

# **On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group**

**New England Fishery Management Council**

**August 26, 2025**

**Wakefield, MA and Webinar**



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Fishery Management Council

# Introductions

**Michael Pierdinock** (NEFMC; Chair)  
**Ted Platz** (NEFMC; Vice-Chair)  
**Terry Alexander** (Mobile Gear/Gillnet)  
**Spencer Bode** (Mobile Gear)  
**Erica Fuller** (Conservation Law Foundation)  
**Jennifer Goebel** (GARFO Protected Resources)  
**Sonny Gwin** (MAFMC; Gillnet)  
**Toni Kerns** (ASMFC)  
**Henry Milliken** (NEFSC)

**Drew Minkiewicz** (Blackpoint Law)  
**Kenneth Murgo** (Trap/Pot)  
**Allison Murphy** (GARFO Sustainable Fisheries)  
**Scott Olszewski** (NEFMC)  
**Marc Palombo** (Lobster)  
**Ross Pearsall** (Recreational)  
**Sam Rosen** (Lobster)  
**Wes Townsend** (MAFMC; Pot/Trap/Gillnet)  
**Erin Wilkinson** (ME DMR)  
**Renee Zobel** (NEFMC)

# ODWG Work Plan: 2025

2025 Priority	Jan – Mar	Apr – Jun	July – Sept	Oct – Dec
Joint action with MAFMC and GARFO to revise gear marking regulations across FMPs	FMAT/PDT Forms; FMAT/PDT meets	MAFMC discusses FW; NEFMC initiates FW; FMAT/PDT meets	ODWG Receives update (July, August); public input session (August)  Anticipated final action: September (NEFMC), October (MAFMC)	
WG report on gear conflict solutions for lobster/Jonah crab, gillnet, and other trap/pot fisheries	ODWG develops 2025 work plan	ODWG continues work on TOR 3B report; draft/update presented to Council	Continue TOR 3B report work (August); Final report presented to Council (September)	
Continue work addressing TORs and refine TORs as needed	ODWG works to address TORs			

# NEFSC Update/Presentation



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# Joint Alternative Gear-Marking Framework



# ODWG Feedback to the Council

- Discuss each alternative, provide feedback
- Staff will summarize comments and provide to the Council in September

## ODWG Discussion: Alternative Set 1

- **Alternative 1A: No Action.** This alternative would not allow for alternative gear marking and would continue to require current surface markings (radar reflectors, highflyers, etc.).
- **Alternative 1B: Region-wide alternative gear marking.** would allow the use of alternative gear marking in all Federal waters within the Greater Atlantic Region.
- **Alternative 1C: Spatially and temporally limited alternative gear marking.** would allow alternative gear marking during and within persistent buoy line restricted areas established by the TRP.
- **Alternative 1D: Spatially limited alternative gear marking.** would allow alternative gear marking within persistent buoy line restricted areas established by the ALWTRP during closures and in the same geographical areas when closures are not in place.



## ODWG Discussion: Alternative Set 2

- **Alternative 2A: No Action.** This alternative would not require a person to demonstrate knowledge of how to mark gear with any approved gear-marking alternatives.
- **Alternative 2B: Letter of Authorization and Demonstration of Knowledge Requirement.** would require a person to obtain a Letter of Authorization documenting that they have demonstrated knowledge of how to mark gear with an approved gear-marking alternative.
- **Alternative 2C: Letter of Authorization Only.** would require a person to obtain a Letter of Authorization to use a gear-marking alternative but would not require the demonstration of knowledge to obtain the Letter of Authorization.



