

Brust, Jeffrey [DEP]

From: Anna Mercer - NOAA Federal <anna.mercer@noaa.gov>
Sent: Monday, June 9, 2025 1:15 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Available Now! Vessels for Cooperative Research

Dear Cooperative Research Community,

During the Northeast Cooperative Research Summits, we heard a clear need for a mechanism to match fishing vessels with scientists for research projects. In response, we created a way for vessel owners and captains to sign up to participate in new cooperative research initiatives as they are developed. **I am thrilled to share that we have over 100 vessels on the list, covering nearly all fisheries and states in the northeast region. We have added information about this initiative/opportunity to the cooperative research website and also wanted to reach out to those of you who have requested this resource directly.**

Many scientists want to work with fishermen, but sometimes it is difficult to know who to contact or where to start. If you are a scientist looking for a partner in the fishing community or if you are a fisherman interested in participating in cooperative research, please contact me for recommendations and opportunities!

Best Wishes,
Anna Mercer, on behalf of the NEFSC Cooperative Research Branch

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**NOAA
FISHERIES**



Cooperative Research in the Northeast

Our Cooperative Research Branch engages the fishing community to answer science questions and improve management of the region's fisheries.

Cooperative research is the partnership between the fishing industry and the science community. We work together to improve our understanding of ocean ecosystems and support sustainable fisheries management. This partnership:

- Produces tools to collect and share data that advance science and fishing
- Applies and interprets data to address research questions
- Facilitates communication and collaboration among Northeast fisheries professionals

