

# MAINE LOBSTER & RIGHT WHALES

Maine Lobstermen have been at the forefront of right whale conservation for more than 20 years and remain committed to enhancing whale protections through measures that provide conservation benefits for whales while ensuring the continued viability of the fishery.

**NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES ARE A SPECIES WHOSE LIMITED POPULATION IS ENDANGERED. MAINE LOBSTERMEN HAVE LED THE WAY IN MAKING GEAR SAFER FOR RIGHT WHALES.**

## POSITIVE IMPACT



**MORE RIGHT WHALES THAN THERE WERE IN 1990,** when measures were implemented. In 2021, there were 20 recorded right whale calve births—the highest total in nearly a decade.



**REDUCTION IN KNOWN U.S. LOBSTER GEAR ENTANGLEMENTS** since enhanced gear safety measures were adopted in 2009



**RIGHT WHALE DEATHS** or serious injuries have ever been attributed to Maine Lobster gear

## DECADES OF IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE CHANGES

### PIONEERING WHALE CONSERVATION

The Maine Lobster fishery has not been linked to the entanglement of a right whale in almost 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



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# THE OCEAN HAS NO BORDERS



## SHIFTING FEEDING PATTERNS:

Studies have shown that right whales' primary food source has shifted out of Maine waters over the past decade, drawing the whales into new waters with fewer protections. They are rarely found in Maine Lobster fishing grounds, the majority of which are close to shore.



## FAIRNESS IN DATA:

Current evaluations assign 50% of "unknown" deaths and serious injuries to the U.S., a point that simply isn't backed up by what we know about whale injuries and deaths.



## ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL:

All areas and fishing gear do not pose the same risk to right whales. Solutions must be scaled to protect right whales where they are in most danger.



**WE WANT TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION. WE ARE ALWAYS OPEN AND WILLING TO SIT DOWN AND GO OVER MEASURES THAT WOULD WORK FOR US AND FOR THE RIGHT WHALES.**

**Michael Sargent**  
Maine Lobsterman



## ENSURING EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

**The future of the Maine Lobster fishery relies on effective protection of endangered right whales, which is why every Maine lobsterman has a vested interest in finding solutions that work.**

For decades, lobstermen have proactively worked to ensure not only the continued sustainability of the lobster population but also as environmental stewards of the marine environment on which they rely.

**The Maine Lobster industry contributes more than \$1 billion to the state economy each year, employing thousands on and off the water.** The effectiveness of current proposed federal regulations have yet to be proven, are not backed by sound scientific data, and could be financially devastating to the fishery--impacting the 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 THE RIGHT WHALES WHILE LIMITING NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON FISHERMAN."**

**Congressional Delegation from Maine**  
July 2019



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