of the Design Oversight Committee (DOC) and the For-Hire Committee (FHC) comprised of representatives from the commercial fishing/for-hire fishing community, the States, and OSW developers.

The main objectives of the **Compensatory Mitigation for Offshore Wind Impacts to Commercial and For-Hire Recreational Fishing** are:

- Develop and document all components of the Fund and associated claims and appeals processes;
- Design and document the administrative and financial functions needed to manage the Fund effectively and efficiently; and
- Conduct robust engagement with stakeholders to best position the Fund as the consensus-based, trusted path forward for efficient, equitable, and transparent regional fisheries compensatory mitigation.

To achieve robust engagement with stakeholders, BrownGreer and the Carbon Trust have developed this Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

1.1.1. What is the purpose of this plan?

The purpose of the **RFA Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan** is to:

- Guide BrownGreer's and the Carbon Trust's approach to engaging with fishing communities across the eleven states, as well as offshore wind developers, and state and federal officials;
- Ensure a fair process by considering all relevant parties and giving everybody an equal opportunity to express their views;
- Ensure transparency in the engagement by explaining when, who and how to engage with stakeholders;
- Set out what stakeholders can expect from the engagement process, including timelines, frequency and format of engagement.

We recognize that stakeholders bring disparate perspectives and views on how such a fund could be structured and implemented. Our approach will focus on fostering collaboration and aiming for

consensus wherever reasonably possible, ensuring that the outcome reflects shared goals. We also acknowledge that compromises will be necessary to accommodate varying priorities, and we are committed to balancing these differences to create a solution that is both effective and fair for all parties involved.

1.1.2. Who is this plan for?

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan is for anyone who intends to participate in the design and development of the fund through the RFA project. The Plan sets out the main stakeholders, stakeholder engagement approaches, and next steps. The Plan has been reviewed by the two dedicated entities established to provide feedback on this project and ultimately the fund administrator: the Design Oversight Committee on Commercial Fishing (“DOC”) and For-Hire Committee (“FHC”)

BrownGreer and the Carbon Trust acknowledge that designing the compensation fund and associated claims process will be a complex effort, involving time from many different individuals across the eleven states; significant work on this effort has been completed to date, and there is still work to be done. We aim to be as comprehensive, respectful and practical as possible, and as such, we will prioritize accessibility and flexibility.

2. Stakeholder engagement goals

2.1. Overarching stakeholder engagement goals

Our goals for engaging across all stakeholder groups, for the entire duration of the RFA project are to:

- Identify a varied and representative set of stakeholders across different fisheries, regions and ports;
- Foster constructive stakeholder relationships built on trust and transparency;
- Provide ongoing opportunities to engage and ensure these opportunities are accessible across the region;
- Look for opportunities to limit stakeholder fatigue;
- Listen carefully and openly, bringing no preconceived notions and remaining open to exploring different ideas and suggestions;
- Provide clear communication, as well as factual and timely feedback; and
- Incorporate feedback from stakeholders and build agreement through consensus

3. Stakeholder identification and mapping

3.1. Identifying stakeholders

Stakeholder categories

Although non-exhaustive, stakeholders across the participating Atlantic States that may have an interest in the design and development of the regional fund have been categorized into the following four sectors:

- Members of the commercial fishing industry;
- Members of the for-hire fishing industry;
- Representatives from OSW development companies (“developers”); and
- Officials from state and federal government institutions.

Each of these sectors is diverse in its own way. In particular, the fishing industry is a complex industry that varies by species, gear type, vessel type and size, business model, port and region. In a sense, there is no one “fishing industry” but rather a complex and interwoven set of industries.

An initial stakeholder database, including representatives from each category, has been prepared and shared with and approved by NYSERDA, the contracting authority for the RFA project along with Special Initiative on Offshore Wind (SIOW) and Consensus Building Institute (CBI). The Carbon Trust and BrownGreer will continue to develop and use this database throughout the course of the project.

Identifying relevant stakeholders

We will aim for a robust, “bottom up” stakeholder engagement process, collecting feedback from the DOC and FHC members as well as the wider commercial and for-hire fishing industries, the OSW industry and government institutions.

