

# CFRF NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2023

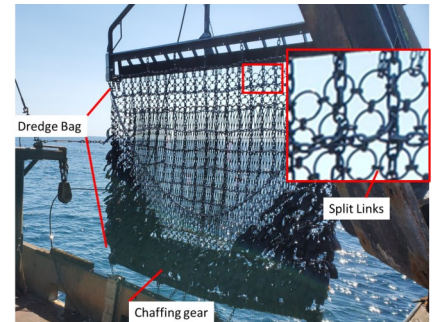
ISSUE #24

## New Project: Reducing Small Sea Scallop and Sand Dollar Catch Through Dredge Bag Modifications

Sand dollars are often caught unintentionally in scallop dredges, which is referred to as bycatch. In areas where sand dollars are found in high density, this accidental catch can significantly reduce the efficiency of targeted scallop fishing.

We have recently initiated a project with members of the Limited Access scallop fleet to explore gear modifications that could help reduce the amount of sand dollar bycatch. This could also lead to a decrease in bycatch of small-sized scallops, which are similar in size to sand dollars, thereby reducing the fishing mortality of this valuable resource.

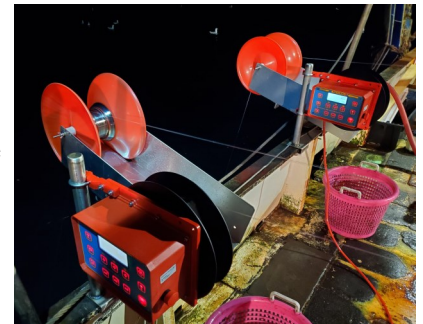
In collaboration with the F/Vs Susan L and Karen Elizabeth, we decided that four bags would be used in the trials. One is a new standard bag (as seen in the photo on the right), one is an old standard bag with stretched-out rings and chains, and two bags are experimental, both incorporating larger ring sizes. The three modified bags will be tested against the new standard bag. The bags are currently under construction and at-sea trials are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2024. Keep an eye out for project updates and visit our [webpage](#) for more information. This project is supported by the NOAA Sea Scallop Set-Aside program.



## New Project: Fostering the Development of Automatic Squid Jigging in Southern New England

Recently, the CFRF piloted the use of automatic squid jigging gear aboard commercial squid trawling vessels. The results showed that further testing is needed to refine the application of this technology and increase squid catch rates.

As a result, and in response to local and regional interest in trialing these machines, we are launching a new project that will create a [free lending program](#) for our four squid jigging machines. Beginning in Spring 2024, local fishermen will be able to use their own expertise to test the machines during their fishing trips. CFRF staff will be available to assist with initial setup and operational support, while the fishermen test the machines independently. This project aims to promote sustainable harvesting techniques with economic, social, and ecosystem benefits. This project is supported by the Partnership for Research Excellence in Sustainable Seafood initiative.



## New Project: Revolution and Sunrise Wind Otter Trawl Survey

We are excited to announce a new partnership with the School for Marine Science and Technology and local commercial fishermen. Together, we are conducting a seasonal otter trawl survey within the areas of the Revolution and Sunrise Wind Farms, which are currently in the pre-construction phase. The goal of this survey is to evaluate the fish communities' abundance, distribution, and population structure, and it is designed to match other regional trawl surveys.

We kicked off the project in August and successfully completed the summer survey for the Revolution Wind Farm area, along with two reference areas north and south of the development zones. The most abundant species caught were scup, butterfish, little skate, silver and spotted hake, and Atlantic longfin squid, with an average catch volume of 248 kg/tow across the three study areas. Visit the project [webpage](#) to stay up to date on this survey's progress! Thanks to the crew of the F/V Heather Lynn, SMAST staff, and AIS Inc for making this first survey a success. This project is supported by Revolution Wind.



## Project Update: Whelk Research Fleet

Since 2022, the Whelk Research Fleet has sampled nearly 5,000 channeled and knobbed whelks from over 70 trips! Initially funded by the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, the Fleet comprised eight fishing vessels from Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

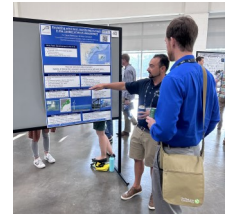
Recently, we received additional funding from Vineyard Wind, LLC to expand and continue the Research Fleet. To address gaps in data collection, we have added three new members from Menemsha, Martha's Vineyard - Otto Osmer of F/V Right Stuff, Nick Wilbur of F/V Little Feat, and Tom Turner of F/V Sea Raven. We are thrilled to welcome them to the team!

In the near future, we plan to increase our sampling coverage even further by adding vessels from the CT and NY area. We are grateful to the participating fishermen who have provided valuable feedback and data through their sampling efforts. Check out the [webpage](#) for more information!



## Education and Outreach

- In August, Dave Bethoney and Hannah Verkamp attended the [American Fisheries Society](#) Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan! They both presented posters on some of our offshore wind farm research and participated in a symposium on the intersection of fisheries and offshore wind farm development.
- Dave Bethoney recently visited the [Block Island Maritime Institute](#) to talk about the work we do with fishermen as part of their "Tuesday Talks" speaker series! It was great to visit the island and connect with new people- thanks to everyone who attended!
- Hannah Verkamp visited the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance in July to present on our Black Sea Bass Research Fleet at their "Small Boats. Big Science" speaker series! You can read more about the event and her talk [in their August e-magazine!](#)
- In August, Dave Bethoney visited the Norman Bird Sanctuary to participate in their "[Coastal Conversations](#)" lecture series. During this visit, attendees sat beside the beach while learning about our collaborative research projects and the issues facing offshore wind farms and fisheries co-existence.
- Don't forget to follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) for regular updates on our work!



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