



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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December 22, 2021

Notice of Public Comment Period and Virtual Public Hearing:

Proposal for Authorization to Conduct Ropeless Fishing Activity Within Certain Areas of the Massachusetts Trap Gear Closure Area Using On-Demand Vertical Buoy Lines Systems

The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has received a proposal from the Pioneers for a Thoughtful Co Existence, Inc. (“Pioneers”) for a Scientific Project Permit and Letter of Authorization. The Pioneers—collaborating with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare—seek to fish so-called “ropeless” lobster trap gear through the use of on-demand vertical buoy line systems affixed to their trap gear. This fishing activity will occur within two discrete areas near Boston Harbor and along the South Shore during the state’s seasonal (February 1 – May 15) commercial trap gear closure. The full proposal may be found on DMF’s [website](#).

In summary, the purpose of this activity is to study location marking and transmission capabilities among vessels using the trap tracker application. This will help in the development of expert opinions on the technical usability and reliability of the technology in the inshore lobster trap fishery and evaluate gear visibility to better understand the potential for gear conflicts. The study is also designed to describe the performance of the gear and unintended movements during winter weather events and to continue investigations into command failures, hauling malfunctions, storage challenges, and catch deterrents associated with the deployment of this technology.

DMF will present the Pioneer’s proposal to the public at a virtual public hearing on Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 6PM. The hearing will provide the public and interested stakeholders with an opportunity to learn about this proposed study and ask questions. DMF is also seeking comments from all stakeholders, including: lobstermen involved with the project and those not involved; mobile gear fishermen (scallopers, draggers, clam dredgers) who may legally fish in the area but may not be able to detect the presence of the buoy-less gear; and other interested members of the public. The comment received from the public will help inform DMF’s action on the issuance of a Scientific Project Permit and Letter of Authorization. Verbal comment may be provided at the public hearing. Written comment will be accepted close of business on Monday, January 16, 2022. Written public comment can be submitted by e-mail (marine.fish@mass.gov) or post (251 Causeway Street, Boston, MA 02114). Please direct all public comment to the attention of Director Daniel McKiernan.

Public Hearing Schedule

6PM

January 12, 2022

Via Zoom Webinar

Pre-Register Here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_WCwVIV6WS02R7HyRvsxdRw