



Bycatch Solutions Hub: 2025-2026 Annual Report

(Year 3)



**BYCATCH
SOLUTIONS
HUB™**

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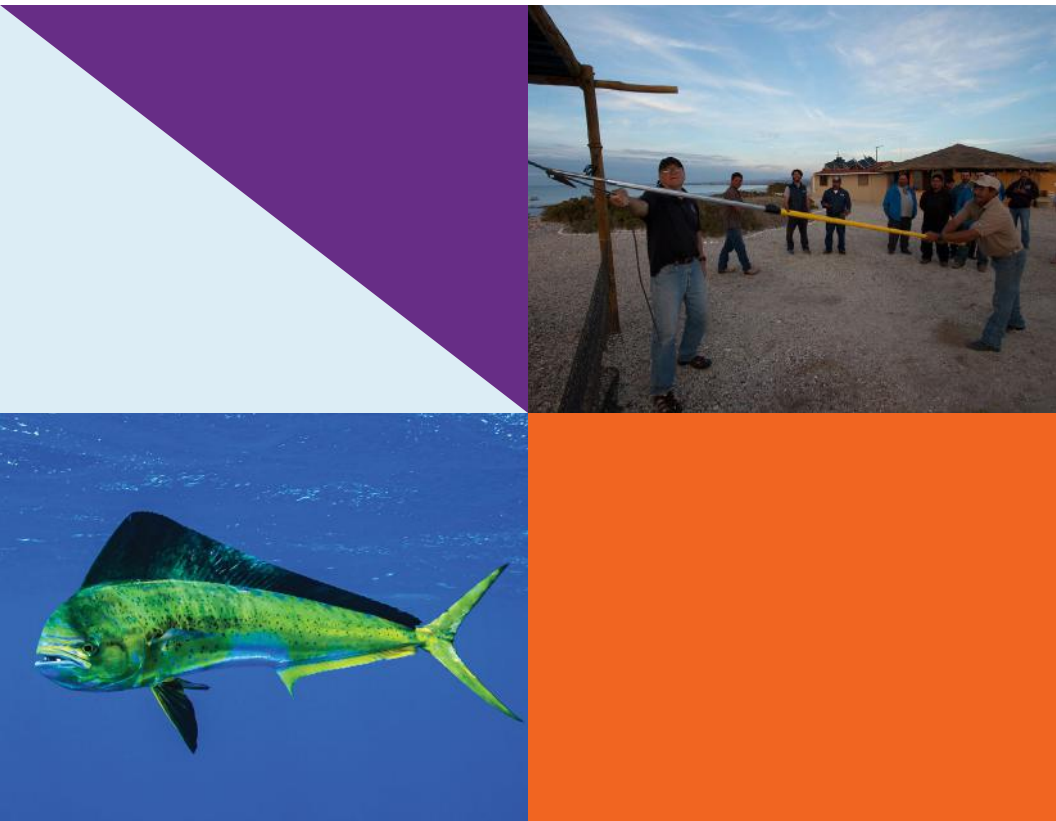
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Letter from SFP

I am pleased to share with you this annual update on the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) Bycatch Solutions Hub. In the three years since we launched the Hub with support from Nestlé Purina Petcare Europe, we have made great strides in advancing the adoption and implementation of best practices that reduce impacts on endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species in fisheries around the world.

Over the past year, the Hub has continued to grow – strengthening collaboration among industry, NGOs, gear innovators, and governments toward our shared goal of reducing bycatch in global fisheries. And it's been great to see the Hub expand beyond just a repository of tools and resources into a thriving network of companies and organizations dedicated to knowledge sharing, innovation, and impact.

We are proud that the Hub is emerging as a powerful catalyst for collaboration, demonstrating strong stakeholder interest as a dedicated space to connect innovation, problem solving, and supply-chain engagement.



Additionally, we are thrilled to be receiving worldwide recognition as experts in connecting conservation efforts with the seafood industry.

