

# Net Free Seas Handbook

## For artisanal fishing communities



Produced by



Funded by



## Project information

The Net Free Seas project (NFS) was started in 2020 by the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF). EJF is an international non-profit organisation working globally to protect natural environments and the human rights of people who depend on them. The Net Free Seas project is funded by the Norwegian Retailers' Environment Fund (NREF) and the Rufford Foundation. This version of the handbook was first released in 2023.

## Project objectives

- 1) To collect abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gears from the environment.
- 2) To create incentives for fishing communities to collect and clean abandoned fishing nets for recycling.
- 3) To generate additional financial revenue for participating communities to act as supplementary incomes or community reserve funds.
- 4) To promote a circular economy approach to tackling abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gears.

## The Net Free Seas project

Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) poses a significant threat to marine lives and ecosystems. The World Animal Protection estimates that more than 136,000 sea lions and whales are killed by fishing gears each year. These nets also injure birds, turtles, and fishes when they get entangled. EJF established the Net Free Seas Project to begin tackling this critical issue in Thailand.

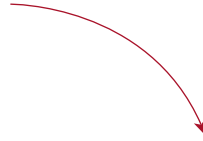
The NFS project aims to encourage artisanal fishing communities to participate in the elimination of plastic waste, especially fishing gears, within their communities and natural environments through recycling. At present, EJF is working with artisanal fishing communities across 12 different coastal provinces. From 2019 to 2022, over 60 tons of fishing nets and ropes were collected with over USD\$20,000 generated in revenue for participating communities. These nets have been recycled into a wide variety of products including face shields, push sticks, drinks coasters, wall clocks, bottle openers, and more.

## How does it work?

The NFS project is designed around a community participation approach. This allows the project to be adaptable, flexible and scalable according to community needs. The project facilitates direct engagement and communication between fishing communities and recyclers, ensuring project efficiency, transparency and sustainability:



1. The fishers help to accumulate and clean used fishing nets and ropes and sell them to their respective project coordinators.



2. Fishing nets and ropes are stored at each community centre and transported to the recycling facilities.



3. Recyclers transform fishing nets and ropes into plastic pellets which are then used as the raw materials to produce a wide range of products made from recycled material.



## Products from collected fishing nets

The fishing nets and ropes collected via the NFS project have been recycled into wide range of products. The project collaborates with Qualy – a Thai design company - to design and manufacture household designer products such as drinks coasters, wall clocks, storage units as well as tools designed to prevent the spread of Covid-19.



## How to participate in this program?

The Net Free Seas project is eager to work with fishers and artisanal fishing communities all across the country. Participation can allow communities affected by ALDFG waste to protect their natural environment through the cleaning, collection, and recycling of fishing gear waste whilst generating tangible financial benefits from the collection and sale of these nets.



## How to enrol in the project

1.



Contact the Net Free Seas Project Officer through Line ID: nfsproject or call 092-917-5500

2.



Appoint at least two community representative coordinators who will be responsible for overseeing the procurement and bookkeeping of the community's fishing gears.

3.



Set up a storage area where members can accumulate nets and ropes - ideal locations are easily accessible to members but provide a secure structure that will prevent fishing nets and ropes from leaking into the natural environment.

4.



Coordinators work with community representatives to collect fishing nets and ropes from members and transport them to recycling facilities.

5.



NFS Project officers are available to support the design of bookkeeping systems and facilitate the transportation of fishing nets and ropes to recycling facilities.

6.



NFS Project officers can support net cleaning and storage training for communities to ensure they are ready for recycling.

7.



Community coordinators may liaise with NFS Project officers about the frequency of net collection based on seasonal availability of material or other concerns.

8.



As the project progresses, community coordinators may contact recyclers directly without going through NFS Project Officers. Regular monitoring and assistance will be conducted and provided as needed.



At this time, the project primarily accepts fishing nets made of Polyamide (PA6) or nylon, high-density polyethylene (HDPE), and Polypropylene or PP also known as ‘Yai Yak’ ropes. For more information, please scan the QR code below.

