

Guidelines for Developing Derelict Trap Removal Programs in the Gulf of Mexico



Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

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**GUIDELINES FOR
DEVELOPING DERELICT TRAP REMOVAL PROGRAMS
IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**

**Developed by the
Derelict Trap Task Force**

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GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

Derelict Trap Task Force

Harriet M. Perry, *Chair*
University of Southern Mississippi
Gulf Coast Research Laboratory
P.O. Box 7000
Ocean Springs, MS 39566-7000

Vince Guillory
Louisiana Department of Wildlife &
Fisheries
P.O. Box 189
Bourg, LA 70343

Tom Wagner
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
702 Navigation Circle
Rockport, TX 78382

Artussee D. Morris
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
6300 Ocean Drive, Suite 2500
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Leslie Hartman
Alabama Department of Conservation
& Natural Resources
P.O. Drawer 189
Dauphin Island, AL 36528

Anne McMillen-Jackson
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation
Commission/Marine Research Institute
100 Eighth Avenue, SE
St. Petersburg, FL 33701-5095

Traci Floyd
Mississippi Department of Marine
Resources
1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101
Biloxi, MS 39530

Bob Fairbank
P.O. Box 4079
Gulfport, MS 39502

Mark W. LaSalle
Mississippi State University
Coastal Research and Extension Center
2710 Beach Boulevard, Suite 1E
Biloxi, MS 39531

Larry E. Young
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, TX 78744

Gary L. Graham
Texas A&M Marine Advisory Service
P.O. Box 710
Palacios, TX 77465

Robert Metz
P.O. Box 237
Lakeshore, MS 39558

Staff

Mr. Larry B. Simpson
Executive Director

Mr. Steven J. VanderKooy
IJF Program Coordinator

Mr. Jeffrey K. Rester
Habitat/SEAMAP
Coordinator

Mrs. Cynthia B. Yocom
IJF Staff Assistant

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Preface

The wire crab trap dramatically influenced the blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*) fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. Crab traps were introduced in Louisiana and Texas as early as 1948 and were widely accepted throughout the Gulf of Mexico by the middle 1950s. The total number of traps fished in the Gulf has continued to increase with increasing numbers of traps per fishermen. Although adoption of the crab trap has had a positive impact on fishing efficiency and harvest, proliferation of traps has resulted in user group conflicts and an increase in problems associated with lost or discarded (derelict) traps.

In October 2001, the State-Federal Fisheries Management Committee of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission formed the Derelict Trap Task Force to define state issues relevant to the derelict crab trap problem. This task force was comprised of representatives from the Crab and Habitat subcommittees, Law Enforcement Committee, Commercial/Recreational Fisheries Advisory Panel, and the Sea Grant Advisory Program. The task force was asked to assist states and/or other appropriate institutions in developing guidelines for derelict trap removal programs.

The efforts outlined in this guide can be used by agencies, organizations, or individuals that want to develop a program for trap removal or by an agency mandated to do so. These efforts can be accomplished by committees and subcommittees or by a single, dedicated individual.

This report outlines the various components necessary for implementing successful derelict trap removal programs and includes reviews of ongoing programs in the Gulf States. State program reviews relevant to trap disposal are included as appendices.

While the Derelict Trap Task Force has focused primarily on the problems associated with the wire blue crab trap in the Gulf of Mexico, many other trap fisheries can benefit from such a program. Recognizing that derelict traps are at issue in many regions of the coastal United States, this report attempts to provide program narrative which can be applied to any type of derelict trap (blue crab, stone crab, lobster, or fish). Likewise, the basic principles in this report are similar to other volunteer-based, debris cleanup programs and could also be applied to other debris activities.

I. Designate Lead Agency

A. Select Program Coordinator

A state or other institution should select a program coordinator to serve as director and point of contact for trap removal program activities. The coordinator will organize individuals to ensure that trap removal activities run efficiently. This person will be responsible for overseeing development of legislation (if needed), working with industry, solicitation of volunteers and donations, publicity, in-house and external logistics, data collection, and program review.

B. Identify Stakeholders

The lead agency will identify individuals and groups with an interest in establishing a program to remove derelict traps from coastal waters. These may include but are not limited to: commercial harvesters, recreational users, law enforcement, civic groups, state/federal agencies such as Sea Grant and Marine Extension Service, legislators, conservation groups, and land owners.

C. Select Planning Committee

A planning committee should be formed which includes representatives of the various stakeholders and the program coordinator. This committee will be responsible for the development of the removal plan.

II. Plan Program Publicity

Civic and conservation groups, print and audio media, state resource agency publications, Sea Grant outreach programs and newsletters, and presentations to interest groups are potential outlets for disseminating information defining the need for and scope of the problem as well as for generating participation. Public awareness of program goals should begin prior to plan development.

III. Develop Derelict Trap Removal Plan

The planning committee should coordinate with state and federal agencies, and state and local municipalities if it is necessary to gain access to restricted areas or wildlife refuges. Guidelines may need to be developed to allow transport of traps from or over private property.

A. Tasks

The planning committee is responsible for identification and delegation of tasks associated with the Derelict Trap Removal Plan. The following list has been compiled from existing removal programs and may need to be modified for individual states or sites.

1. Regulatory

a. Review Existing Regulations and Legislation

The planning committee and the state resource management agency should review state ordinances and statutes to determine whether agency or legislative authority is needed for a closure of the trap fishery and for non-owners to remove derelict traps.

b. Propose New Regulations and Legislation

New legislation or regulations may need to be introduced. Legal issues regarding traps as private property must be addressed in any new legislative or regulatory initiative. It may be necessary to define traps as 'litter' or 'debris' under public health safety codes to allow for removal and disposal by the public.

c. Determine Program Type

The planning committee should solicit input from industry and/or crab advisory committees regarding times, seasons, and methods of trap removal which would be least disruptive to the fishery. Seasonal or area closures may or may not be the most appropriate mechanism for removing derelict traps. Marine law enforcement staff should be consulted to ensure the legality of trap removal options.

2. Budget Development

The planning committee should develop a budget which identifies both actual and in-kind dollars, taking into consideration donated goods, services, and volunteer man-hours. Sources of funding need to be identified outside the state agency and donations solicited. Supplies that assist volunteers should either be budgeted or donated and include heavy-duty gloves, crab-pulling gaffs, tarpaulins, high-pressure washers, first aid kits, cutting shears, and refreshments such as water.

Budget codes should be implemented to track actual costs of the program (personnel time, vehicle mileage, boat hours and fuel, printing and publicity costs, supplies provided by agency or institution, etc.).

3. Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteers should be solicited from stakeholder organizations and the public at large. Presentations to local conservation/sportfishing groups will reach a large number of potential volunteers and can snowball into additional requests for presentations elsewhere. Volunteer contact information must be maintained as continued communication is critical to actual participation in the event.

Information on boat size and availability is essential to planning of water-based events. Shallow-draft vessels or air boats are helpful in marsh and nearshore waters. In large water bodies, a collecting vessel or barge anchored in a central location is useful.

4. Public Relations/Education

Pre-event publicity is essential to wide participation in the trap removal program. Supporting organizations, stakeholder groups, dignitaries, and media representatives should be asked to participate in outreach and educational activities at the event with interactive displays for the public and participants.

5. Volunteer Training

The program coordinator and members of the planning committee should meet with volunteer representatives for a program overview, discussion of specific tasks, and assignment of removal areas. A site coordinator from the lead agency should be assigned for each collection site to organize volunteer effort and ensure everything runs smoothly.

a. Assignment of Site Coordinator

On the morning of the event, at each pre-selected site, the planning committee or program coordinator should ensure that knowledgeable staff are onsite to orient volunteers. If any dignitaries have been invited to cleanup sites on the day of the event, the program coordinator should invite appropriate media and organize any speaking events with the site coordinator.

The site coordinator is responsible for all onsite activities and for reporting to the program coordinator and planning committee.

b. Onsite Activities

1) Safety and Release Form

It is recommended that agencies draft a release form to discourage lawsuits should injuries to volunteers occur. Orientation should begin with safety reminders including basic common sense guidelines on lifting and handling fouled traps, severe weather precautions, and emergency phone numbers. A cell phone number should be obtained for each vessel if possible. Coast Guard Auxiliary staff are helpful with communication between vessels and shoreline staff, and they can provide a direct line to the Coast Guard in case of emergency.

A basic first aid kit should be at each site.

2) Maps and Navigation

Navigational instructions to volunteers should be given, including locations of derelict trap concentrations as determined by pre-event aerial surveys, if available.

Laminated maps (for each collection site) and photocopies of trap concentrations (for distribution to volunteers) should be provided at the site and may be provided to volunteer groups prior to the event.

3) Distribution of Supplies

Supplies and goods should be distributed onsite during initial operation and may include:

work gloves	first aid kits
gaffs or hooks	tarpaulins
wire cutters	cutting shears
trash bags	bottled water
maps	
emergency phone and VHF radio information	

4) Data Collection Instructions

The site coordinator should review the data collection form with the volunteers. The need for accurate and complete information should be stressed. Questions should be encouraged prior to departure.

5) Physical Removal of Traps

Barges and large platform vessels provide efficient collecting stations for on-water transfer of traps. Oyster and barnacle-fouled traps and lines should be handled with caution. Flattening traps allows them to be stacked. Lines and floats should be removed; floats and lines in good condition may be recycled. However, styrofoam floats and polypropylene ropes are only recyclable under strict procedures by permitted recycling centers.

6) Volunteer Roster

The site coordinator should maintain records of volunteers. Sign-in sheets should be provided and volunteer information collected at the time supplies are distributed.

7) Completed Form Return

The site coordinator should assign site supervisors at each location to count incoming traps (using tally meters/clickers, if available) and to supervise collection of data sheets from the public. Site supervisors should quickly scan data sheets to make sure that necessary information is recorded and to resolve any questions that may arise concerning the information collected.

6. Disposal

Approval may be needed for temporary disposal of traps at onshore sites; city, county, navigation district, or private ramp owners may need to be contacted. Exhaust all means to recycle before traps are disposed in landfills. Early contact with recycling and landfill facilities helps ensure adequate trap disposal. If contacted early, recycling centers or landfills are often willing to reduce charges for landfill disposal, dumpster rental, dump truck hauling, manpower, etc.

A crushing apparatus at each site will reduce the volume of traps for disposal; cities, counties, or paving companies may be good sources for backhoes or other trap-smashing equipment. Plywood sheets can accomplish the same task with minimal expense.

Buoys and polypropylene rope may be illegal to burn or recycle; cutting shears are essential at collection sites to remove and dispose of rope and buoys.

7. Data Collection

a. Design Forms

The program coordinator and planning committee should work with the state management agency to determine the type of data collected and the design of the form. The forms should be simple to understand and define all relevant terms and procedures.

b. Data Components

Suggested data collection elements include:

- 1) location of trap – was trap on water or on land,
- 2) gear or buoy identification present,
- 3) trap usable or non-usable,
- 4) degradable panel present, and if so, open or closed,
- 5) escape vents present, and
- 6) bycatch (crabs, finfish, other, live or dead).

In addition, the form should provide for the identification of the individual or volunteer group, the number of people per boat, and the hours worked. Trained observers (biologists, graduate students, state agency staff) can ensure collected data is accurate.

B. Delegation of Tasks

The planning committee is responsible for delegation of the tasks identified above.

IV. Agency Program Review & Reporting

The program coordinator, with the help of the planning committee, should prepare a thorough report of all aspects of the trap removal program.

A summary document detailing total number of traps removed, volunteer numbers and hours (persons, vessels), type and value of donated goods, staff hours expended and agency costs, cost/benefit estimate, and analysis of data collected should be provided to participants and other interested parties. Recommendations for future removal program efforts should developed.

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Florida

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FLORIDA

HISTORY

At the end of each fishing season, fishermen are required to retrieve their lobster and/or crab traps. However, some traps are abandoned by fishermen through neglect, or are lost during a natural disaster or force of nature that moves them from their original vicinity of deployment. The Florida trap retrieval program was originally established in 1985 to remove traps left in the water and their use for illegal harvest during the closed season.

Section 370.143, Florida Statutes, authorizes the Commission to implement a trap retrieval program for retrieval of lobster and stone crab traps remaining in the water during the closed season for each species. Trap retrieval is typically conducted on an annual basis by Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) employees, contracted vendors and volunteers authorized by the Commission to handle traps in the absence of the trap owner. Those individuals not authorized to handle traps may be subject to penalties provided for trap molestation, trap theft or theft of the trap contents pursuant to Chapter 370, Florida Statutes. Florida law allows only the trap owner to retrieve a trap except for Commission employees and where the owner has a written agreement (filed with the Commission) with another fishermen to pull the gear.

“Trap retrieval” requires scheduling and completing each trip in a designated area, disposing of debris, and completion of work vouchers and Commission retrieval observation records. During a trap retrieval trip, an FWC observer records the area patrolled, the number of traps retrieved, and the crawfish or stone crab endorsement number indicated on each trap retrieved. All buoys, ropes, and plastics are removed from the traps and returned to shore for proper disposal at a county landfill. The disabled trap is disposed of at sea within specifically designated coordinates approved by the Commission. Plastic and wire traps are returned to shore for resale to the original owner or disposal in a landfill. Trap owners frequently do not purchase their retrieved wire or plastic traps.

In **1985**, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Florida Marine Patrol (FMP) was tasked with the responsibility for retrieval of traps remaining in the water at the close of season. FMP officers used Department vessels and pulled traps by hand. In 1993, DNR and the Department of Environmental Regulation merged to become the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The trap retrieval program then became the responsibility of the newly formed DEP.

In **1996**, the Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) and Office of Fisheries Management and Assistance Services (OFMAS), began managing the program and contracted with commercial fishermen to use their vessels and fishing capabilities to conduct trap retrieval. Retrieval evolved into a program allowing authorized fishermen and volunteers to participate and be reimbursed for the landfill fees and some fuel costs. FMP officer presence was always established aboard a vessel acting as an observer to document the required trap information for fee assessment. In both 1996 and 1997, approximately 3,500 traps were recovered. Prior to 1996, few records remain to document the number of traps recovered or the areas patrolled. Fees assessed and collected for retrieval of traps one year fund retrieval efforts in the following year.

In **1998**, following the Ground Hog Day Storm, shoreline trap debris was removed through an existing trap retrieval contract issued to Organized Fishermen of Florida (OFF), a commercial fishing organization. Through OFF, a group of volunteers retrieved traps by airboat from the Lower Keys and a second group of commercial fishermen retrieved traps from the Marquesas. Estimates for trap loss during the *Ground Hog Day Storm* suggest that less than 80,000 lobster traps and approximately 22,000 stone crab traps were destroyed, lost, or otherwise unrecovered by the fishermen in Monroe County. Many traps no longer had ropes and buoys attached or were washed onto flats and mangrove shorelines. Two 1.5-mile shorelines, Little Pine Key and No Name Key, were each estimated to have over 10,000 ropes and buoys on each shoreline. Staff from the Lower Keys Wildlife Refuges identified a third, 5-mile shoreline in the Marquesas Keys that contained an estimated 40,000 buoys.

In September 1998, Hurricane Georges caused severe damage in the Florida Keys and was closely followed by Tropical Storm Mitch in November 1998. Many fishermen had not completed their lobster trap loss assessments from Hurricane Georges and were not able to provide accurate estimates of trap loss further compounded by the destruction of Hurricane Mitch.

In **1999**, OFF and Monroe County Commercial Fishermen (MCCF) recognizing the necessity for trap retrieval as a source of cleanup and recovery from the various tragic storms occurring during 1998, combined their membership efforts to jointly oversee an extensive one day trap retrieval clean up. This combined effort resulted in the retrieval of approximately 9,000 traps and 15,000 pounds of debris from ropes and buoys.

In **2000**, employees from the DEP and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) joined efforts to contract with qualified captains of commercial fishing vessels, thru commercial fishing organizations, to conduct trap retrieval and shoreline debris removal. Federal Emergency Management Assistance (FEMA) funding was used to remove approximately 11,637 traps including 6,526 traps in less than five feet of water and 5,111 traps in five feet of water or more, which had potential for affecting human health and safety. The total number of buoys with line removed was 8,205.

In **2001**, volunteers participated in an authorized limited trap retrieval conducted in the areas of Long Key, Marathon, and the John Pennekamp State Park that resulted in nearly 500 traps retrieved.

Currently, fishermen are sub-contracted thru a contracted representative of a fishing organization and paid for each trap retrieved. FWC's office of Marine Fisheries Services and FMRI conducted trap retrieval in the summer of 2002 under a contractual agreement awarded jointly to OFF and MCCF. An on-site FWC employee coordinated retrieval activities. Generally, retrieval was limited to approximately 4,000 traps by a cap on program funding. Under the current program implementation, fishermen are paid per trap under a contract with OFF.

