



New England Fishery Management Council

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Council Establishes On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group; Fishermen Encouraged to Apply for a Seat at the Table

The New England Fishery Management Council is looking for members of the mobile gear, gillnet, trap/pot, and recreational fishing communities, as well as other members of the public, to serve on its On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group. The application deadline is [Monday, April 24, 2023](#).

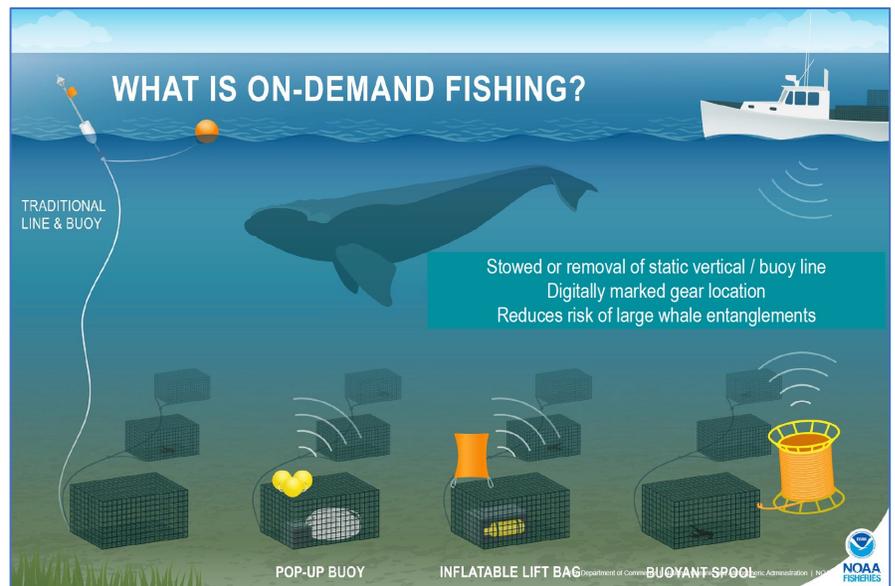
The working group's goal is to identify strategies for reducing gear interactions between on-demand gear, which is often referred to as ropeless gear, and fisheries that use other gear types, such as the groundfish, monkfish, and scallop mobile gear fisheries and the recreational party/charter rod-and-reel fishery.

In addition, the working group will identify strategies for reducing gear interactions that may result from [future measures adopted for sink gillnet fisheries and trap/pot fisheries](#). These would be measures other than those already implemented for the Northeast lobster and Jonah crab fisheries to protect North Atlantic right whales, humpback whales, fin whales, and other protected resources.

IMPORTANT: This working group will focus on interactions between on-demand and other types of fishing gear. The working group will not comment on the suitability of on-demand gear for fixed gear fisheries.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS: Several members of the public, including representatives from the mobile gear, gillnet, trap/pot, and recreational fisheries, will be appointed to serve on the group. Other members will be chosen at the discretion of the Council chair and come from:

- The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils;
- The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission;
- NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO);
- The Northeast Fisheries Science Center; and
- The New England Council's staff.



Learn more about on-demand fishing from NOAA Fisheries at: (1) [Developing Viable On-Demand Gear Systems](#); (2) [Detecting On-Demand Gear](#); and (3) [Protected Species Gear Research](#).



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WHY IS THE COUNCIL CREATING A WORKING GROUP: On-demand gear is expected to play an increasingly large role in reducing right whale and other large whale rope entanglements. Rather than using vertical lines to connect gear such as traps/pot and gillnets to a surface buoy, on-demand gear utilizes acoustic or timed-release technologies such as pop-up buoys, float bags, and buoyant rope spools to retrieve gear set on the seafloor. Fishermen use a geolocation app to locate and recall their gear for retrieval, while other user groups can access gear locations using the app to avoid gear conflicts.

