

Ghost Gear Facts & Figures



Prevalence

- Recent studies indicate that abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) – also known as ghost fishing gear – makes up 70-86% of all floating macroplastics in the ocean gyres by weight.
 - One study estimated that 86% of marine debris in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch are fishing gear ([Lebreton et al., 2022](#)).
 - Another study found that, by weight, 70% of floating macroplastic debris is fishing gear in the ocean gyres – mainly buoys, but also nets, lines, and other fishing gear ([UNEP, Eriksen et al., 2014](#)).

Wildlife Impacts

- Ocean Conservancy research has found that ghost gear is the most harmful form of marine debris, with pots, lines, traps, nets, and buoys ranking as the highest threat ([Wilcox et al., 2016](#)).
- A study of 870 ghost nets recovered from Puget Sound, USA, found that they contained more than 32,000 marine animals, including over 1000 fish, 500 birds, and 20 marine mammals ([Good et al., 2010](#)).
- A 2022 study estimates fishing rope as a major source of ocean microplastic pollution, with the hauling of rope on maritime vessels potentially resulting in billions of microplastic fragments entering the ocean every year ([Napper et al., 2022](#)).

Economic Costs

- An estimated 5-30% decline in some fish stocks is attributed to ALDFG ([NOAA Marine Debris Program, 2015](#)).
- In just one crab fishery in British Columbia, Canada, annual replacement of lost gear costs the fishery over 490,000 USD (650,000 CAD) ([Drinkwin et al., 2017](#)).
- Removing just 10% of derelict pots (approximately 4,400) from the five most heavily fished sites in both Virginia and Maryland could increase blue crab harvest in the Chesapeake Bay by 22 million pounds or approximately 14% ([Bilkovic, et al., 2015/2016](#)).

The GGGI

- Ocean Conservancy's Global Ghost Gear Initiative is the world's only alliance dedicated to tackling the issue of abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear on a global scale.
- The GGGI brings together participants from the fishing industry, the private sector, academia, governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to develop and implement scalable solutions to the ghost gear problem. There are currently 160+ GGGI members, including 23 national governments involved with the initiative.
- The GGGI, alongside local partners, conducts and funds ghost gear removals around the world.
 - In 2019, the GGGI and the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation removed an approximately 20,000-pound gear ball offshore of Portland, Maine. ([Ocean Conservancy](#)).
- You can find the GGGI's Best Practice Framework for the Management of Fishing Gear [HERE](#) and for Aquaculture [HERE](#).