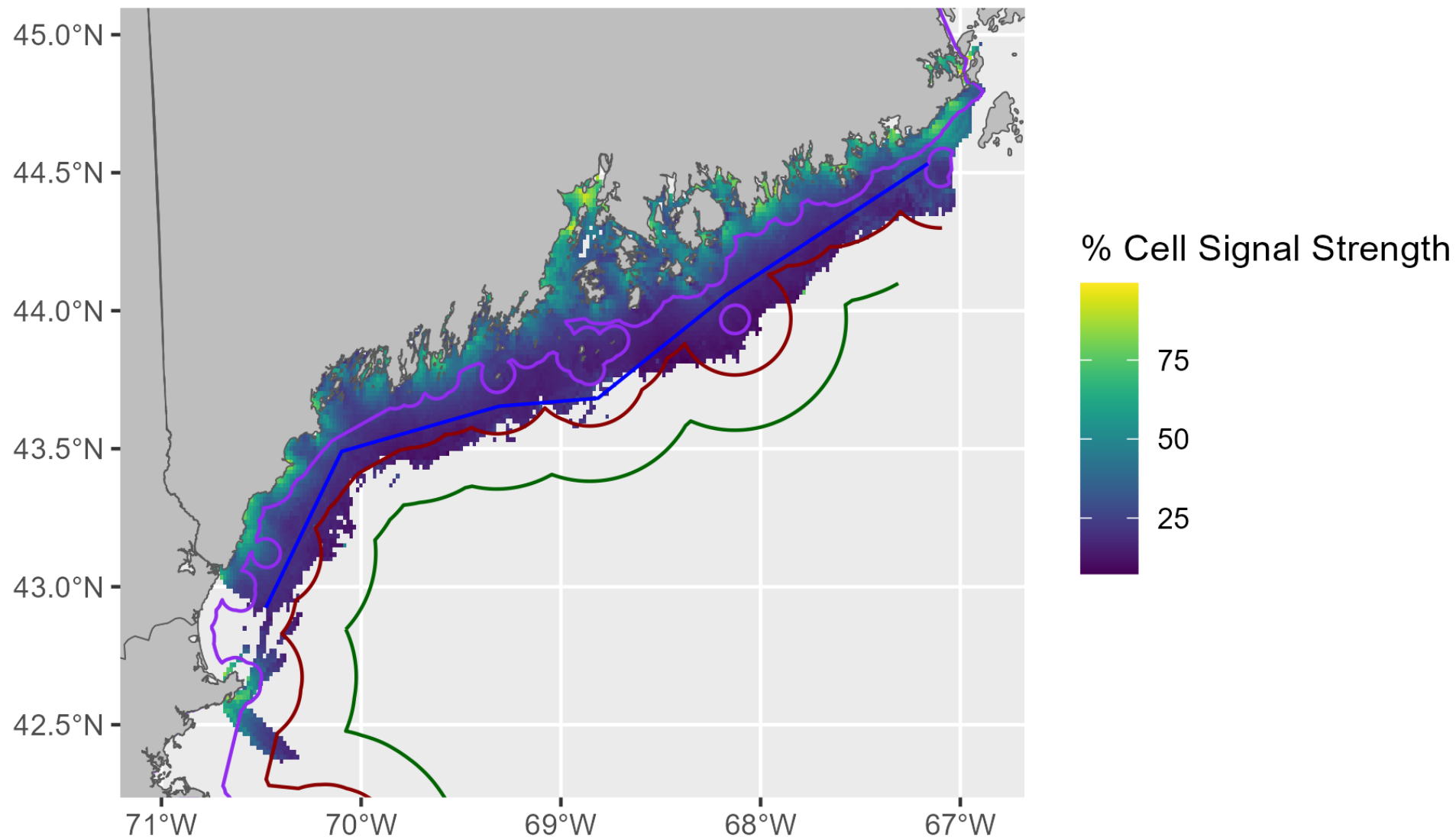
# TOR 3B Report Recommendations/ Discussion



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# Mean Cell Signal Strength from Particle TrackerOne systems using AT&T/T-Mobile/Verizon LTE Category M1

**Follow-up from July  
23 ODWG Meeting:  
Cell Phone Signal  
Strength Offshore**



Cell strength per 1 arc-minute square where 3 or more vessels reported, Jan 2024-Dec 2024.  
3NM line = purple, 6NM line = blue, 12NM line = dark red, 24NM line = green

# **Draft** Questions for Advisory Panels

- How much time and space is needed to maneuver vessels once gear is deployed? How quickly can vessels turn or otherwise adjust course to avoid other gear?
- How far out do vessels need to know the location of on-demand gear in order to avoid gear conflict? In other words, what would the ideal range of visibility be for on-demand gear locations displayed on a chart plotter?

*Possible recommendation to engage with the APs on this subject?*



## Possible ODWG Recommendations

**TOR 3b:** Develop recommendations on reducing gear interactions between on-demand gear used in the Northeast lobster and Jonah crab fisheries and other types of fishing gear (including the fixed gear, mobile gear, and recreational/charter fleets) in the form of a final report by fall 2025.

**Scope of Recommendations:** ODWG is making recommendations specific to **Council-managed fisheries** (fixed/mobile/recreational). Can also include more general comments re: on-demand gear landscape.