As I reflect on the progress we've made this year and our continued commitment to healthier ocean ecosystems and more sustainable seafood, I also want to take a moment to thank all of our partners and collaborators for sharing our dedication to reducing bycatch worldwide.

The enthusiasm and participation generated through the Hub signals a promising shift toward solutions-driven efforts that can accelerate meaningful action across global fisheries to scale innovative gear solutions.

Anne M. DiMonti

Protecting Ocean Wildlife Program Manager
Warwick, Rhode Island, USA



What is the Bycatch Solutions Hub?

The Bycatch Solutions Hub bridges the gap between innovation and action to reverse the decline of ocean wildlife and deliver solutions that the seafood industry can easily support.

The Hub was established by Sustainable Fisheries Partnership in 2023, with support from Purina Europe, to bring together the seafood industry, conservation organizations, gear manufacturers, and government agencies in a collaborative effort to address one of the seafood sector's most pressing sustainability challenges – the unintended bycatch of endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) marine species in wild-capture fisheries. By creating a centralized and accessible online platform, the Hub helps industry stakeholders more easily identify, understand, and implement proven bycatch mitigation solutions in real-world fisheries operations.



Since its inception, the Hub has served as a resource to provide:

- Tools, resources, and options for seafood companies interested in implementing bycatch mitigation efforts in their supply chains
- A network of seafood companies, gear innovators, and NGOs dedicated to reducing bycatch across their supply chains and collaborating to address specific bycatch challenges
- A place to share and collect data across all efforts to quantify impact and inform progress on reducing bycatch and restoring ocean biodiversity of ocean ecosystems
- A convening platform that brings together interested parties in webinars, meetings, and other interactive events to hear about new developments, share experiences, and learn from others.

**“The Bycatch
Solutions Hub
bridges the
gap between
innovation
and action”**





Project Overview

To date, the Hub has generated over USD 1.2 million to support bycatch mitigation projects, workshops, and outreach to drive measurable progress in the protection of ecologically important and threatened species.

These initiatives have contributed to reducing entanglements of critically endangered North Atlantic right whales, eliminating seabird bycatch in key fisheries, developing programs to recognize fishers for using responsible practices to release sea turtles and other marine wildlife, and expanding the use of new technologies to better safeguard sawfish and shark species. The Hub has also received generous grants to support the administration and operations of the site.

This report provides an overview of the scope and impact of these efforts. Funded projects span a wide range of fishing gear types and operate across diverse regions including the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, as well as the U.S. Gulf. Collectively, they support the conservation of a broad range of protected species.





2023–2026: Facilitated bycatch reduction projects by gear type, location and vulnerable species protected

Gear types represented

- Pot and traps (11)
- Gillnets (3)
- Purse seines (2)
- Pelagic longlines (6)
- Multiple fisheries (4)

Projects by geographic location

- Northwest Atlantic (11)
- Northeast Atlantic (1)
- Eastern Pacific (4)
- Western & Central Pacific (3)
- South Pacific (2)
- U.S. Gulf (1)
- Global (4)

Projects by protected species*

- Large baleen whales (12)
- Small-toothed whales (3)
- Seabirds (4)
- Sharks and rays (3)
- Sea turtles (4)

**Several projects support multiple species*

**Total funding facilitated:
\$943,000+**





Year 3 Key Outcomes and Conservation Impact Contributions

The Hub continues to deliver significant progress in reducing fisheries-related impacts on vulnerable marine species while advancing sustainable fishing practices. These results reflect our comprehensive approach to bycatch reduction, marine species protection, and responsible fisheries industry practices.

2022–2026 *(July)* Funding Overview

40 project requests received

26 total projects funded

\$858,345 value of projects funded

\$435,000 additional donations* facilitated by the Hub

*support for conferences, training, workshops and overall support of the Hub



Notable 2025–2026 advancements include:

Measurable reductions in whale entanglements in pot and trap fisheries, helping protect marine mammals such as endangered North Atlantic right whales.