Basically FWC contracts with OFF to coordinate with MCCF to provide a workforce (fishermen with trap pulling vessels) and retrieve traps. FWC coordinates and establishes areas to be worked, observes effort, records traps retrieved and assesses retrieval fees accordingly.

Although the Trap Retrieval Program began to hinder illegal fishing activities, primarily in the Keys, recently it has begun to consider issues and concerns about the cumulative effect lost or abandoned traps and debris may have on important fishery habitat and species populations (any species that could access the traps) and expansion of the program into other areas of the state using different approaches to accomplish the goals of retrieving functional traps as well as trap debris is planned.

FUNDING

Pursuant to Section 370.143, Florida Statutes, a fee of \$10 per abandoned trap is assessed to the trap owner of each trap retrieved from waters during the closed season. These fees are deposited in the Marine Conservation Trust Fund and dedicated to the operation of the trap retrieval program. During the 2000 Florida legislative session, the fishing industry and fishery managers successfully established a fee for Stone Crab trap licenses and dedicated \$25 of each fee collected to cover the cost of trap cleanup. The \$25 also entitles the license holder to a retrieval fee "waiver" for 5 traps per license issued. Historically, the trap retrieval program has had a budget of approximately \$40,000. However, trap retrieval has been conducted only in the Florida Keys area and current funding is insufficient to support an expanded statewide trap retrieval program using the same approach.

Alabama

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Alabama's Pilot Derelict Crab Trap Clean-Up Effort: Summary Report B-1

Alabama's Pilot Derelict Crab Trap Clean-up Effort: Summary Report

Leslie D. Hartman

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division

Blue crabs have been caught in the Gulf of Mexico using predominantly wire mesh traps since the 1950s. Subsequent coastal population increases, and the increased number of both recreational and commercial trap numbers has become a concern. User conflict and problems with lost or abandoned traps are now a major issue in all Gulf States.

User conflict issues involve actively fished traps and lost or abandoned traps, frequently referred to as derelict traps. Active and derelict traps pose a navigational hazard, can damage equipment and create the potential for injury. The paramount environmental issue involves the proliferation of derelict traps in inshore waters. A precise definition of a derelict trap is one no longer actively maintained. Storm events, user conflict or, infrequently, abandonment create a preponderance of derelict traps resulting in bycatch mortality, and negatively impacting marine resources (Guillory, 2001).

A derelict trap continues to fish and will retain all sizes of blue crabs and bycatch resulting in a self-baiting cycle often referred to as ghost fishing. Fishing mortality associated with ghost fishing appears to be increasing as the commercial industry improves the structural integrity of their equipment (Carr and Harris, 1997; Guillory, 1996). The combination of more and sturdier traps is expected to increase duration and quantity of ghost fishing mortality.

Alabama currently harvests 98 - 99% of its blue crabs using crab traps with commercial crab fishermen reporting a loss rate of 20 – 50% annually. Competitive pressure has resulted in increased numbers of traps deployed. Resultant user group conflicts and bycatch mortality concerns led Alabama to initiate a derelict crab trap removal program. A detailed review of derelict traps and necessity for removal programs is presented by Guillory et al. (2001). This report provides an overview of Alabama's derelict removal pilot program.

Initiating the Derelict Clean-up Effort

Coastal population growth has increased user group interactions with crab traps. Letters, phone calls and newspaper editorials complain about the proliferation of traps in local waters. Proposed initiatives to reduce active traps involve the legislative process and the desire to fully involve the affected industry, while removal of derelict traps has historically been hampered by a lack of manpower. With input from all interested groups, Alabama defined the following problems: 1) derelict traps in shallow waters and on marsh edges 2) unseen derelict traps in deep waters and 3) legal restrictions on removing derelict traps.

A summer initiative was suggested to give the shrimping fleet the opportunity to lawfully remove derelict traps. Existing complaints indicated that the shrimp fleet caught numerous traps and the industry requested that disposal sites be provided. A component of the derelict program was designed to address this need and scheduled for the initial seven days of the shrimping season, a time of maximum trawling effort.

Subsequent removal programs were designed to remove shallow water traps. Because the deep-water effort would be optimized during the summer, a volunteer summer clean-up effort was designed to remove traps from accessible marsh edges and to provide valuable feedback for an expanded winter effort. The specific date of Saturday, June 15 was selected for the shallow water clean-up. Volunteers would be able to remove any trap found within 100 yards of the shoreline during that day.

Initiating the derelict trap removal program required a regulatory change. Program funding and manpower were also identified. Following a Texas clean-up design, volunteer participants were identified. Funding became the critical issue as disposal costs, equipment and personnel costs were calculated. Coastal Impact Assessment Program funds were utilized to support the clean-up effort. Public awareness of the program included several media outlets.

Funding

NOAA Coastal Impact Assessment Program funded for a major portion of the clean-up. These available funds had to be reallocated by the Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Once identified, the funding required completion of a Project List. NOAA provided this list to the project coordinator to ensure compliance with Federal law. Purchase and expenditure records were maintained by the project coordinator and processed according to state procedures.

Initial estimate for the June clean-up program was \$21,000 with final actual costs of \$10,944.42. The significant difference in budgeted and actual expenses arose from disposal cost. Disposal costs were estimated for the deep-water clean-up to include daily disposal for 7 days for 4 full dumpsters and 1 day of disposal for 12 full dumpsters for the shallow water effort. Limited trap return reduced disposal needs. Despite this, all future budgets will include the same estimated disposal effort to ensure accounting overruns do not occur. The removal of a deep water barge from the program and the use of wholesale rather than retail vendors depressed equipment expenditures.

Personnel time exceeded budget owing to the amount of volunteer coordination accomplished by the project coordinator. Initial estimates had the coordinator's salary and fringe projected at 13% of overall costs. As equipment costs declined and coordination efforts increased, the coordinator's salary accounted for 52% of the total funding.

Regulation Changes

Current Alabama regulation permits only law enforcement personnel to handle and remove derelict traps. This restriction has led to clandestine dumping of entrained derelict traps by shrimp fishermen. Industry representatives indicate that derelict traps are returned to the water near existing structures (Pete Barber, personal communication). This technique may remove the derelict traps from trawlable bottom but does not reduce

ghost fishing and fails to prevent later redistribution following a storm event. This regulation also prohibits the general population from removing derelict traps.

Defining a derelict trap on site is simple; to define it legally requires significant effort to ensure all possible parameters are addressed. Alabama selected to define derelict traps through their location at a point of time. A three-part regulation was promulgated to allow the derelict removal program to proceed. Regulation 220-3-.52 (a) established a one day closed season to all crab traps, commercial or recreational, in any state waters within 100 yards on the shoreline on June 15, 2002. Part (b) of the regulation provided a closed season for all crab harvesting for the initial seven days of the shrimp season. This closure was limited to areas opening to shrimping for two reasons: 1) minimize economic impact on the commercial crab fishermen and 2) no trawling effort would be expended in permanently or temporarily closed areas. The final part of the regulation (c) defined any trap remaining in the defined area during the specified time would be considered marine litter and subject to removal by any individual.

Participants

The commercial fishing industry was informed of the details of the program by including several industry representatives in the planning process and distributing an overview of the regulation to seafood shop owners, shrimp fishermen and the media.

Several environmental groups, government agencies and universities also participated in planning (Appendix A). Organizations involved in the effort had been solicited because of their concern about derelict traps or because of a history of environmental concern. Individuals and families joined following media coverage about the event.

Participants ranged in age from 3 to 60+. Organized groups had access to boats and an established pattern for working together while individual participants focused on traps that directly impacted their property. An estimated 36 – 50 people participated.

Media

Publicity was achieved through news releases to all local media venues; press, radio and television. Several newspapers published the initial release and followed with special interest articles (Appendix B). Televised publicity included interest pieces, an interactive morning show and interviewing opening day shrimp fishermen. Post-event coverage included newspaper editorials and two months a radio interview. Articles have also appeared in specialized literature. With few exceptions, most of these media interactions were unsolicited responses to the initial news release. Solicited venues included a morning interactive television piece to generate interest. Overall the tactic of an initial news release followed by minimal media solicitation generated extensive coverage and public outreach.

Two web pages were created to explain the event and provided for the availability of clean-up results. A brochure was provided to all participants and made available to interested observers. The brochure defined the need for the program, the participants, safety rules, a supply list, disposal location sites and a small data sheet. This

comprehensive document about the program will be used as the template for future outreach efforts.

Logistics

Disposal

The disposal process was designed to create full coastal coverage while providing easy boating access. Selection of collection sites for the deep water clean-up was determined by the primary anchorages of the shrimping fleet. Selection of 12 collection sites for the shallow water clean-up were based on access and centralized location (Figure 1). Permission of dockside property owners was obtained prior to the deployment of 40-yard roll-off dumpsters.

Barge

Obtaining large-scale participation in the deep-water program required minimizing the time needed for derelict trap disposal. A barge was engaged to traverse inshore waters and collect derelict traps. The barge was to be available for the first two days of shrimping season and would be responsible for land disposal. Due to weather conditions the barge was unavailable. VHF radio traffic also indicated that no barge was necessary the first day.

Equipment

Based on the example of the Texas clean-up program, gloves, hooks and wire snips were identified as the primary tools for a volunteer effort. Those items were provided to group leaders for distribution prior to the shallow water clean-up.

Volunteer Coordination

Experts interacted with group leaders and requested that each organization select a stretch of shoreline to become their responsibility. This tactic was likened to the adopt-a-mile program. For those unselected areas, information on other possible participants along those shorelines was solicited from the engaged volunteers. Each group coordinated their respective personnel, vessels and equipment needs. Supplies were provided to the group leader for dispersal prior to the clean-up. Volunteers were requested to return specialized and unused items to personnel manning the disposal sites.

Frequent email interactions kept groups informed and engaged future participation from groups with prior engagements. Follow up emails will inform and maintain interest level for the impending winter clean-up.

Results

Deep-water clean-up

Five children from the Youth Conservation Corps in association with the Fish and Wildlife Service helped remove 9 traps from Little Lagoon and 24 from the Bon Secour Bay area. Commercial shrimp fishermen participation in Mobile Bay and Mississippi Sound was lower than expected. Approximately 100 traps were placed near the Bon

Secour dumpster. The commercial shrimping fleet did not utilize three remaining dumpsters.

No additional data was collected from this effort.

Shallow Water Clean-up

Approximately 50 volunteers participated in the June 15 clean-up effort. The volunteers were extremely diverse including several U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Fleets, the Coastal Conservation Association, Fort Morgan Civic Association, Bay Area Fly Fishers, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. These groups spearheaded the Mississippi Sound and Mobile Bay clean-up efforts collecting hundreds of traps. A total of 323 traps were removed from local waters during the day.

A data collection sheet was provided to all volunteer leaders along with data recording instructions. Data received from these sheets varied in quality. The two groups that returned data sheets also collected the largest numbers of traps and provided the most detailed data. Metadata collected at the disposal sites and information contained on the data sheets is provided in Table 1. Bycatch information is presented in Table 2.

Discussion

Program Coordination

Several challenges confronted the derelict crab trap clean-up program. The simplicity of the regulation enabled rapid program initiation. Once the regulation was in place, funding was defined. Available CIAP funds eased this objective and personnel were committed to the clean-up program. Soliciting volunteer organizations was highly labor intensive because confirming efforts were necessary to maintain group interest in the program. It is anticipated this aspect will remain the most time consuming as new organizations will be recruited and greater pre-planned placement of individuals and vessels may be attempted.

Deep-water Cleanup

Involvement of shrimp fishermen in future programs will be addressed through increased outreach. Specific problems represented by derelict traps to the shrimping industry should stimulate their personal investment in the program. Handouts and public meetings will be utilized as the outreach method. A contingency plan should be developed to provide dumpsters in the event of a hurricane. Such occurrences redistribute derelict traps; providing the shrimping fleet with disposal areas will aid in their reduction.

While the number of traps confirmed removed from deep water was not as high as anticipated, the program decreased ghost fishing. With increased education and interaction, a greater return can be anticipated in the future.

Shallow-water Cleanup

The shallow water cleanup resulted in the removal of 323 derelict traps from Alabama waters. As a pilot program, it was successful. Information on how future programs could be improved was obtained. Volunteers suggested that using airboats

would increase access to shallow water traps. Suggestions were made to replace the hook provided with a grappling hook for increased maneuverability around traps. Some volunteers indicated that a half-day program was just as effective.

Several volunteer teams failed to collect any derelict traps. This failure was attributed to the lack of visibility and the 100 yards from shore closure precluded access by deeper draft boats. Kayaks were suggested as a method of penetrating shallow water areas.

Some areas lacked volunteer coverage. This can be improved by soliciting volunteers earlier and increasing awareness in local communities. Increased awareness will be promoted via mailings, newsletters and additional media coverage.

A combined total of 447 traps were collected. Initial expectations for the program were that a minimum of 1 thousand derelict traps would be removed. This assumption was based on anecdotal reports from shrimp fishermen and knowledge of the area. Volunteer reports indicate that a minimum of 300 additional traps remained after the shallow water efforts and recent trawling in areas not included in the regulation substantiates the presence of deep-water derelict traps. This information indicates underutilized disposal sites were ignored rather than unnecessary during the deep-water phase of the clean-up. Underutilized dumpsters during the shallow-water phase resulted from obscured traps due to tide and failure to engage volunteers in all areas. Discussions have begun to identify additional volunteers and to review the placement of the dumpsters.

While the amount of bycatch data collected during the clean-up is insufficient for detailed analysis, indications are that significant area impacts are caused by derelict traps. At the mouth of Mobile delta, 26 – 65 traps were collected from the water yielding a total of 58 identified blue crabs. Visual inspection revealed that most crabs appeared to be a minimum of 4 inches long and the potential impact of derelict traps spatially and temporally on harvest becomes apparent. In northern Mississippi Sound, only 17 blue crabs were identified from 54 traps. Limited commercial crab usage of the area indicates lower catch and decreased economic impact. Environmental impacts due to bycatch entrainment are evident in the diversity of species identified. Two dead clapper rails were identified from marsh edge traps. Five live terrapins were also released from 1 trap, it should be noted that this particular trap was retrieved from an area permanently closed to traps. The variety of bycatch observed indicates the impact of derelict traps to other organisms.

Summary

Alabama's Derelict Crab Trap Clean-up Program achieved moderate success. In terms of effective program management, minor improvements can be made; permit airboats to participate during the winter, solicit additional volunteers and select better tide conditions. The total number of traps returned, 456, was lower than anticipated. This resulted from the limited participation of the shrimping fleet and also high tide conditions obscuring many derelict traps. Volunteer reports indicate that many times the traps collected remained after the program. The winter clean-up will target these additional traps. Proposed gear restrict the number of traps in the future.

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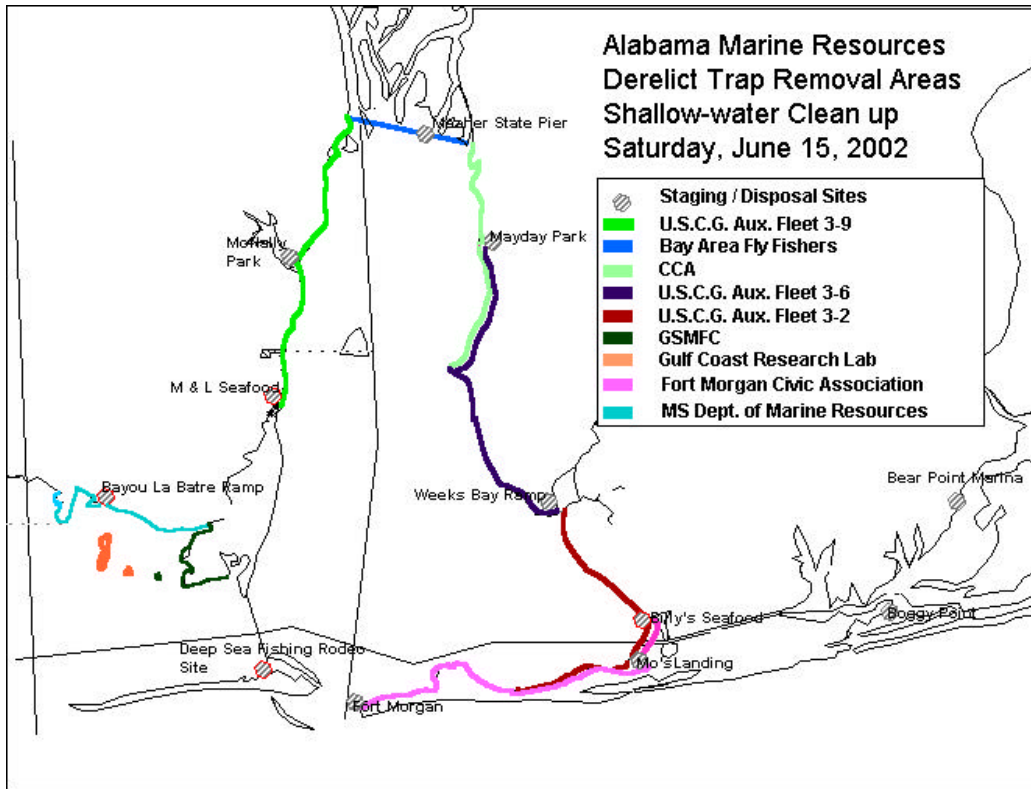


Figure 1. Location of disposal sites for the Derelict Crab Trap Clean-up Program and shorelines patrolled by participating groups. Red edged Staging / Disposal Site locations indicate sites used during both deep-water and shallow water phases.