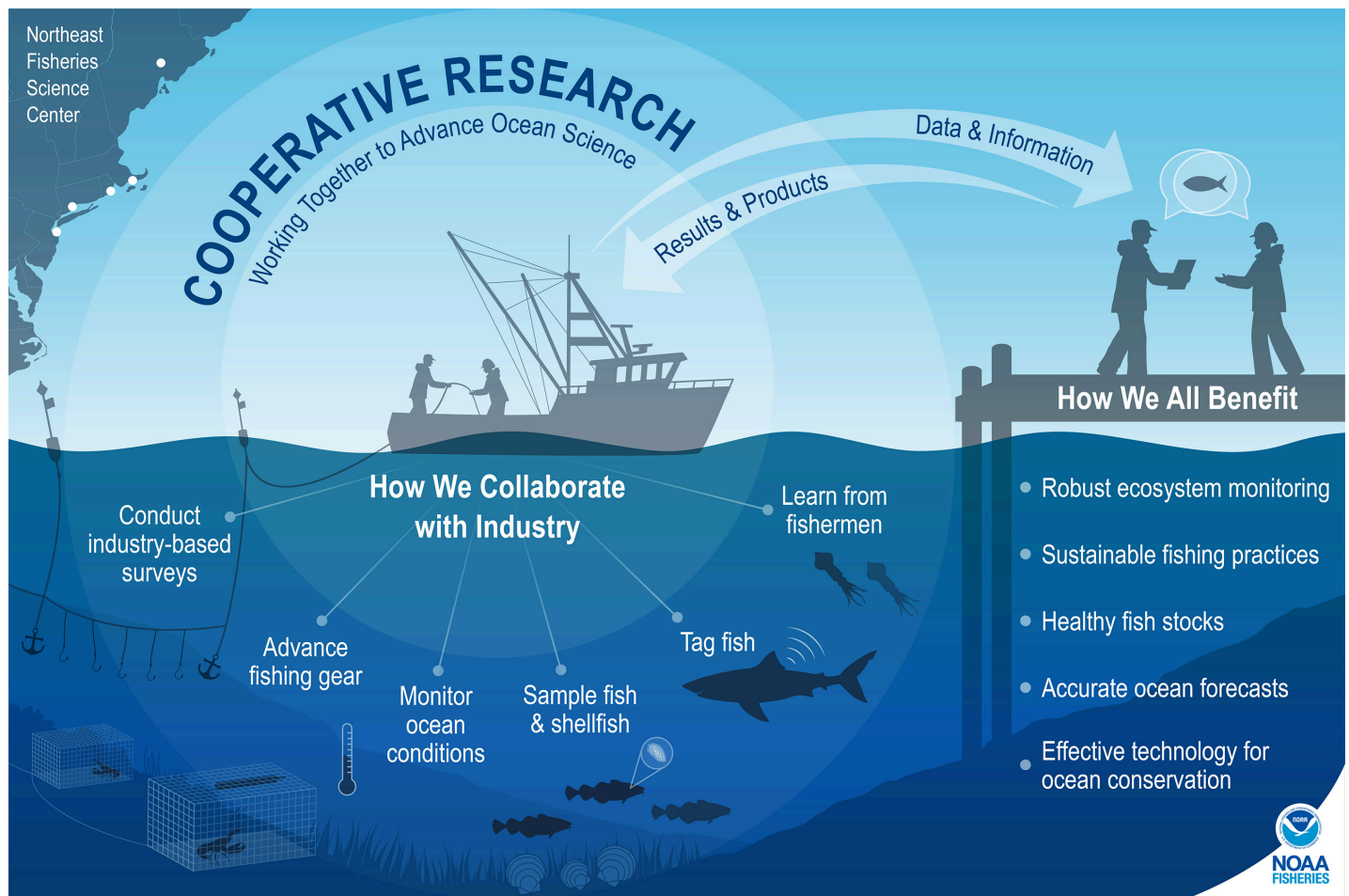


Diagram describing the process, types, and products of cooperative research conducted between scientists and the fishing industry. Credit: NOAA Fisheries

Bottom Longline Survey

The [Gulf of Maine Cooperative Bottom Longline Survey](#) started in 2014 to collect data on species that prefer rocky habitats. We conduct this survey every spring and fall aboard two chartered commercial fishing vessels. Scientists incorporate data from this survey into stock assessments and use it to answer questions about species distribution shifts and ecosystem dynamics.

Featured Publications

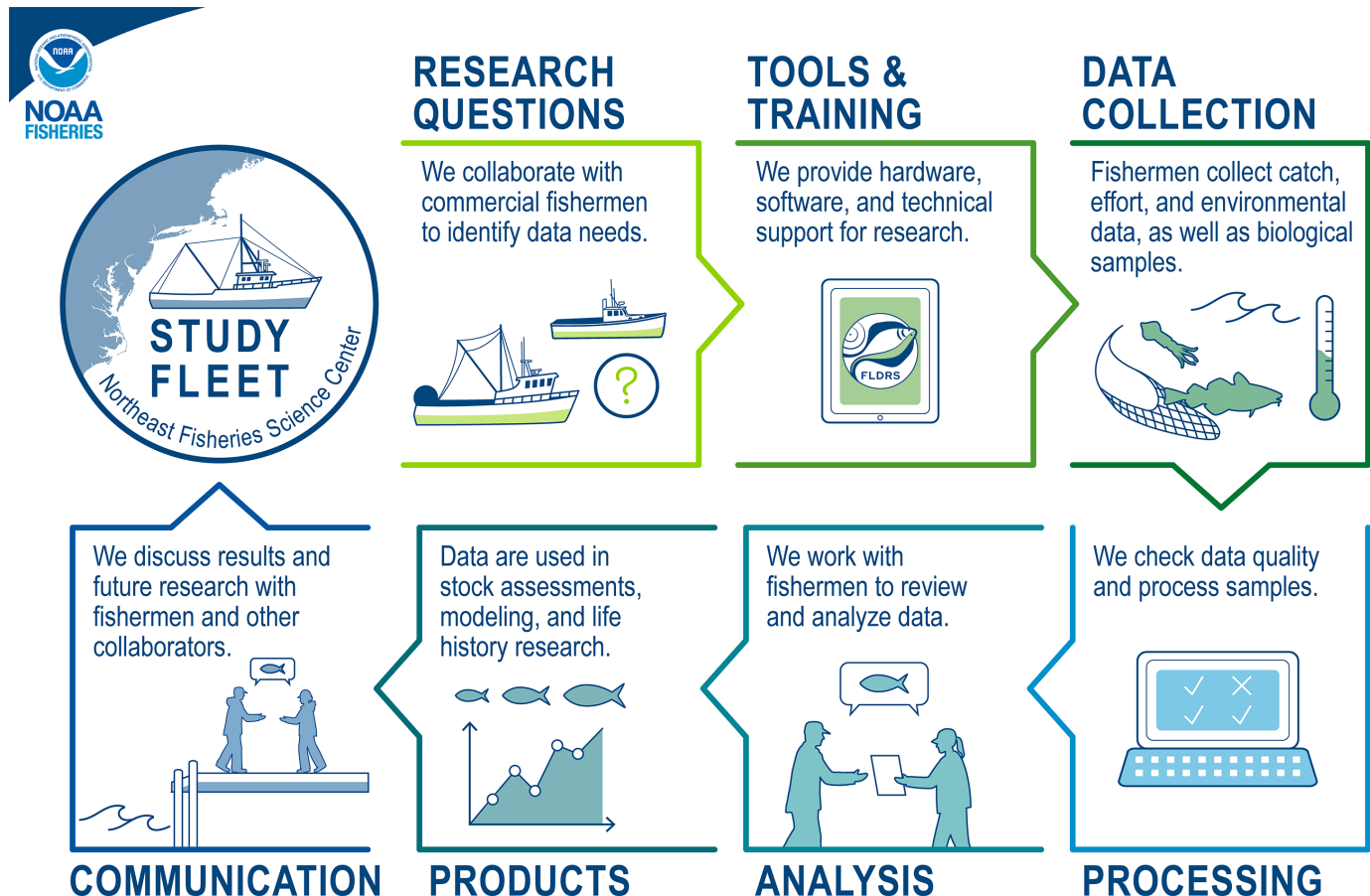
Contact: [Dave McElroy](#)

