



# The Ghost Gear Program Overview

*Reducing Abandoned, Lost or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear In Canada*



## Purpose

- Raise awareness of Abandoned, Lost or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG, or “ghost gear”) and its impacts
- Provide an overview on the Ghost Gear Fund (or Sustainable Fisheries Solutions and Retrieval Support Contributions Program, SFSRSCP)
- Showcase results and successes from the Program’s inaugural year and upcoming activities
- Introduce the new Fishing Gear Reporting System



# Ghost Gear Definition

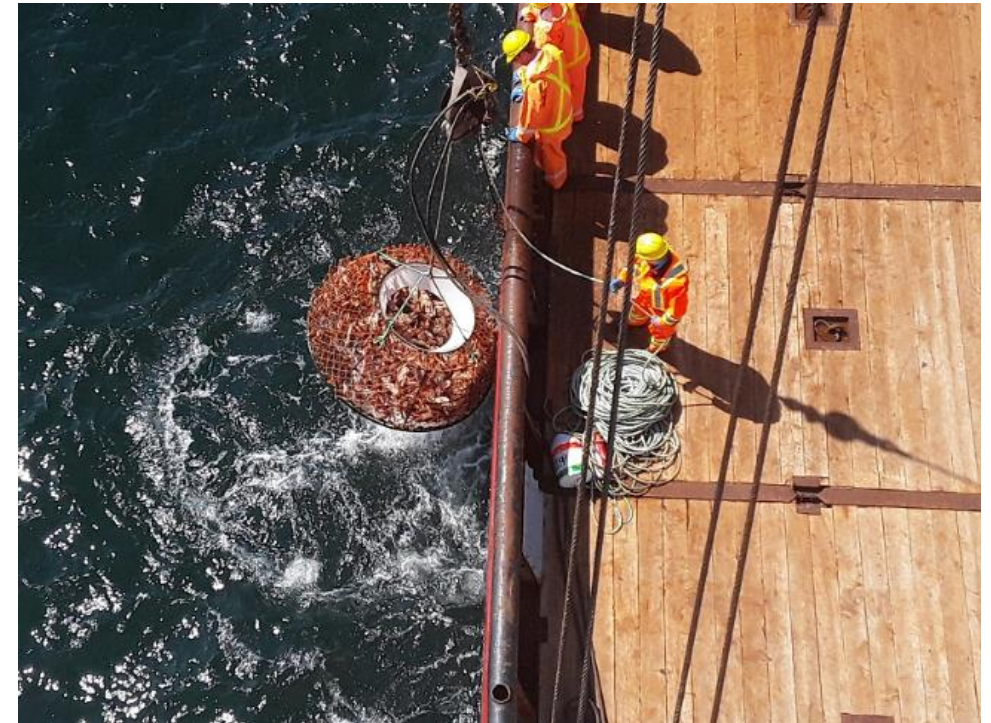
## What is “Ghost Gear”?

Defined as any fishing gear that has been **abandoned**, **lost** or otherwise **discarded** (ALDFG).

The causes of ghost gear are commonly rough weather, snags below the surface, and unintentional line cutting from marine traffic and gear interactions

Globally, it is estimated that 600,000-800,000 metric tonnes of ghost gear enter the oceans on an annual basis. (UNEP, 2018).

Ghost gear represents 46%-70% of global marine plastic litter by weight (GGGI, 2020).





## Impacts of Ghost Gear



### **What are the effects of Ghost Gear?**

Ghost gear has detrimental impacts on the environment, the fishing industry, aquatic ecosystems, and is a threat to marine mammals due to entanglement.

It is a major threat to healthy fisheries and fish stocks. Ghost gear is responsible for population declines of 5% to 30% in global harvestable fish stocks (NOAA, 2015).

Ghost gear is the most harmful form of marine debris to sea life. 90% of species caught in ghost gear are of commercial value (GGGI, 2021)





## The Ghost Gear Fund

- Intended to support Canada's commitment to prevent and mitigate marine litter, improve fisheries sustainability particularly with respects to Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG)
- Support Canada's commitments nationally and internationally, on efforts to reduce the incidence and effects of ghost fishing
- \$16.7M over 2 years (2020-2022) to support projects under 4 themes:
  - **Third party led retrieval of abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)**
  - **Gear acquisition and piloting of currently available innovative gear technology to prevent gear loss**
  - **Responsible Disposal**
  - **International leadership**
- 49 projects have been funded by the Ghost Gear Program so far, 4 international and 45 domestic.
- \$1.2M has been set aside for Small Craft Harbour projects to establish storage and processing capacity with Harbour Authorities.



# Ghost Gear Fund – Project Distribution 2020-2022



**Gulf – 6 projects**

**Maritimes - 12 projects**

**Newfoundland and Labrador – 4 projects**

**Quebec – 8 projects**

**Pacific – 13 projects**

**National – 2 projects**

**International – 4 projects**

Icons show locations of project activities under the Program, additional information on individual projects can be found on the [DFO Ghost Gear website](https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/ghost-gear-fund)



# Ghost Gear Fund– Funded Projects in Gulf

Region	Organization Name	Project Length
Gulf	CSR GeoSurveys Ltd.	2020-2022
Gulf	Association des Pêcheurs Professionnels Crabiers Acadiens, Inc. – 2 <i>projects</i>	2021-2022
Gulf	PEI Fishermen's Association	2021-2022
Gulf	Maritime Fishermen's Union	2021-2022
Gulf	Esgneopetitj First Nation	2021-2022