Table 1. Number and characterization of derelict traps collected by area.

Location	Number of Traps Collected			Floats Present			Number of Traps on SAV	Number of Traps with Escape Rings	Trap Condition	
	Land	Water	Total	Land	Water	Total			Usable Traps	Non-usable Traps
Mississippi Sound	115	54	169	11	19	30	0	0	31	138
Mobile Causeway	35	26	100*	0	11	11	9	1	15	46
Alabama Port	—	6	6	—	0	—	0	0	5	1
Bon Secour Bay	—	—	28	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Little Lagoon	—	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Perdido Bay	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Weeks Bay	—	7	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total:	150	93	323	11	30	41	9	1	51	185

* Data not available for all traps collected

_ Data unavailable

Table 2. Bycatch species identified by area

Location	Blue Crabs		Stone Crab/ Mud Crabs	Clapper Rails	Diamondback Terrapin	Striped Mullet	Hermit Crabs	Oysters
	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Live	Live	Live
Mississippi Sound	13	4	17	2	5	1	25	55+
Mobile Causeway	38	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alabama Port	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bon Secour Bay	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Little Lagoon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Perdido Bay	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Weeks Bay	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total:	51	24						

- Data unavailable

Appendix A Participants

Coordinating Organizations:

Alabama Marine Resources Division
Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
Coastal Conservation Association
Alabama Seafood Association

Volunteer Organizations:

Coastal Conservation Association
Bay Area Fly Fishers
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Fleets
Weeks Bay National Estuary Reserve
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
Gulf Coast Research Laboratory
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Youth Conservation Corps
Fort Morgan Civic Association
City of Orange Beach
Alabama Coastal Foundation
Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge

Site Sponsors:

Billy's Seafood, Bon Secour
M&L Seafood, Fowl River
Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo site, Mobile Junior Chamber of Commerce
Bayou La Batre Public Ramp, Town of Bayou La Batre
McNally Park, City of Mobile
Meaher State Park Public Ramp, Alabama Marine Resources Division
May Day Park Ramp, Town of Daphne
Weeks Bay Public Ramp, Alabama Marine Resources Division
Fort Morgan Ramp,
Conoco at Mo's Landing, Little Lagoon
Boggy Point Boat Ramp, Alabama Marine Resources Division
Bear Point Marina, Gulf Shores

Mississippi

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Mississippi Derelict Trap Activities

In 1999, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) initiated a derelict trap program funded by a grant from the Mississippi Tidelands Trust Program. For purposes of this program, a derelict trap was defined as a trap that was “unbuoyed, unmarked, and not actively fished.” This definition was used as a guideline for field determination on which traps to pick up and recycle. If there was any question as to whether a trap was being actively fished, it was left in the water. The objectives of the program were to: 1) identify the scope of the problem in Mississippi, 2) make the boating public and fishermen aware of the problems associated with derelict and abandoned traps, and 3) begin removal of derelict traps from selected areas. Coastal waters were surveyed, problem areas identified, and a trap retrieval program was initiated. Following completion of the initial project, the MDMR adopted a program to retrieve and recycle traps within their existing programmatic activities. Over 2400 derelict crab traps were collected and recycled. Most were obtained from marsh areas around Bayou Caddy, Graveline Bayou, and Bayou Cumbest during winter low tides. An estimated 7000 to 8000 derelict traps still litter coastal waters. Commercial and recreational fishermen in Mississippi have been instrumental in locating high concentrations of lost or abandoned traps and continue to work with the MDMR Crab Task Force to address the problem in local waters.

In 2002, a cooperative MDMR/GCRL study was funded through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program to begin a dedicated trap retrieval and recycling program for the State. Existing ordinances and regulations affecting removal of traps from coastal waters were reviewed. The following ordinance, originally put into place to deter theft of crabs and crab traps, prohibited the collection of said traps by the general public, shrimp fishermen and other user groups who may inadvertently have derelict traps entangled in their gear. Under this law, only MDMR personnel could legally remove traps from the water. The Statute, Section 97-17-58 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated states:

“Every person who shall steal, remove, take or carry away crab pots, the property of another used to catch saltwater crabs from said pots shall be guilty of petit larceny, and on conviction shall be sentenced to serve term in the county jail not to exceed three (3) months or be fined a sum not to exceed One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) or both.”

In 2002, the Mississippi legislature adopted a new law to allow the cleanup of derelict crab traps for a period of not less than ten (10) nor more than thirty (30) days per year. Any crab trap remaining in the public waters after the expiration to the seventh day of a closed season may be considered as abandoned under the regulations established by the Commission on Marine

Resources. MDMR, GCRL and over 35 volunteers removed over 1,400 derelict crab traps from Mississippi's waters from January 21 to 25, 2003, the state's first-ever closed crab trap season. The abandoned traps held 1,488 live crabs, which were returned to the water. Other species found alive and dead in traps were mullet, flounder, toadfish, red drum, gray snapper, sheepshead, diamondback terrapin, cormorant, and stone crabs. Mississippi's first closed season for crab traps began January 14 and reopened January 26, 2003. Licensed recreational and commercial crabbers were notified a month in advance and allowed to remove their traps from the water during the first seven days of the closure. After January 20, 2003, any traps remaining in public waters were considered abandoned and subject to removal. Members of MDMR and GCRL fisheries staff and volunteers took advantage of the winter low tides and braved extremely low temperatures during the five day cleanup to recover the abandoned traps and record the quantity and type of bycatch species found in the traps.

S. B. No. 2553 *SS26/R812SG* G1/2
02/SS26/R812SG

To: Ports and Marine Resources

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2002

By: Senator(s) Hewes, Gollott

SENATE BILL NO. 2553

(As Sent to Governor)

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-15-84, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
TO CLARIFY REGULATION OF CRAB TRAPS AND FEMALE CRABS BEARING EGGS;
TO CREATE CODE SECTION 49-15-84.1, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE
THE COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES TO ESTABLISH A CLOSED SEASON ON
THE USE OF CRAB TRAPS; TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMISSION ON MARINE
RESOURCES TO DESIGNATE AS ABANDONED THOSE TRAPS REMAINING IN
PUBLIC WATERS DURING THE CLOSED SEASON; TO PROVIDE THAT ABANDONED
CRAB TRAPS ARE SUBJECT TO IMMEDIATE REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL; TO REPEAL
SECTION 49-15-85, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROHIBITS THE TAKING AND
POSSESSION OF EGG-BEARING CRABS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 49-15-84, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

1449-15-84. (1) The commission shall coordinate with the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in the development of an ordinance for the purpose of taking *Callinectes sapidus* (blue crab) or allied species. The ordinance shall include provisions for the

establishment of size limits for individual or market use as well as establishing legal harvest size for the cultivating of peeler crabs and soft-shell crabs. (2) The commission shall establish specifications for crab traps and shall require buoys of adequate size which are identified as to the owner of the buoys and traps. Recreational crabbers may use no more than six (6) crab traps per household. The taking of crabs with drop nets is permitted without a license. (3) It is unlawful to catch, hold or have in possession any female sponge crab or any female crab bearing visible eggs at any time. It is not unlawful to catch those crabs unintentionally, if the crabs are immediately returned to the water.

SECTION 2. The following shall be codified as Section 49-15-84.1, Mississippi Code of 1972:

49-15-84.1. (1) The commission may establish a closed season for the use of crab traps in the public waters of this state. The commission may designate the closed season as not less than ten (10) days nor more than thirty (30) days per year. Any crab trap remaining in the public waters after the expiration to the seventh day of a closed season may be considered as abandoned under the regulations established by the commission. (2) The commission shall adopt rules to govern the removal and disposal of abandoned crab traps as necessary to enhance: (a) The conservation and management of crab resources; (b) Boating safety; (c) The cleanliness of the beds and bottoms of the public waters of the state; and (d) Enforcement of this chapter. (3) Abandoned crab traps are litter and are subject to immediate removal and disposal.

SECTION 3. Section 49-15-85, Mississippi Code of 1972, which prohibits the taking and possession of female egg-bearing crabs, is repealed.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2002.

Current Mississippi regulations that help deter the occurrence of lost traps are:

- 1)1 All crab traps must be marked with a float of at least six (6) inches in height, six (6) inches in length and six (6) inches in width and the float must have a highly visible color.
- 1)2 Commercial traps must be marked with the corresponding crab license number, set out on the trap in a to be clearly visible, or an approved color-coded buoy or float.

- 1)3 Recreational traps must be marked with the owner's name or if fished from a boat, with that vessel's Mississippi registration identification.
- 1)4 It is unlawful to place or cause placement of any crab trap in any marked channel or fairway.
- 1)5 It is unlawful to place or cause placement of any crab trap in any navigable waterway in such a manner that that the trap line or float will interfere with normal boat traffic in said waterway and as such creating a hazard or nuisance to navigation.

Mississippi Trap Removal Activities



CFRD personnel pulling in a trap from shallow waters.



Bayou Caddy shoreline before trap removal



MDMR personnel involved with the removal program.



Preliminary Results Mississippi Trap Removal Program/ 21 January through 25 January Data from Returned Forms

TOTAL NUMBER OF TRAPS COLLECTED - 1,405

Total number of traps with data cards filled out - 1,111

Total number of traps turned in as of 27 January (no data forms) - 294 (these traps not in calculations below)

Trap Statistics

96 of the 1,111 traps had bait in them (83 traps of the 96 had crab bycatch; crab bycatch per baited trap = 9.0)

1,015 were non-baited (327 out of 1,015 had crab bycatch; crab bycatch per non-baited trap = 0.78)

756 of the traps had floats (666 floated traps were without bait; 90 of the floated traps were baited) (baited floated traps appeared to be recently abandoned lines)

Total number of dead crabs in 1,111 traps was 167; number of live crabs released - 1,488

Other Species Bycatch

Non-baited traps (L=live;D=dead)

Baited Traps

Mugil cephalus (mullet) - 3L, 3D

Paralichthys lethostigma (flounder) - 4L, 3D

Opsanus beta (toadfish) - 11L

2L

Sciaenops ocellatus (red drum) - 1L

Catfish - 1D

Lutjanus griseus (gray snapper) - 1L

Pseudemys scripta elegans (red ear turtle) - 1L

Fish - 3L, 3D

Micropogonias undulatus (croaker) - 3L

Cyanea (lion's mane jellyfish) - 3L

Rat - 1D

Comorant (bird) - 1D

Clapper rail (bird) - 1D

Malaclemys terrapin (diamondback terrapin) - 6D

1D

Archosargus probatocephalus (sheepshead) - 44L, 7D

1L

Menippe adina (stone crab) - 30L, 3D

1L

Lagodon rhomboides (pinfish)

1L



News Feature

Contact: Susan Perkins
Phone: (228) 374-5000

SLP-02-07
January 15, 2002

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winter Low Tides Aid DMR in Derelict Crab Trap Removal

BILOXI, Miss. – Winter is here, and the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is gearing up for the removal of derelict crab traps along the Gulf Coast.

Now in its third year, the DMR's derelict crab trap removal program began in January 2000 and has since retrieved and recycled 1,842 traps. It is one of only a few derelict crab trap recycling programs in the nation. The DMR uses the low tides of winter to locate these abandoned crab traps because they can easily be spotted in the shallow waters. Recovered traps are recycled through a cooperative effort between the DMR and Keesler Air Force Base Recycling Department. A scrap metal recycling company accepts the traps at no charge.

Derelict traps are defined as traps, which are unbuoyed, unmarked and not actively fished. These traps are abandoned or lost due to uncontrollable environmental factors such as storms, inadvertent clipping of float lines by propellers and theft. The derelict crab traps can be a navigational hazard, unsightly and may continue to catch crabs and other species.

"Removing these traps benefits our coastal and estuarine environments and provides safer navigational waters for recreational boaters and recreational and commercial fishermen," said DMR fisheries biologist Bill Richardson.

It is illegal for anyone to place a crab trap in a manner that blocks a navigable waterway. The DMR State Marine Patrol issues citations for this offense and to those with improperly marked crab traps. A person convicted of having improperly marked traps or traps blocking a navigable waterway is subject to a fine of \$100-\$500 for the first offense.

The Mississippi Blue Crab Task Force, made up of recreational and commercial crabbing and shrimping representatives, DMR biologists, DMR State Marine Patrol and Gulf Coast Research Laboratory biologists, has developed a crab trap tag system that will help identify traps. Other issues being considered include escape rings that would prevent the capture of undersized crabs and juvenile fish and the use of degradable hooks and panels for crab traps and reflective tape or paint for float traps as other possible conservation and safety measures.

The goal of the Mississippi Blue Crab Task Force is to identify problems and issues in the blue crab fishery and come up with their possible solutions, encouraging conservation of the resource and its habitat and improving the overall value of the fishery. Its mission is to make recommendations to the Commission on Marine Resources for a fair and equitable management strategy that allows for optimum use of Mississippi's crab stocks.

—MORE—

Derelict Crab Trap Removal—page 2 of 2

Derelict crab traps should be reported to DMR fisheries biologist Bill Richardson, and illegal traps actively being fished should be reported to the DMR State Marine Patrol by calling (228) 374-5000.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit us online at www.dmr.state.ms.us.

PHOTO CUTLINE: The Department of Marine Resources has retrieved and recycled 1,842 derelict traps since the derelict crab trap removal program began in January 2000.

—END—



News Release

Contact: Susan Perkins
Phone: (228) 374-5000

SLP-02-55
May 7, 2002

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DMR Wins Keep Mississippi Beautiful Awards

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) received two awards at the 10th annual Keep America Beautiful awards luncheon held April 18 at the Hilton Hotel in Jackson, for its Derelict Crab Trap Recycling Program and for the second consecutive year for its role in coordinating the 2001 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup.

To be eligible for a Keep Mississippi Beautiful/People Against Litter statewide award, a program must show successful results in one of the following environmental leadership areas: litter prevention, beautification and community improvement, minimizing the impact of solid waste on communities and recycling. Keep Mississippi Beautiful received entries from 24 counties.

“Both the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and the Derelict Crab Trap Recycling Program underscore the DMR’s mission: to enhance, protect and conserve marine interests of Mississippi,” said Lauren Thompson, DMR public relations director. “Like so many of the DMR’s programs, these are collaborative efforts that succeed because of the commitment of a dedicated staff coupled with community involvement.”

The DMR Office of Fisheries has retrieved and recycled 2,198 derelict crab traps since the Derelict Crab Trap Recycling Program began in 1999. Derelict traps are defined as traps, which are un-buoyed, unmarked and not actively fished. These traps are abandoned or lost due to uncontrollable environmental factors, inadvertent clipping of float lines by propellers and theft. These traps are a navigational hazard, interfere with shrimp trawling and oyster dredging and may contribute to crab and finfish mortality.

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup takes place each year on the third Saturday of September in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup. The event, which is coordinated by the DMR in conjunction with the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force, raises public awareness about the issues of marine litter and marine debris. In 2001, more than 2,855 volunteers picked up 2,595 bags of trash totaling 35 tons along 73 miles of Coastal waterways in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties. Volunteers collect data, which is compiled and submitted to the Ocean Conservancy for analysis.

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DMR wins Keep Mississippi Beautiful Awards, page 2 of 2

PHOTO CREDIT: Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.

PHOTO CUTLINE: (SLP-02-55A) Nevie McArthur (left), Keep Mississippi Beautiful/People Against Litter (KMB/PAL) vice chairperson, and Ron Aldridge (right), KMB/PAL chairperson, present DMR public relations director Lauren Thompson (center) with the award for the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup.

PHOTO CUTLINE: (SLP-02-55B) Nevie McArthur (left), Keep Mississippi Beautiful/People Against Litter (KMB/PAL) vice chairperson, and Ron Aldridge (right), KMB/PAL chairperson, present DMR marine fisheries biologist Traci Floyd with the award for the Derelict Crab Trap Recycling Program.

