



## WeCrab Marine Debris Project Ghost Pot Prevention & Removal

**Volunteer Processing & Community Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017**

### What is the problem?

New Jersey's coastal bays provide Essential Fish Habitat and ecological services to countless Mid-Atlantic species that use these areas during coastal migrations or as seasonal nurseries and habitat. These smaller estuaries support commercial and recreational fishing, boating and eco-tourism, all of which form the backbone of NJ's coastal economy. Commercial crabbers rely heavily on this productive system to make a living. Unfortunately, the dynamic nature of the estuary (seasonal weather, major storms and especially boating traffic) may result in up to 10-20% of gear lost or damaged each year. Gear loss is not limited to the commercial sector, it is also common to the recreational crabbing community (setting commercial-style pots). The recreational sector loss is due not only to boat traffic cut-offs, but also to unfamiliarity with regulations and a lack of working knowledge to properly set commercial-style pots. "Ghost pots" result in loss of product, time, and income for the commercial fishing community and can limit crabs for future capture by both commercial and recreational interests. As the name implies, "ghost pots" may continue to fish after they have been lost – accumulating and removing target (blue crab) and non-target species (oyster toadfish, tautog, rock crab, etc.) from the system.



### Volunteers Needed!

Recovered pots are being stored at the Stockton University Marine Field Station in Port Republic and now need to be inventoried for additional data (condition, cause of loss, weight), broken down, and recycled. **On April 22<sup>nd</sup> scientists, students, commercial crabbers, and volunteers will gather from 9:00– 3:00 at the Field Station to clean up these derelict pots.** Please join us and be prepared to get dirty and learn more about ghost pots and the projects occurring in New Jersey through a variety of informational tables. Lunch will be provided for processing volunteers.

### What specific tasks are needed?

- ▶ Data recorders
- ▶ Weigh station operators
- ▶ Ghost pot inspection teams
- ▶ Breakdown of debris (tools needed for this!)
- ▶ Heavy lifting of debris

## Recommended tools to bring from home:

- ▶ Mini-bolt cutters
- ▶ Tin snips
- ▶ Linesman pliers
- ▶ Safety glasses (an absolute must)
- ▶ Gloves (another absolute must)

## What funding agency is sponsoring this work?

NOAA's Marine Debris Program is supporting the WeCrab Marine Debris Project along with other removal and prevention projects in New Jersey. The WeCrab Marine Debris Project is a partnership between the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve and Stockton University, and compliments additional work being done with other grant partners including, Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, Conserve Wildlife of NJ, MATES, and Monmouth University. These federally funded grants support locally driven, community-based marine debris prevention and removal projects that benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and wildlife.

## What are the project goals?

- ▶ Provide crab pot workshops and presentations for recreational crabbers setting commercial-style pots to reduce gear loss from this sector. These workshops provide WeCrabNJ ***Rig It Right*** kits for the proper deployment of commercial-style pots.
- ▶ Provide professional development opportunities for educators and provide mini-grants for student-led marine debris stewardship projects.
- ▶ Engage students and community members in stewardship activities focused on the processing of recovered gear as part of NOAA-funded removals occurring in coastal bays from southern Ocean County to northern Cape May county.
- ▶ Build on past and current training of commercial crabbers in the use of low-cost side-scan sonar. This training allows recovery of lost gear during the season, reducing annual gear loss while providing economic benefits to the commercial community.

## Directions and further contact information

Community Day Processing Event on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, will take place at:  
Stockton University's Marine Field Station  
30 Wilson Avenue - Port Republic, NJ 08241

For More Information contact Kaitlin Gannon at 609-812-0649 x 206 or email to [gannon@marine.rutgers.edu](mailto:gannon@marine.rutgers.edu)



Photos courtesy of K. Unkert