- More than 300,000 whales and dolphins die each year from entanglement in fishing gear, with additional unknown impacts from marine debris, posing serious risks to vulnerable populations. In 2026, the Hub supported the International Whaling Commission's Global Whale Entanglement Response Network (GWERN), expanding the program's hands-on global training to include **four additional training workshops** and providing four disentanglement kits to be delivered worldwide.
- Smart Buoy technology provides the ability to track fishing gear, helping to eliminate or significantly reduce gear loss. By enabling fishers to continuously monitor the location and movement of deployed gear, these systems ensure that all gear is retrieved at the end of the season, reducing bycatch and entanglement. Through the Hub, the initiative expanded to include an additional **87 smart buoys** and three plotter links deployed across three Nova Scotian crab vessels, as well as software and data plans for accessing buoy data, initial training, and ongoing technical assistance.
- Acoustic, on-demand ropeless fishing systems are being developed for voluntary use in the Gulf of Maine and in offshore deep-water pot and trap fisheries, to reduce the risk of whale entanglement. The Hub supported the design and construction of **10 new box line management on-demand systems**, including the development of a high-pressure direct-fill system for use on offshore commercial vessel decks and the repair and maintenance of existing on-demand gear already in active fishing operations. Additionally, the Hub has offered support for the advancement of on-demand gear lending library programs in Massachusetts, U.S., and Halifax, Canada.

"SFP secured funding for the IWC Global Whale Entanglement Response Network (GWERN), enabling the expert technical trainers to implement a full year of disentanglement training across the globe in 2026. Without this fundamental support, GWERN could not train trainers, build capacity for direct disentanglement response, or expand regional entanglement response networks..."

Harriet Pinder,
Projects Coordinator,
International Whaling
Commission (IWC)



Innovation to further develop biodegradable fish aggregating devices (BioFADs), to reduce long-term marine debris and minimize harm to non-target ETP species such as sea turtles, sharks, and pelagic rays.

- In collaboration with partners, the Hub has supported development of the new “jelly-FAD,” a biodegradable, non-entangling alternative that eliminates netting and replaces plastic with plant-based and other organic materials. As part of this effort, a training workshop in December 2025 convened scientists, fishing industry representatives, NGOs, and fisheries management organizations from 13 organizations and six tuna fleets to share results from ongoing trials. The workshop included fleet presentations highlighting key achievements, challenges, and next steps, along with research updates. The project is currently underway, with BioFAD deployments scheduled for 2026 following construction, training of FAD manufacturers, and material distribution.

Advancement of modified purse seine technologies to enhance fishing practices, lower unintended catch, and improve overall efficiency.

- Chilean purse seine fisheries, which comprise approximately 500 small artisanal vessels, have experienced high levels of seabird bycatch, particularly of the endangered pink-footed shearwater. To address this risk, a modified purse seine (MPS) has been developed, incorporating changes to buoy mounting, mesh size, and net materials. This redesign has demonstrated a 90–98% reduction in seabird bycatch without impacting target fish catch, while also lowering net construction costs. With support from the Hub, the project aims to expand implementation to five additional vessels in 2026.

Deployment of electronic monitoring (EM) systems in Eastern Pacific Ocean pelagic longline fisheries to strengthen transparency and accountability across fishing operations and enable more accurate tracking of catch and bycatch, while still supporting sustainability standards and fishers' livelihoods.

- Following a 2024 Hub-supported pilot project, this work has expanded to include a new phase focused on improving fishery data collection and tuna traceability using radio frequency identification (RFID) and electronic monitoring (EM). The project is now integrating EM, RFID tagging, and cold-chain tracking on semi-industrial longline vessels in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean. Key achievements include AI-assisted EM video review to verify species, timing, and logbook accuracy; use of temperature and time-to-ice sensors to monitor handling and cold-chain quality; and outreach to incorporate market and buyer feedback.



