

Benefits of Ropeless Fishing Gear for British Columbia Whales and Marine Mammals

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Issue Summary:

BC is home to several species of **endangered, threatened, and special concern whales** which are at risk from a variety of factors including entanglement in fishing gear. This could be greatly reduced through the use of new types of **whalesafe ropeless fishing gear**.

Current funding opportunities have left a **funding gap in BC and the Pacific** as most are targeted for research in Atlantic Canada and Quebec leaving other parts of Canada behind.



<https://thetyee.ca/News/2022/03/30/Whales-Back-BC-Fishing-Gear-Killing-Them/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/orca-rescue-1.4688481>



Whales:

In BC, Southern Resident Killer Whales and North Pacific Right Whale are endangered.

Fin whales, Northern Pacific Resident Killer Whales, and Transient Killer Whales are threatened.

Sperm Whales, Humpback Whales, and Grey Whales are special concern.

Policy Recommendations:

1. Increase the number of projects studying the use of ropeless fishing gear to prevent the entanglement of whales and other marine species.
2. Expand existing funding opportunities from DFO's "Whalesafe Gear Adoption Fund" to include more BC and Pacific fisheries.
3. Work with local fishing communities and indigenous communities to understand challenges and solutions for adopting new types of gear.
4. Provide subsidies to switch from harmful gear to ropeless gear.



<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/marine-mammal-protection/developing-viable-demand-gear-systems>

Traditional systems use line and buoys which can get caught around the bodies and fins of marine mammals.

Ropeless Fishing:

Pop-up buoys and Inflatable Lift Bags use a signal to release the underwater buoy or inflate the bag for on-demand retrieval. Buoyant spool systems use a signal to release and unwind rope that can reach the surface. Other types of whale safe gear include ropes with built in sections that are designed to break from the force of entanglement.

Its time to modernize our fishing gear technology.

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List of Potential Contacts

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