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# \$18 million invested in fishing gear innovation to support North Atlantic right whale conservation

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

## Funding will provide 'critical resources' to help fishermen develop and integrate new fishing gear in New England fisheries

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have announced nearly \$18.3 million in grants to support the development and use of innovative fishing gear that reduces the risk of gear entanglement for North Atlantic right whales.

These grants will provide "critical resources" to aid fishermen in developing and integrating new gear that enables them to adapt to changing conditions in New England coastal communities and fisheries, such as lobster. The grants will generate more than \$1.4 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of \$19.7 million.

The funded projects will advance promising technologies that remove the need to rely upon vertical buoy and gear marking lines in the water. These grants also provide funding to ensure close coordination and partnership with fishermen to develop and refine technology that will be affordable,



NFWF-NOAA funding will help develop and integrate new fishing gear in New England fisheries to help North Atlantic right whale conservation.

integrate seamlessly into fishery operations and enable safe and efficient use. The fishing gear and other innovations catalyzed by this program will give fishermen and resource managers a variety of tools to address the diverse needs of New England fisheries.

“These awards will make significant contributions to the conservation of the North Atlantic right whale and help ensure the coexistence of this species, and others, and vibrant New England fisheries into the future,” said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of NFWF. “The New England Gear Innovation Fund demonstrates the importance of finding enduring conservation solutions that work for both wildlife and people.”

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The grants were awarded through the New England Gear Innovation Fund (NEGIF), a partnership between NFWF and NOAA, with additional support from Shell USA. The NEGIF builds on the longer-term Fisheries Innovation Fund (FIF), which supports the effective participation of fishermen and fishing communities to implement sustainable fisheries. FIF has worked since 2010 to partner with and engage fishermen and fishing communities in the identification and implementation of solutions to their pressing conservation and fisheries sustainability needs.



## Gear-lending program has harvesters working through closures and trying ropeless fishing gear without commitment

Faced with closures to protect right whales, Canadian commercial fishers are trying ropeless fishing gear via the CanFish Gear Lending Program.



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“NOAA Fisheries and its partners are dedicated to pursuing innovative approaches to recover and conserve the endangered North Atlantic right whales through our Road to Recovery efforts,” said Janet Coit, assistant administrator for NOAA Fisheries. “This grant program and collaboration with NFWF will ensure funding can quickly support an array of projects and accelerate progress towards ropeless technologies to reduce entanglement in fishing gear.”

It's anticipated that these grants will help to solve various challenges and help prepare the industry for large-scale deployment of this gear. This work will also accelerate and complement existing work by NOAA, its partners and others addressing North Atlantic right whale threats.

A complete list of the 2023 grants made through the NEGIF is available [here](https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/nfwf-negif-20231113-gs.pdf) (<https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/nfwf-negif-20231113-gs.pdf>).

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