

ATLANTIC

Sea Debris: Locating and removing derelict fishing gear in the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

The mission of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary is to conserve, protect, and enhance the biodiversity, ecological integrity, and cultural legacy of the area. Derelict fishing gear (DFG) poses an entanglement risk to endangered whales, other marine mammals, fish species, and humans (divers). This project builds on the lessons learned from the demonstration project completed in 2007, and has three primary objectives:

- The first objective (assessment) is to assess where DFG is likely to be found, and locate conglomerations for later retrieval.
- The second objective (retrieval and disposal) is to retrieve DFG in one of three ways: a) by returning to locations identified previously; b) by retrieving gear reported by fishermen; or c) retrieving gear with a non-invasive collecting device. Disposal of the retrieved gear is a critical and essential part of the proposed work and requires coordination with the Town of Scituate. The outcome of this objective will be to retrieve and dispose of two metric tons of DFG.
- The third objective (education and outreach) will involve efforts to make fishermen and other users of the sanctuary, aware of the detrimental effects of derelict gear on ecosystem health and the benefits of removing it. To aid in this, an informational video documentary will be created.



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.

ATLANTIC

Sea Debris: Locating and removing derelict fishing gear in the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

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.

CURRENT PARTNERS

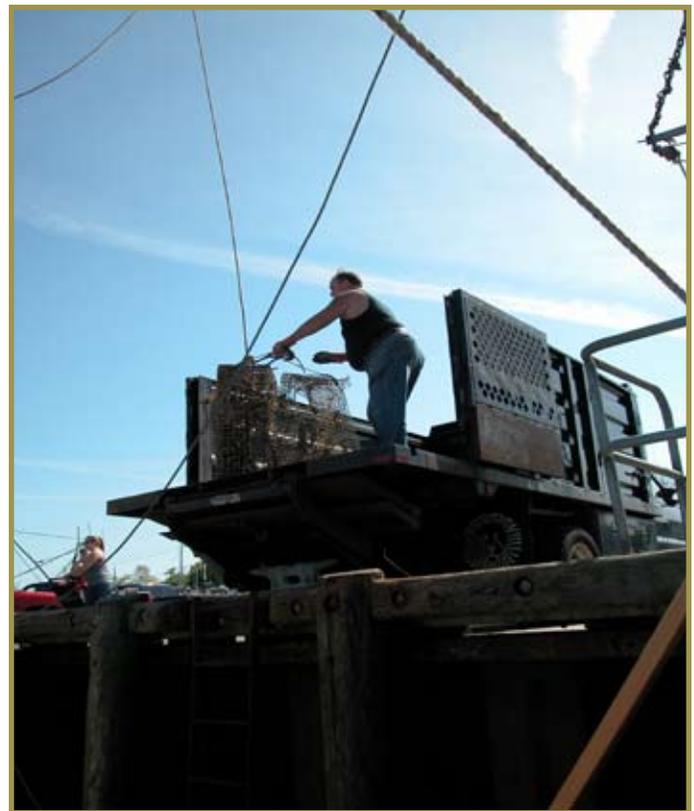
- Captain Frank Mirarchi
- Scituate Harbormaster Mark Patterson

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

CONTACTS

Ben Cowie-Haskell
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
Ben.Haskell@noaa.gov
(781) 545-8026 x207



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

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.