Massachusetts has a long and proud history with marine industries. Today, Massachusetts is the number two producer of seafood in the country by sales. The seafood industry employs 11,270 Massachusetts workers in commercial fishing, seafood processing and wholesale distribution, and another 11,000 workers in related industries. Combined, these jobs pull in a payroll of $509 million.

In 2009, Massachusetts adopted a first-in-the-nation Ocean Management Plan. The Ocean Plan is a framework for managing the state’s marine waters in the face of growing economic, environmental and recreational interests. The planning area includes more than 2,000 square miles of ocean. The plan delineates a wide variety of resources within this area—fisheries, commerce, recreation, wildlife, and geology—and designates distinct zones of development.

Southeastern Massachusetts is home to a rich and historic fishing industry. Much of the cultural diversity of southeast Massachusetts is owed to the early days of the whaling industry, which drew Portuguese immigrants. Today in Southeastern Massachusetts there is a large representation of Portuguese speakers, with ancestry tracing to Portugal, the Azores, and Cape Verde.

The Port of New Bedford is the largest fishery port on the U.S. East Coast. The region has several additional fishing ports, including Chatham, Woods Hole, Rock Harbor, Sandwich, Scituate, Provincetown, and Plymouth. Southeastern Massachusetts (including Cape Cod and the Islands) is also the focal point for all of the Commonwealth’s marine aquaculture industry.

The Southeastern Massachusetts seafood industry is not just fishing - it includes processing, wholesale and retail distribution, marine equipment suppliers, and storage facilities. New Bedford alone has more than 30 processors and distributors, and the New Bedford commercial port alone employs more than 4,400 workers. In 2011, the New Bedford fishing fleet brought in $369 million in direct sales.

Sources:
1. USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012
2. Massachusetts Special Commission on Seafood Marketing, 2013
3. Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, 2009
5. Woods Hole Sea Grant http://www.whoi.edu/seagrant/page.do?pid=52096