We will focus on identifying as many relevant stakeholders as possible during the start of the RFA project but will continue to build out the network of stakeholders throughout the project duration. We will identify stakeholders by:

- **Building on the previous phase of work:** CBI and SIOW facilitated an extensive two-year consensus-based engagement process involving representatives from state institutions, the commercial fishing industry, and the OSW industry, with additional input from federal agencies and other relevant organizations to prepare for the RFA Project. Details of this effort are outlined in the document titled *Framework for Establishing a Regional Fisheries Compensation Fund Administrator for Potential Impacts to the Fishing Community from Offshore Wind Energy Development*.¹ An initial stakeholder list was drawn together from this phase of work and will be used as a starting point for the RFA project.

¹ <https://offshorewindpower.org/fisheries-mitigation-project>

- **Desktop research:** We will add to the initial stakeholder list through desktop research on membership of key organizations, attendance at meetings and committee roles.
- **Referrals:** We will ask our existing contacts and network for referrals. In particular, we will work with DOC and FHC members to identify groups or individuals that should engage in the RFA process (see Section 3.2.1 for information on the anticipated role of DOC and FHC members in stakeholder engagement).

We will continue to update our internal stakeholder database with new contacts from research and outreach conducted throughout the duration of the project.

3.2. Engaging stakeholders

3.2.1. Role of Design Oversight Committee (DOC) and For-Hire Committee (FHC)

The RFA will actively collaborate with DOC and FHC members to facilitate meaningful discussions and gather feedback from their respective sectors. A “sector” encompasses all relevant stakeholders – commercial fisheries, for-hire recreational fishing, offshore wind developers, states and federal government institutions—ensuring that the perspectives of all key players are considered in the decision-making process. This approach aims to deliver sector-wide, consensus-based advice to the RFA on the fund design.

We have designed flexibility into our approach and will adapt our engagement based on the evolution of the work, listening to feedback from DOC and FHC members on how best to engage with their sectors. The DOC and FHC will provide advice, guidance, and support to ensure that a legitimate, functional, efficient, and equitable regional claims process, and its administration are established. A separate DOC and FHC Terms of Reference document is publicly available on the RFA website (www.rfainfo.com).

We acknowledge the existing commitments and jobs of DOC and FHC members. Therefore, we do not expect members to be the primary point of contact for all stakeholder meetings or to lead the administration of meeting setup. We acknowledge that members and sectors have different approaches to working with their stakeholders and we prioritize establishing working relationships with each DOC/FHC and alternate member to reflect these approaches in our engagement.

Specifically, we will, with input from the DOC and FHC, support stakeholder engagement within and across each sector by:

- Advising on meetings, gatherings and other opportunities to engage with stakeholders individually or in a group format;
- Supporting dialogue by attending sector or regionally specific meetings and providing updates on the progress of designing and developing the fund;
- Identifying and carrying out specific measures to promote varied and representative participation across their stakeholder groups, such as finding hyper-local individuals who are trusted within their local communities and can help amplify the project engagement work.
- Helping to facilitate consensus-building by identifying mutually acceptable compromises;

We will convene a minimum of five DOC and FHC meetings over an 18-month period to report on progress, engage in targeted discussions on specific aspects of the fund development and assist in agreeing to the next steps. See Section 3.3 (Consolidating feedback and reporting back).

3.2.2. Engaging with the wider sectors

Stakeholder engagement activities will vary over time and across stakeholder categories. A key principle to our activities is fostering a two-way dialogue that includes delivering information throughout the duration of the project to ensure progress is communicated, feedback on early input can be provided and new contacts can be engaged in the process at any point throughout the duration of the stakeholder consultation. These valuable conversations will be used to gather feedback to inform future dialogue, topics for more detailed discussion and new stakeholders to engage.

We consider the importance of accessibility in the form of accessing information and providing input. This includes the convenience of meeting location (virtual, in-person, linking to existing gatherings), times/seasonality, language, work commitments and childcare needs. We will work with the DOC, FHC, and engagement officers to provide initial guidance which will be supported by direct feedback from stakeholders.