**Timing of Recommendations:** Current report would not preclude ODWG from making additional recommendations (if tasked) or Council from considering action in the future

# Pathways for ODWG Recommendations

- **Council Actions**

- **Now:** Council could develop measures to address gear conflict before potential widespread use of on-demand gear
  - Possibility of employing gear conflict amendment
  - Likely more general measures/recommendations
- **Future:** Council could follow gear conflict amendment process to react to specific instances of gear conflict
  - Could be more specific area/ issue-based measures

- **Non-regulatory measures**

- Recommendations for actions outside of fisheries regulations (ex. communication strategies)

- **Other**



# **DRAFT** Consensus Statement 1

“The ODWG is not supportive of implementing a new pre-trip notification for the purposes of reducing gear conflict **at this time.**”

## **Discussion from July 23<sup>rd</sup> ODWG Meeting**

- Using pre-trip notifications for this purpose isn't practical for scallop/groundfish fisheries
- May not add much benefit if a real-time gear location visualization system is in use
- Recreational vessels don't have VMS/PTNS requirements → would not receive pre-trip notification or geofence alerts



## **DRAFT** Consensus Statement 2

“At this time, the ODWG is not supportive of developing regulations **that would replace (codify?) existing** gentlemen’s agreements. This would allow fisheries to continue to operate as they have been with gentlemen’s agreements.”

### **Discussion from July 23<sup>rd</sup> ODWG Meeting**

- Vessels coming from other areas may not be aware of gentlemen’s agreements
- Existing agreements work well; hesitation to change current, effective strategy
- May be more practical in discrete areas
- NEFMC gear conflict amendment can be implemented if gentlemen’s agreements are no longer working

## **DRAFT** Consensus Statement 3

“The ODWG recommends the use of a universal (digital?) gear marking and detection system (that would display on-demand gear locations from all manufacturers?) to address on-demand fishing gear conflict.”

### **Discussion from July 23<sup>rd</sup> ODWG Meeting**

- “Universal gear marking”: system where vessels can see gear from multiple manufacturers on one platform/system
- Suggestion from the public to clarify language



# Past ODWG Discussion – add to recommendations or rationale?

- **Use of a universal gear marking and detection system**
  - Real time/close to real time on-demand gear locations
    - May be more or less necessary by area (high versus low gear density)
  - Available to all user groups (fixed, mobile, recreational fleets)
  - Specific visibility distance for various fleets?
    - Vessel maneuverability varies due to gear type/ weather conditions/ area/ etc
    - 5-mile proxy seems to be working for now
    - *Area for further industry input?*
  - Data sharing options?
    - Send limited data to each vessel based on location
    - Send all available data to all vessels (filtering onboard to only display gear in a certain range)
    - Area-based curation of data based on permit



# Questions & Discussion

***TOR 3b:*** Develop recommendations on reducing gear interactions between on-demand gear used in the Northeast lobster and Jonah crab fisheries and other types of fishing gear (including the fixed gear, mobile gear, and recreational/charter fleets) in the form of a final report by fall 2025.



# **Review Draft TOR 3B Report**



# Next Steps

- Reviewing/Finalizing TOR 3B Report: via correspondence
- Final TOR 3B Report to Council: September Council meeting



# Upcoming Meetings

- AP Meetings: Alternative Gear-Marking Framework presentations/discussion
  - Groundfish: [September 3](#)
  - Scallop: [September 12](#)
  - Monkfish/Skate: [September 16](#)
- Alternative Gear-Marking PDT/FMAT: [September 11, 10-12 pm](#)
- NEFMC Meeting (ODWG Report, Alt Gear-Marking FW): [September 23-25](#)
  - Gloucester, MA and Webinar
  - **ODWG Agenda Item: Thursday, September 25, 9 am**
- MAFMC Meeting (Alt Gear-Marking FW): [October 7-9](#), Philadelphia, PA and Webinar
- Ropeless Consortium: [October 20-21](#); New Bedford, MA and Webinar
  - [Registration information](#), [2024 meeting report](#)

# Other Business



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# Joint Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Public Engagement Session 4 – 6 pm

