



# JOINT NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL OCEANIC &  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL FISH & WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

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NOAA04-092  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
September 27, 2004

## **WHALE-SAFE FISHING GEAR COMPETITION ANNOUNCED; RESEARCH TEAMS TO COMPETE FOR \$50,000**

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) have opened a worldwide research competition intended to spark innovative new designs in fishing gear that will reduce the risk of large whales getting entangled in some fishing operations. Partners in the project also include the Northeast Consortium and the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department.

The winning research team will receive a grant of up to \$50,000 to complete development of the most promising commercially viable, whale-safe gear prototype. The winners will also test the new gear in competition the fall of 2005 and then conduct at-sea tests with fishermen upon in the spring of 2006.

"Our foundation is pleased to be partnering with a diverse group of experts within the federal government and the fishing industry to support this international effort," said John Berry, Foundation executive director. "We believe this project will help reduce the common threat of entanglement to endangered right whales throughout the world."

"Modern fishing gear is stronger, more efficient, and more reliable than that of centuries past, but we believe technological innovation cuts both ways – we also think it can be made safer for whales," said Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries. NOAA Fisheries is the federal agency charged with recovering and protecting marine mammals, including large whales.

Known as *The Large Whale Gear Competition*, the project is newly formed under the foundation's National Whale Conservation Fund, which was established to support research, management, conservation and education/outreach activities related to the conservation and recovery of whales.

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The international competition is open to teams composed of at least three people, and include an advisor from academia or a related fishing industry or association, private company or other entity qualified to advise on potential solutions to gear-whale interactions.

The deadline for letters of intent is Dec. 1, 2004. Selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposals, which will be due March 15, 2005. Up to five teams will be awarded grants of up to \$10,000 each to develop the prototypes and participate in an at-sea challenge in fall 2005.

For full details on the competition and rules for entry, visit the National Whale Conservation Fund Web site at [www.nfwf.org/programs/large\\_whale\\_gear.htm](http://www.nfwf.org/programs/large_whale_gear.htm).

For more information on mitigating the risks posed to large whales by fishing gear in the northeastern United States, visit the NOAA Fisheries Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Web site at [www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp).

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a nonprofit organization established by Congress in 1984 dedicated to the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants, and the habitat on which they depend. The Foundation creates partnerships between the public and private sectors to strategically invest in conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. The Foundation distributed 687 grants in 2003 and has leveraged \$261 million in federal funds since its establishment, for a total of more than \$786 million in on-the-ground conservation.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov).

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On the Web:

NOAA: [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

NOAA Fisheries: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation: [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)