

SUBMISSION TO THE
NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD
June 2021

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

Issue: Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Ghost Gear Efforts

Background:

As a threat to Canada's aquatic ecosystems, in September 2018, Canada announced at the G7 the strengthening of our domestic and international commitment to address marine litter by signing on to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative. To further support this commitment, in December 2020, the Minister of DFO-CCG included the implementation of the Ocean Plastics Charter and the G7 Charlevoix Blueprint for Healthy Oceans, Seas and Resilient Coastal Communities in the department's mandate priorities.

Ghost Gear is defined as any fishing gear that has been abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded . Ghost Gear represents a key source of marine litter in the Arctic, much of which originates offshore. Ghost Gear itself has detrimental impacts on the environment, the fishing industry, and fishery yields, the sustainability of biodiversity in aquatic ecosystems, and has been identified as a threat to marine mammals due to entanglement.

Current Work:

The commitment from the Government of Canada led to the creation of the Sustainable Fisheries Solutions and Retrieval Support Contributions Program (commonly referred to as "the Ghost Gear Fund"). The Ghost Gear Fund allocated \$8.3 million dollars over two years (2020 – 2022) to support 26 projects across Canada under four themes (Third party led retrieval of Ghost Gear; gear acquisition and piloting of currently available innovative technologies; responsible disposal; and international leadership).

Future Work:

DFO recognizes that Ghost Gear Program initiatives are underrepresented in the Arctic Region. Challenges to support programing include: the large geographic area and its remoteness; limited options and infrastructure to currently support responsible disposal; and limited scientific data and understanding of local knowledge related to ghost gear and its impacts in the Arctic. DFO looks to work collaboratively with the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) in the coming years to establish programing to address these challenges, and to support clean arctic ecosystems and prevent future impacts caused by fishing presences. Areas of potential collaboration may include:

- 1) Development and distribution of a survey to increase public engagement on the subject of ghost gear;
- 2) Development of a responsible disposal supply chain for ghost gear and other fishing gear;
- 3) Development of potential projects to remove and properly dispose of ghost gear from arctic ecosystems; and,
- 4) Test and implement gear technologies that reduce the risks and impacts of ghost gear (for example, biodegradable gillnets and net marking).

DFO looks forward to further engagements with the NWMB, communities and other stakeholders and resource users. Should you have any immediate questions or would like to discuss the ghost gear program further, please contact David Klein of DFO at David.Klein@dfo-mpo.gc.ca or (431)-337-3132.

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