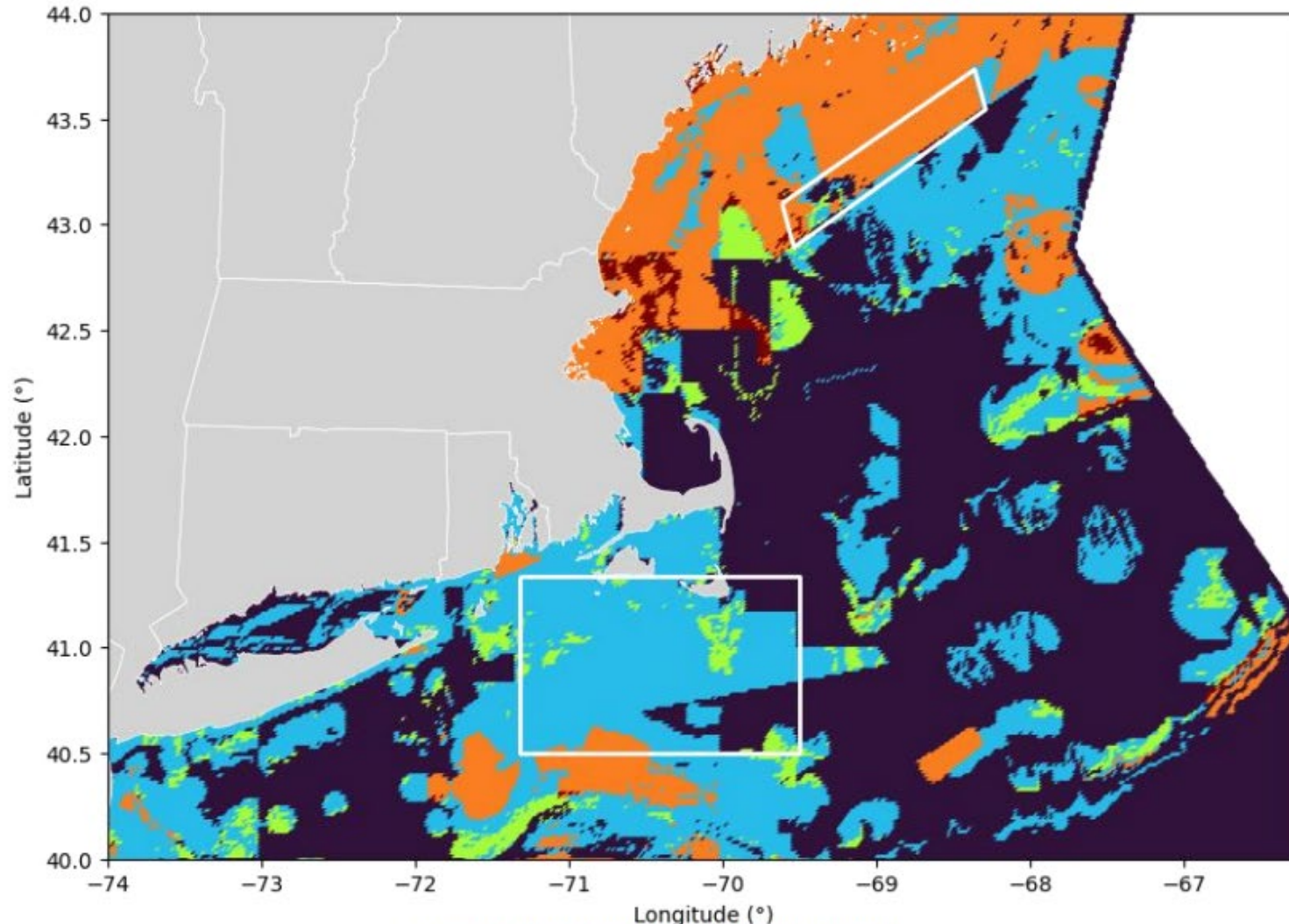


# Additional Slides



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## MITRE Restricted Area Gear Conflict Risk Map – as presented at 4/29 ODWG Meeting



- Used locational fixed-gear density (data support tool fixed gear layer); mobile fishing operations (VMS)
- 2019-2021 data, combined for average activity within 3 months of spring fishing season

