MARINE DEBRIS PROGRAM

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

ATLANTIC

Demonstration Project for At-sea Retrieval and Shore-side Removal of Derelict Fishing Gear from the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

Derelict fishing gear in the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the Gulf of Maine is a pervasive problem with chronic impacts. The problem impacts fishermen by causing them to spend valuable fishing time disentangling the derelict gear and it impacts NOAA and the public by degrading marine resources in the sanctuary including the possible entanglement of endangered and protected marine mammals. Fishermen are frustrated with this recurring problem and want to act responsibly but have few options for addressing it. Working with a local dragger, the SBNMS is conducting a demonstration project that will help clean up the sanctuary and protect its resources and will serve as the prototype for developing a long-term solution to this pervasive problem in the sanctuary and the Gulf of Maine.

Capt. Frank Mirarchi and sanctuary staff lead Ben Cowie-Haskell display their successful catch of derelict lobster traps from the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary off of Massachusetts. *Photo courtesy of Dave Haley.*

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

Marine debris is any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes.

MARINE DEBRIS SOURCES

Sources of marine debris include land-based sources, such as littering, dumping, and industrial losses. Ocean-based debris can come from fishing vessels, cargo ships, stationary platforms, and other vessels.

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MANDATES

Mandates supporting NOAA's marine debris efforts include the following:

- Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act of 2006, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1951 et seq.
- U.S. Ocean Action Plan
- Coral Reef Conservation Act
- Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1901 et seq.
- Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, (Title II) 33 U.S.C. §§ 1401 et seq.
- Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.

PARTNERS

- Captain Frank Mirachi, Captain of the fishing vessel, *Barbara L. Peters*
- Mark Patterson, Scituate Harbormaster

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

- Cleaning up the sanctuary
- Reducing the entanglement hazard to marine life
- Collaborating with commercial fishermen to develop solutions
- Understanding the scope of the marine debris problem
- Reducing fishermen's fixed costs (handling the derelict gear)
- Conserving fishery resources through the removal of entanglement hazards

CONTACT

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Derelict traps are hauled away for disposal by a private hauling company. *Photo courtesy of B. Cowie-Haskell.*

Trawler *Barbara L. Peters* is the vessel used in the demonstration project. *Photo courtesy of F. Mirarchi.*

This project is funded through NOAA's National Ocean Service, Office of Response & Restoration, Marine Debris Program. The NOAA Marine Debris Program works with other NOAA offices, as well as other federal, state, and local agencies and private sector partners to support national, state, local and international efforts to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources, oceans, and coastal waterways from the impacts of marine debris.