



COPE^o Working Group on Marine Debris and Entanglement Meeting Minutes

6 November 2024

11:00 am EST

Attendees

- Wayne Macdougall, *Working Group Chair*
- Clayton A. Burke, *Working Group Chair*
- Anne DiMonti (Sustainable Fisheries Partnership)
- Amy Knowlton (New England Aquarium)
- Joanna (Recent graduate, Stony Brook University)
- Hannah Dawicki, *COPE^o Administrator*

Agenda Items

- 1) Welcome and Introductions
 - Hannah Dawicki initiated the meeting by introducing COPE and its mission as a digital think tank focused on facilitating discussions on maritime and ocean-related issues.
 - Wayne Macdougall and Clayton Burke were introduced as the chairpersons for the Marine Debris and Entanglement Working Group.
- 2) Discussion on Marine Entanglement Mitigation Strategies
 - Wayne and Clayton provided updates on the positive engagement of fishermen in the Ropeless Consortium, indicating increased participation this year.
 - Amy Knowlton shared insights from attending the Ropeless Consortium meeting, emphasizing the need for government agencies (NOAA, DFO) to make definitive decisions to support ropeless fishing technologies.
 - Noted that fishermen need flexibility in gear options to suit regional needs.
 - Discussed challenges around interoperability and gear regulations.
- 3) Challenges and Opportunities in Gear Technology
 - Wayne and Clayton highlighted challenges with current ropeless gear, especially in areas like Nova Scotia where traditional methods are deeply ingrained.



- Current trials in Canada are limited and overburdened by regulatory hurdles.
 - Canada is testing weak link inserts, but implementation has been slow and inconsistent.
 - Amy Knowlton discussed the need for regulations to allow for active fishing using experimental gear, especially in closed areas impacted by right whale sightings.
 - Anne DiMonti emphasized the importance of moving from experimental to active fishing permits to encourage wider adoption of new technologies.
- 4) Barriers to Implementation
- Amy Knowlton noted ongoing issues with gear lending libraries in Maine due to equity concerns. Maine DMR is exploring solutions to these issues.
 - Delays in Canada due to bureaucratic processes, with stringent reporting requirements and slow approvals for ropeless gear trials.
- 5) Future Meetings and Action Items
- Amy Knowlton shared that the Ropeless Consortium Board is considering additional meetings beyond the annual session to maintain momentum.
 - Participants discussed the possibility of leveraging COPE as a platform for continuous dialogue between consortium meetings.
 - Hannah Dawicki proposed utilizing COPE's educational resources to develop courses on sustainable seafood sourcing and gear innovation.
- 6) Next Steps
- Amy Knowlton will share updates from the upcoming Ropeless Consortium board debrief.
 - Wayne and Clayton will reach out to Canadian agencies and stakeholders to gather more information on regulatory progress.
 - Participants were encouraged to identify potential new members and collaborators for the working group.
- 7) Closing Remarks
- The meeting concluded with a consensus on the importance of continued collaboration and information sharing.
 - Next meeting date to be determined.
 - **Action Items:**



- Amy Knowlton to provide feedback from the Ropeless Consortium board debrief.
- Hannah Dawicki to explore collaboration opportunities with seafood buyers and develop educational materials on sustainable practices.
- Wayne and Clayton to follow up with Canadian Wildlife Federation and other stakeholders to enhance engagement on the West Coast.