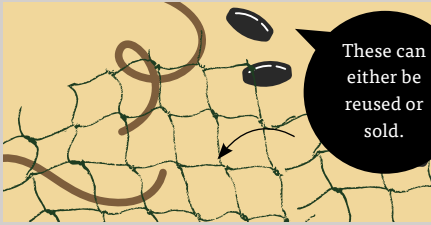


NFS Project officers can be contacted via LINE or by phone if you have any questions about the types of nets and ropes accepted by the project.

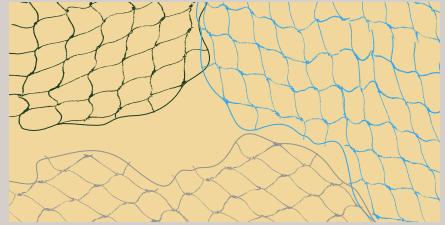
## How to clean fishing nets and ropes

Recyclable fishing nets and ropes must be cleaned and dried before delivery. Appropriately prepared and cleaned gears improve the quality of the recycled plastic pellets and may fetch a higher price.

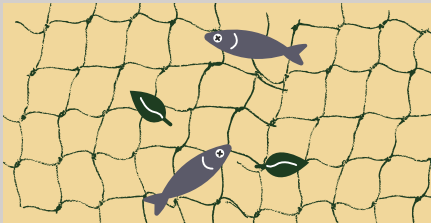
### Tips on how to clean fishing nets and ropes



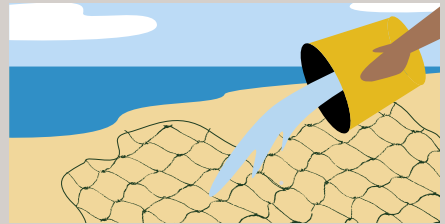
1. Remove metal weights and buoy.



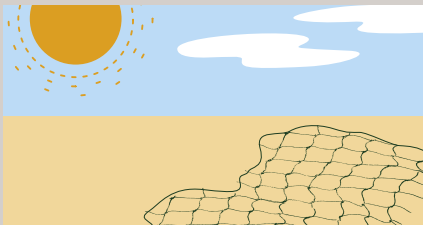
2. Separate the ropes and nets according to each plastic type. The project only accepts plastic from fishing ropes and nets.



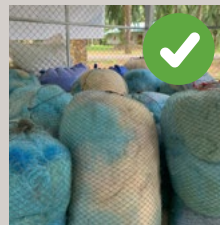
3. Remove any aquatic animals, twigs, leaves, shells, rubbish or other debris from nets and ropes.



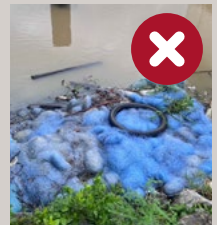
4. Rinse them again with clean water as thoroughly as possible. The project discourages the use of chemicals to clean nets and ropes as this may cause harm to you and the environment.



5. Finally, store the nets in a dry, secure place to prevent nets from becoming wet or from leaking into the natural environment.



Correct storage method

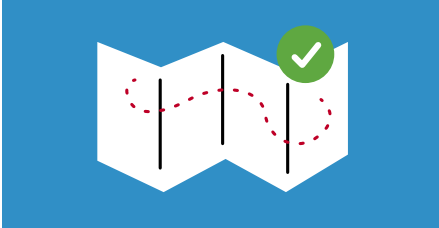


Incorrect storage method

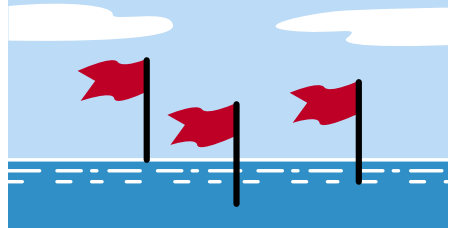


## How to prevent fishing gears from entering the sea

The easiest way to prevent fishing gear debris from damaging marine ecosystems is to stop them from entering the sea or removing them from the sea as quickly as possible. Listed below are a range of methods for fishers to reduce fishing gear debris whilst at sea:



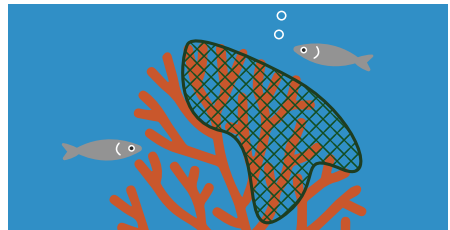
1. Locate the nearby coral reef areas by checking with the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources or the Department of Fisheries and aim to stay away from these sites to reduce net entanglement.