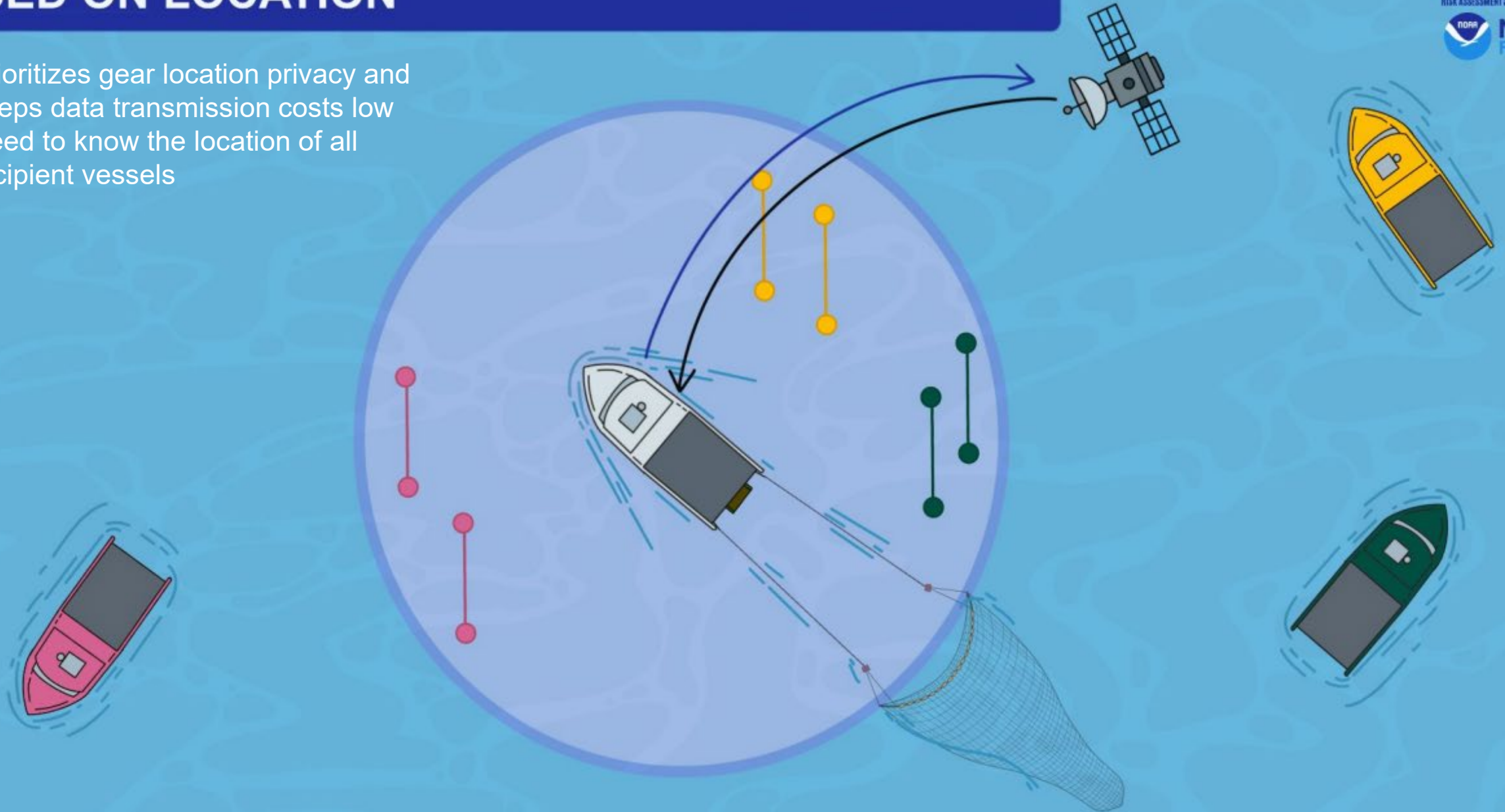


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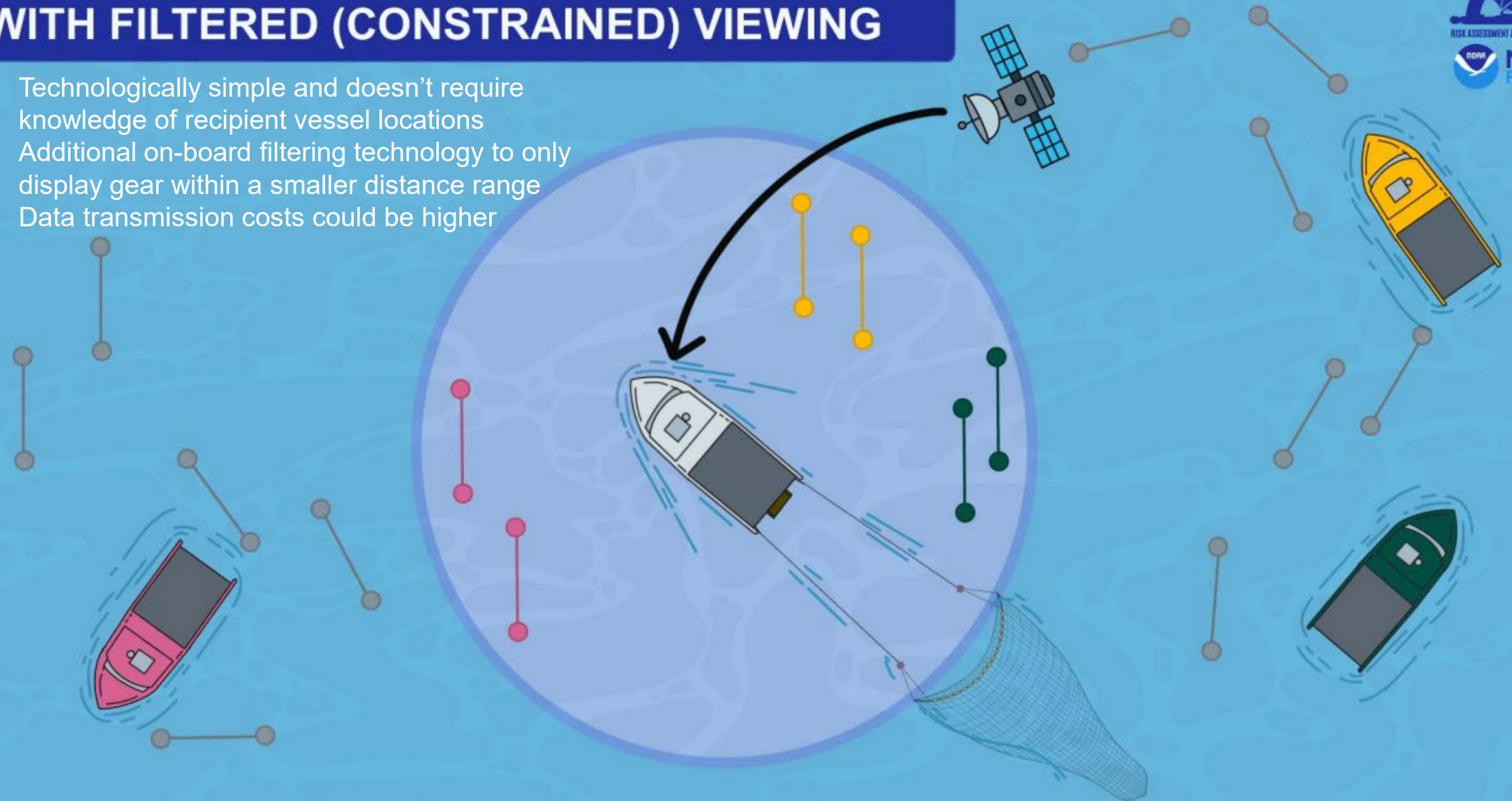
# OPTION 1: SEND LIMITED DATA TO EACH VESSEL BASED ON LOCATION

