

## Whalesafe fishing gear

To help protect North Atlantic right whales and other whale species, non-tended fixed gear fisheries in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, including the snow crab and lobster fisheries, will be required to use whalesafe gear as their fishing seasons open in 2023.

Whalesafe gear falls into two general categories:

- Low breaking-strength rope or links that are designed to break at 1,700 lbs. of force. This gear will make it easier for entangled whales to free themselves and reduce the risk of serious injury; and
- Systems that allow fishing gear to be deployed without vertical line in the water, either rope-on-demand systems that stow buoy lines at the sea floor, or inflatable bag systems that eliminate buoy lines. These are released by an acoustic signal sent from the fishing vessel.

## Whalesafe Gear Adoption Fund

Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Whalesafe Gear Adoption Fund (WSGF) is providing up to \$20 million towards the purchase, testing and refinement of whalesafe gear with the goal of making gear innovations fully operational by 2023, and to support the advancement of rope-on-demand gear technology.











The Whalesafe Gear Adoption Fund also provides support to Canadian manufacturers to increase the domestic supply of commercially-ready whalesafe gear by 2023.











Groups in the following categories were eligible to apply to the Whalesafe Gear Adoption Fund:






- Canadian not-for-profit and charitable organizations
- Canadian companies, businesses, organizations, and associations
- Indigenous organizations and communities
- Recognized research, academic, and educational institutions






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### Funded projects






Name  	Area of work  	Description  	Total funding for 2020-2022  	Focus of work  
Area 19 Snow Crab Association	Cape Breton, Nova Scotia	The goal of this project is to purchase and test different types of whalesafe gear on snow crab fishing gear and to provide data on which type of whalesafe gear will work best on the gear in the specific conditions of the fishery.	\$150,000	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links











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Ashored Inc.	Throughout Atlantic Canada and Quebec	Ashored has been developing a rope-on-demand system for over 3 years. This project will help them increase their manufacturing capacity to meet the anticipated need for rope-on-demand fishing gear in the coming years. This also is expected to lower costs and make the system more affordable for harvesters.	\$338,800	Rope-on-demand
Association des Crabiers Gaspésiens	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec	This team proposes to purchase and test three different rope-on-demand systems, to then train harvesters and fishery officers in their implementation and use for the snow crab fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The testing will include a system developed by a Canadian manufacturer, with the goal of informing and supporting the production of the system on a commercial scale.	\$439,127.50	Rope-on-demand
Association of Inshore Fishermen/Association des pêcheurs côtiers des Îles (APCI)	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec	The APCI will conduct at-sea trials of different types of low breaking-strength gear modifications, to determine which type(s) will be best suited to the fishing conditions around the Magdalen Islands.	\$149,200	Low breaking strength rope/links
Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation (CCFI)	Newfoundland and Labrador	The CCFI represents harvesters, processors, aquaculture operators, business owners and academic leaders across Atlantic Canada. The purpose of this project is to test and evaluate a rope-on-demand system being developed by Ashored Inc. This will first be done by Centre researchers, and then in commercial lobster and crab fisheries.	\$790,102.76	Rope-on-demand

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Canadian Whale Institute	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick	This project will contribute to the development of a virtual multi-manufacturer gear location marking system, to support the use of rope-on-demand fishing gear. This system allows fish harvesters and enforcement officers to locate equipment quickly when it does not have traditional surface buoys. This project seeks to inform manufacturers and decision makers about adaptations that will encourage the safe and economical use of rope-on-demand gear in multiple Canadian fisheries, including lobster, snow crab, hagfish and halibut.	\$550,000	Rope-on-demand
Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF)	Bay of Fundy, Scotian Shelf, Gulf of St. Lawrence	CWF will create a gear-lending program with several types of whalesafe gear options (rope-on-demand systems, low breaking strength links, sleeves, low breaking strength rope, etc.) that will be available to fish harvesters across the Maritimes. The goal is to have at least 200 fish harvesters participate in trials of whalesafe gear. CWF will maintain a warehouse of the gear in NS and will hire technicians to support the maintenance and distribution of gear.	\$4,413,800	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links
Clearwater Seafoods	Scotian Shelf offshore, Nova Scotia	Clearwater Seafoods plans to purchase 100 time tension line cutters (TTL) to be installed on their offshore lobster fishing gear. During the 12 month fishing season, they will conduct laboratory tests as well as at-sea trials to refine the performance of the TTLs to suit the conditions of this deep water fishery.	\$250,000	Low breaking strength rope/links