—END—



**MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES**

**MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES
RESOLUTION NO. DMR 120602 CLOSING BOTH COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL
CRAB SEASON BEGINNING 6:00 AM JANUARY 14 THROUGH 6:00 AM JANUARY 26, 2003**

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources acting through §49-15-84.1 has the authority to establish a closed season for the use of crab traps or crab pots in the public waters of this state; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources has the authority to open and close seasons for the taking of seafood through §49-15-15 3(a) of the Mississippi Code of 1972, annotated; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources wishes to act through the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources in order that seasons may be opened and closed in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources has determined that it is essential for the public to be notified in advance of such openings and closures;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS THE ORDER OF THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES THAT:

1. The Mississippi closed season for both commercial and recreational crabbing will begin at 6:00 a.m. January 14 and the season will reopen at 6:00 a.m. January 26 of 2003. After the seventh day of the closure, any trap or pot remaining in public waters after January 20 may be considered abandoned and will be removed by the cleanup effort. During this wintertime closure, all crab traps or crab pots must be completely removed from the water, otherwise they will be considered abandoned and subject to removal. During the closed season, crabs may not be harvested from any crab trap or crab pot and crabs must be returned to the water.
2. The closing dates shall be advertised one (1) time in a newspaper or newspapers with a general circulation in the counties of Hancock, Harrison and Jackson. The closing of the crab season shall become effective at 6:00 a.m. on the day after publication or at such later time as may be specified in the public notice. Mississippi public waters shall re-open for the harvesting of crabs with crab traps or crab pots after 6:00 a.m. on January 26, 2003.

So ordered this the 6th day of December, 2002.

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

By: 
Mr. Rickey Hemba, Chairman

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

By: 
William W. Walker Ph.D., Executive Director



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

News Release

Contact: Marti Schuman
Phone: (228) 374-5000

MLS-02-157
December 19, 2002

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DMR Initiates Closed Crab Season to Remove Abandoned Crab Traps

BILOXI, Miss. – Mississippi's first closed season for crab traps and crab pots begins **Jan. 14, 2003 at 6 a.m.** The season will reopen **Jan. 26, 2003 at 6 a.m.**

The closed season for both recreational and commercial crab trap fishing will allow for a derelict trap cleanup and data collection. All crab traps and crab pots must be removed by the trap owner from public waters during the first seven days of the closed season. Any crab trap or crab pot remaining after sunset on Jan. 20 will be considered abandoned and subject to removal. During the closed season, crabs may not be harvested from any crab trap or crab pot and crabs must be returned to the water during trap removal.

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will remove derelict traps in cooperation with Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) and volunteers. Derelict traps are defined as traps, which are unbuoyed, unmarked and not actively fished. After data is collected the traps will be turned in to a recycling center or a landfill.

"Derelict crab traps can pose a serious navigational hazard to boaters and may be a danger to marine and aquatic life. The closed crab season will allow us to remove these traps from Mississippi's marine waters and collect valuable data about the quantity and type of marine life that may become ensnared in these abandoned traps," said DMR Executive Director William Walker.

The DMR will be sending postcards to all Mississippi licensed recreational and commercial crab trap fishermen notifying them of the closing and requesting their cooperation. Alabama and Texas have successfully used a closed crab trap and crab pot season to address the derelict trap issue.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms.us

PHOTO CREDIT: Photo Courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

PHOTO CUTLINE: An abandoned trap may become entangled in a boat's propeller and cause damage.



Notice



The recreational and commercial crab trap/pot fishing season will close at 6 a.m. January 14, 2003 through 6 a.m. January 26, 2003 to allow for a derelict trap cleanup and data collection. During this closure time no harvest of crabs with trap/pots will be permitted. Crab trap/pot fishermen will have from 6 a.m. January 14, 2003 through 6 p.m. January 20, 2003 (seven days) to remove their traps/pots from the water. Any crab trap/pot remaining in the water after 6 p.m. January 20 will be considered abandoned and subject to removal.

The recreational and commercial crab trap/pot season will reopen at 6 a.m. January 26, 2003. The Commission on Marine Resources and the Department of Marine Resources appreciate your cooperation during this closed season and your assistance in addressing the derelict crab trap/pot issue in Mississippi. For more information, call (228) 374-5000.

Section 49-15-84.1 of the Mississippi Code of 1974, Annotated.



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

News Release

Contact: Marti Schuman
Phone: (228) 374-5000

MLS-03-03
January 9, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DMR Seeks Boaters to Remove Abandoned Crab Traps

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) in cooperation with Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) is seeking adult volunteers to participate in Mississippi's Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup Day to remove derelict crab traps and crab pots from Mississippi's marine waters on Saturday, Jan. 25 the last day of the Mississippi closed crab trap season.

To sign up in Hancock and Harrison counties contact: Traci Floyd, DMR, (228) 374-5000; in Jackson County contact Harriet Perry, GCRL, (228) 872-4218.

All volunteers will need to sign a waiver of liability form and will be asked to fill out a data card documenting the number of traps retrieved and bycatch information, such as the number and types of fish or other marine life found in the recovered traps. Derelict trap collection sites will be manned from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 25.

Check-in and drop off sites will be at Bayou Caddy Launching Ramp in Waveland, Ocean Springs Harbor in Ocean Springs and Tucei's Fishing Camp in Gautier. Recovered traps will be taken to a recycling facility by the DMR. Volunteers **must** check-in at one of these three sites.

The closed season for crab traps begins Jan. 14 at 6 a.m. The season will open Jan. 26 at 6 a.m. Licensed recreational and commercial crab trap fishermen may remove their traps from the water during the first seven days of the closure. After Jan. 20, any traps remaining in public waters will be considered abandoned and subject to removal. DMR and GCRL biologists will spend Jan. 21 - 24 surveying the derelict traps and collecting bycatch information.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms.us

—END—



News Release

Contact: Marti Schuman
Phone: (228) 374-5000

MLS-03-12
January 29, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup a Huge Success

BILOXI, Miss. – From Jan. 21-25 the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR), the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) and volunteers removed a total of 1,429 abandoned crab traps from Mississippi's marine waters.

"It was a very successful first effort. We had excellent cooperation from the fishermen," said DMR Fisheries Biologist Bill Richardson.

Mississippi's first closed season for crab traps began Jan. 14 at 6 a.m. and reopened Jan. 26 at 6 a.m. Licensed recreational and commercial crab trap fishermen were allowed to remove their traps from the water during the first seven days of the closure. After Jan. 20, any traps remaining in public waters were considered abandoned and subject to removal.

DMR, GCRL and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission biologists spent Jan. 21 - 25 collecting and surveying the derelict traps, collecting bycatch information and returned 1,454 live crabs to the water. Other species found in the wire mesh cages used to catch crabs included mullet, flounder, toadfish, red drum, gray snapper, sheepshead, diamondback terrapin, cormorant, stone crabs and a rat.

Mississippi's first volunteer Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup Day was held Jan. 25 — the final day of the Mississippi closed crab trap season. Despite the extremely cold temperatures and low tides 38 volunteers from Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana used 18 vessels to scour the marine waters and deposited 533 traps at the three derelict trap collection sites. At the Bayou Caddy Launching Ramp site in Waveland 8 traps were collected by 2 volunteers; Ocean Springs Harbor site in Ocean Springs brought in 83 traps by 8 volunteers and at Tucei's Fishing Camp in Gautier 442 traps were collected by 29 volunteers. The Mississippi Soft Drink Association donated bottled water for volunteers.

Crab traps were removed from the open Mississippi Sound and the following areas:

Jackson County

- East and West Pascagoula River
- Graveline Bayou and Lake
- Davis Bayou

Harrison County

- Biloxi Bay

—MORE—

Hancock County

- St. Louis Bay
- Bayou Caddy
- Heron Bay

Recovered traps were taken to a recycling facility by the DMR.

The Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program, a joint effort of the DMR and GCRL, was funded by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality through the Mississippi Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP). CIAP is a federally sponsored program that provides money for the state and counties to address statewide coastal issues.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms.us

PHOTO CREDIT: Photo Courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

PHOTO CUTLINE1: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources employees Rudy Balias, left, maneuvers a boat to help Buddy Goff, center, and Doug Drieling remove a derelict crab traps from the West Pascagoula River on Jan. 25, 2003. A total of 553 abandoned traps were recovered during Mississippi's first volunteer Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup Day.

PHOTO CUTLINE2: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources fisheries biologist Bill Richardson collects derelict crab traps west of the Biloxi-Ocean Springs Bridge on Jan. 22, 2003, the second day of Mississippi's derelict crab trap cleanup. More than 1,400 abandoned crab traps were picked up by the DMR, Gulf Coast Research Lab and volunteers during Mississippi's first closed crab trap season. The season opened on Jan. 26.

—END—

Vols fish out 1,100 traps

Sun Herald 126-03 Pg A2

Cleanup closes crab moratorium

By DAVE GAREY
THE SUN HERALD

GAUTIER — About 1,100 abandoned crab traps were hauled out of Mississippi waters, thanks to a nearly two-week prohibition on crabbing.

The moratorium ended Saturday with the Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup Day event.

Some 33 volunteers in 15 boats braved the chilly waters off Bayou Caddy in Waveland, Ocean Springs Harbor and Tucei's Fish Camp in Gautier to clean up abandoned traps.

The program is a joint effort of the Department of Marine Resources and Gulf Coast Research Lab with federal funding from a Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant and administered through the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

Leslie Hartman, a marine biologist with Alabama's DMR, was among the volunteers.

"We've got 41 traps, and we're not finished yet," Hartman said. "My personal goal is 160 traps."

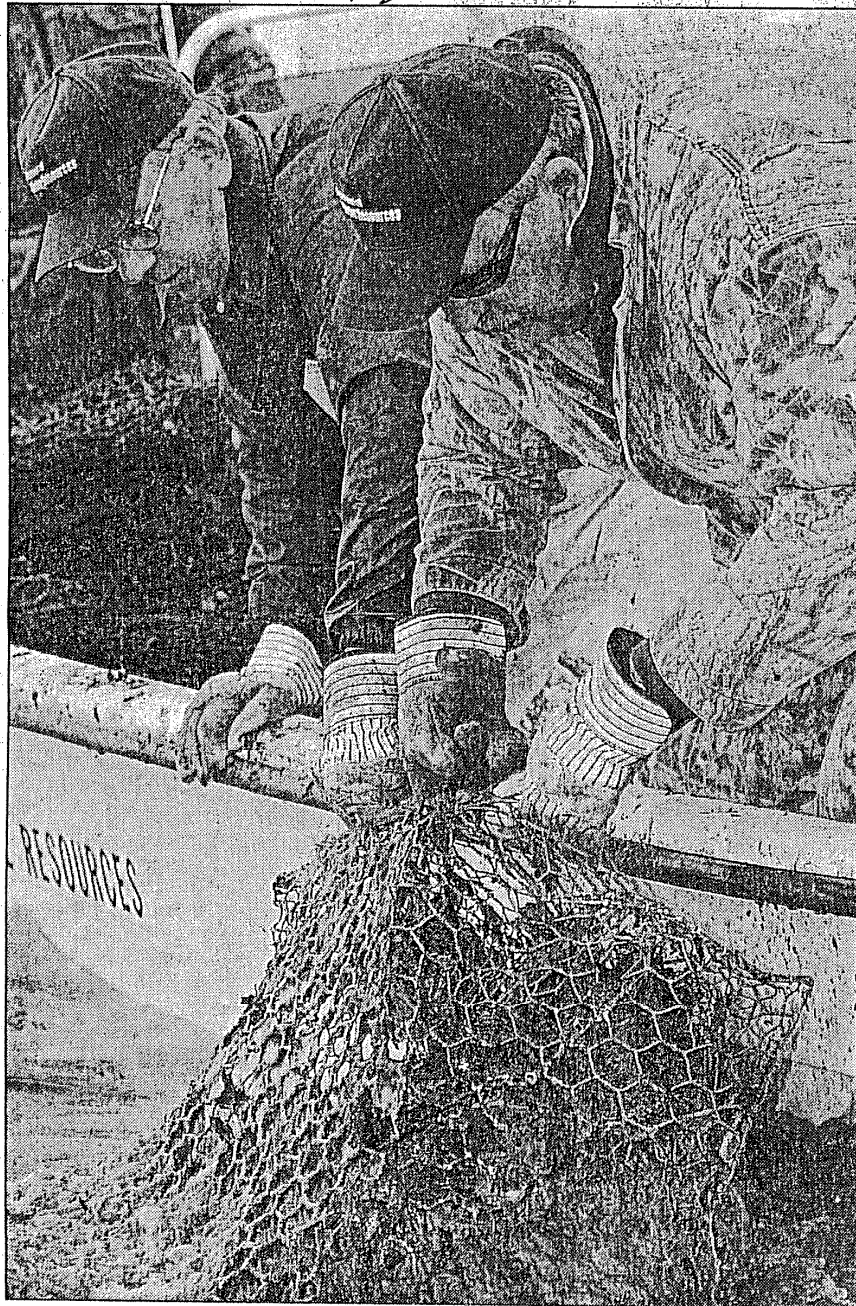
Hartman freed a live flounder and two live blue crabs from an abandoned trap she had just scooped up from her spot under the CSX bridge in Gautier. A cormorant was not so fortunate, however. It died in one of the traps.

The "closed season" — which ran Jan. 14 to Saturday — marks the first time the state has used a prohibition period to clean up derelict crab traps.

Licensed commercial and recreational trappers were given a week to remove their traps. After that, all remaining traps were deemed derelict by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and collected.

Abandoned traps pose a hazard not only to marine life unwittingly caught in them, but to boat navigation and fishermen. Coast shrimpers' nets and turtle excluder devices have been damaged by submerged crab traps, resulting in lost catches, said GCRL fisheries biologist Kirsten Larsen.

The traps also wreak havoc on boat propellers, said Derik Wolfe of Gautier, a crabber and fisherman who volunteered for the cleanup.



Master Sgt. Charlie Vyles, above, with the Department of Marine Resources, Marine Patrol, looks across the West Pascagoula River while heading back to Tucei's Fishing Camp in Gautier on the last day of the Mississippi close trap season. Five hundred traps were collected across South Mississippi Saturday.

Buddy Goff, left, and Doug Drieling, with the Department of Marine Resources, remove a derelict crab trap from the West Pascagoula River on Saturday. DMR in cooperation with the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, collected 442 traps in the Pascagoula River area. A total of 1,100 traps were collected during the close season.

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY CARA OWSLEY
THE SUN HERALD

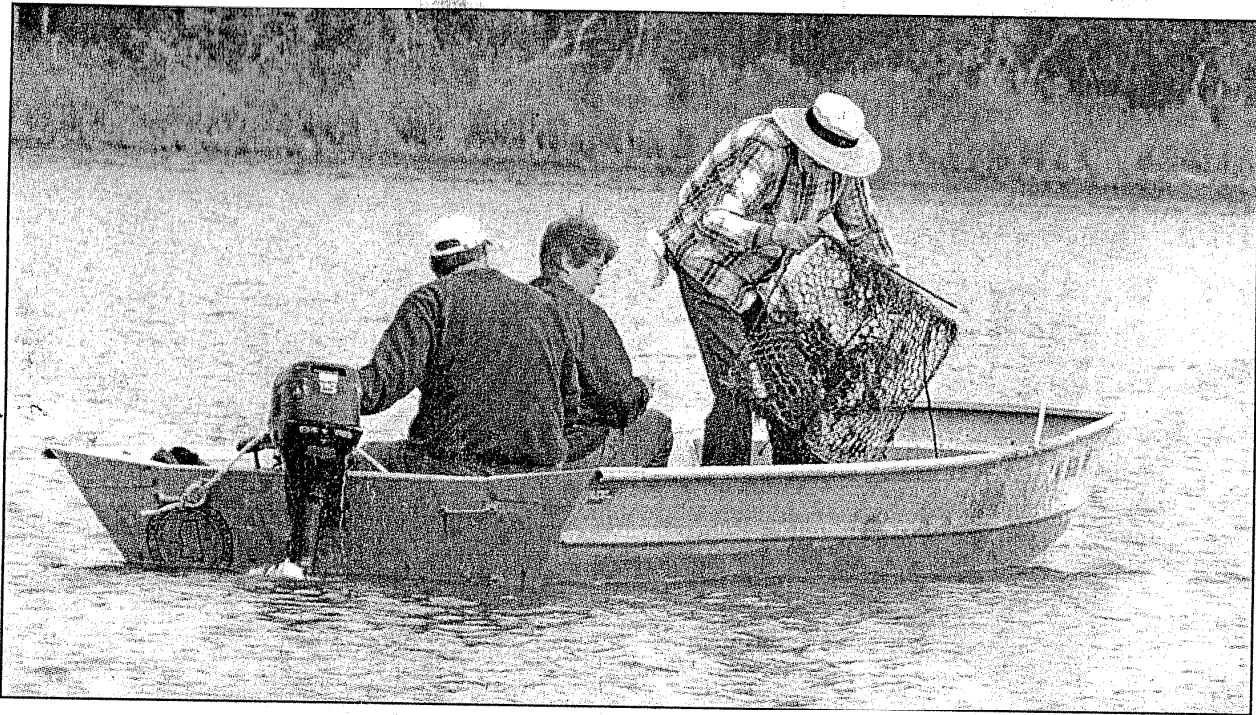
Despite the number of collected traps, trappers have been "very cooperative," said DMR biologist Bill Richardson, who was pleased by the amount of marine life rescued during the cleanup.