- Prioritizes gear location privacy and keeps data transmission costs low
- Need to know the location of all recipient vessels



## OPTION 2: SEND ALL DATA TO ALL VESSELS WITH FILTERED (CONSTRAINED) VIEWING

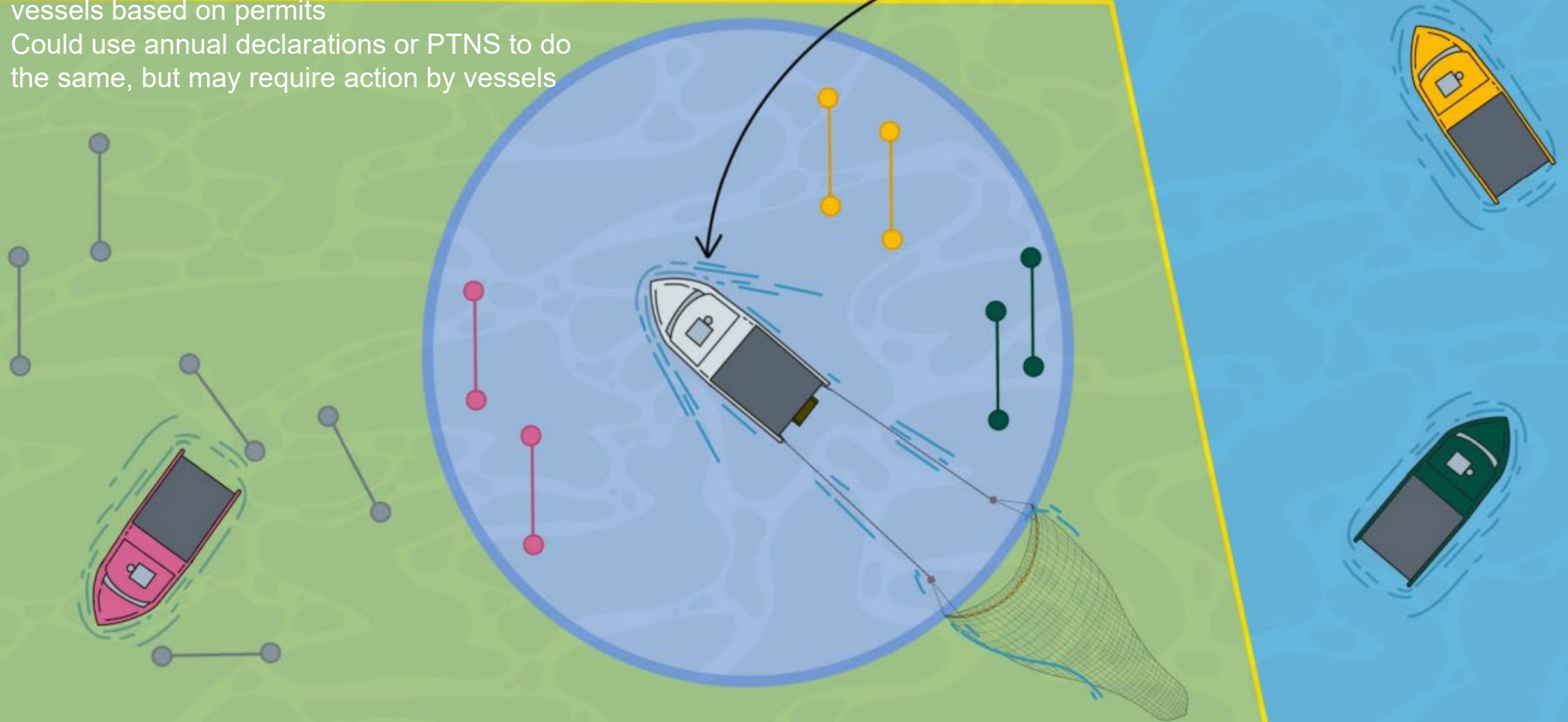
- Technologically simple and doesn't require knowledge of recipient vessel locations
- Additional on-board filtering technology to only display gear within a smaller distance range
- Data transmission costs could be higher





