Advisory Council Meeting

December 18, 2025 | Meeting Summary

Meeting-in-Brief

The ROSA Advisory Council meeting focused on updates and discussions related to regional research, monitoring, and data governance initiatives. Key topics included updates on the Regional Research & Monitoring Program projects, highlighting work to understand access to fishing within offshore wind farms, assess impacts to larval fish, and develop regional-scale fisheries surveys. The meeting also covered progress from the Data Governance Program, including the development of standards and recommended repositories for fisheries monitoring data, and a collaborative funder coordination initiative to streamline research and monitoring efforts across the region. Additionally, the pilot NYSERDA fellowship program was introduced, which is supporting this year a PhD candidate graduate research on scallop habitat dynamics in the Mid-Atlantic at SUNY Stonybrook, with a focus on updating habitat data to improve management and anticipate potential spatial conflicts with offshore wind development.

Welcome

Facilitator Patrick Field (Consensus Building Institute) welcomed participants and guided attendees through the meeting's agenda.

ROSA Updates

Fisheries and Benthic Monitoring TechSurge

Executive Director, Reneé Reilly, provided a summary of the Fisheries & Benthic Monitoring TechSurge event, hosted by the Marine Technology Society in partnership with Rhode Island Sea Grant, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC), the University of Rhode Island, with sponsorships from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Shell, AKRF, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO). She

highlighted the impact of the event on advancing ocean observing tools and methods, with over 150 attendees participating.

Advisory Council Member Rick Bellevance (Priority Charters, LLC) raised concerns about observations of potential environmental impacts on fish resources and benthos related to offshore wind projects in southern New England (including migration changes, meat quality issues, and species distribution changes). ROSA staff affirmed they would follow up on those issues directly.

Regional Research & Monitoring Program

ROSA Research Program Manager, Tricia Perez, provided an update on the Regional Research and Monitoring Program, noting the completion of the first RFP process with 10 selected projects, and introduced upcoming presentations on two recently executed contracts. She noted that Project Fact Sheets are available for all projects on the ROSA website.

Dr. Dave Secor (University of Maryland, Center for Environmental Studies) presented a project called Flyway Assessments of Offshore Wind Farm Impacts on Migratory Fish, which aims to evaluate cumulative impacts of offshore wind projects on migratory fauna by modeling migration patterns. He explained that the project will use general additive models to interpolate incidence data along principal migration vectors, focusing on seasonal dynamics and migration speed across species. Dr. Secor highlighted that the project will utilize large telemetry databases for sand tiger sharks, striped bass, and Atlantic sturgeon to extract flyway metrics such as migration speed, hotspots, stopovers, and frontal dynamics. The outcomes will provide baseline migration rates and patterns for new species, which can be used to evaluate cumulative offshore wind impacts on migration behaviors.

Christopher Gurshin (ASA Analysis & Communication, Inc.) introduced his project, which aims to develop regional-scale survey methods and analytical techniques to monitor potential impacts of offshore wind installations using active acoustics. Chris and the team will leverage data from multiple acoustic sensors to detect and classify fish and zooplankton species, with a particular focus on comparing different survey designs and data collection approaches. The project will involve collaboration with NOAA and other stakeholders to integrate existing data sets and ground truth findings.

Fish and Fisheries Offshore Wind Research Database (FishFORWRD)

Tricia presented the updates to FishFORWRD, ROSA's database for offshore wind and fisheries research and needs, which now includes a Research Gaps Analysis with 72 unique summarized research needs matched to existing projects in the database. Additionally, the update includes 22 new projects (240 projects total in the database). She demonstrated how the tool can be used by funders, researchers, and the fishing industry to explore progress made and research still needed to understand the impacts of offshore wind on fish and fisheries on the U.S. East Coast.

Data Governance Program

Research Director, Mike Pol, discussed the *Data Governance in Motion* workshop held in November, where recommendations for fishing gear data standards and repositories were presented to participants from various sectors, representing 27 different organizations. The workshop focused on using Darwin Core for data structure and the Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS) as a data repository.

Rachel Blake (Intertidal Agency), presented an overview of the data governance and stewardship work done by the ROSA Data Governance Committee, focusing on applying FAIR data principles to make fisheries data findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable for regional and cumulative assessments and decision-making. She highlighted efforts to establish robust data repositories, align data policies with other organizations, and standardize data formatting using Darwin Core for interoperability. Rachel also discussed ongoing work to develop recommendations for storing benthic image data and emphasized the value of data reusability, citing examples like the Fish Globe Project, and the use of seafloor data in ocean data portals for decision support.

Funder Network Progress and Impact

Reneé presented updates on the funder coordination network, highlighting progress in coordinating research projects across the Atlantic Coast and maximizing resource use. She mentioned the development of a shared Data Management and Sharing Plan (DMSP) template with the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC), and efforts to streamline information

requests to OSW Developers for research purposes. Pat then led a brief exercise for attendees to reflect on ROSA's work and express interest in future activities.

Partner Updates

Trawl Geometry and Catch Standardization

Andy Jones (Northeast Fisheries Science Center, NEFSC) presented findings from a recently-published study conducted in collaboration with regional stakeholders, including fishermen, academic researchers and ROSA's Mike Pol, on the use of a restrictor rope between trawl doors to maintain trawl geometry and improve data consistency in fishery surveys. The project aimed to determine the impact of the restrictor rope on catch rates and fish size distribution. Results indicated that the rope had a subtle but measurable effect on gear performance, with no significant impact on aggregate catches or length distributions of targeted species. The study concluded that the restrictor rope could be a useful tool for standardizing catches across different vessels and survey conditions, including monitoring for impacts from offshore energy development, though further research is needed to assess its effectiveness on other species and in different trawl configurations. ROSA Advisory Council Member Robert Ruhle (F/V Darana R), also a co-author on the study, which was conducted on his vessel, provided comments supporting the value and validity of the work.

Regional Industry-Based Trawl Survey (RIBTS) Project: Industry Survey Initiative

ROSA Advisory Council Member Robert Ruhle (F/V Darana R) also presented on the RIBTS project, a regional industry-based trawl survey being conducted by NTAP to address data gaps in the NEFSC trawl survey and mitigate survey area loss within offshore wind farms. The project's first phase, an 8-day operational assessment scheduled for March, will focus on collecting data south of New England, including inside and outside the Vineyard Wind lease area, using a time slip method to cover both day and night periods. The survey will use a standard 400x12 survey trawl and Tiburon type 2 doors, with oceanographic sensors and SIMrad's TP90 trawl position system to monitor gear placement. The project aims to supplement existing surveys by utilizing industry platforms, with potential for twice-yearly surveys if funding is secured for future phases.

Sea Scallop Habitat Modeling Update

AJ Mabaka (Stonybrook University) presented his research on sea scallop habitat dynamics in the Mid-Atlantic, highlighting the importance of spatially-explicit habitat data for fisheries management and responsible offshore wind development. He introduced a new habitat suitability model that will be refined with additional data and industry input. The group discussed potential next steps, including evaluating habitat changes due to offshore wind development and addressing industry concerns about quality and abundance. This project is supported by NYSERDA and grew out of research gaps identified by ROSA.

Action Items and Next Steps

The next ROSA Advisory Council meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2026 at 1pm ET. Meeting materials, including previous agendas and presentations, can be found on ROSA's website: www.rosascience.org/our-work/advisory-council-priorities-and-meetings/.