The New England Council received its first presentation on ropeless fishing gear during its [June 2022 meeting](#), which was followed by another update in [January 2023](#) that focused on helping mobile gear fleets [visualize ropeless gear positions](#). At that point, the Council agreed to establish a working group to address interactions between on-demand gear and other gear types to prevent or reduce potential gear conflicts.

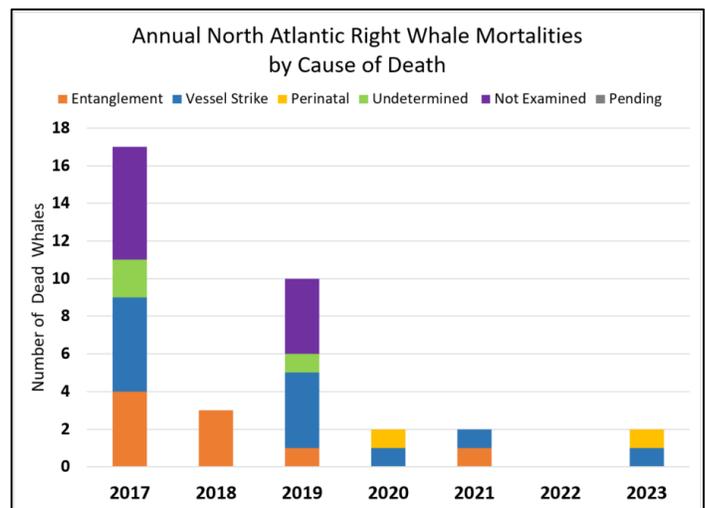
WHAT WILL THE WORKING GROUP DO: The working group will:

- Engage with fishermen, industry members, members of the public, and other relevant stakeholders to identify potential interactions between on-demand and mobile, fixed, and recreational fishing gear use;
- Develop strategies to reduce gear interactions between on-demand and other types of fishing gear;
- Identify and develop strategies to reduce gear interactions that may result from risk reduction measures under consideration for gillnets and other trap/pot fisheries;
- Explore liability issues related to gear interactions; and
- Identify the implications of on-demand fishing gear use for Council-managed fisheries.

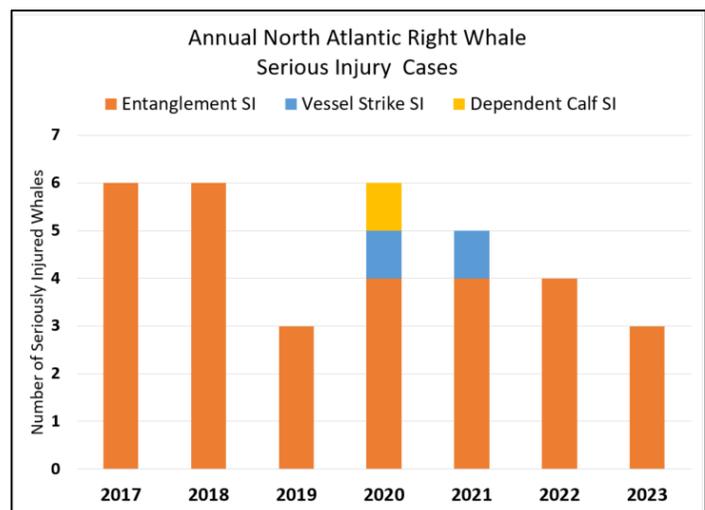
HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE: The Council is looking for fishermen to serve on the working group.

➤ [APPLY ONLINE HERE](#)

WHAT'S NEXT: The first working group meeting will be held in late spring 2023. The group will convene on an as-needed basis. Anyone with questions should contact Emily Bodell of the Council staff at (978) 465-0492, ext. 105, ebodell@nefmc.org.



Annual North Atlantic Right Whale Mortalities by Cause of Death, 2017-2023.



Annual North Atlantic Right Whale Serious Injury (SI) Cases of Whales Last Seen Alive, 2017-2023. – NOAA Fisheries graphics