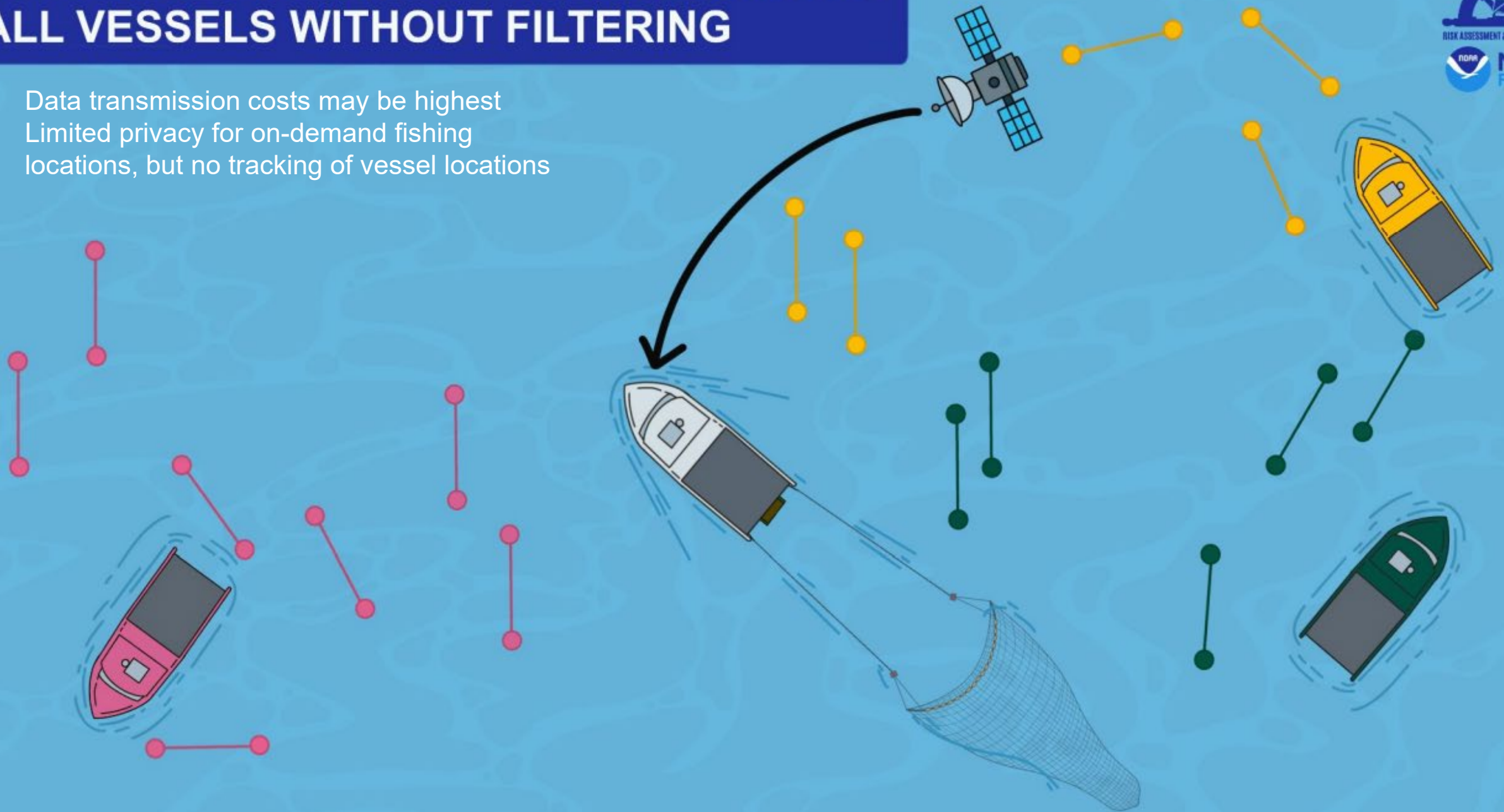
# OPTION 3: AREA-BASED CURATION OF DATA BASED ON PERMIT