Study Fleet

The Study Fleet originated in 2006 to engage fishermen in collecting high-resolution data to address science and management needs. This partnership demonstrates the utility of fishery-dependent data. The Study Fleet comprises approximately 50 fishing vessels whose captains and crews collect detailed data on fishing effort, catch, and environmental conditions.

Researchers use Study Fleet data for many purposes, including:

- Estimating fishery footprints
- Developing catch-per-unit-effort indices for stock assessments
- Understanding the potential impact of offshore wind energy development on fishing operations
- Developing thermal niche models
- Informing regional oceanographic models



An explanation of the components, process, and value of the Study Fleet program supporting NOAA's scientific programs. Credit: NOAA Fisheries

Industry Partners

This program involves approximately 50 fishing vessels from Maine to North Carolina.

Data Collected

Our partners collect haul-level fishing effort, catch, and temperature and depth data.

Contact: [Katie Burchard](#)



Commercial fisherman Rodman Sykes enters fishing effort data as a member of the CRB's Study Fleet program. Credit NOAA Fisheries/Giovanni Giancesin

GOFISH Data Dashboard

The Graphical Offshore Fishing Information System Homepage (GOFISH) allows Study Fleet participants to access, explore, and apply the data collected over the years using the [FLDRS electronic logbook software](#). GOFISH runs on Study Fleet computers to produce automated analyses and visualizations of catch, bycatch, and environmental conditions for individual Study Fleet participants.

Captains participating in the Study Fleet use GOFISH to:

- Explore their catch and effort data over space and time
- Compare their fishing patterns to oceanographic conditions
- Plot catch and bycatch rates
- Refine their fishing practices accordingly

Contact: [Jeff Pessutti](#)

Featured Publications

Cooperative Environmental Monitoring

The [Environmental Monitors on Lobster Traps and Large Trawlers](#) (eMOLT) program outfits fishing vessels with oceanographic sensors to collect bottom-water temperature data across the Northeast U.S. Continental Shelf. This program also sets up data transmission routines to enable near-real time data sharing. These data feed into numerical oceanographic models and into data visualization and access platforms, such as the [Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regional Associations of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems](#) [↗](#). This process is similar to the National Weather Service's use of air temperature observations on land in their forecast models.

Contact: [George Maynard](#)

Featured Publications

Industry-Based Biological Sampling

Our branch works with industry partners across the region to collect fish and invertebrate samples for age, growth, reproduction, and bioenergetics studies. Biosample collection focuses on times of year and areas without surveys or other means to obtain fish samples.

For example, we have collected herring samples to evaluate skipped spawning events, and haddock samples to study reproductive dynamics in the Gulf of Maine, where extreme fluctuations occur. We have recently targeted data-poor species such as cusk and wolffish. The program also collects samples and data to better understand how conversion factors (processed to whole weight) vary over space, time, sex, and maturity for species not landed whole.

Contact: [Katie Burchard](#)

Featured Publications

Collaborative Squid Research

We have developed a research portfolio that focuses on applying fishing industry knowledge and data to advance our understanding of two commercially important squid species: the northern shortfin squid (*Illex illecebrosus*) and the longfin squid (*Doryteuthis pealeii*). We work with harvesters, processors, and scientists to identify patterns and potential environmental drivers of catch rates, distributions, and availability of each species. Our research has contributed to the northern shortfin squid stock assessment as well as the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's specification setting process.. Our goal is to establish innovative collaborative research efforts between industry and scientists to improve the uptake of ecosystem information into management.