Data cards completed by cleanup participants are being analyzed by the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, which will provide an accounting of all creatures discovered in the traps, along with the locations and conditions

of the traps. The removed traps will be taken to recycling facilities.

Dave Garey is a community news correspondent for The Sun Herald.

Cleaning Up The Coast



Staff Photos/William Colgin

Jim Franks pulls up an abandoned crab trap from Davis Bayou Wednesday during a weeklong Mississippi coast-wide cleanup, funded by the DEQ through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program.

Abandoned crab traps and crab pots are being pulled from local waters this week as part of a statewide coastal cleanup financed by the Department of Environmental Quality. State officials say the traps pose hazards to both boaters and marine life, and they will be turned into a recycling center or landfill. Volunteers are being sought to finish up the job Saturday, the day before crab season reopens at 6 a.m. For information on signing up, call the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory at (228) 872-4218.



Dyan Gibson, left, Mark

Derelict crab trap cleanup a huge success

THE SEA COAST ECHO

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Mississippi's first volunteer Derelict Crab Trap



Photos courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources employees Rudy Balius, left, maneuvers a boat to help Buddy Goff, center, and Doug Drieling remove a derelict crab traps from the West Pascagoula River on Jan. 25, 2003. A total of 553 abandoned traps were recovered during Mississippi's first volunteer Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup Day.

Cleanup Day was held Jan. 25 - the final day of the Mississippi closed crab trap season. Despite the extremely cold temperatures and low tides

Some 38 volunteers from Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana used 18 vessels to scour the marine waters and deposited 533 traps at the three derelict trap collection sites.

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- Hancock County

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Recovered traps were taken to a recycling facility by the DMR.

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'Great Books' will view film 'Sorry, wrong number'

THE SEA COAST ECHO

The next Great Books discussion group meeting will feature a showing of the film, Sony, Wrong Number.

The meeting will be Wednesday, February 5, at 7 p.m. in the Seal Meeting

Barbara Stanwyck. The public is invited to attend the showing.

Sponsored by the Hancock County Library System, the discussion group began in March, 1990. Since that time mem-

in 1947 by University of Chicago Chancellor Robert Manyard Hutchins. Its mission is to provide people of all ages, backgrounds and walks of life with the opportunity to read, discuss and learn from outstanding

you read the selection before the meeting. For information, call Sheila Cork at 467-5282.

BEST PAWN
 467-7777

Contact: Dan Shea, 934-1424
E-mail address:
mseditor@themississippiexpress.com

LOC



Staff Photo/William Colgin

Kevin Anson, left, and Frank Allbritten unload derelict crab traps at Tucei's Fish Camp in Gautier at the end of a coastwide collection that took in over 1,100 traps during the week. Crabbing season opens today at 6 a.m. for licensed recreational and commercial crabbers.

Volunteers pull crab traps from local waters

■ Season reopens today at 6 a.m.

By **DONNA HARRIS**
George County Bureau

OCEAN SPRINGS — More than 500 abandoned crab traps were pulled from rivers and bayous in Jackson, Harrison and Hancock counties Saturday, the day before crab season reopens.

Most of the traps were found in eastern Jackson County, said Harriet Perry, director of the Center for Fisheries

Research and Development at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

Saturday's effort was part of a weeklong cleanup that netted more than 1,000 traps. It was coordinated by the research laboratory and the state Department of Marine Resources.

Perry said volunteers and workers were hampered by low tides and extreme cold. Boaters could not remove some of the traps because they were stuck in shallow water.

Perry said abandoned traps continue to

See CRAB SEASON, Page 4-A

Lawrence, Massey announce candidacy

From Staff Reports
PASCAGOULA — Anthony

formally enter the district attorney's race so far. Current Dis-

lawyer since 1990; an assistant district attorney from 1996-99

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Derelict Trap Program Overview D-1

DERELICT TRAP PROGRAM – LOUISIANA

No derelict trap sweeps have been undertaken in Louisiana to date, although several milestones have been accomplished and several articles have been written about derelict traps. The following is a brief synopsis:

1. The Louisiana Crab Task Force at their 4/10/02 meeting endorsed a pilot derelict trap removal program comprised of two components. The first component addressed shallow water traps and included a two-week closure with a nine day pickup of traps in the Terrebonne – Timbalier Estuary within the Feb 10-28 time frame. The second component addressed deep water traps and involved placing a barge in Vermilion Bay at the opening of the inshore shrimp fishery to allow shrimp fishermen to dispose of derelict traps caught in their shrimp gear.
2. The Louisiana Crab Task also authorized the remainder (approximately \$40,000) of money remaining in the Section 201 Petition Fund to be used for a derelict trap removal program. Monies for the Fund were obtained from a one-time commercial crab trap gear fee of \$45 and was dedicated to legal fees of the Blue Crab Coalition in their efforts to secure federally imposed tariffs or quotas on imported crab meat. The monies were rededicated to a derelict trap removal program in the state budget.
3. Recent legislation which dealt with crab traps caught in shrimp gear was publicized. This legislation mandates that any derelict trap caught in shrimp gear must be properly disposed onshore and any serviceable trap be returned to the water with a common float. LSU Sea Grant designed and printed posters summarizing the legislation and placed them at commercial shrimp and crab dealers.
4. A legal opinion from the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries attorney concluded that the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission did not have the authority to implement a derelict trap sweep with a trap closure. A derelict trap sweep would involve a seasonal closure of the trap fishery and allowing nontrap owners to possess derelict traps. The Department attorney further stated that legislative changes would be needed.
5. The Louisiana Crab Task Force has submitted a letter to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries asking if the Department would sponsor legislation to establish a derelict trap program. They also indicated that if the Department chose not to introduce the legislation, the Task Force would.
6. Mr. Fred Miller, a board member of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) and a member of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, has indicated that the Louisiana CCA would provide manpower, equipment, and publicity assistance and possibly funds to any derelict trap sweep.
7. Louisiana Sea Grant has expressed support for a derelict trap program in Louisiana, and would assist with publicity and logistics.
8. Several newspaper articles were written about derelict traps – the Houma Courier on 3/24/02 and the Times Picayune in late July, 2002. A calendar distributed by the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program included a one-page summary of derelict traps. An article in a Louisiana Sea Grant publication is also planned.

Texas

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AN ACT

1-1 relating to crab traps used in the public water of this state and
 1-2 to removal requirements for abandoned crab traps.

1-3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-4 SECTION 1. Subchapter B, Chapter 78, Parks and Wildlife
 1-5 Code, is amended by adding Section 78.115 to read as follows:

1-6 Sec. 78.115. CRAB TRAPS; REMOVAL OF ABANDONED TRAPS.

1-7 (a) In this section, "abandoned crab trap" means a crab trap
 1-8 located in the public water of this state that is designated as
 1-9 abandoned by the commission after the expiration of the seventh day
 1-10 of a closed season established by the commission under this
 1-11 section.

1-12 (b) The commission may establish a closed season for the use
 1-13 of crab traps in the public water of this state. The commission by
 1-14 rule shall designate the closed season as not less than 10 days or
 1-15 more than 30 days between January 31 and April 1 in years
 1-16 designated by the commission.

1-17 (c) The commission shall adopt rules to govern the removal
 1-18 and disposal of abandoned crab traps as necessary to enhance:

1-19 (1) enforcement of this chapter;

1-20 (2) the cleanliness of the beds and bottoms of the
 1-21 public water of this state;

1-22 (3) boating safety; and

1-23 (4) the conservation and management of crab resources.

1-24 (d) Abandoned crab traps are litter for purposes of Section
 1-25 365.011, Health and Safety Code, and are subject to immediate
 2-1 removal and disposal. An abandoned crab trap must be disposed of
 2-2 in compliance with the Health and Safety Code. Section 12.1105
 2-3 does not apply to the removal and disposal of an abandoned crab
 2-4 trap under this section.

2-5 (e) A proclamation made by the commission under this section
 2-6 prevails over a conflicting commission proclamation made under
 2-7 Chapter 47, 61, or 66.

2-8 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2001. The
 2-9 Parks and Wildlife Commission shall adopt rules as required under
 2-10 Section 78.115, Parks and Wildlife Code, as added by this Act, not
 2-11 later than January 31, 2002.
 2-12

 President of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 1410 passed the Senate on
 April 5, 2001, by the following vote: Yeas 30, Nays 0, one
 present, not voting.

 Speaker of the House

 Secretary of the Senate
 I hereby certify that S.B. No. 1410 passed the House on
 May 8, 2001, by a non-record vote.

 Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

 Date

 Governor

[x](#) Newsstand - TPW

[x](#) TPW News

News Media Contact (512) 389-4406

news@tpwd.state.tx.us

Oct. 1, 2001

State Taking Steps To Rid Bays of Abandoned Crab Traps

LINKS

AUSTIN, Texas -- Six million pounds of crabs are taken out of Texas bays each year and sold for \$3.5 million. It's not what's being taken out of the water that has state officials concerned, but what's being left behind -- abandoned crab traps.

Texas Parks and Wildlife reports that many thousands of the wire mesh cages used to catch crabs are lost or abandoned each year. State game wardens pick up 2,630 traps annually, yet there are still many more still in the water to foul shrimpers' nets, snag fishermen's lines and create an unsightly view of Texas shores.

Until recently, only the owner or a TPW game warden could legally remove a crab trap. The 77th Legislature of Texas passed Senate Bill 1410, sponsored by Sen. "Buster" Brown (R-Lake Jackson) and Rep. Debra Danburg (D-Houston), that created an abandoned crab trap removal program. The legislation authorizes the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to close crabbing in Texas waters from 10 to 30 days sometime in February and March to facilitate removal of thousands of lost and abandoned crab traps.

"There are a lot of traps on the bottom of the bays and the folks who usually find them are shrimpers whose nets get caught on them or recreational boaters when motors get tangled with them," Hal Osburn, TPW director of coastal fisheries explained to the commission in August.

The agency is proposing new regulations to facilitate a major cleanup effort. TPW is recommending a 16--day coastwide closure on the use and fishing of any crab traps in public waters to run from Feb. 16 through March 3, 2002.

Under provisions of SB1410, TPW may use volunteers to help pick up lost traps during certain periods of the closure. During the first seven days, only TPW game wardens will be collecting abandoned traps. After that, the traps will be defined as litter and can be removed by anyone. All traps picked up as litter must be disposed of properly and cannot be reused.

"We're planning to make this a community volunteer initiative to clean up the bays," Osburn noted. "We'll be educating the public about the safety precautions involved and encouraging volunteers to participate during the weekends when we can have a coordinated effort. Some of the commercial crabbers may also be volunteering their boats to assist with the collection."

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In addition, TPW is also proposing to remove the requirement to date crab trap gear tags, which should enable crabbers to more efficiently run their traps each day.

Many of the specific ideas for these proposals originated in meetings held during the summer between TPW and the agency's Crab Advisory Committee, the Crab Review Board and the Finfish Review Board. Also, eight workshops were held along the coast to solicit ideas from industry members and other stakeholders.

TPW has scheduled six public meetings along the coast to discuss the closure proposals and to hear comments from potential volunteers for the cleanup program. Hearings are set for 7 p.m. at the following locations:

- **Oct. 11 -- Galveston County Extension Office**, 5115 Highway 3, Dickinson.
- **Oct. 15 -- Texas State Technical College**, 100 Marine Center Drive, Palacios.
- **Oct. 16 -- Seadrift Community Center**, 501 S. Main, Seadrift.
- **Oct. 17 -- Aransas County Court Room**, 301 N. Live Oak, Rockport.
- **Oct. 18 -- Port Isabel Community Center**, 213 Yturria, Port Isabel.
- **Oct. 18 -- Jefferson County Sub Courthouse**, Second Floor, 525 Lakeshore Drive, Port Arthur.

To volunteer or for more information about the proposals, contact the coastal fishery outreach specialist nearest you: Bobby Miller in Seabrook, (281) 474-2811, or Art Morris in Corpus Christi, (361) 825-3356.


SL 10/1/01

Please send comments, suggestions or questions to:

Texas Parks and Wildlife, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX, US, 78744

fpwnews

Last Revision: September 28, 2001

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 TPW News

News Media Contact (512) 389-4406

news@tpwd.state.tx.us

Nov. 12, 2001

LINKS

Commission Approves Crab Trap Cleanup Dates, Shrimp Rules

AUSTIN, Texas -- The Texas coastline will be closed for crabbing Feb. 16-March 3, 2002, so that abandoned crab traps can be removed. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission approved the dates Thursday, Nov. 8.

TPW Coastal Fisheries Division Director Hal Osburn estimated there are thousands of the wire mesh traps abandoned in Texas bays. "The traps need to be removed because they can be hazardous for commercial fishers, recreational boaters and anglers," he said.

Why a 16-day closure? It was a compromise.

The state law passed during the last legislative session that requires TPW to implement the abandoned-trap program directed the department to close the crab season for 10 to 30 days.

Through a series of public forums, TPW took feedback from citizens and fisherman and decided on the closing dates. Obviously, commercial crabbers wanted the shortest possible closure. TPW wanted a longer closure to allow sufficient time to use volunteers to help in the cleanup since only TPW game wardens are allowed to pick up traps during the first seven days.

There are 259 licensed crabbers, and that number was capped during the 1997 legislative session. Each person can use up to 200 traps, and they are marked so TPW officials know exactly who owns which traps. With the current closure, the limited number of fishers and trap marking system, TPW hopes the problem will remain in check.

"This (1997 law) combined with the closure really allows you to go in and do something about it," Osburn said.

Anyone interested in volunteering in the clean up should call Bobby Miller in Seabrook at (281) 474-2811 or Art Morris in Corpus Christi at (361) 825-3356.

In other commission action, TPW is planning to collect a higher fee per acre for oyster farming. State lawmakers approved Senate Bill 305 in the 77th legislative session that says there will be an increase from \$3 to \$6 per acre that would be effective in March. That change would affect about 43 leaseholders in the Galveston Bay area, according to TPW officials.

TPW also has the option to auction the now 15-year leases relinquished by

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holders.

There are 2,327 acres currently leased. Oysters caught in the Galveston Bay area make up a third of Texas' total oyster fisheries -- or \$3 million dollars, Riechers said.

TPW will seek public comment on the change in the coming weeks, and the TPW Commission will vote on it at its January meeting.

At its November meeting, the commission also approved minor modifications to shrimp harvesting regulations to:

- Allow the use of "try nets," or smaller nets while catching Seabobs, a type of shrimp.
- Modify the placement of bycatch reduction devices in nets to better comply with federal standards and current fishing industry practices. Shrimpers can place the devices up to 11 feet from the tie-off end of the net; the previous requirement was 10 feet.
- Change the shrimping boundary in West Bay to include the area south of a line extending west from the Interstate Highway 45 causeway bridge at Virginia Point, along the southern edge of Tiki Island to the northeastern tip of North Deer Island at channel marker 48.
- Allow exemptions from the use of bycatch reduction devices and turtle excluder devices in state waters when an exemption is implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service due to special trawling conditions.
- Liberalize the turtle excluder device sleeve measurement to allow currently acceptable federal excluder devices to be used without alteration.

KE 11/12/01

Please send comments, suggestions or questions to:

Texas Parks and Wildlife, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX, US, 78744

tpwnews

Last Revision: November 09, 2001

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TPWD News

Media Contacts:

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news@tpwd.state.tx.us

Feb. 4, 2002

State Taking Steps To Rid Bays Of Abandoned Crab Traps

LINKS

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Until recently, only the trap's owner or a TPWD game warden could legally remove a crab trap. The 77th Legislature of Texas created an abandoned crab trap removal program (SB 1410), sponsored by Sen. "Buster" Brown (R-Lake Jackson) and Rep. Debra Danburg (D-Houston), that authorizes the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to close crabbing in Texas waters for a short period and remove all traps that are found. This year from Feb. 16-March 3, all Texas coastal waters will be closed to crabbing while TPWD staff and volunteers scour the bays in an attempt to remove lost and abandoned traps.

"There are a lot of traps on the bottom of the bays and the folks who usually find them didn't want to. They are often shrimpers whose nets get caught on them or recreational boaters whose motors get tangled with them," Hal Osburn, TPWD Director of Coastal Fisheries explained.

Under provisions of SB1410, TPWD may use volunteers to help pick up abandoned traps only in certain periods of the closure. During the first seven days, only TPWD game wardens will be collecting abandoned traps. After the first seven days of the closure period, the traps will be defined as litter and can be removed by anyone. All traps picked up as litter must be disposed of properly and cannot be reused.

