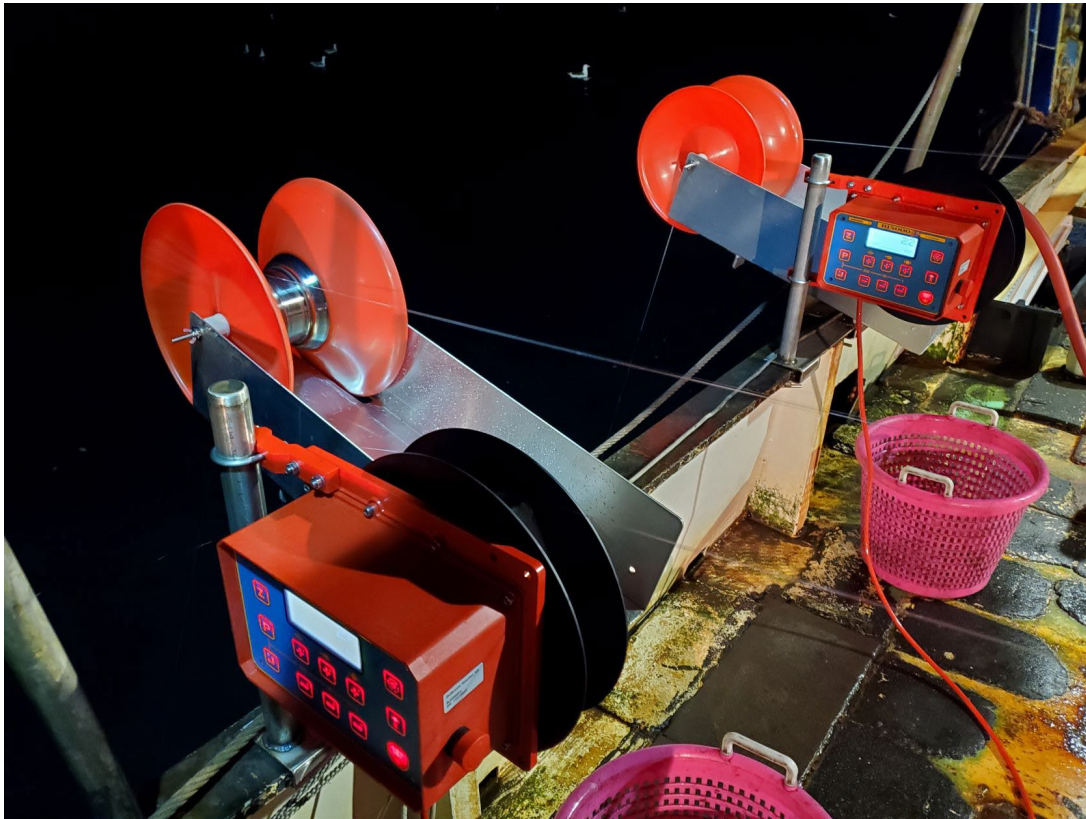


## Piloting a Low-Bycatch Commercial Squid Jig Fishery in Southern New England

The Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation, in collaboration with the Town Dock and local fishermen, have been investigating the potential use of automatic squid jigging equipment in the commercial longfin squid fishery in southern New England. There has long been interest in attempting to use automatic jigging machines to allow vessels to fish through the night and in areas not open to trawl gear, its relatively low operational costs, and virtually zero bycatch.

The project team worked closely with trawlers home ported in Point Judith, Rhode Island; a smaller, inshore, day-trip based vessel and two larger, offshore, multi-day, vessel. Vessels were retrofitted to create a platform to operate the machines and run the jigging lines. At-sea gear trials were started in the spring of 2021 and the project team completed 20 at-sea gear trial days through the fall of 2022. Although squid catch from the jigging machines was very low, the project team successfully overcome a steep learning curve to setting up and operating the jigs that will hopefully aid others in future. Further, the project has been successful in fostering substantial local interest to further investigate the effectiveness of automatic jigging machinery.



Automatic squid jigging machines deployed on a Rhode Island-based trawl vessel.