Year 3 Project Spotlights

Smart buoy technology in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada

Efforts to prevent and mitigate North Atlantic right whale (NARW) entanglements in snow crab gear have made gear tracking a priority for harvesters, regulators, and conservation NGOs. Smart buoys enable real-time monitoring of gear location and movement, helping fishers reduce gear loss and ensure full seasonal recovery. Over four seasons in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, more than 350 units have been deployed by 10 fishers, leading to improved gear recovery, detection of unusual movement, and reduced poaching.

In spring 2025, with support from Publix and Chicken of the Sea Frozen Foods, 87 additional smart buoys and three plotter links were provided to three Nova Scotian vessels, along with software, data access, training, and technical support. By July 2025, most gear was successfully recovered, with only one unit lost, likely due to vessel interaction. Lessons from the project highlighted the importance of buoy rigging in strong currents and the need for more frequent data transmission, both of which informed mid-season adjustments. Continued funding supports expanded trials and improved understanding of smart buoy use to reduce gear loss and support NARW protection.



“The support from the Bycatch Reduction Hub helps harvesters fish responsibly using Blue Ocean Gear’s Smart Buoys to avoid ghost fishing and bycatch. By subsidizing the gear, sponsors of the Hub enable fishers to use innovative technology and provide a truly sustainable product where the method behind the sustainability is clear. We have valued our relationship with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership in making this technology more readily available to fisheries and sharing the goal of sustainability across the entire seafood supply chain”

Kortney Opshaug, Ph.D., CEO, Blue Ocean Gear Inc.

Increasing data reporting and protection of ETP species in longline mahi-mahi fisheries

Ocean Allies is a program designed to promote responsible fishing practices in the Eastern Pacific mahi-mahi fishery, co-funded by SFP's Global Mahi Supply Chain Roundtable and Publix and executed by COREMAHI in Peru and Ecuador. The fishery is largely artisanal, with thousands of small-scale vessels operating across a dispersed fleet. While interactions with sea turtles and sharks have been known to occur, they are not well-documented. Through the program, fishers are trained to identify these species, report incidental catch, and apply safe handling and release practices.

To reinforce these practices, Ocean Allies launched a 2025–26 fishing season contest, inviting fishers to submit videos demonstrating proper handling and release techniques. The contest sought to reward responsible fishers who have long implemented good practices.

More than 30 fishers from 16 different vessels participated, documenting the responsible release of 28 individuals of vulnerable species: 18 sea turtles, six sharks, two dolphins, one ray, and one seabird, reflecting growing awareness among fishers about protecting endangered, threatened, and protected species, and helping to identify potential champions for future pilot efforts focused on reducing impacts on these species.

Recently, the winners of the [Ocean Allies](#) contest were recognized for their success in implementing responsible practices in the handling and release of marine wildlife during the 2025-26 mahi-mahi fishing season. In addition to social media recognition and a medal, the captains and crew members of the winning vessels received a Garmin GPS device (first place) and a tablet (second place). The awards ceremony at the COREMAHI annual meeting in Lima brought together representatives of partner companies along the mahi value chain, such as the Peru Mahi Alliance, as well as fishing organizations from Peru and Ecuador.

Despite this progress, trust remains a key barrier. Some fishers, such as in Ecuador and Costa Rica, are reluctant to share videos due to concerns that footage of incidental catch could be misinterpreted by conservation groups. Additionally, as the program operates across multiple countries, there is hesitancy around sharing data and information.



“What we value most about the Ocean Allies project is that they recognize a simple truth that we have valued from the beginning of our sustainability journey: that lasting improvement only happens when fishermen are part of the solution.”