We will prioritize informing stakeholders of the work by:

- Holding a kick-off / introductory DOC and FHC meeting;
- Having 1-2-1 meetings with all DOC and FHC members and alternates, including seeking guidance on how to prioritize outreach;
- Establishing and growing networks through existing forums, attendance at key meetings (on guidance from the DOC/FHC);
- Setting up individual and group meetings with different members of each sector at key locations across the region.

We recognize the importance of utilizing existing relationships and networks to build on local presence that is available, engaged, and attuned to the specific needs and priorities of the local fishing community. By building meaningful connections, we can better understand local perspectives, foster trust, and ensure that the development considers the unique challenges faced by the variety of stakeholders. In addition to being available locally at suitable times, we will work closely with the DOC, FHC, local fishing industry engagement advisors and individuals already closely connected to the fishing industry to support information collation, dissemination and local meeting facilitation.

3.3. Consolidating feedback and reporting back

Through the engagement process, the RFA will gather and present information to sector groups through targeted sector-specific meetings. Where necessary, one-on-one meetings with key individuals or stakeholder groups will be arranged to ensure an acceptable consensus is reached. The collected information will then be presented and discussed during DOC and FHC meetings to solicit input, facilitate review, refine proposals, and build agreement. We will work with the DOC and FHC, and other stakeholders as appropriate, to mitigate the risk of stakeholder fatigue when determining ongoing and future engagement approaches. Following these workshops, the RFA will further refine the framework and present it to the DOC and FHC for final approval of each design component.

The RFA will make significant efforts to incorporate the advice of the DOC and FHC to develop recommendations that can achieve consensus for the final claims process. The RFA may continue with the design and development of the claims process even if consensus is not reached, provided that meaningful efforts to seek consensus and resolve differences have been made.

A public website (www.rfainfo.com) will be maintained throughout the duration of the project. We will actively share this website with existing organizations, groups and forums to ensure widespread access to project updates. To ensure transparency, a summary of meeting notes reflecting the discussion will be provided on the public website.

3.4. Tracking progress and adjusting our approach

Based on the engagement carried out in previous stages of this project and our own connections, we have developed an initial list of stakeholders who should be informed and consulted on the design and development of the fund.

The following section provides a summary of our tracking tools and anticipated means of communication for engagement:

- We will maintain an internal database and track dates of engagement, key topics, who we are contacting and who is providing feedback, to ensure proportionate representation across landing port, gear type, species type, business type, and business size.
- RFA strongly supports transparency in engagement but are mindful of the need to protect stakeholder relationships, including allowing identities to be withheld.
- We will maintain a record of DOC and FHC agendas and meeting summaries without attribution. These will be made available on a public website along with presentations and background material where possible.
- In addition to meetings that we instigate, on guidance from the DOC and FHC, we will endeavor to be available to present at existing meetings and gatherings, such as Fishery Management Council Meetings and townhalls.
- Record feedback and ensure this is considered and discussed as part of the development of design drafts.
- Maintain stakeholder networks and ensure engagement is meaningful and feedback and progress updates are reported back.

Appendix 1: Initial stakeholder engagement timeline for RFA Project

To be updated every 3 months

	Timeline for the RFA Project - design and development of the regional compensation fund
November 2024	Project set-up and initiation
December 2024	Launching the DOC / FHC and kick-off meetings
January – March 2025	<p>Introducing the RFA Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging 1-2-1 with DOC / FHC members • Finalizing DOC / FHC terms of reference • Building the stakeholder network • Gathering initial feedback on engagement approaches, fund design • Developing the RFA Stakeholder Engagement Plan • Launching the RFA Project Website • Presenting introduction to project at Maine Fishermen's Forum • Hosting second DOC / FHC meeting
April 2025	<p>Consultation on how options for complimentary activities/funds could fit into the structure of this compensation fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on eligibility • Discussion on compensation and mitigation • Seeking feedback from DOC / FHC • Supporting sector "break-out" meetings for DOC / FHC members
May – July 2025	<p>Consultation on eligibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing options papers on eligibility • Seeking feedback from DOC / FHC members on options papers • Supporting sector "break-out" meetings for DOC / FHC members • Seeking feedback from wider sectors at existing events and meetings • Consolidating feedback and seeking DOC / FHC consensus on desired option
August 2025 – July 2026	<p>Consultation on other fund components</p> <p>Schedule to be updated by July 2025</p>