

Ghost Gear Wrangling - Working with California Fishing Fleets to Prevent Whale Entanglements

Bren Environmental Leadership Program



The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a global environmental nonprofit working to create a world where both people and nature can thrive. In California, TNC is tackling the dual threats of accelerated climate change and unprecedented biodiversity loss. Science determines where we focus and equity guides how we achieve lasting results. Grounded by decades of local on-the-ground experience, we maximize our ability to affect change by bringing together real-world solutions, policy expertise, sustainable financing and collaborative partnerships.

Lethal entanglement in fishing gear is a leading cause of human-caused whale mortality worldwide. The U.S. West Coast is on the frontlines of this issue as climate change shifts whale migration and fishing season patterns, increasing overlap and risk. Lost fishing gear is suspected to be a major contributor to whale entanglements, with most incidents occurring outside the fishing season. TNC is committed to supporting both thriving whale populations and sustainable fisheries, and since 2015, TNC and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA) have collaborated with the Dungeness crab fishery to pioneer lost gear recovery efforts to reduce entanglement risk to whales and sea turtles. Building on this foundation, we are working with partners to expand and enhance lost gear recovery efforts through innovative technologies, industry partnerships, and community outreach.

The BEL graduate fellow will work alongside TNC and PCFFA staff to:

- Develop training materials to support scaling lost gear programs in ports across the state and enhance use of TNC apps to catalyze gear recovery.
- Synthesize data and reports on lost gear recovery efforts to date and develop communication materials to share findings with key stakeholders.
- Collect and analyze user feedback on TNC lost gear apps to support development.
- Create outreach materials, such as communication resources and social media content, to raise awareness about the lost gear recovery initiative among different maritime user groups.
- Develop a long-term plan for lost gear recovery across the state including financial analysis, policy recommendations, and community outreach.

Qualifications

- Strong interest in ocean conservation, fisheries management, and marine policy.
- Excellent communication and outreach skills, with the ability to engage diverse stakeholders.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively within a team.
- Strong organizational skills and attention to detail.
- Experience with data collection and synthesis.
- Experience with or interest in developing public outreach and communications materials.
- Interest in mentoring an undergraduate student working on the project.
- Familiarity with GIS, app development, or marine technology is a plus but not required.

Details

The position is 10 weeks, 35 hours per week, with exact dates flexible between late June to mid-September. This internship is (fully remote, in person or hybrid). The student will receive a \$8500 stipend. This position is part of the Bren Environmental Leadership Program – the student will attend mentoring and leadership training during Spring Quarter and mentor an undergraduate student working on the project throughout the summer.

How to Apply

Please submit applications [here](#) by **February 28, 2025**. Applications should include:

- *A brief statement (1-3 paragraphs) or cover letter describing why you are interested in this project and how your previous experience and qualifications make you a good fit for the position. We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment and supporting diverse students in Environmental Science, including those from underrepresented, low-income, and first-generation college backgrounds, and those active in DEI, environmental justice, or social justice. We welcome insights into how your experiences or perspective might shape your contribution to the BEL community.*
- *A resume or CV, including any relevant coursework and previous experience*

Interview and Selection Process: *Approximately two weeks after the submission deadline, applicants selected for interviews will be notified by email. Though only some students will be selected for interviews, all applicants will be notified of the status of their application when the interview/selection process is complete (approximately 3-4 weeks after application deadline).*