Guy Pizzuti, Business Development Director for Seafood, Publix Supermarket



Use of acoustic pingers to reduce marine mammal bycatch

Marine mammal fisheries bycatch remains a significant global issue, with an estimated 600,000 animals caught each year. In Norway, harbor porpoise bycatch in commercial bottom-set gillnet fisheries averaged 2,871 individuals annually between 2006 and 2018, well above sustainable limits. Key fishing gillnet areas, such as the Vestfjorden and Lofoten region, have long been associated with incidental capture of marine mammals, particularly harbor porpoises.

To address this risk, the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research trialed the use of acoustic deterrent devices, or pingers, demonstrating that pingers can reduce harbor porpoise bycatch by 70–100%. While these results led to mandates for the use of pingers in certain fishing areas, compliance remained low at around 60%, largely due to the cost burden on fishers. The project has overcome this barrier by providing free pingers to selected high-risk vessels, encouraging broader adoption and more consistent use.

Since its launch in April 2025, the project has engaged fishers in northern Norway and produced 500 pingers for distribution. Early progress has been slow, partly due to vessels being at sea and limited voluntary use of pingers outside mandated zones.

As of now, 10 vessels have joined the trials, with some already equipped with pingers and additional units set to be distributed as vessels return to port. Focusing on a smaller, more engaged group has the potential to improve monitoring and demonstrate clearer impacts on bycatch reduction. It will also enable participating vessels to share best practices and streamline operations across regulated and non-regulated fishing areas, supporting more effective and scalable adoption of pinger technology.

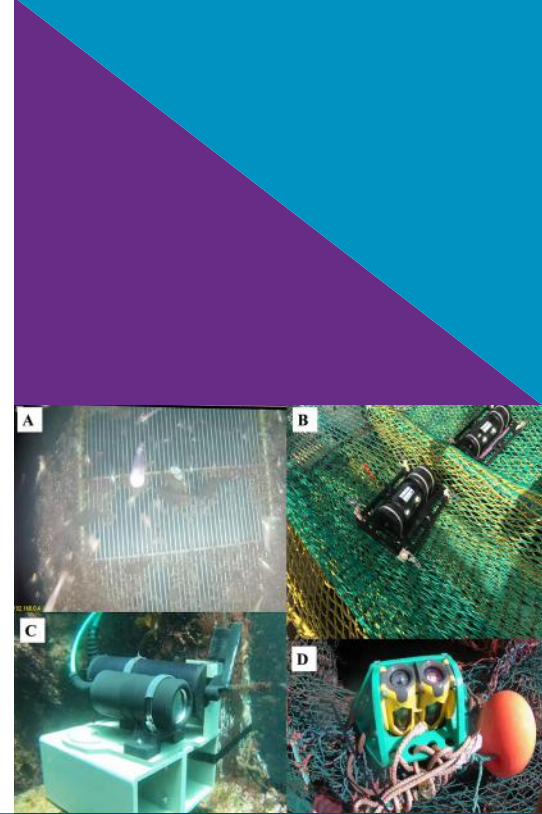


Electronic monitoring of endangered smalltooth sawfish bycatch in the Florida pink shrimp fishery

In January 2026, SFP, in collaboration with LGL Ecological Research Associations and Saltwater, Inc., launched a project to test electronic monitoring systems on U.S. Gulf shrimp vessels, for the purposes of monitoring interactions with endangered smalltooth sawfish. Trawl bycatch in the Florida pink shrimp fishery represents the greatest fishery threat to endangered smalltooth sawfish. However, observer coverage for the fishery is low (1-2%), and increases in this coverage would be costly. Electronic monitoring could represent a cost-effective method for bolstering observer coverage and providing objective, scientific data needed for management.

Two different types of electronic monitoring systems will be tested. Saltwater will use vessel-mounted cameras to detect sawfish entangled in nets as they are brought alongside vessels and the condition of the sawfish as they are released, while LGL will investigate the feasibility of underwater trawl-mounted cameras for observing sawfish behavior within nets. In addition, the collaborators will lay the groundwork for automatic detection of sawfish in video footage via artificial intelligence.

