



Input on Canada's draft Whalesafe Fishing Gear Strategy

**North Atlantic Right Whale Technical Working Group
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Scope of the WSG Strategy

- Initial focus on eastern Canada, expanding on existing measures to protect endangered North Atlantic right whale
- Proposes to expand to west coast fisheries and whale species
- ‘Large whale’ species – baleen whale populations; right whale, humpback whale, fin whale, blue whale
 - Reflecting current knowledge about rope strengths and whale entanglements



Canada's whalesafe fishing gear goal

Implement whalesafe gear in commercial fisheries across Canada to reduce whale entanglements, supporting sustainable modern fisheries that coexist with healthy whale species and populations.



Objectives supporting WSG Strategy goal

Priority fisheries	Incorporate on-demand fishing gear into priority fisheries to protect NARWs in Atlantic Canada and Quebec
Assess risk	Assess fisheries across Canada to identify fisheries with a high risk of whale interaction and entanglement
On-demand gear	Incorporate on-demand fishing gear more widely into Canadian fisheries
Other gear modifications	Implement other gear modifications to prevent and alleviate whale entanglement harm
Knowledge gaps	Continue research and gear trials to address knowledge gaps



Making Canadian fisheries more 'whalesafe'

Benefits for whales mean benefits for the fishing industry and others

- Maintaining access to desired seafood markets
- Receiving, and retaining, MSC certification
- Obtaining positive comparability findings under the U.S. MMPA Import Provisions
- Respecting rights of First Nations and Indigenous people
- Protecting culturally important whales species
- Supporting recovery of species at risk



Monitoring progress

1. Progress at reducing entanglements

- Measuring risk reduction
- Monitoring entanglement rates / incidents

2. Progress at supporting sustainable fisheries

- Maintaining access to U.S and international markets
- Maintaining Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certifications

Reporting to Canadians

- Annual update on Whalesafe Gear Strategy on the Whalesafe Gear website
- Published gear analyses of recovered fishing gear from entanglements on the Marine Mammal Response Program website
- Continuing dialogue with impacted groups and industries



Targeted engagement

- Distributed by e-mail July 2024, to fishing industry, researchers, Indigenous groups, NGOs
- Written feedback until 1 October 2024
- In-person engagement sessions in Eastern Canada
- Will hold virtual engagement sessions (1 English, 1 French) in Eastern Canada and one in Pacific Region



Next steps

- Finalize Strategy in early 2025
- DFO also working on internal processes, protocols, information etc.