



April 2025

Dear Hub Friends and Supporters,

I am Anne DiMonti, Protecting Ocean Wildlife Program Manager at Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP). Moving forward, I will be overseeing SFP's Bycatch Solutions Hub. I am sad to share that Phillip Sanchez, SFP Bycatch Program Coordinator, has left SFP to pursue other endeavors. He will be greatly missed and was pivotal to the development of the Hub. I have some very big shoes to fill.



For those of you who received Philip's September 2024 newsletter, you may remember he welcomed me to SFP at that time. As he noted, the primary focus of my work at SFP will be to reduce marine mammal entanglement in pot and trap fisheries such as lobster and crab. Prior to joining SFP, I was employed with Audubon Society of Rhode Island as Director of Audubon's Nature Center and Aquarium. During my career, I have developed and directed several collaborations with marine and maritime organizations, government offices, universities, and NGOs to advance shared conservation marine efforts. I look forward to working with SFP's

partners and supporters and getting to know you. I am located on the US East Coast, in Rhode Island.

*Best Fishes,
Anne*

Looking ahead...

We understand this may be a difficult time for many of our partners and supporters. We continue to celebrate the people and partnerships protecting the ocean and saving marine wildlife, creating an inclusive space where all changemakers feel seen, valued, and inspired.

The Hub is about cultivating long-term engagement and a united community committed to a future where a sustainable seafood industry and thriving marine ecosystems go hand-in-hand. By spotlighting the people driving the movement – fishers, conservation professionals, seafood industry leaders, scientists, gear innovators, and engaged consumers – we value personal connections to marine wildlife, highlight positive impact on the water, and inspire deeper collaboration. SFP is here to offer support and assistance. Please feel free to reach out.



An exciting start to 2025: Seafood Expo North America (SENA)

It was wonderful to see many of you in person at the 2025 Seafood Expo North America (SENA) in Boston, Massachusetts. For those of you who may have missed it, SFP hosted our [4th Annual Bycatch Solutions Showcase event](#). We also co-hosted informational panels showcasing the latest efforts in sustainable fishing tools and strategies for protecting [whales](#) and [seabirds](#). The panels were held in partnership with the International Fund for Animal Welfare and Southern Seabird Trust.



Project Spotlight:

Preventing albatross extinctions with the Seabird-Safe Fishing Toolkit

The tuna supply chain now has a decision-support tool to help companies reduce captures of threatened albatrosses and other seabirds in tuna longline fisheries. Seabird bycatch on the high seas is driving multiple albatross species toward extinction.

With the [Seabird-Safe Fishing Toolkit](#), users can check a world map to see if their fishery or product originates from a seabird-risk area. They can assess how seabird-safe their fishery or tuna product is currently, set seabird-safe objectives for the future, and rate the reliability of monitoring to verify seabird-safe measures are being used.



The next iteration of the toolkit, available later this year, will enable users to download a report. The recently revised MSC Fishery Standard has stronger requirements for protecting marine wildlife from fisheries bycatch, and projects like the toolkit will help fisheries meet this higher bar.

The Seabird-Safe Fishing Toolkit has been developed by the Southern Seabirds Trust and the New Zealand Department of Conservation, with the support of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Oceans and Fisheries Working Group.

[Learn more about seabird-safe fishing](#)



Organization Spotlight:

On-demand gear lending libraries

Since 2018, [on-demand fishing](#) has been documented and researched along the US East Coast and Canada as a method to solve entanglement issues within trap and pot fisheries. On-demand

fishing (also called ropeless fishing) removes the static vertical line from the pot or trap to the surface buoy, which is the primary threat of entanglement. In some cases, on-demand fishing allows for continued fishing in closed areas, while still providing protection for endangered, threatened and protected species, such as endangered North Atlantic right whales.



Three gear-lending libraries, in the US and Canada, are offering fishers the opportunity to test this gear free of charge, in exchange for information, data, and insights into its ease and usability and suggestions for future improvements.

The [Northeast Fisheries Science Center Gear Library](#) (NEFSC) in Pocasset, MA, has lent over 579 retrieval systems fishers to trial as of fall 2024, with an 85-88% success rate. About 70 fisheries participants have tested the gear in five US states, collectively accomplishing 12,384 hauls between 2020 and February 2025. Of these, 10,901 trials occurred in areas open to commercial fishing using hybrid trawls and another 1,483 trials occurred using fully on-demand gear in restricted areas from 2023-2025.

In Maine, efforts are underway to expand the [Maine Innovative Gear Library](#), which lends gear to 65 Maine fishers awarded experimental fishing permits. As of February 2025, the program accomplished 475 successful trial hauls using a variety of on-demand experimental gear, including active on-demand acoustic, active spring/timed release, and onboarding.

In Canada, at the close of the 2024 season, 200 harvesters were licensed to use on-demand gear provided by the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) [CanFISH Gear Lending Library](#) in Nova Scotia, Canada. CanFish maintains two separate projects, including a trial program with more than 1,300 deployments that has tested nine different units with a 60-97% success rate. However, no catch is associated, as it is completed outside the commercial fishing season. They also have a gear-lending program with more than 175 available on-demand units. From 2022-2024, 350,000

lbs. of snow crab were landed using this on-demand gear, with a 96-98% success rate.

It is important to remember that on-demand fishing is not expected to eliminate historical methods of trap/pot fishing. Rather, it will be a tool, along with other modifications such as gear marking, weak links, and weak rope, to allow fishing practices to continue in areas frequented by protected species.

Bycatch in the News

Maine lobstermen test ropeless traps aimed to protect endangered right whales

Massachusetts Launches Innovative Passive Acoustic Monitoring Program for North Atlantic Right Whales



Working with Northeastern United States Lobster harvester to develop acoustic trap retrieval

Most Maine lobstermen have resisted alternative fishing gear. A new initiative hopes to change that.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Whale Safe Fisheries Assessment

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