

# MAINE LOBSTER AND RIGHT WHALES

In Maine, lobstering is a way of life for thousands of independent fishermen. Lobstermen are often part of multi-generational fishing families that are at the core of the state's coastal and island communities.

## COMMITTED TO WHALE PROTECTION

Maine Lobstermen have been leaders in right whale conservation for over 20 years and remain committed to enhancing whale protections through measures that provide conservation benefits for whales and ensure the continued viability of the fishery.

## WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT RIGHT WHALES AND FISHING GEAR

- ⚓ The Maine Lobster fishery has not been linked to the entanglement of a right whale in over 15 years. In fact, 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.
- ⚓ U.S. regulations include effective static fishery closures where right whales are known to aggregate, such as areas off the southeast U.S. coast and near Cape Cod Bay.
- ⚓ Right whales are rarely seen within inshore Maine waters, where the majority of Maine Lobster is caught, but Maine Lobstermen still made extensive changes to their gear to make it safer for whales.
- ⚓ Rope removed from right whales between 2010 and 2018 is not consistent with the rope most typically used in the Maine Lobster fishery.

## PIONEERING WHALE CONSERVATION

THE MAINE LOBSTER FISHERY HAS CONTINUALLY ENHANCED ITS RIGHT WHALE PROTECTIONS OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS.

1997

ALL SURFACE FLOAT ROPE REMOVED, WEAK LINKS IMPLEMENTED

2000

BEGAN MARKING VERTICAL LINES TO IDENTIFY ORIGIN OF GEAR

2009

REPLACED 27,000 MILES OF FLOATING GROUND LINE WITH WHALE-SAFE SINKING LINE

2015

REQUIRED MINIMUM TRAPS PER BUOY LINE TO REDUCE VERTICAL LINES IN THE WATER

2020

MARKED ALL VERTICAL LINES WITH MAINE-SPECIFIC COLOR

2021

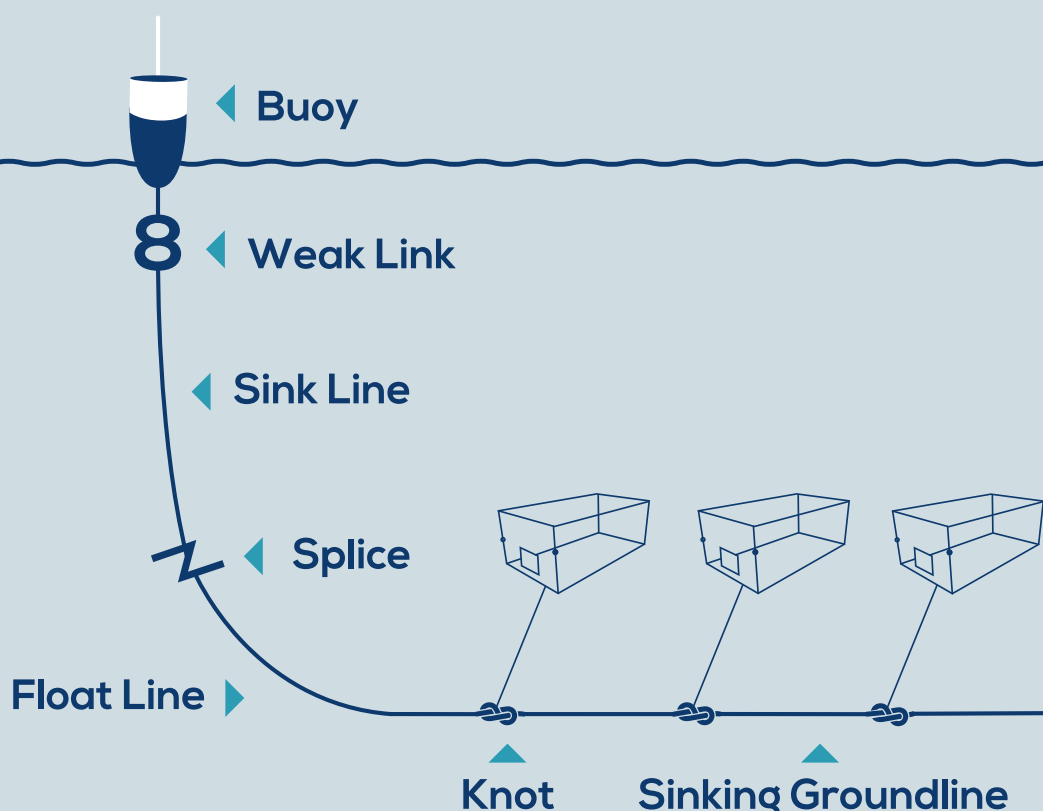
IMPLEMENTED SEASONAL CLOSURES

2022

CONVERTED ALL GEAR TO INCLUDE WEAK LINKS/WEAK ROPE, INCREASED THE NUMBER OF TRAPS PER BUOY

## MAINE LOBSTERING GEAR MADE SAFER FOR WHALES

- 1 Eliminated all surface float rope
- 2 Replaced floating ground lines with sinking line
- 3 Incorporated weak links near the buoy which part should a whale encounter it
- 4 Use minimum traps on each buoy line to reduce vertical lines
- 5 Haul all traps at least once per month
- 6 Uniquely mark gear to distinguish Maine rope from other fishing gear



Maine Lobstermen and the State remain dedicated to right whale protections, but the whales cannot be adequately protected without shared commitment from all fisheries as well as the shipping industry plus improved scientific research to better inform regulations.

## \$1 BILLION THE MAINE LOBSTER INDUSTRY

CONTRIBUTES MORE THAN \$1 BILLION TO THE STATE ECONOMY EACH YEAR, EMPLOYING THOUSANDS ON AND OFF THE WATER. THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS COULD BE FINANCIALLY DETRIMENTAL TO THE FISHERY AND COULD IMPACT THE VERY BEDROCK OF MAINE'S COASTAL ECONOMY.

SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS BY NOAA TO SAVE THE RIGHT WHALES MUST FOCUS ON DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE REGULATIONS THAT WILL ACTUALLY REDUCE THE RISK TO RIGHT WHALES WHILE LIMITING NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON FISHERMEN.

CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION FROM MAINE, JULY 2019



LEARN MORE AT [RIGHTWHALESANDMAINELOBSTER.COM](https://rightwhalesandmainelobster.com)

#SaveMaineLobstermen