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TPWD will be facilitating volunteer trap removal efforts on Saturday, Feb.

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On Other Web Sites

23 at 24 locations coastwide, weather permitting.

- Padre Island
National Seashore

"To maximize our time allotment, we are targeting that Saturday as the main event, so to speak, with the next available weekend day, Feb. 24, or the following weekend of March 2 or 3 as back-up in case of inclement weather," said Art Morris, program coordinator with TPWD. "The decision to postpone in case of inclement weather will be made at the local site on the morning of the cleanup, but common sense will dictate whether a facilitated disposal site will be staffed or not."

Morris noted that individuals that conduct cleanups on days other than TPWD facilitated cleanup dates will have to make their own arrangements for trap disposal but can contact the local coordinator for assistance.

"Currently we have close to 200 vessels and 600 individuals representing more than 40 organizations, clubs, companies, and government entities donating their services to help out with the program," Morris said.

Following is a site list of TPWD staff facilitated locations where traps can be dropped off during the cleanup. Each site will be manned by TPWD staff from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Disposal facilities will be provided at each site on the day of the cleanup. For those that chose to work on their own, TPWD requests information about the number of traps that they collect.

To volunteer or for more information contact one of the local coordinators or program coordinator Art Morris in Corpus Christi at (361) 825-3356.

The Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Data Card is available on line at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fish/crabtrap/datacard.htm>

Crab Trap Cleanup Collection Sites

Aransas Bay-local TPWD coordinator Karen Meador 361-729-2328

- South Copano Causeway Ramp
- Conn Brown Harbor-Aransas Pass
- Corpus Christi Bay-local TPWD coordinator Terry Cody 361-729-2328
- Conn Brown Harbor-Aransas Pass
- South Nueces Ramp-Corpus Christi

Galveston Bay-local TPWD coordinator Lance Robinson 281-474-2811

- East Bay-Stingaree Bait Camp
- Trinity Bay-Fort Anahuac
- Galveston Bay-Seabrook Public Ramp (Media site)
- Galveston Bay-Eagle Point Ramp
- Upper Galveston/Trinity Bay-Crawley's Bait Camp
- West Bay-Causeway Bait & Tackle Camp
- West Bay-Sy's Bait Camp
- Chocolate Bay-Chocolate Bayou Ramp

Lower Laguna Madre-local TPWD coordinator Randy Blankinship 956-350-4490

- Adolfe Tomae County Park-Arroyo Colorado
- Port Mansfield Navigation District Ramp-Port Mansfield.

Matagorda Bay-local TPWD coordinator Bill Balboa 361-972-6253

- Matagorda Harbor Boat Ramp-East Matagorda/Matagorda Bay
- Railroad Park-Palacios
- Lavaca Pier Ramp-Port Lavaca

Sabine Lake-local TPWD coordinator Jerry Mambretti 409-983-1104

- Walter Umphrey State Park on Pleasure Island
- J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area (TPWD Wildlife Division personnel only)
- San Antonio Bay-local TPWD coordinator Norman Boyd 361-983-4425
- Charlies Bait Stand-Seadrift
- Port O'Conner Public Ramp/TPWD compound
- Seadrift Harbor Refuge (The Hole)

Upper Laguna Madre-local TPWD coordinator Kyle Spiller 361-825-3353

- Bird Island Boat Ramp-Padre Island National Seashore
- Marker 37 Boat Ramp
- Kaufer Park Boat Ramp- Baffin Bay-Riviera Beach

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Media Contacts:

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 E-mail news@tpwd.state.tx.us

March 11, 2002

Crab Trap Cleanup a Huge Success

AUSTIN, Texas - From Feb. 16-March 3, a total of 8,008 abandoned crab traps were picked up by volunteers, TPWD coastal fisheries staff and game wardens, among others.

"The totals exceeded my expectations considerably," said Art Morris of TPW's Coastal Fisheries Division. "I was encouraged by the amount of volunteer turnout and the effort put out by everyone. This was a fantastic program. Everyone walked away from it dirty, muddy, and tired with a smile on their face. . . It has been a really wonderful feel-good project for everyone who was involved."

A total of 541 volunteers assisted and 223 vessels were used, according to TPWD statistics. The area where the most traps were picked up was Galveston Bay where 3,163 were recovered. There were 190 volunteers there.

Texas Parks and Wildlife reports that many thousands of the wire mesh cages used to catch crabs are lost or abandoned each year. State game wardens pick up more than 2,500 traps annually, yet there are many more were left in the water to foul shrimpers' nets, snag fishermen's lines and create an unsightly view of Texas shores.

Until recently, only the trap's owner or a TPWD game warden could legally remove a crab trap. The 77th Legislature of Texas created an abandoned crab trap removal program (SB 1410), sponsored by Sen. "Buster" Brown (R-Lake Jackson) and Rep. Debra Danburg (D-Houston), that authorized the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to close crabbing in Texas waters for a short period and remove all traps that are found. This year from Feb. 16-March 3, all Texas coastal waters were closed to crabbing while TPWD staff and volunteers scoured the bays in an attempt to remove lost and abandoned traps.

"There were a lot of traps on the bottom of the bays and the folks who usually find them didn't want to. They are often shrimpers whose nets

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get caught on them or recreational boaters whose motors get tangled with them," Hal Osburn, TPWD Director of Coastal Fisheries explained.

Under provisions of SB1410, TPWD used volunteers to help pick up abandoned traps only in certain periods of the closure. During the first seven days, only TPWD game wardens were allowed to collect abandoned traps. After the first seven days of the closure period, the traps were defined as litter and were eligible to be removed by anyone.

TPWD Commission Chairman Katharine Idsal took part in the cleanup at Aransas Pass. The Chairman helped collect traps aboard the division's research vessel, spoke with stakeholders and held an informal news conference in front of a massive pile of crab traps. And at the Seabrook site near Houston, state Rep. Debra Danburg went out on a boat with members of the media. Danburg said it was gratifying for her as a legislator to see direct results of a law she helped pass.

Morris also wanted to thank the nearly 60 organizations that helped out with the project in donations of resources. He also noted that the Coastal Conservation Association, NOAA Restoration Center and other groups provided thousands of dollars to help pay cleanup expenses.

"We are certainly saving a lot of organisms that would have otherwise been wasted," Morris said. "We removed some unsightly debris from the bays of Texas and hopefully we can reduce the frequency of boaters hitting them with their propellers and getting tangled up. Ultimately we should see some resource benefits for the crabbing and shrimping industry by removing these traps."

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GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

Reported CCA timeline for 2002 Closed season:

- Oct 2001: Approached FishAmerica Foundation for possible grant from NOAA Restoration Center
- Nov 2001: Begin preparing grant proposal; approach TPWD for info
- Dec 2001: TPWD staff made presentation to state chapter for participation
- Jan 2002: Obtained 'Letter of Support' and 'Statement of Work' from TPWD
Local chapters asked to take head count for participation
Chapters create participation plans (who's doing what, where)
Submitted grant proposal to NOAA/FishAmerica Foundation
- Feb 2002: Obtained grant; presented to TPWD
Staff participated in closed season cleanups; main event 23 Feb 2002

(Additional bullets that may be appropriate for all volunteer organizations)

- Delegate one person as organization contact with Trap Removal Lead Agency
- Meet with local chapter leaders early in process to delegate local leaders, set strict timeframes for volunteers
- If applying for grant, work directly with Lead Agency coordinator on specifics
- Create working file on list of volunteers, available boats (size, draft, type), locations of preferred work, number of assistants, contact phone, cell numbers, email addresses
- As main event date approaches, double-check status of all volunteers/vessels; notify Lead Agency coordinator of any changes
- Week prior to main event, local chapter leaders should meet with Lead Agency staff to discuss locations of trap concentrations, if available from aerial flights
- Day of event, local leaders should coordinate volunteer effort with Lead Agency staff, to avoid duplication of effort, missed areas.
- Followup discussion of volunteer effort, either at local chapter or state level; document needs/changes for future cleanup efforts.

Greetings Volunteer,

Just wanted to give you an update on the progress of the abandoned crab trap removal program.

On February 16 through March 3, 2002, the crab fishery will be closed to the use of crab traps for both recreational and commercial crabbing. **However, volunteers can only legally collect abandoned traps from February 23rd to March 3rd. On March 4th, the closure will be lifted and the removal of crab traps by those other than the trap owner will be illegal.** During the first seven days of the closure only Game Wardens will be allowed to remove traps from the water. Only from the 8th day, February 23rd and continuing through March 3rd, any crab traps left in the water will be designated as “litter” by law and will be susceptible to volunteer collection. To maximize our time allotment, we are targeting Saturday, February 23rd as the “main event” so to speak, with the next available weekend day, February 24th, or the following weekend of March 2nd or 3rd as back up in case of inclement weather. The decision to postpone in case of inclement will be made at the local site on the morning of the cleanup, but common sense will dictate whether a facilitated disposal site will be staffed or not.

For those that conduct cleanups on days other than TPW facilitated dates, disposal will have to be self-facilitated, but contact the local coordinator for assistance.

Currently, each local TPW Ecosystem Leader is finalizing cleanup plans for their respective bay system. Also, a TPW conducted aerial flight is scheduled on February 19th to help locate abandoned traps. Currently, the Galveston and San Antonio Bay complexes will be receiving the most clean up effort—that is the most volunteer time and equipment. So far, some bays like San Antonio and Aransas Bay’s have had lots of volunteers express interest in helping out, however we are still in need of help in Matagorda/East Matagorda bays, Galveston Bay, and Sabine Lake. We are in particular need of airboats in all bays, but particularly the Aransas Bay system. Nevertheless, we have several weeks to recruit volunteers prior to the cleanup and if the current pace keeps up, we are looking at a small army of volunteers. Currently we have close to 200 vessels and 600 individuals representing roughly 30 organizations, clubs, companies, and government entities donating their services to help out with the program.

Attached is a site list of TPW staff facilitated locations where traps can be dropped off. Each site will be manned by TPW staff from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Disposal facilities will be provided at each site on the day of the cleanup. Expect a short orientation prior to heading out and the issuance of some simple data collection cards. Some boat captains may be asked to take out volunteers without boats or be asked to bring a trained observer onboard to collect some more detailed data.

The local coordinator will contact you in the bay system that you have indicated that you would like to participate in. They will want to know who is bringing what to where so that they know where you want to work out of or steer you in areas of greatest need. If you are not contacted, please contact the local coordinator in your bay system of interest.

Texas Parks and Wildlife will be preparing a website news release that has a link to the data collection card for those that do not participate at a TPW facilitated site. The website address is: www.tpwd.state.tx.us . Look for the news release to come out sometime in early February.

If you have any questions or suggestions please feel free to contact the local TPW coordinator or myself. Thanks for your interest and we look forward to working with you.

Art Morris
Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program Coordinator
Texas Parks and Wildlife
6300 Ocean Drive, Suite 2500
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
Office (361) 825-3356
Fax (361) 825-3370
Email art.morris@tpwd.state.tx.us

LOCATION: Facilitated collection sites (24 total) in each major bay along the Texas coast as follows:

- (1) Sabine Lake-local TPW coordinator Jerry Mambretti 409-983-1104
 - a. Walter Umphrey State Park on Pleasure Island
 - b. J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area (TPW Wildlife Division personnel only)

- (2) Galveston Bay-local TPW coordinator Lance Robinson 281-474-2811
 - a. East Bay-Stingaree Bait Camp
 - b. Trinity Bay-Fort Anahuac
 - c. Galveston Bay-Seabrook Public Ramp (MEDIA/COMMISSIONER SITE)
 - d. Galveston Bay-Eagle Point Ramp
 - e. Upper Galveston/Trinity Bay-Crawley's Bait Camp
 - f. West Bay-Causeway Bait Camp
 - g. West Bay-West Bay Marina Bait Camp
 - h. Chocolate Bay-Chocolate Bayou Ramp

- (3) Matagorda Bay-local TPW coordinator Bill Balboa 361-972-6253
 - a. Matagorda Harbor Boat Ramp-East Matagorda/Matagorda Bay
 - b. Railroad Park-Palacios
 - c. Lavaca Pier Ramp-Port Lavaca

- (4) San Antonio Bay-local TPW coordinator Norman Boyd 361-983-4425
 - a. Charlies Bait Stand-Seadrift
 - b. Port O'Conner Public Ramp/TPW compound
 - c. Seadrift Harbor Refuge (The Hole)

- (5) Aransas Bay-local TPW coordinator Karen Meador 361-729-2328
 - a. South Copano Causeway Ramp
 - b. Conn Brown Harbor-Aransas Pass (MEDIA/COMMISSIONER SITE)

- (6) Corpus Christi Bay-local TPW coordinator Terry Cody 361-729-2328
 - a. Conn Brown Harbor-Aransas Pass (MEDIA/COMMISSIONER SITE)
 - b. South Nueces Ramp-Corpus Christi

- (7) Upper Laguna Madre-local coordinator Kyle Spiller 361-825-3353
 - a. Bird Island Boat Ramp-Padre Island National Seashore
 - b. Marker 37 Boat Ramp
 - c. Kaufer Park Boat Ramp- Baffin Bay-Rivera Beach

- (8) Lower Laguna Madre-local coordinator Randy Blankinship 956-350-4490
 - a. Adolfe Tomae County Park-Arroyo Colorado
 - b. Port Mansfield Navigation District Ramp-Port Mansfield

DRAFT Report on the State of Texas
2002 Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program

A review of the 2002 program with recommendations



Artussee D. Morris
Program Coordinator
Texas Parks and Wildlife
6300 Ocean Drive, Suite 2500
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

INTRODUCTION

Abandoned crab traps-defined here as lost or discarded and capable or not capable of fishing-have been identified as a significant source of mortality of blue crab *Callinectes sapidus* (the target species) and a variety of other organisms, creating user conflicts, visual pollution, and possibly having negative effects on sensitive habitats throughout the range of their use.

In Texas, removal of these “derelict” traps had previously been delegated to Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) state game wardens with the authority to remove traps if they violated certain regulations. These efforts were labor intensive, time consuming, and the magnitude of the problem made it unreasonable to expect practical resource benefits. However, efforts from law enforcement personnel had identified the extent of the problem to the State and ultimately led to a possible solution or at least an effort in addressing the problem. The solution came in Senate Bill 1410, the Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program, during the 77th State of Texas Legislature in June of 2001.



Abandoned traps in East Matagorda Bay

Senate Bill 1410, sponsored by Sen. J.E. “Buster” Brown (R-Lake Jackson) and Rep. Debra Danburg (D-Houston) created a first ever abandoned crab trap removal program in the State of Texas. Prior to this bill, only the trap’s owner or TPWD game wardens could legally remove crab traps from the public waters of Texas. Senate Bill 1410 laid out provisions that TPWD could work out ground rules for a closure with the commercial crabbing industry. The bill stated that a crab season closure for the use of traps would occur during the months of February or March, extend from 10 to 30 days, and during the first seven days of the closure, only game wardens could remove traps. On the eighth day of the closure, abandoned traps would be considered “litter” under state health and safety regulations, therefore anyone could pick them up. This would provide an opportunity to use volunteers in a statewide campaign to remove abandoned traps. Working out the details would be the charge of the TPWD Commission.

GETTING INDUSTRY ON-BOARD

With the provisions of SB 1410 in hand, TPWD Coastal Fisheries Division staff had the task of working with industry and other stakeholders on the details of the closure. Two meetings were held in June and July 2001, with the already established major stakeholder advisory groups-the crab fishery advisory committee, the crab license management review board, and the finfish fishermen’s license management review board (while not commercial crabbers, finfish fishermen are allowed to fish crab traps for bait purposes only and would be affected by the closure).

A variety of options were discussed with the work group to come up with a plan that would: (1) be the least disruptive to the fishery; and (2) maximize the use of volunteer time and effort. The option of a ten days closure with the seven-day “waiting period”, was considered the least disruptive to the fishery, but threw “all the eggs in one basket” for volunteer efforts. If inclement weather occurred on the weekend of volunteer effort, the closure would be ineffective, presenting very little opportunity to remove traps. The option of the longest closure, 30 days, would provide for maximum use of volunteer effort, however, it would be the most disruptive of the options to the fishery. Ultimately, a 16-day closure was selected. A 16-day closure would not be too disruptive to the fishery and would allow nine days of volunteer effort including two weekends.



Abandoned traps on shoreline of Redfish Bay

The next decision was exactly when would the closure occur, given the February/March options. It was suggested by crab fishermen, that crab landings are typically the least during the mid to late part of February. This led to at February 16 to March 3rd proposal, which allowed for two weekends of volunteer effort or one to fall back on in case of inclement weather at the start of the closure.