Shortfin Squid Electronic Size Monitoring (ILXSM)

We require high frequency, region-wide size and weight sampling of shortfin squid to gain a better understanding of the cohort and population structure of this valuable, dynamic species. Our researchers and industry partners worked together to develop an efficient electronic system to collect standardized shortfin squid size and weight data. In the summer of 2021, we installed electronic data collection systems at processing facilities across the region. When fishing vessels land at a facility, the data collection system records paired mantle length and whole weight of each individual squid. These data help scientists better understand the size composition of shortfin squid cohorts and population while the fishery is open, which is key in advancing the assessment and management of this dynamic species.

Contact: [Anna Mercer](#)

Longfin Squid Biological Sampling Program (SQUIBS)

The longfin squid biological sampling program (SQUIBS) collects longfin squid (*Doryteuthis pealeii*) from commercial fishing vessels every week to assess the growth and reproductive dynamics of this species. Technicians at Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Narragansett Laboratory measure biological characteristics of each squid collected, including mantle length, mantle width, body weight, reproductive organ sizes, and egg presence, using an electronic data collection system. This biological sampling effort will provide a comprehensive data stream of lengths, weights, age and maturity estimates throughout the year. These data will advance understanding of longfin squid life history, will be used in a new length-based assessment model for longfin squid, and will contribute to the 2026 longfin squid research track stock assessment.

Contact: [Anna Mercer](#)








Oceanographic Drivers of Squid (Squid-Squad)

Climate-driven variations in oceanic conditions can impact population dynamics of commercially important species, including the northern shortfin squid. This is a highly dynamic species. Its movement onto the continental shelf is largely influenced by oceanography, yet much remains unknown about its life history strategies. Our collaborative interdisciplinary research team of oceanographers, fisheries biologists, statisticians, and industry partners have established a multi-year field sampling research effort designed to collect coincident oceanographic and biological data on a commercial squid fishing vessel. This project builds upon ongoing *Illex* research efforts to expand and test novel data collection methods as well as advance our current understanding of oceanographic drivers of the northern shortfin squid.

[Learn more >](#)

Contact: [Kim Hyde](#)

Collaborators/Partners:

- [Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#) 
- [Illex Research Track Stock Assessment Working Group](#)
- [University of Massachusetts Dartmouth School for Marine Science & Technology](#) 
- [Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution](#) 
- [Open Ocean Research](#) 
- [University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science](#) 
- [Virginia Institute of Marine Science](#) 
- [Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation](#) 
- Squid fishing fleets and processors across the northeast region

Featured Publications

Evaluating Impacts of Offshore Wind Energy Development

To understand the potential conflict between fisheries operations and the development of offshore wind farms, we work with the UMass School for Marine Science and Technology using fine-scale fishing data from a variety of sources. These sources, which include our Study Fleet and [Northeast Fisheries Observer Program](#), help us explore how the scale of fishery-dependent data (e.g. haul-by-haul versus trip-level) affects our understanding of the fishing operation footprint.

We also collaborate with industry partners to review data sources, analytical approaches, and results, and to predict socioeconomic implications of offshore wind energy for fishery operations and management.

Contact: [Anna Mercer](#)

Featured Publications

Pilot Hook-and-Line Survey

Many historical fisheries surveys, including the NEFSC Bottom Trawl Survey, are unable to operate around structured habitat. The Pilot Hook and Line Survey (HLS) is exploring new survey tools, including hook and line and stereo camera systems, to complement existing surveys, ensure data continuity, and provide new data streams for fisheries resources that associate with structured habitat. The HLS samples un-towable habitat, including wrecks, large boulders, natural and artificial reefs, and areas of marine infrastructure development to provide data on the distribution, abundance, biomass, length composition, and biology of federally managed species.

Six vessels conducted our initial surveys in spring and fall 2024

- *F/V Lady Rebecca*, Newburyport, Massachusetts

- F/V *Frances*, Point Judith, Rhode Island
- F/V *Rudee Mariner*, Virginia Beach, Virginia
- F/V *TNT*, Barnegat, New Jersey
- F/V *Salted*, Cape May, New Jersey
- F/V *Fish Bound*, Ocean City, Maryland

The next pilot survey is scheduled to occur in spring of 2025 and will target the continental shelf between Massachusetts and Virginia. Our goals are to:

- Continue to develop hook and line survey protocols
- Expand the spatial scope of the pilot survey
- Analyze data to evaluate gear performance and selectivity
- Explore analytical approaches for modeling the catch rate data

Five vessels will conduct the pilot survey in spring 2025:

