



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### **DMF's Ropeless Fishing Gear Feasibility Report Released**

*The first phase of a two-year project evaluating the operational, technological, legal/regulatory, and socioeconomic challenges and opportunities of alternative lobster gear is complete.*

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has completed the first phase of a two-year project, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to comprehensively characterize the issues and challenges associated with the integration of on-demand fishing gear technology into New England lobster fisheries.

On-demand fishing gear, also known as 'ropeless gear,' is a type of fishing gear used in 'fixed gear' fisheries, or fisheries that use equipment that is left, or 'fixed', in place over time to capture fish. On-demand fishing gear replaces traditional vertical buoy lines, which can result in entanglements with marine mammals including North Atlantic right whales, with new gear retrieval and marking methods. Most on-demand fishing gear systems consist of submerged buoyancy devices that are activated using time-release mechanisms or acoustic signals transmitted from the surface.

In our report, [Assessing the Feasibility of On-Demand Gear in New England Lobster Fisheries](#), we present an up-to-date assessment of the issues and make a series of recommendations for researchers and policymakers who are working on on-demand gear. The report, authored by DMF contractor Noah Oppenheim of Homarus Strategies LLC, contains information gleaned from over 130 hours of interviews and a two-day workshop with dozens of experts including fishermen, conservationists, law enforcement professionals, fishery managers, and scientists participating.

During phase two of the project, which will take place over the course of 2022, DMF will take a deep dive into the socioeconomic issues of on-demand fishing gear, producing a first of its kind model capable of providing economic welfare and cost impact estimates for lobster fisheries under various on-demand fishing gear management and implementation scenarios.

DMF and all our stakeholders are leading the way towards an even more prosperous, sustainable, and environmentally protective ocean management system. If you would like to learn more about this project, please contact [erin.burke@mass.gov](mailto:erin.burke@mass.gov).