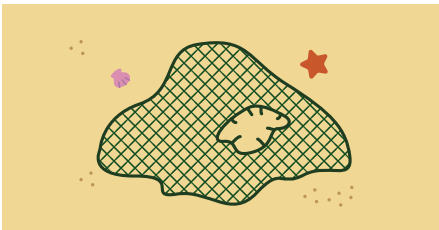
2. Work with other fishers to mark or flag the locations of underwater rocks or areas where fishing gear may become stuck or damaged.



3. If you come across lost fishing gears, try to collect these (safely) and submit them to the Net Free Seas project for further recycling.



4. If fishing gear debris is found in a location that is difficult to recover, such as on a coral reef, mark its location and notify the Net Free Seas project via LINE or phone.



5. If your fishing gears are damaged, old, and in need of repair offshore, do not throw defective gears into the sea.



6. When repairing fishing gear on shore, choose a place where the nets will not be blown back into the sea by waves or wind.

## Guidelines for participation in the NFS project



Participating communities must strictly comply with environmental and human rights standards set by EJF. EJF reserves the right to immediately cease community participation if these conditions are violated.

### Environment

- Fishing nets, ropes, and other types of plastic must not be disposed of by burning, as the dust and smoke produced from burning plastics are extremely harmful to public health and the environment.
- Avoid using hazardous chemicals to clean fishing gear as these chemicals may contaminate the environment, harm animals, and contaminate water sources. EJF recommends that communities use seawater, clean water, or rainwater to clean fishing gears. If you need more information, please refer to the ‘Tips on how to clean fishing nets and ropes’ section on page 8 or contact project officers.

### Human and labour rights

EJF has a strict anti-child labour policy as follows:

- EJF strictly prohibits any form of child labour under the age of 18 in all activities carried out under the NFS project. EJF defines child labour in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards: Work that deprives children of their childhood and other harmful acts that affect their health,

morals, or mental state.

- However, EJF supports youth's participation in environmental conservation and makes allowances for internships and/or trainings that strengthen skills and knowledge in plastic waste management within participating communities. In this case, youth involvement requires:
  - ▶ An activity or function supervised by an adult in the community.
  - ▶ An activity that does not interfere with school attendance or access to the youth's basic education.
  - ▶ That this is not an activity that has long working hours and is not continuous or carried out at night.
  - ▶ No usage of chemicals or tools/ machines that could cause harm to the user.

## Contracted work and fees

- The NFS project sets a standard and transparent purchase price for each type of fishing gear. To combat fraud, EJF reserves the right to review trading practices without prior notice.
- Persons contracted under the NFS project must be paid at least the minimum wage of each province set by the Ministry of Labour. The information on the minimum wage for each province can be found at <https://www.mol.go.th/อัตราค่าจ้างขั้นต่ำ/>
- Working hours must not exceed 8 hours per day, and workers must have at least 1 hour of rest per working day.
- EJF encourages the use of personal protective equipment (i.e. gloves) during working hours to ensure safety and prevent injury when cutting, storing, and transporting fishing nets and ropes.

## Code of Conduct

EJF opposes all discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other protected characteristics. We have strict policies against harassment, bullying and any other form of intimidation. If anyone involved with NFS project has any concerns about the conduct of any staff or partners, please contact [info@ejfoundation.org](mailto:info@ejfoundation.org).



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Protecting People and Planet

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Norwegian Retailers'  
Environment Fund



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If you would like to learn more about the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) or the Net Free Seas project, you can visit our website or Facebook page according to the information below.

-  [ejfoundation.org](http://ejfoundation.org)
-  [facebook.com/EJFThailand](https://facebook.com/EJFThailand)
-  [nfs@ejfoundation.org](mailto:nfs@ejfoundation.org)
-  [nfsproject](#)