- April 22 - May 2: F/V *Rudee Mariner*, Virginia Beach, Virginia
- May 6 - 16: F/V *Fish Bound*, Ocean City, Maryland
- May 20 - 30: F/V *Salted*, Cape May, New Jersey
- June 3 - 13: F/V *TNT*, Barnegat, New Jersey
- June 17 - 27: F/V *Frances*, Point Judith, Rhode Island

Contact: [Jason Morson](#) or [Katie Viducic](#)

Groundfish Conversion Factor Research

We are partnering with the fishing community and Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to update gutted to whole weight conversion factors and length-weight relationships for groundfish stocks. We are doing this by sampling lengths as well as pre- and post-processing fish weights on commercial fishing trips and sampling fish length and weights port side at fish dealers. Stock assessment models estimate population dynamics based on numbers of individuals, but commercial landings and quotas are reported in weight. Sampling fish whole and gutted at sea allows us to create conversion factors that are used to translate commercial landings (weight) into population numbers. This sampling approach will allow us to assess how these relationships vary by geographic region, season, processing method (machine gutted/hand gutted) and gear type.

The Conversion Factor Project started data collection on October 1, 2024, and will continue for two years. This research focuses on eight species (Atlantic cod, haddock, yellowtail flounder, American plaice, witch flounder, winter flounder, pollock and summer flounder). The updated gutted to whole weight conversion factors and length-weight relationships produced by this project's data will be used by the science center's stock assessment scientists to ensure accurate and up-to-date calculations of these groundfish stocks.

Contact: [Katie Burchard](#)

Collaborative Golden Tilefish Length Sampling

The [golden tilefish](#) stock in the mid-Atlantic is poorly sampled by traditional survey methods, making fishery-dependent data the primary source for length and age information. However, portside sampling, which collects landings-at-length data, has declined by more than half in recent years, raising concerns about biases and potential failures in the stock assessment model. To address this, a pilot project will test video recording as a more efficient data collection method to improve golden tilefish size distribution estimates. Two tilefish vessels will be equipped with camera systems to capture length data during routine catch-handling processes. Initial trials will involve collaboration between vessel crews, video technology providers, and science center personnel. By expanding available data streams, this effort aims to enhance stock assessments, reduce biases, and improve the accuracy of landings-based models.

Contact: [Andy Jones](#)

Recreational Biological Data Collection Program (RecBio)

The Atlantic cod research track assessment and winter flounder research track stock assessment identified collecting length and age data from the recreational fishing fleet as a high priority. We developed the Recreational Fishery Biological Sampling Program, or RecBio, in 2023 to address these needs by providing for-hire captains with electronic tools to efficiently collect catch location, date/time, species, length, and age information on kept and released fish. Our branch works with Pelagic Strategics and the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life to engage over a dozen for-hire vessels in this pilot data collection program.

Contact: [Anna Mercer](#)

Northeast Cooperative Research Summits

The Northeast Cooperative Research Summit is an annual event that brings together scientists, managers, and members of the fishing industry to coordinate regional cooperative research, form new partnerships, and develop research priorities. We share approaches and results of ongoing cooperative research projects, discuss opportunities for expanded fishing industry participation, and develop best practices for applying cooperative research results to stock and ecosystem assessments and fisheries management.

The summit features presentations about new research, breakout sessions featuring panels of fishermen and scientists discussing regional topics of importance, and informal networking time. We prioritize the active participation of industry members at the Northeast Cooperative Research Summit.

We hosted the inaugural Northeast Cooperative Research Summits in Newport News, Virginia, and Providence, Rhode Island, in 2023. The 2024 Northeast Cooperative Research Summit was held in Cape May, New Jersey. The 2025 Northeast Cooperative Research Summit was held in Portland, Maine. The Northeast Cooperative Research Summit will rotate locations throughout the northeast region in future years.

[Learn more about and download reports from the Northeast Cooperative Research Summits.](#)



Scientists and industry members mingle at the 2023 Northeast Cooperative Research Summit in Providence, Rhode Island. Credit: NOAA Fisheries/Kim Hyde

Looking for Research Partners in the Fishing Community? Contact Us!

In an effort to create new partnerships between the science and fishing communities, we have collated a list of over 100 fishing vessels who are interested in participating in cooperative research in the northeast region. If you are a scientist looking for a research partner in the fishing community, please contact us and we can connect you to vessels participating in the fisheries or areas that your

research focuses on. If you are a fishing community member that would like to be added to the list, please contact [Anna Mercer](#).

Contact Us

Branch Chief: [Anna Mercer](#)

[Cooperative Research Contacts](#)

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More Information

- [Fostering Regional Partners](#)
- [Cooperative Research Staff Directory](#)

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