- Send geographically specific information to vessels based on permits
- Could use annual declarations or PTNS to do the same, but may require action by vessels



# OPTION 4: SEND ALL AVAILABLE DATA TO ALL VESSELS WITHOUT FILTERING

- Data transmission costs may be highest
- Limited privacy for on-demand fishing locations, but no tracking of vessel locations





# NEFMC Gear Conflict Amendment



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# Framework Process



# NEFMC Gear Conflict Amendment

## **Scallops, Northeast Multispecies, Herring, Monkfish FMPs**

### **Framework Measures to address gear conflict:**

- 1) Mandatory monitoring of a radio channel by fishing vessels
- 2) Fixed gear location reporting and plotting requirements
- 3) Standards of operation when gear conflicts occur
- 4) Fixed gear marking and setting practices
- 5) Gear restrictions for specific areas (including time and area closures)
- 6) Vessel monitoring systems
- 7) Restrictions on the number of fishing vessels or amount of gear
- 8) Special permit conditions

These measures can be developed/added to designated FMPs via a framework adjustment.



# 1) Mandatory monitoring of a radio channel by fishing vessels

- Vessels fishing in a gear conflict management area would be required to continuously monitor a certain radio channel
- Violation: if vessels fishing in a gear conflict management area could not be raised on the radio channel
- Could presume that other vessels in the gear management area are aware of gear locations

*Potential Applications:* Alert vessels to on-demand gear presence in a gear management area via radio broadcast

## 2) Gear location reporting by fixed gear fishermen; mandatory plotting by mobile gear fishermen

- Fixed gear vessels would mark gear locations and provide notification of locations to mobile gear vessels working in specified areas
- Mobile vessels wanting to fish in an area would provide notification of intent; fixed gear locations would be provided for mobile vessels to plot/ note in vessel log
- Violations:
  - Fixed gear vessels that do not report gear locations
  - Mobile gear vessels that do not record reported locations of fixed gear
- Technology to make fixed gear marking/ making gear locations available via apps/chartplotter is in development/ available



### 3) Standards of operation when gear conflict occurs

- Develop protocols for release or retention of entangled gear
  - Example: When disentangling another vessel's gear, it should be removed in a way that minimizes damage to the major components of the gear. For example, it might be acceptable to cut the groundline to remove the tangled gear, but it should be re-tied once it is returned to the water.
- Current protocol for NEFSC EFP: if vessels accidentally tow up an on-demand unit, they are asked to retain the unit and alert the NEFSC Gear Research Team

*Potential Applications:* Would help answer the question of what happens if on-demand gear is accidentally towed up



## 4) Fixed gear marking and setting practices

- Council could adjust:
  - Fixed gear marking requirements – add/ change markers, require certain spacing of markers
  - Length of gear – limit amount of area taken up by fixed gear
  - Deployment – could require setting in certain directions/along specific bottom contours. Mobile gear fishermen could be required to fish within defined lanes through gear management area
  - Monitoring of fixed gear
- Could be used to implement more formalized “gentleman’s agreements”; different strategies for different areas

## 5) Gear restrictions for specific areas (including time and area closures)

- Fishing areas would be set aside for specified periods to allow access by one or more gears
  - Separation buffers – establish boundaries around adjacent gear management areas where fishing is prohibited
  - Consider ways to reduce gear conflict during transition times



## 6) Vessel monitoring systems

- Any vessel fishing within a gear conflict management area would be required to have functioning VMS onboard
- Would allow vessels to report and receive fixed gear locations
- Could be used to monitor location of vessels and fixed gear locations; potential enforcement applications?



## 7) Restrictions on the maximum number of fishing vessels

- Could set a ceiling on the amount of fixed gear and trawling activity in a gear management area to control density of fishing effort
- Based on physical factors of area (amount of trawlable bottom, area available for setting fixed gear, strength of prevailing tidal currents)

## 8) Special permitting conditions

- Add special conditions or industry agreements as part of a vessel's permit; would be applied if a vessel was fishing in a gear conflict management area
- NMFS would distribute industry-based agreements and require fishermen to acknowledge receipts of agreements/conditions before the vessel could fish within affected area
  - Potential for a training requirement/educational component to be a special permit condition?