With support from two Florida-based companies, Publix Super Markets and Cox's Wholesale Seafood, vessel-mounted electronic monitoring systems were installed on seven shrimp boats fishing off the west coast of Florida. As of April 2026, several boats have completed fishing trips with the vessel-mounted EM systems and have sent the hard drives to Saltwater for analysis.



Year 3 Outreach and Engagement

Innovative Gear Workshop

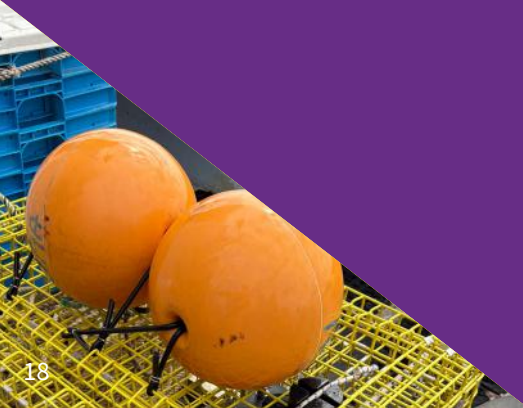
In September 2025, SFP partnered with the New England Aquarium (NEAq) to host a first-of-its-kind [Innovative Gear Workshop](#) in Boston, MA, which brought together representatives of the seafood industry, harvesters, gear innovators, and scientists to review innovative pot and trap technologies, discuss the various trials underway with gear-lending libraries and how to support them, and understand the significance of ETP species bycatch within the pot and trap industry. In addition, participants toured the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) gear-lending library in Pocasset, MA, and took part in an on-the-water demonstration of on-demand gear.

As a result of the workshop discussions, participants gained a better understanding of the incentives necessary to offset costs to harvesters and processors to bring on-demand caught seafood to the market. This has led to major seafood supply chains now actively asking for on-demand caught lobsters, reaching out to SFP for further assistance in understanding availability, feasibility, and pathways to scale.

The workshop has opened the door to increased interest from Massachusetts lobster suppliers. These suppliers are partnering with SFP, the NEFSC, additional seafood suppliers, buyers, and fishermen to actively encourage the expansion of on-demand technologies to bring on-demand caught lobster to market and support the protection of endangered North Atlantic right whales. In addition to reducing whale entanglement, on-demand gear, equipped with GPS and interoperability technology, has been shown to offer several broader benefits, including reduced gear loss and theft, lower fuel costs, shorter trip durations, and the ability to collect valuable scientific data such as bottom temperatures and sea state conditions.

Building on the interest generated by the workshop, six attendees went on to participate in the 2025 Ropeless Consortium Annual Meeting in New Bedford, MA. This marked the first time that seafood industry representatives had attended the meeting since its inception in 2018.

At the meeting, SFP and NEAq presented a summary of the workshop, underscoring the growing interest among seafood processors and buyers in solutions to reduce entanglements and demonstrating this momentum to harvesters and other stakeholders.



Seafood Expo North America

On March 15 and 16, 2026, at Seafood Expo North America in Boston, MA, SFP convened a series of interactive expert panel discussions focused on addressing bycatch while advancing solutions for sustainable seafood. The panels explored the adoption of innovative fishing gear to reduce bycatch and strengthen sustainable seafood supply chains, including key challenges, cost considerations, and the role of buyer engagement in accelerating uptake.

Discussions also examined the impacts of ghost gear (lost or abandoned fishing gear) on supply chains and marine ecosystems, including stock depletion, increased costs for fishers, and distribution disruptions.