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<b>CoastLine Cordage Group Ltd.</b>	Throughout Atlantic Canada and Quebec	This project aims to produce a cost-effective braided low breaking strength link that can be spliced in to existing vertical buoy lines, for use in any fixed gear fishery. WSGF supports Coastline Cordage to set up the manufacturing process to produce the low breaking strength link. The project will include trials with various lobster and crab harvesters, with the objective of making it available broadly to fishers by 2023.	\$800,000	Low breaking strength rope/links
Coldwater Lobster Association	Scotian Shelf, Nova Scotia	The Coldwater Lobster Association represents lobster harvesters in Southwest Nova Scotia. The purpose of the project is to test 4 low breaking strength rope and low breaking-strength link technologies as whalesafe gear options.	\$426,478	Low breaking strength rope/links
<b>Conseil de la Première Nation des Innus de Nutashkuan</b>	Quebec	The purpose of this project is to adapt and test a rope-on-demand buoy system that has been used in Europe's marine environment. The WSGF will support the improvement of the manufacturing process, to provide enough buoy systems for testing in four fishing zones.	\$500,000	Rope-on-demand
Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University	Newfoundland and Labrador	The Marine Institute will work with local fish harvesters to test low breaking strength rope/links, braided sleeves, hydraulic load-limiters, a spring tagline release, and time tension line cutters (TTLCs). They will host 15 demonstration sessions to reach at least 750 harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador.	\$1,169,000	Low breaking strength rope/links
Fundy North Fishermen's Association (FNFA)	Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick	FNFA plans to test a variety of innovative low breaking-strength devices in their lobster fishing gear over two years. Their focus is to identify cost-effective solutions for longer term use in the fishery.	\$247,650	Low breaking strength rope/links

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Grand Manan Fishermen's Association	Bay of Fundy	The purpose of this project is to test low breaking-strength rope in lobster and longline groundfish fisheries. The WSGF is supporting the purchase of low breaking-strength rope and the cost of sea trials by harvesters.	\$763,836	Low breaking strength rope/links
<b>Homarus Inc</b>	Gulf of St. Lawrence, New Brunswick	Homarus Inc. is the research unit of the Maritime Fishermen's Union and through this project, they will expand their current trials of the Edgetech rope-on-demand system. Their goal is to test the Edgetech system on various trap and trawl configurations in the crab and lobster fisheries.	\$380,215	Rope-on-demand
<b>Merinov</b>	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec	Merinov is working to develop and refine an innovative low breaking strength link and advance it toward commercial availability. This technology has an adjustable double threshold to withstand trap hauling by harvesters, while being able to break at tensions below 1,700 lbs, which is associated with whale entanglements.	\$444,235	Low breaking strength rope/links
<b>Micmacs of Gesgapegiag</b>	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec	The purpose of this project is to test 3 different whalesafe gear modifications and identify which one will be most suitable to adopt in their fleet after trials are complete.	\$360,000	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links
<b>Millbrook First Nation</b>	Gulf of St. Lawrence; Bay of Fundy Nova Scotia.	The purpose of this project is to test a variety of rope-on-demand systems, and low breaking strength devices, in snow crab and lobster fisheries. These gear trials will help Millbrook First Nation determine which systems best suit their fisheries, guiding the purchase of gear to outfit more vessels in their fleet.	\$500,000	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links

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Mi'gmaq Maliseet Aboriginal Fisheries Management Association (MMAFMA)	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec	This project will expand on previous trials for the lobster fishery, involving other Indigenous fishers. WSGF funding will support the purchase of equipment for larger scale low breaking strength gear trials, and the purchase of ropeless fishing gear for comparative testing in their fisheries.	\$300,000	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links
Nova Robotics	Throughout Atlantic Canada and Quebec	The WSGF is supporting Nova Robotics to increase their manufacturing, assembly and testing capacity for their low breaking strength Rope Spring Release and trials to fisheries in Atlantic Canada and Quebec. The project includes outreach to fishing communities for training on the use of the spring release, as well as conducting trials for different gear types and configurations. They also propose to develop a second device, a low cost rope-based "Shear Plane" low breaking strength link, designed to be spliced into any size rope and provide a calibrated 1,700 lbs breaking strength. Through this project they will increase production and testing of its reliability and flexibility.	\$350,000	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links
OCEAN-CAM	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Quebec	OCEAN-CAM is developing an innovative rope-on-demand buoy system that it wishes to make commercially viable for fixed gear fisheries. The company will work with harvesters to test and refine their system.	\$500,000	Rope-on-demand

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PEI Fishermen's Association (PEIFA)	Gulf of St. Lawrence, Prince Edward Island	This project takes a cost-sharing approach to identifying a whalesafe gear solution for PEI lobster fishers. Each harvester will be given \$1,000 to purchase gear modifications of their choosing to test and determine which whalesafe gear will work best for their fishing conditions. The PEIFA will lead the distribution of gear for trials and deployment in fisheries as well as maintaining a database to track which modifications are tested and the results of these trials.	\$2,250,000	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links
Passamaquoddy Recognition Group	Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick	Passamaquoddy Recognition Group is testing 12 rope-on-demand units, to refine them for their lobster fishery in the Bay of Fundy.	\$121,600	Rope-on-demand Low breaking strength rope/links
Polysteel Atlantic Ltd.	Throughout Atlantic Canada and Quebec	Polysteel Atlantic is a rope manufacturer for the fishing industry in Nova Scotia. The objective of this project is to produce a rope below 1,700 lbs breaking strength that will meet durability and longevity requirements for fisheries. With WSGF support, they will modify their existing technology/machinery, while identifying materials and production improvements that can lead to a commercially viable, competitively priced product.	\$825,000	Low breaking strength rope/links

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