



AHOI in southwest Newfoundland, tracking and tackling ghost gear left in the wake of Hurricane Fiona

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Norris Point, NL, Nov 29, 2022 - [Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative \(AHOI\)](http://www.ahoi.ca) is on the southwest coast of Newfoundland collecting, auditing and mapping ghost gear in the coastal and inshore fishing areas hit by Hurricane Fiona. The displaced fishing gear, or “ghost gear” was dislodged by the record-breaking storm in September. Since then, debris, including rope, nets, and other fishing gear have been littering the shore. AHOI Wastebusters retrieved 4240 lbs of ghost gear in the first 4 days of helping and another 2044 lbs this week!

AHOI partnered with [Tour Gros Morne \(TGM\)](#) and received funding from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to carry out this work until March 2023. Working with other organizations, AHOI hopes to collect 10,000 lbs of fishing gear from Port aux Basque to Rose Blanche, NL.

“We are blown away by how much we’ve collected in the Diamond Cove area alone” says Ian Stone, co-owner of TGM and team lead for the AHOI cleanup crew. Being on the ground and seeing how massive and entangled the debris is, we know it’s just the tip of the iceberg.”

The gear consists of thousands of pounds of fishing rope, trawls, traps, and pots that were stored for the winter in fishing sheds along the coast. They were scooped up and scattered by storm surges generated from category-2 hurricane strength winds.

“When things like nets and rope are loose in the environment, they continue to damage and devastate marine species and terrestrial life, long after the storm is over. Our friends at [Clean Harbours Initiative](#) have even pulled up gear in the harbours of Burnt Islands and Rose Blanche, NL with lobsters completely entangled which they’ve had to cut free to survive. We have seen fishing sheds wiped from the coast, piles of fishing rope, along with anchors, engines, fishing tubs and fishing hooks scattered on the shores that fish harvesters need for the spring.” says Stone.

Whatever gear can be salvaged and retraced is going back to the harvesters who own it. The rest will be upcycled, recycled, or reused in innovative ways, rather than

going straight to landfill. AHOI will work with interested artisans, businesses, and municipalities to see as much of the material used as possible, making this a circular effort, which AHOI is known to promote.

"We couldn't just sit at home knowing we could help. Our mandate is to look after the coastal communities in NL and the oceans we all depend on. So, helping our neighbors on the southwest coast after homes, lives and livelihoods were literally upended was a no-brainer. Also, as the only designated [blue community](#) in the province, we committed to taking local actions that reduce plastic pollution, support sustainable communities, and inspire and create change that sees benefits on a global scale. So, collecting this material before it does further damage to the marine habitat and fisheries was a must." says AHOI founder, Rebecca Brushett.

All the gear collected will be counted, weighed and audited, which is something [AHOI has been doing on the west coast for years](#). AHOI will conduct research to identify where the gear originated from and ways that coastal communities and fish harvesters can reduce the chances of losing gear in future events. AHOI will also use its [Remote Operated Vehicle \(ROV\)](#) and Tour Gros Morne's aerial drone to document lost fishing gear on shores and deep in the harbours for retrieval. The information collected will be mapped and go into a report to be shared with DFO, fish harvesters, municipalities, researchers, and the public.

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BACKGROUND

[Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative](#) is a registered non-profit organization formed in 2019. It aims to raise awareness of our changing ocean and facilitate actions to protect it and communities that depend on it most. AHOI works with local businesses, universities, government agencies and others, to create innovative programs that support the health of our oceans, while working towards a more resilient and sustainable blue economy. AHOI is a champion in cleaning our shores, collecting 5,941.4lbs of marine pollution from 24.25km of coastline in the Gros Morne region since 2019. It has partnered

with Gros Morne National Park, Memorial University of Newfoundland, municipalities, businesses, and other organizations to introduce and implement circular, sustainable practices that benefit the ocean and the communities and economies that surround it. AHOI and the Gros Morne Region were [designated one of Plastic Oceans' BlueCommunities](#), the first in the province and the fifth in all of Canada!

[Tour Gros Morne](#) (TGM) is an award-winning tourism company in Norris Point, NL, that combines adventure, culture and cuisine into high-quality tours. It offers everything from hiking to cultural workshops to progressive food tours. All of the tours are guided by the company's [Sustainable Tourism Promise](#), which recognizes the need to care for the places they visit - the environment, the culture and the people connected to it. TGM's experiences offer low carbon transportation options, locally sourced and sustainable food that generates almost zero plastic waste, and uses only reusable food and drink containers, to reduce its plastics dependency and carbon footprint.