

## More than 63 tonnes of ‘ghost gear’ removed from Atlantic Ocean in 2020, Fisheries Department says

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Fishing gear collected from the Atlantic Ocean.

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More than 63 tonnes of lost fishing gear was retrieved from the Atlantic Ocean in 2020 as part of a government program to reduce marine pollution, the Fisheries Department said Thursday.

Most of the so-called “ghost gear” collected were traps and pots from lobster and crab fishing, the department said in a news release. Ghost gear is the term used to describe lost, abandoned and derelict fishing nets and commercial fishing gear left behind in the country’s waters.

The program to retrieve the lost gear was funded by Ottawa’s Ghost Gear Fund, which financed 26 projects – 22 in Canada and four internationally – related to keeping the planet’s oceans healthy.

“(Our oceans) need to be sustainable for the long term,” Fisheries Minister Bernadette Jordan said in an interview Thursday.

The Fisheries Department said most of the gear was collected from the Bay of Fundy and the coastal waters off Nova Scotia, though some was gathered from the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the shores of Newfoundland.

About 14 per cent of the material collected were nets and longline fishing equipment that together measured more than 3,200 meters, about the same length as 32 football fields.

The program also helped reunite gear to fishers, Jordan said, adding that more than 100 pieces of marked gear was claimed by harvesters. “It’s not just taking it out of the ocean and putting it in a landfill site, it’s being addressed for the long term,” she said.

Jordan said the ghost gear project will tackle the waters of the Pacific Ocean off the coast of British Columbia in 2021.

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