



### **Phase One of the Bottom Line Project Begins in May**

The Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation (GOMLF) will conduct Phase One of the Bottom Line Project, a voluntary groundline rope exchange program for Maine lobstermen, during the week of May 21, 2007, in Scarborough, Maine. GOMLF, a Maine non-profit research organization that collaborates on lobster industry projects, has contracted with Conigliaro Industries of Framingham, MA, to collect, transport and recycle up to 500,000 pounds of used float rope during Phase One.

The Bottom Line Project provides economic assistance for lobstermen to convert their groundlines by issuing vouchers worth \$1.40 per pound of float rope turned in. Vouchers will be accepted by participating rope dealers toward the purchase of new sink rope.

This is the first rope exchange to help Maine lobstermen defray the costs of converting from floating to sinking groundlines. At least one additional rope exchange will be offered to lobstermen affected by the Final Whale Rule, which should be released later this year and which will define areas of the Maine coast impacted by a ban on floating groundlines. GOMLF plans to collect and recycle up to one million pounds of used float rope during the first year of the program.

Float rope used in the commercial lobster industry has been implicated in the entanglement of large whales such as the North Atlantic right whale in the Gulf of Maine. According to federal fisheries managers, replacing floating groundlines (the rope linking traps together) with sinking line will reduce the threat of whale entanglement in lobster gear.

GOMLF is offering this first rope exchange to Maine lobstermen who fish in Lobster Management Zone G or in federal waters, areas which have been the most impacted by federal Dynamic Area Management (DAM) zones. DAM zones are triggered by the presence of three or more right whales in any given area, and one of the requirements for fixed gear in these areas is to have sinking groundlines in order to be compliant.

Lobstermen from other areas who are interested in exchanging their floating groundlines for sink rope are welcome to participate during the Phase One collection in May, but must register with GOMLF first.

Maine lobstermen have expressed concerns about sinking groundlines hanging down in rocky bottom, directly impacting hauling safety, the expense of replacing lost gear, and fishing capability in many areas.

For more information on the Bottom Line Project, visit [www.gomlf.org](http://www.gomlf.org) or contact Laura Ludwig at the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation, 207-985-8088.