



Jared Golden  
Congress of the United States  
2nd District of Maine

September 22, 2025

Dr. Cate O'Keefe  
Executive Director  
New England Fisheries Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Dr. O'Keefe,

I am writing to share my strong opposition to the Joint Alternative Gear-Marking Framework (Framework) that will be considered by the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) at its September 25th meeting. This premature and unnecessary proposal ignores congressional intent and could adversely impact the livelihoods of thousands of Maine fishermen that I represent.

As you are aware, Congress, through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (P.L. 117-328), paused the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) until December 31, 2028. This provision was included out of the dire need to preserve the existence of our nation's lobster fishery and to provide both state and federal regulators with more time to improve the data that informs the future management of this resource. In response to this congressional directive, the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (TRT) delayed its own process until 2026, with no new rulemaking expected before 2028 in order to fully incorporate additional science and analyses. If adopted, the Joint Alternative Gear-Marking Framework would not only undermine the TRT process and confuse fishery stakeholders, but it would also defy the explicit will of Congress.

Additionally, it appears to me that this Framework pushes the lobster fishery into utilizing ropeless or on-demand fishing gear despite the lack of reliable testing of this technology and potential risks to crew safety. There are also numerous outstanding issues raised by fishermen regarding gear reliability and the potential for conflicts between the lobster industry and other fisheries that will not use this same gear but occupy the same waters. The technology does not yet exist to enable interoperability between the various manufacturers of these ropeless systems, and the excessive replacement costs that small operators would incur to replace lost equipment have yet to be addressed. In an industry already struggling with narrow financial margins and regulatory uncertainty, these are not trivial concerns. Absent more robust testing and input from fishing stakeholders, adopting the Framework could put thousands of fishermen out of business and destroy the communities along Maine's coast whose economies depend on a viable fishery.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject the Joint Alternative Gear-Marking Framework and instead adopt Alternative 1A. Doing so will ensure that the NEFMC is adhering to congressional intent and reassure the fishing industry that you will pursue an approach that is grounded in sound science and the lived realities of those whose livelihoods would be most impacted.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared F. Golden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jared F. Golden  
Member of Congress