



Derelict Crab Trap Removal Project

Project Status

Project Year: 2016 **Status:** Complete
Category: Volunteer **Location:** Barataria Basin
Project Partners: LA Wildlife & Fisheries, NOAA
 Jean Lafitte Harbor, Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary
 Foundation

Background and Problem Addressed:

Crab traps were introduced in Louisiana as early as 1948 and their use has become widely accepted over the years. Since the 1970s, trap landings have contributed over 99% of total blue crab landings.

Every year large numbers of crab traps are lost or abandoned due to a variety of reasons. These are called “derelict” crab traps. Trap loss may result from extreme weather conditions such as tropical storms or hurricanes. Strong wind and waves can displace traps or cause them to roll along the bottom submerging the buoy lines and buoy. Accidental clippings of the buoy lines by passing vessels, displacement of traps caught in shrimp gear, vandalism, improper disposal of old, unfishable traps and simple abandonment by fishermen are other causes of trap loss.

Derelict traps can “ghost fish!” Ghost fishing is what fishing gear does when it has been lost, dumped or abandoned. Nets, long lines, fish traps or any man-made contraption designed to catch fish or marine organisms are considered capable of ghost fishing when unattended, and without anyone profiting from the catches, they are affecting already depleted commercial fish stocks. Caught fish die and in turn attract scavengers which will get caught in the same net, creating a vicious circle.

The removal of these derelict and abandoned crab traps is important to boating safety and crab harvesting efforts. Removal of these traps reduces ghost fishing mortality of blue crabs and other marine organisms, reduces hazards to safe navigation and conflicts with other fishing gear.





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Project Description:

In February of 2016, BTNEP in partnership with LDWF and NOAA held a crab trap removal event in the Barataria Basin near Lafitte. The event took place at the Jean Lafitte Harbor located at the end of LA 45.

Over 30 volunteers, including boat owners and on the ground volunteers were in attendance to aid in the removal of 844 derelict or “ghost” crab traps from the Barataria Basin. Each volunteer donated approximately seven hours of their time equaling over 200 combined man-hours for the event.

In the week that followed the event, BTNEP and LDWF staff members picked up an additional 250 abandoned crab traps totaling more than 1000 abandoned traps that were collected and smashed for disposal.

The goal of the event was to remove abandoned traps. Abandoned traps increase mortality of blue crabs and other species, as well as, create navigation hazards. The event also served as an educational element designed to reduce the number of traps lost annually and to lessen the impacts of traps in the environment.

The state’s Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program has been a cooperative effort removing more than 25,000 crab traps from Louisiana’s coast for more than a decade.

CCMP Action Items Addressed:

Citizen Involvement Programs and Activities (Sustained Recognition and Citizen Involvement #3)