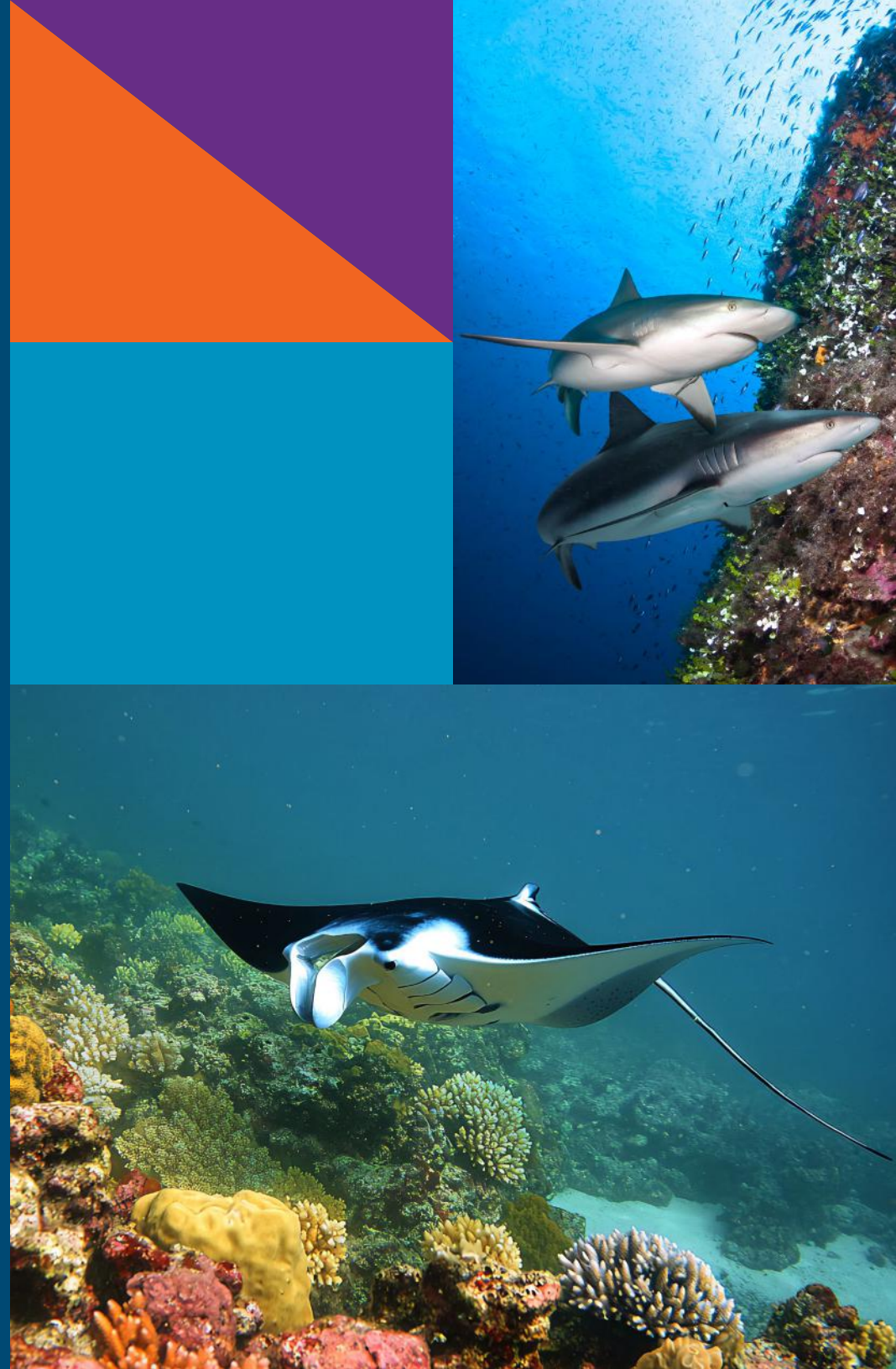
In addition, we also hosted a Tuna Transparency panel that highlighted practical solutions to pressing transparency challenges in tuna fisheries, with industry experts exploring how emerging tools are improving visibility into vessel operations and addressing critical issues such as bycatch, vessel monitoring, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.



