

# PROTECTING RIGHT WHALES & THE MAINE LOBSTER INDUSTRY

## TWO DECADES OF WHALE PROTECTION

Maine Lobstermen have been leaders in right whale conservation for over 20 years making proactive changes in fishing methods and gear to ensure whale protection. **In fact, historical measures taken to protect the species during this period have resulted in an overall population increase of right whales from 295 to 450 showing their effectiveness.**

### UNDERSTANDING THE FACTS

**Since 2002 there has only been one Right Whale entanglement - and no serious injuries or attributable deaths - in Maine waters. In fact:**

- Right whales are rarely seen within inshore Maine waters where the majority of Maine Lobster is caught.
- Rope removed from right whales between 2010 and 2018 is not consistent with the rope most typically used in the Maine Lobster fishery.
- 23 of the 30 whales that died between 2017-2019 were found in Canadian waters or were a result of entanglement in Canadian fishing gear.

Beyond closures and temporary solutions based in sightings, Maine has proactively modified fishing practices to ensure the continued protection of right whales including removing all surface float rope, replaced floating line with whale-safe sinking line, incorporating weak links allowing whales to break free from gear, using fewer traps on buoy lines to reduce rope, and hauling all traps at least one per month.



### MAINE WORKING TOWARD A SOLUTION

**In addition to long-standing efforts, Maine proposed regulatory measures in January 2020 that would further reduce the risk posed to Right Whales, including:**

- Reduction in the number of vertical lines
- Weakening of remaining vertical lines
- Increased gear marking & harvest reporting

The measures would not only minimize the risk of serious injury and mortality that may result from an entanglement, but also reduce the potential of an entanglement occurring altogether.

### MAINTAINING BEST IN CLASS SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES

**Maine Lobster harvesters use the same careful practices they've had in place for 125 years to protect the species and the marine environment in which they operate. Measures include:**

- Tail notching to protect female breeders
- Minimum size limits to allow juvenile lobsters to mature and reproduce
- Maximum size limits to protect the large, health breeding stock
- Trap limits to prevent over-fishing
- Trap-only harvesting methods
- In-trap vents to allow for under size lobsters to escape



**[FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO RIGHTWHALESANDMAINELOBSTER.COM](http://RIGHTWHALESANDMAINELOBSTER.COM)**