While SB1410 did not designate provisions for the magnitude of the closure, e.g. a statewide or partial closure, it was agreed that at least during this first year’s efforts, that a statewide closure would be most beneficial. It would be easier to enforce than a bay-by-bay closure and alternating dates or bays would be more confusing. With an “untrained” volunteer effort targeted to remove the traps, a statewide closure would be the easiest to remember and provide for the least amount of “accidental” trap removal. The advantages of a alternating date or bay closure would be that the fishery could simply move traps from a closed area to an open area and not lose fishing time.

The next step was for staff to approach the TPWD Commission for permission to go out for public comment with a proposal of a 16-day coastwide closure to occur from February 16 to March 3, 2002. This was granted at the August 29th Commission meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

After the proposal for public comment was published, as required in the Texas Register, six coastwide public hearings were conducted in mid-October. These public hearings were held to receive input on the proposed regulations associated with removing abandoned crab traps and eliminating the requirement for the date tag on crab traps-an associated proposal that came out of the work group meetings. Announcement of these



Aerial picture of lost traps in San Antonio Bay

public hearings were published on TPWD's web site and were included in the department's news release package. Additionally, some local newspapers wrote articles on the meetings to notify interested individuals of the meeting time and place. Despite these efforts, no attendees were present at three public hearings.

A total of 23 people attended the other three public hearings. Most (16), primarily commercial crab fishermen, attended the public hearing in Seadrift. Of those individuals that provided public comment, two individuals supported the proposal to eliminate the date requirement on the gear tag; one comment in opposition was received. The majority of the attendees at the Seadrift meeting wanted the minimum of a 10-day closure. One comment was received at the Dickinson public hearing that requested a longer closure than the proposed length. In general, the individuals at the hearings recognized the need to remove abandoned crab traps with some individuals volunteering their resources for the cleanup.

Despite the majority of the public comments in favor of a 10-day closure, the TPWD Commission adopted the proposal as it was presented on 7 November 2001.

GETTING STARTED

Almost immediately after adoption of the proposal, efforts occurred to seek volunteer support, donor support, and advertising of the event. Coastal Fisheries Division staff would take the lead on getting word out about the program and to seek volunteers. With an estimated 30,000 traps lost each year in Texas, several items were immediately identified as must need items: (1) numerous volunteers with vessels would be needed to make a significant impact; (2) disposal facilities would be needed-either landfill or recycling if possible; (3) arrangements for staff facilitated dump off sites would have to be made; (4) the crabbing and finfish industry would have to be contacted announcing the closure; and (4) abandoned traps would ultimately have to be located.

Staff immediately began work on seeking volunteer effort. News releases were immediately sent out by the TPWD Media Communication Division staff to all written media in Texas announcing the crab trap removal program and word began to get out. A Coastal Fisheries Division staff member was assigned as the program coordinator/main contact person to facilitate both in-house and external efforts. Coastal Division staff made arrangements to give presentations to a variety of fishing organizations, conservation organizations, and any group that could possibly assist over the next three month period. Ultimately, this effort would prove to be well spent.



**First trap collected at
Conn Brown Harbor**

It was determined that landfill disposal would be the easiest method of disposing of the traps. However, dumping fees would be a consideration. With no money available to finance the project, there would be much effort conducted to locate disposal companies and municipalities that would donate their resources to the project, which included hauling and dumping. Recycling companies were approached to take traps, however due

to the lack of adequate coastwide recycling capabilities only three companies ultimately were involved with recycling. Also, it was determined that recycling of trap floats and nylon ropes would be only available to those recyclers that had permits to do such, most do not. Therefore, floats and lines would have to be cut off and disposed of through normal channels, if the traps were to be recycled. In the end, most traps would be delegated to the local landfills.

With over 400 miles of coastline to cleanup, numerous staff facilitated drop off sites would have to be arranged. Ideally, these sites would provide volunteer orientation, disposal facilities, direction, devices to aid in collecting traps, and provide for a means of enumerating the traps that were collected-an important piece of information. Boat ramps were identified as the most likely spots to hold these sites. However, if these were not publicly owned, then permission to hold a site on the premises would have to be obtained. Additionally, if launching fees were typically charged, it would be necessary to ask the owner if those would be lifted for the event. In all cases where access fees were typically charged, the owner or entity in charge waved fees temporarily for the program.



Upper Laguna Madre volunteers

It was determined that the most efficient method to contact the roughly 1000 commercial crab and finfish fishermen that a closure for the use of traps was imminent, was to do a direct mailing. Letters were prepared and license purchase databases provided an easy means of identifying those to be contacted. Also notices were placed in all crab dealer establishments by TPWD staff. Finally, a TPWD newsletter "Anchor Line" directed at the commercial fishing industry would contain an article about the closure in it as well. All items were earmarked for delivery to the industry during January 2002, weeks prior to the closure. As a result, it was determined that the majority of crab fishermen had removed their active traps prior to the closure. Only a couple of instances of violations of the new closure were identified, most likely due to apathy. Anecdotal information from crab fishermen prior to the closure indicates that crab dealers purchased crabs at an above normal price to increase stocks to carry them financially through the closure. However, crab catches were poor in most areas of the coast, with the exception of Aransas Bay, where above average catches were being reported.

While it was not hard to determine where derelict traps were located, it was decided that an aerial survey during the first seven days of the closure would be useful in to locating concentrations of derelict traps. Concerns over the expense (~\$140/hour), initial concerns of the benefit of aerial flights in locating traps, and time required (past experience indicated it would take three days to conduct a coastwide flight) would be debated. Nevertheless, it was ultimately decided that a partial coastwide aerial flight would be conducted. The Laguna Madre, not known for its commercial crabbing activity (therefore few derelict traps), would not be flown, leaving the rest of the coast to be flown with two planes at one time if possible, depending on weather conditions and availability. This effort would prove useful in providing direction to volunteers.

ACQUISITION OF RESOURCES

Efforts from TPWD staff recruiting efforts proved fruitful in getting enough resources together to accomplish an adequate trap removal effort. To make the job easier for the expected 600 participants and 200 vessels needed to cover eight bay systems and with no designated operating funds for the project, it was determined that some items would need to be donated to the program if possible. Tarps to protect volunteer boats would be needed. Crab trap hooks to help with handling traps would need to be manufactured. A donation of gloves would be practical. Donations for free items to give to entice participants would be a nice touch. Refreshments such as water or soft drinks could also be supportive. Department out of pocket expenses, principally fuel costs and disposal fees, were estimated at roughly \$14,000, therefore a grant through a habitat restoration foundation or similar organization would be important. Although some items, such as drinks and “grab bags” proved not to be extremely important in the end—most volunteers did not expect any resources to help out with the project—donations of these items could serve as an enticement to volunteers.



Crab trap hook

Seeking most donations for such an undertaking proved to be easier than expected. With the notion of a first ever project of this magnitude being conducted that promised resource benefits, reducing user conflicts, and a “debris” cleanup, companies and organizations were amenable to donating resources to help out with the program. Ultimately, 61 companies, organizations, municipalities, and government entities donated resources to the project or helped with the cleanup (**Appendix 1**).

However, the most difficult donations to secure were disposal of the traps. A large disposal company, with many facilities located coastwide, was approached to donate the disposal for the entire project. The notion was that one company would be easier to coordinate with than several smaller companies. After submitting a donation request to the parent company that was reviewed by its in-house donation committee (donations requests were reviewed once each month), it was denied based on the cost and scope of the project. After much time and effort by staff to secure this donation, it eventually proved fruitless and the tougher path had to be taken. Each bay system would have to secure disposal or recycling at the local level, meaning several companies, municipalities, and counties would have to be approached. Nevertheless, all disposal was donated, but the effort to secure it was more time consuming.



Dumpster filled with traps

A huge helping hand came late in the donation acquisition process. The Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), head quartered in Houston, TX, secured a \$14,000 grant from the NOAA Restoration Center through the FishAmerica Foundation. Staff involvement in the grant request process was limited to providing an itemized list of materials that the monies would be used for: TPWD fuels costs, aerial flights, volunteer recruitment, and other associated items. Also staff provided a “Letter

of Support” for the grant request and a project description. Conditions of the grant agreement included adhering to the projected material purchase list and the monies had to be spent within one year. Reporting requirements included an interim report and final report due no later than 5 April 2003. This report was prepared to satisfy those requirements.

GETTING READY

Saturday, February 23rd was singled out as the “main event” day, with a 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. schedule. Although it was the eighth day of the closure, it would be the first day of the closure that volunteers could collect abandoned crab traps. By doing so, it would maximize the time allotment available to use volunteers or in the case of inclement weather it allowed for the next available weekend day to hold the event. Weekend days were generally thought of as being the best available days to expect volunteers to participate.

The plan was to use staff, at some sites multiple staff, to facilitate 24 sites coastwide, plus a staff-only site within the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area in Sabine Lake and one site in Aransas Bay where traps could be dropped off where staff would remove them later (**Figure 1**). Staff would provide orientation to the volunteers, provide them with available resources, provide direction, make available disposal facilities, facilitate disposal companies, and provide for a media contact if the situation arose. Those bays predicted to need the most effort—having the most abandoned traps—would have more sites than those less likely to have lots of traps. Galveston Bay, due to the size of its crab fishery (hence the likelihood of many traps to collect) and its large geographic size had the most staff facilitated sites with eight. The least number of sites would be in Sabine Lake at one site.

However, in Sabine Lake there was a plan to use staff following February 23rd to cover a considerable portion of the bay that fell within the care of the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area, a TPWD owned area. Concerns for habitat protection with using “untrained” volunteers traversing the heavily managed marsh would lead to the decision that staff would need to cleanup that sensitive area.

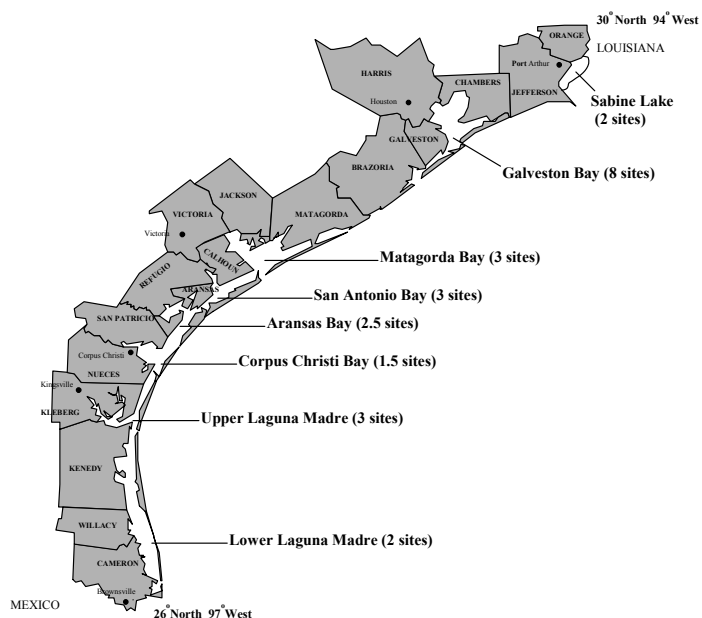


Figure 1. Map of Texas coast with bay systems and number of facilitated sites.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service barge with traps

Two sites were designated as “media” sites, located in or near two of the biggest metropolitan areas on the Texas coast—Seabrook Public Ramp near Houston and Conn Brown Harbor in Aransas Pass near Corpus Christi. Local TV and written media were invited to document the event, which would provide for exposure for the program to hopefully generate interest in future cleanups. Legislators, TPWD Commissioners, and local dignitaries were invited to observe the event at these sites. These two sites would ultimately provide for some terrific public relation opportunities, to not only the program, but for donors that wanted active participation at the site.

Contacts with federally owned wildlife management areas and refuges would provide additional “weekday” effort. Generally these facilities were more interested in using their own staff or their “own” volunteers to work more sensitive areas available to them. This additional effort would prove to be effective in areas where access was limited or restricted and allowed for extended collection dates that otherwise would not have occurred.

Additionally, some volunteer effort was slated for “weekday” effort for those that wanted to participate, but could not on the staff facilitated date. Most notable was the Exxon-Mobil Emergency Oil Spill Response Team that wanted to use their 50-man crew and 19 vessels to work on their own, using their own equipment and disposal facilities, as a training exercise for the team. Any “weekday” effort would have to be self facilitated, but by contacting the local TPWD Coastal Fisheries Division office they could get direction and disposal of traps could be arranged.

To keep track of the number of traps that were collected at each site, a person would be designated as the official trap counter. In all likelihood, this would mean that a facilitator would have multiple duties. To keep track of traps that were collected by “weekday” participants, every effort was made to get them data collection cards that simply provided a means of contacting TPWD with the location and number of traps collected (**Appendix 2**). This data card would be available on the TPWD website or could be mailed or faxed to the participant.

This event, the first event of its kind ever to be held in Texas, provided an opportunity to collect some data on condition of these traps and the organisms found in these traps. However, allowing “untrained” volunteers to collect data could lead to improper data collection, species misidentification, location miscues, and other problems that would greatly jeopardize the integrity of the information. Maintaining quality control on a full-scale data collection regime would be too difficult thus was not a priority of the program. Therefore, it was decided that a minimum of 30 observations per bay system would be collected, spread out evenly within the bay system as best as possible, using trained individuals, e.g. TPWD staff, trained biologists, university biology students, retired biologists, etc., to collect the data. It would be acknowledged that the data would not be of scientifically defensible quality, but it would provide some reasonably accurate anecdotal information on what organisms were in the trap, their condition (live or dead), some information about the trap condition, if escape rings and degradable panels were present, and so forth that might be useful to crab researchers. Standardized data collection cards were developed to accomplish this task (**Appendix 3**).

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Law Enforcement Division (game wardens) efforts during the first seven days of the closure would be to monitor the field situation and ensure that no one violated the closure. It would make little sense to do a sweep of traps with a small fleet, when a small armada of volunteer vessels would be doing the same thing within a week. Nevertheless, a total of 318 traps were confiscated from primarily the Aransas/San Antonio Bay systems and 12 citations were written to one person for illegal use of traps during the closure. Overall, it appeared that the crabbing industry had abided by the new closure.

During the first seven days of the closure any trap that remained in the water would be considered abandoned. This would give impetus to survey the situation during that time period to garner information on the magnitude of the problem and to locate the major problem areas. Aerial flights were scheduled to fly as much of the coast as possible surveying the shallow waters, predominantly along the edges of the bay to get information that would serve several purposes. As detailed of information would be needed, meaning a trap count-as best as possible-would be useful in measuring the “success” of the upcoming cleanup. Also detailed locations would be important in directing volunteers to areas that contained traps to avoid duplicating effort.

The aerial survey turned out to be more daunting of a task than expected even with purposely deleting the Laguna Madre. After roughly 10 hours of flight time (approximately 1000 nautical miles), only the Corpus Christi, Aransas, San Antonio, and Matagorda Bay systems were surveyed. An additional day of flights would be needed to fly Galveston Bay and Sabine Lake, however, due to staffing restraints, a reasonable staff based “ground truthing” of Galveston Bay previously, and the predicted lack of traps in Sabine Lake it was decided that those bays would not be flown. Ultimately, enumerating traps from the air proved to not be as useful as originally hoped based on the discrepancy in the number of traps saw from the air and from what was collected during the cleanup.

FEBRUARY 23, 2002

Dealing with volunteers is never a certain undertaking, but it was estimated, based largely on word of mouth and some written commitment that about 600 volunteers with 200 vessels had indicated that they would help out with the project. Also dealing with a predisposed time line, weather would be a factor in the ability to conduct a successful cleanup. Other concerns were that if the volunteers would think of this as an opportunity for an overall debris clean up as well, that would require other or more disposal capabilities on site. (In fact, the Valley Sportsman’s Club has coordinated their annual bay debris cleanup with the crab trap cleanup at the same site and date at Adolph Thomae County Park in the lower Laguna Madre.)



TPWD Commissioner Idsal with staff giving news conference at Conn Brown Harbor

As it turned out, 525 volunteers brought 215 vessels to 23 of the 24 staff facilitated sites coastwide (one site at Port Lavaca

Causeway had no one show up). A cold front had passed through the coast on Thursday, February 21st and clearing weather conditions turned out to be ideal for the event—sunny, low 70°s, light wind, sea conditions calm, low tide early in the morning. Volunteer interest was keen and energetic. Registration began as soon as staff would be able, largely beginning by 8:00 a.m., with sign in sheets and liability waivers (**Appendix 4**) signed. Donated equipment (12'x14' vinyl tarps, crab trap hooks, gloves) was dispersed and after a short orientation at 9:00 a.m. most volunteers were off to collect traps. Early coordination with “crew” and “captain” proved to be very useful. Those that did not have boats would act as crew for those that did not have crewmembers previously set up, but brought a boat.