Spotlight on the Future: Year 4

As the Bycatch Solutions Hub enters its fourth year, we will continue to support emerging bycatch technologies by connecting bycatch solutions projects in need of support with interested seafood industry partners. These technologies are proving to be efficient, sustainable, and economically resilient complementary tools that respect traditional fishing practices while advancing marine conservation and the protection of ETP species. In many cases, they also reduce gear loss and theft, lower fuel costs, shorten trip durations, and enable the collection of valuable scientific data. Several promising new bycatch solutions projects are currently seeking support from industry leaders, including:

- Sorting grids for mobulid (Manta) ray best practice release in tuna purse seiners
- Slides and safety clothing for shark release in tuna purse seiners
- Release Velcro and harnesses for release of large sharks in tuna purse seiners
- Development and testing of solar-powered lights to reduce sea turtle and shark bycatch in purse seines and gill nets
- Advancement of sustainable trawl fisheries through FloMo gear trials
- Dungeness crab and snow crab buoy gear tracking to reduce ghost gear and entanglements
- Ghost Gear reduction with the use of innovative gear technologies



The Hub continues strengthening connections between the seafood industry and bycatch mitigation efforts through partner engagement. SFP staff have been honored to receive global invitations to attend conferences and workshops to share their expertise in linking conservation initiatives with the seafood industry. These opportunities help SFP to engage the supply chain, strengthen partnerships, raise awareness among major seafood buyers, and expand efforts to protect endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species.

Upcoming 2026 events that SFP will participate in include

- “Whales are in Our Nature” event hosted by Pew Charitable Trusts, Oceans North Conservation Society, Canadian Wildlife Federation, and Georgia Strait Alliance with support from SFP
- The Society for Marine Mammalogy Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals
- The Seafood and Fisheries Emerging Technologies Conference
- The 2026 North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium Annual Meeting
- The 2026 Ropeless Consortium Annual Meeting.

Additionally, SFP will continue to develop buyer trips to visit projects in action and offer roundtable discussions that provide buyers with opportunities to participate directly in the conversations that affect industry.

We are also excited to announce that the Bycatch Solutions Hub website will soon have a refreshed design. While many of the resources our users rely on will remain unchanged, these updates will make it easier to navigate the site and quickly find the information and resources needed.

Additional information will continue to be available through the quarterly Hub Newsletter, which currently reaches more than 370 global subscribers.



Key Learnings

As the Bycatch Solutions Hub continues to evolve, several key learnings have emerged that emphasize its value, impact, and ongoing need. There is a clear demand for practical tools, resources, and implementation methods to help seafood companies integrate sustainability into their supply chains. The Hub has demonstrated the importance of building a connected network of seafood companies, gear innovators, and NGOs committed to advancing conservation and reducing bycatch by working collaboratively.

Additionally, there remains a clear need for a centralized space to share and collect data across initiatives, enabling stakeholders to better quantify impact, track progress, and inform strategies to reduce bycatch and restore ocean biodiversity. In this space, the Hub's role as a convening platform is essential, bringing together diverse stakeholders to exchange knowledge, highlight new developments, and learn from one another's experiences.



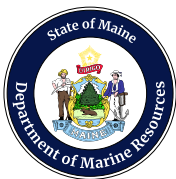
Working together to drive change and ocean conservation

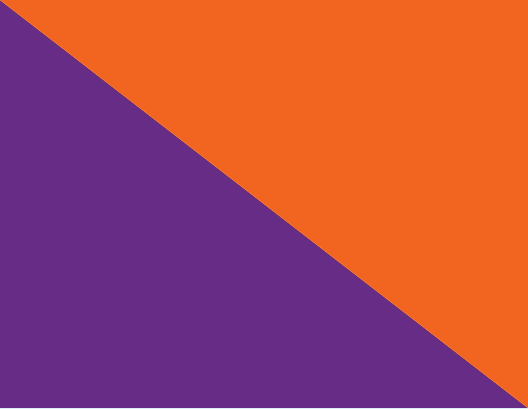
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