# Overview of the Ghost Gear Fund

## What it is:

- Stewardship-led program for:
  - ALDFG retrieval
  - Returning retrieved tagged gear to harvesters
  - Piloting of technology to reduce ALDFG or mitigate its impacts
  - Responsible disposal and upcycling of ALDFG
- All retrieval and piloting activities require a licence under Section 52 of the Fisheries General Regulations. Retrieval can only take place during closed fishing seasons
- Data collection to help understand the location and impact of ALDFG in Canada using the new Fishing Gear Reporting System

## What it is not:

- An Enforcement program
- Opportunistic ALDFG retrieval during active fishing
- Retrieval of ALDFG without proper authorizations
- Development of new gear technologies to prevent ghost gear





## ALDFG Fisheries General Regulations Section 52 Permitting

Permit holders authorized to carry out retrieval operations must:

- Indicate all planned retrieval sites, including coordinates
- Hail out in advance of commencing retrieval operations
- Adhere to requirements for transportation, storage and responsible disposal of retrieved ALDFG
  - Tagged gear that is in good condition must be stored in a secure location, DFO will coordinate the return of gear back to the original owner
- Return all bycatch found in ALDFG to the ocean (with the exception of Aquatic Invasive Species)
- Report retrieved gear through data collection forms or through the Fishing Gear Reporting System



## Year 1 Successes of the Ghost Gear Fund

### **Through Ghost Gear Fund initiatives:**

- 230 retrieval trips took place in Canada
- 312 tonnes of fishing related debris, including 1,303 units of gear, was removed from Canadian waters and aquaculture sites in 2020-2021
- Over 100 traps were returned to harvesters
- Approximately 300 jobs were created through the Program
- A pilot for incidental in-season retrieval using S.52 permits took place in the Arctic for northern shrimp fleet



## Year 2 plans for the Ghost Gear Fund

### **Expanding infrastructure for recycling and disposal of ALDFG on the East and West coast**

- In collaboration with Small Craft Harbours and Harbour Authorities, the ALDFG recycling/responsible disposal network is currently being expanded to allow for processing of different materials and increased support for retrieval activities.

### **Targeting priority areas for retrieval**

- The Program's second call for proposals focused on projects that targeted priority areas for retrieval work. These priority areas include high risk gear types (ie. Gillnets) in Fraser River (Pacific) and frequented marine mammal areas in the Gulf of St-Lawrence.

### **Knowledge gathering of ghost gear and fisheries in the Arctic**

- The Program is currently gathering information regarding the status of ghost gear and the types of fisheries in the Arctic in order to locate lost gear hotspots and effectively plan future retrievals.



# New Tool: The Fishing Gear Reporting System

## **What is the Fishing Gear Reporting System (FGRS)?**

- A new online system developed under the Ghost Gear Fund that makes reporting lost fishing gear easier for commercial harvesters.
- Launched on July 14, 2021, the new Fishing Gear Reporting System allows commercial harvesters to conveniently input a description of their lost gear, the cause of loss, and its location from any online device.
- Since 2019, all commercial fisheries are required to report their lost gear to DFO.

## **Benefits of the tool**

- Increased reporting of lost gear helps DFO to generate accurate gear loss hotspots maps and trends, guiding more effective retrieval efforts and locate high-priority areas.
- More effective retrieval will result in larger amounts of ALDFG recovered, which will be returned to its original owner if tagged and in good condition.



# How to use the Fishing Gear Reporting System

## Setting up an account:

1. Harvesters can make an account that is unique to them on the [FGRS website](#)
2. The system is used to report:
  - I. Fishing gear lost during fishing activities or previously lost gear
  - II. Retrieval of previously lost gear that belongs to the reporting harvester
  - III. Retrieval of any ALDFG during authorized retrieval efforts under a S52 permit
3. Information required when reporting is:
  - I. Locations (coordinates and region)
  - II. Gear type
  - III. Harvester identification
  - IV. Management Area
  - V. Description of gear and tag numbers if applicable.
4. The system can be accessed on any smart electronic device. Reporting can be done in real time or at a later date

*Note: [PDF versions](#) of the lost and retrieved fishing gear are still available if required which can be submitted via email*





## Fishing Gear Reporting System DEMO

**To request an in-depth demo on how to use the new  
FGRS, please contact your regional Ghost Gear  
Coordinator, Lisa Bujold:**

**[Lisa.Bujold@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Lisa.Bujold@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)**



## Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Can I apply for a Section 52 licence to retrieve ALDFG if I am not a participant of the SFSRCP?

Answer: Yes you can apply for a Section 52 licence to carry out independently funded retrieval activities. Contact your regional Ghost Gear coordinator for more information.

Question: I would like to apply for funding under the Ghost Gear Fund. Will there be another opportunity to apply?

Answer: Any announcements will be made on our website: <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fisheries-peches/management-gestion/ghostgear-equipementfantome/index-eng.html>

Question: How can I report ALDFG that I encounter while fishing?

Answer: DFO welcomes the reporting of ALDFG regardless of the scenario. If you come across ALDFG that is not your own previously lost and reported gear, please email [DFO.LostandRetrievedGear-EnginsPerdusRecupere.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:DFO.LostandRetrievedGear-EnginsPerdusRecupere.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) with information that can help us locate or map the lost gear. This includes but not limited to; coordinates, quantity, type of gear and LFA.



The Regional Ghost Gear Coordinator is the point of contact for the Ghost Gear Program.

The coordinator for the Gulf Region is Lisa Bujold: [Lisa.Bujold@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Lisa.Bujold@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

**Thank you**