

ESPERIMENTING THE USE OF SMART BUOYS FOR THE DETECTION OF NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE ENTANGLEMENTS

ASSOCIATION DES CRBIERS ACadiens – IFAW – BLUE OCEAN GEAR

Description

The purpose of this activity was to address entanglement problems linked to the use of traditional fishing gear in the snow crab fishery of the southern Gulf of St-Lawrence. To fully address the need for whale-safe gear in the snow crab fishery, Smart Buoys serve as supplementary technology compatible with both on-demand and traditional gear. They can detect and locate entangled gear on a whale providing for quick rescue operations limiting the damage on the whale and improving its' survival possibilities. In addition, this technology offers harvesters several benefits such as improving gear tracking and detecting gear theft events.

Update of work done in 2024

During the 2024 snow crab season, trials were conducted using Smart Buoys with three harvesters from the two main snow crab fishermen organizations to test the efficacy of this technology in their fishery. Gear theft and whale entanglements simulations were conducted as well as informal post-season interviews with snow crab harvesters to gather feedback and recommendations. The results suggest that snow crab harvesters find this technology useful in terms of tracking gear and detecting gear loss, gear theft, and possible whale entanglement events. Moreover, the simulations demonstrated that Smart Buoy technology can successfully identify whale entanglement and gear theft patterns. Also, a short survey conducted after the season with 37 snow crab harvesters representing 35% of the midshore traditional fishing fleet revealed a growing interest for experimenting with Smart buoys; 21 respondents out of 37 indicated that they would be ready to test these buoys in their own fishery next spring.