By 10:30 a.m. many boats had begun to arrive back at the sites to drop off traps. Ground crews facilitated transferring traps to dumpsters, dump trucks, trailers, or what ever was used to haul traps. At some sites, this would prove to be a major undertaking and indicated a need to for additional people to help with the magnitude of the traps coming in (1,264 traps came into the Fort Anahuac State Park site alone). By 2:00 p.m. most volunteers had ceased collecting traps and had gone home or went fishing. By 4:00 p.m., all sites had cleaned up their respective sites and were done for the day. In all, 6,888 traps would have been collected on the first day available to the general public to collect traps, ranging from 38 in the lower Laguna Madre to 2,713 in Galveston Bay.

While the first day of the cleanup appeared to be a huge success, exceeding most expectations, there would be still be eight more days of opportunity to collect traps.

FEBRUARY 24-MARCH 3

For the most part the major effort had already occurred, but from February 24 to March 3 there would be an opportunity to collect more traps. While a concerted volunteer effort was not planned, there were a few instances that could prove fruitful. Most notably would be the Exxon-Mobil Oil Spill Emergence Response Team efforts in Galveston Bay. Their team could be directed to cleanup what was missed. However, cold fronts during the week doomed the team's efforts and in one day's effort only 12 traps were recovered. In fact, weather conditions proved to greatly diminish most attempts throughout the week.

Nevertheless, despite inclement weather conditions federal refuge staff and TPWD staff efforts in particularly the Galveston Bay and Sabine Lake systems did manage to collect more traps. Overall, during the eight days of the closure following 23 February, 1,123 more traps were collected coastwide.

RESULTS

Coastwide, from February 23 to March 3, a total of 8,070 traps collected by 554 volunteers, using 228 vessels (**Table 1**). The range was from 86 in the lower Laguna Madre to 3,214 in Galveston Bay. Two thirds of the traps came from two bay systems, Galveston Bay and San Antonio Bay. The TPWD Law Enforcement Division collected 318 traps as a result of the new law from February 16 to February 28.

Table 1. Summary of number of traps collected, number of volunteers, and number of volunteer vessels used during Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program, February 23-March 3, 2002.

Major Bay	No. of traps	No. of volunteers	No. of vessels
Sabine Lake	438	16	8
Galveston Bay	3214	190	77
Matagorda Bay	526	36	12
San Antonio Bay	2131	106	43
Aransas & Corpus Christi Bay	1392	124	53
Upper Laguna Madre	283	18	7
Lower Laguna Madre	86	64	28
Total	8070	554	228

Four hundred and fifty three observations were made on the contents and condition of the traps (**Table 2**). Twenty-one species of organisms were observed, most in live condition. Blue crab was the most numerous species observed (46%), followed by gulf stone crab *Mennippe adina* (30%) and sheepshead *Archosargus probatocephalus* (8%). Less than 10% of the traps were categorized as lying on sea grass beds. Forty-two percent had some sort of owner identification present. Approximately, 1/3 were in a “fishable” condition. One third had degradable panels present, with 41% open. Sixty seven percent had escape rings present.

Table 2. Summary of observations (in percent) on condition of abandoned crab traps observed from 2002 Texas abandoned crab trap removal program observed. SL=Sabine Lake, GB=Galveston Bay, MB=Matagorda Bay, SAB=San Antonio Bay, AB=Aransas Bay, CCB=Corpus Christi Bay, ULM=Upper Laguna Madre, LLM=Lower Laguna Madre.

Major Bay	SL	GB	MB	SAB	AB	CCB	ULM	LLM	Coastwide
No. of observed traps	83	93	31	48	62	68	31	37	453
% on seagrass	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.30	0.06	0.26	0.00	0.07
% ID present	0.35	0.37	0.48	0.60	0.61	0.32	0.32	0.41	0.42
% in fishable condition	0.17	0.29	0.42	0.77	0.23	0.23	0.42	0.57	0.34
% degradable panel present	0.40	0.67	0.23	0.42	0.14	0.14	0.19	0.14	0.34
% degradable panel open	0.52	0.30	0.33	0.55	0.60	0.57	1.00	0.40	0.41
% escape rings present	0.76	0.70	0.74	0.88	0.80	0.46	0.45	0.49	0.67

Overall, out of pocket expenses for the project (not counting administrative salaries) were approximately \$14,000. However, this was recovered through a donation of a grant secured by CCA from the FishAmerica Foundation funded by the NOAA Restoration Center.

Donations to the project were 600 pairs of waterproof gloves (Best Manufacturing), 200 crab trap gaffs (Wimberly Investments), 200 12' x 14' vinyl tarpaulins (Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program), \$600 worth of drinks (HEB), 600 samples of suntan lotion (SmartShield), and 600 grab bags of fishing tackle (Berkley), plus donated services for disposal, hauling, and dump fee waivers.

Staff made 22 presentations to 14 different organizations in eight different cities, expending 2,916 man-hours to the program, either by making presentations or facilitating drop off sites.

DISCUSSION

The number of traps collected is clearly indicative of the problem in Texas and should be indicative of the problem in other states. Anecdotal information suggests that there could be thousands of traps still out in Texas bays. This is not unexpected due to prior estimates (based on interviews with crab fishermen) running over 30,000 traps lost each year in Texas. This effort was concentrated in the shallow waters along shorelines of islands and the main land, however there is plenty of deep water that is likely harboring more traps. Although low tides were occurring on the morning of the 23 February, it appears that extremely low tides often associated with a frontal passage may make conditions more favorable for better trap removal, exposing more traps to passing observers. A method to find and collect deep-water traps would be useful in collecting more traps.

A large amount of effort went into coordinating the trap removal program, however while difficult to measure, it has been deemed a successful first run at removing traps from the Texas coast by most parties involved. Most likely volunteer enthusiasm had a lot to do with it, a directed promotional program involving many presentations, media attention, the relatively large number of stakeholder groups/organizations in Texas, and the freshness of the program that appealed to many interests.

The staff directed presentations to stakeholder groups and media attention was successful in recruiting volunteers. Organizations with sport fishing ties were targeted as the most likely to volunteer to participate in the program. Often these types of organizations are well established, having numerous members, and generally have a resource/habitat protection mission or goal that lend them to be ideally suited to participate in such programs. Drawbacks were that some organizations were too wide spread (many chapters spread out over a wide area) to approach with one or two presentations. This led to several chapters of the same organization being approached, when ideally one presentation to the main chapter or head quarters would condense staff effort. Also these types of organizations may not be networked with each other enough to ensure that word gets out to all chapters. Therefore approaching each individual chapter may be the best solution even though more staff effort is required. Media, particularly written media, is often looking for new stories and the freshness of this program was well suited and should not be overlooked in future endeavors. Several contacts with volunteers were made simply by people reading about the program in "x" paper.

Using volunteers as the "backbone" of the program can have many problems. The uncertainty of their participation is always a factor to consider. Also, getting accurate response to enquiries on the amount of resources offered can be difficult to access and plan for. Liability issues, especially when department equipment is involved, have to be addressed. Ensuring accurate information dissemination can be of concern. However, the costs associated with conducting such a project with only department resources and staff would outweigh the problems considering the magnitude of such a project, therefore the uncertainties must be coordinated around a "worst case scenario". In this case,

coordinators would have to plan around the possibility of little or no volunteer participation.

It has been suggested that conducting cost-benefit analyses of the program be considered. One important tool of cost-benefit analysis is the benefit-to-costs ratio, which is the total monetary cost of the benefits or outcomes divided by the total monetary costs of obtaining them. While cost to operate the project is fairly easy to obtain, the benefits are extremely difficult to measure. The data collection design did not effectively address the intangible benefits of removing traps, such as value of organisms “saved”, the value of removing debris from the water, the loss of productivity of the fisherman, or the value of reducing user conflicts. A simplistic calculation could take into account the value of the resources “saved” for the brief time period and extrapolate the savings over some longer time period (such as estimated ex-vessel value of the crabs and other organisms over several years). However, the accountability based on the assumptions associated with this calculation based on minimal information does not lend itself to evaluation purposes.

Nevertheless, there are numerous benefits to removing abandoned crab traps. For one, waste of organisms associated with the “ghost fishing” of these traps will be reduced. Those organisms that were released will have the potential to contribute to spawning success of the species or can be harvested, as in the case of blue crabs, at a later date. Cleaning up the bays of unsightly debris has aesthetic value. Removing traps should reduce user conflicts. Additionally, there are benefits to species of special concern, such as diamondback terrapins *Malaclemys terrapin*. The many benefits associated with removing abandoned crab traps give reason to continue the program into the future.

STAFF RECCOMENDATIONS

Re-evaluate the use of data card for volunteers at facilitated sites. Redundant given that staff kept track of all traps brought to the site.

Consolidate sites where there was little or no turnout of volunteers

Obtain washing equipment for cleaning up site/docks after the event

Implement awards program to recognize individual(s) effort and to garner future support/participation.

Involve commercial crab industry by invitation.

Obtain more crab trap hooks.

Document incidence of escape rings and degradable panels that have been intentionally disabled.

Document the presence or absence of bait in traps.

Document the location of trap as being on shore or in water.

Start times and end times should be earlier, e.g. 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The initial seven-day period of the closure should be arranged to allow game wardens to collect traps without the burden of storing traps as evidence.

Plan for more shore based personnel to cope with the traps collected at dock.

Appendix 1. List of participant organizations and/or donors to the 2002 Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program.

Aransas County	Saltwater Conservation Association of Texas
Bass Enterprises	Saltwater-Fisheries Enhancement Association
Berkley	Shore Fishing and Casting Club International
Boots & Coots International Well Control	Smart Shield
Brazoria County	Stingaree Marina
Calhoun County	Team Oso
Cameron County Causeway Bait Camp	Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Science Club
Best Manufacturing	Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Tri-Beta Society
Center for Fisheries Research and Development- Gulf Coast Research Laboratory	Texas General Land Office
Chambers County	Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network
Charlie's Bait Stand	Texas Parks and Wildlife
Christmas Bay Foundation	Texas Outdoor Writers Association
City of Aransas Pass	Trailer Trash
City of Corpus Christi	U.S. Coast Guard Auxillary
City of Kingsville	University of Texas Marine Science Institute
City of Palacios	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
City of Port Lavaca	Valley Sportsman Club
Clear Creek Environmental Foundation	Victoria College Biology Club
Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program	Waste Management Inc.
Coastal Bend Guides Association	Willacy County
Coastal Conservation Association	Wimberly Investments
Commercial Metals	
Crawley's Bait Camp	
Dawson Recycling	
Eagle Point Bait Camp	
ExxonMobil	
Galveston County	
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission	
HEB	
Jefferson County	
Kirby Inland Marine	
Marker 37 Marina	
Matagorda County	
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources	
Padre Island National Seashore	
Pompano Lease Service, Inc.	
Port Mansfield Port Authority	
Port of Bay City	
Republic Waste Services	
Saltwater Anglers League of Texas	

Appendix 2. Front and back page of general public data collection card.

NAME _____ DATE _____

LOCATION _____

PLEASE PUT ONE CHECK MARK FOR EACH TRAP COLLECTED

	1	2	3	4	5

Attention: It is unlawful to retain crabs taken from traps collected during this closure.

COMMENTS: _____

Appendix 2. Front (above) and back page (below) of general public data collection card.

TEXAS ABANDONED CRAB TRAP DATA CARD
*****TRAPS CAN ONLY BE REMOVED FROM FEB. 23 TO MAR. 3*****

INSTRUCTIONS

- Please fill in your name & phone number in case TPW has any questions.
- Please fill in the date that you collected the traps.
- Location can be major bay or minor bay.
- Please put a check mark in each box for each trap collected.
- Use the comments section for any unusual observations.

SAFETY TIPS

- Wear life vest, gloves, protective clothing
- Use caution with barnacles, shell, rusty wire
- Be careful when pulling/lifting traps stuck in mud
- Use VHF radio or cell phone for emergency communication

IN THE EVENT OF FOUL WEATHER:

The decision to postpone the first day's efforts in case of inclement weather will be made sometime that morning at the local level. Nevertheless, using common sense would dictate whether to participate or not during marginal weather conditions.

Trap Drop-Off sites will be manned from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Other trap disposal can be facilitated by contacting one of the following:

TPWD CONTACTS

Sabine Lake	Jerry Mambretti	(409) 983-1104
Galveston Bay	Lance Robinson	(281) 474-2811
Matagorda Bay	Bill Balboa	(361) 972-6253
San Antonio Bay	Norman Boyd	(361) 983-4425
Aransas Bay	Karen Meador	(361) 729-2328
Corpus Christi Bay	Terry Cody	(361) 729-2328
Upper Laguna Madre	Kyle Spiller	(361) 825-3353
Lower Laguna Madre	Randy Blankinship	(956) 350-4490
Coastwide Coordinator	Art Morris	(361) 825-3356

Please return data cards to the facilitator on site or mail to:

Texas Parks and Wildlife
Attn: Art Morris
6300 Ocean Drive, Ste. 2500
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Appendix 3. Front and back page of data observer card.

NAME _____	DATE _____					
LOCATION _____						
<i>PLEASE FILL OUT ONE COLUMN PER TRAP</i>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 2 3 4 5 </div>					
1. Was trap lying on seagrass? (Y/N)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
2. ID present(gear tags, # on buoy) (Y/N)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
3. Condition of trap? Usable (U) Non-usable (N)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
4. Degradable panel present (Y/N)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
4a. If yes, was degradable panel open? (Y/N)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
5. Escape vents/rings present (Y/N)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
 <i>Number of bycatch species/live (L) or dead (D) Eg. Blue crab=2L 1D</i>						
Blue crab	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
Stone crab	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
Diamondback terrapin(See description on back)	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
<i>Other species, please write in:</i>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 15px;"><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>					
COMMENTS						

Appendix 3. Front (above) and back page (below) of data observer card.

TEXAS ABANDONED CRAB TRAP DATA CARD

INSTRUCTIONS
 Please fill out a column for each trap. Location can be major bay or minor bay.
 Question 3, **Usable** (fishable with minor repairs)
Non-usable (too heavily damaged to be fished)
 Question 4: Degradable panel (can be loop of string or wire for attaching trap lid tie-down strap OR 3"x6" panel on side of trap.
 Question 5: Escape vents present (PVC rings 2 3/8" in diameter located on the outside trap walls)

SAFETY TIPS
 Wear life vest, gloves, protective clothing
 Use caution with barnacles, shell, rusty wire
 Be careful when pulling/lifting traps stuck in mud
 Use VHF radio or cell phone for emergency communication

IN THE EVENT OF FOUL WEATHER:
 The decision to postpone the first day's efforts in case of inclement weather will be made sometime that morning at the local level. Nevertheless, using common sense would dictate whether to participate or not during marginal weather conditions.
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Coastwide Coordinator	Art Morris	(361) 825-3356

Please return data cards to the facilitator on site or mail to:

Texas Parks and Wildlife
 Attn: Art Morris
 6300 Ocean Drive, Ste. 2500
 Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Diamondback terrapin ID
 -Usually have small black spots on heads and legs
 -May have blue or gray heads & a diamond shaped spot on head
 -The shell is brown to black, w/ diamond-shaped patterns;underside yellow or brown

Appendix 4. 2002 Abandoned crab trap removal program volunteer liability waiver form.

LIABILITY RELEASE

In consideration for the opportunity to participate in the Crab Trap Cleanup on or about February 23, 2002, **I AGREE TO RELEASE, DISCHARGE, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS THE TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT FROM ANY AND ALL CLAIMS, LOSSES, DAMAGES, DEMANDS, CAUSES OF ACTION, SUITS, AND LIABILITY OF EVERY KIND RESULTING FROM THE CRAB TRAP CLEANUP, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY CLAIM FOR LOSS, DAMAGE, OR DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, OR INJURY (INCLUDING DEATH) REGARDLESS OF WHETHER SUCH LOSS ARISES IN WHOLE OR IN PART FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF TPWDD.** The released parties include all agents, employees, officers, directors, and contractors of TPWDD. I have read this release and I understand all of its terms.

I understand that water activities pose risks of personal injury and property damage, including but not limited to drowning, animal stings or bites, and hypothermia. I understand that litter such as abandoned crab traps presents dangers of cuts, punctures, and other injury.

I understand that I am participating in the Crab Trap Cleanup at my own risk and that TPWDD does not have responsibility for my safety or the safety of persons under my care.

I WILL WEAR A PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE (LIFE PRESERVER) AT ALL TIMES WHILE IN OR ON THE WATER AND I WILL ASSURE THAT ALL PERSONS UNDER MY CARE DO SO AS WELL. I WILL USE ALL APPROPRIATE PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT TO PROTECT MYSELF AND ALL PERSONS UNDER MY CARE FROM INJURY DUE TO LITTER.

I sign this release voluntarily and with full knowledge of the legal consequences.

Signature of Volunteer or Parent/Guardian

(Parent/Guardian must sign if participant is under 18)

Date

 Printed Name