



FWC Trap Retrieval Programs

November 16, 2016

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Marine Fisheries Management

Derelict traps

- 3 major trap fisheries in Florida
- Traps may become lost or abandoned
- Traps are considered derelict when they remain in the water during the closed season, or lack certain elements during the open season



Derelict traps

- Impact marine life, the environment, and public safety
 - Continue to trap marine life (“ghost fishing”)
 - May also trap small turtles, birds
 - Navigational hazards



Trap Retrieval Programs

- 1980s through early 2000s: volunteers, law enforcement, and commercial fishermen
- 2006: Spiny Lobster/Stone Crab Trap Retrieval Program implemented
- 2009: FWC implements blue crab closures specifically to facilitate the removal of lost and abandoned traps



Trap Retrieval Programs

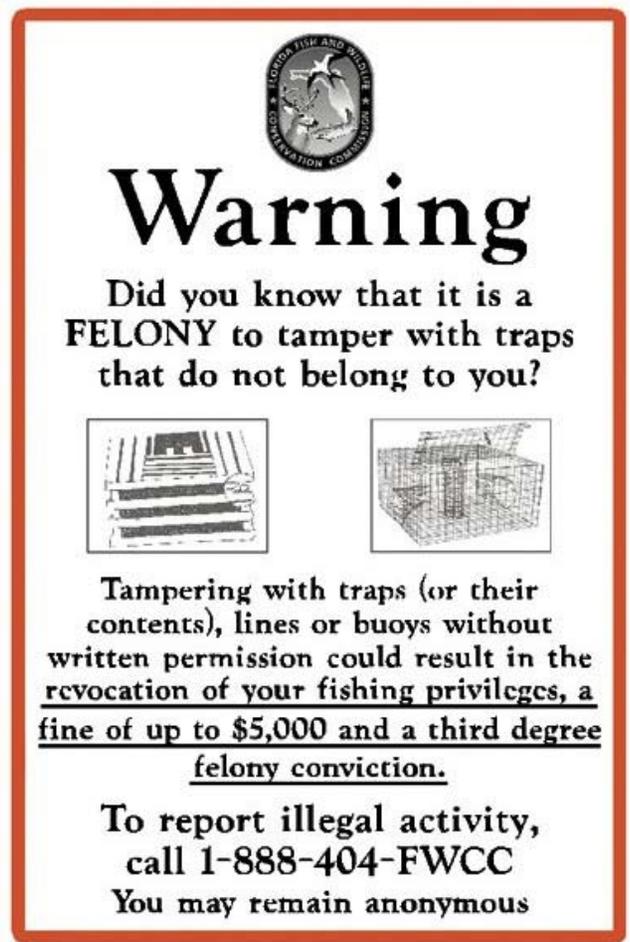
- FWC contracts with commercial fishers during the closed season to remove derelict spiny lobster, stone crab, and blue crab traps
- FWC observers are onboard all commercial boats participating in trap retrieval operations
- FWC also provides authorization for volunteer groups to conduct derelict trap cleanups



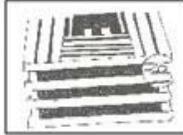
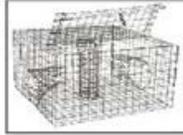
Trap Retrieval Programs

Volunteer Group Cleanups

- Groups must apply for and receive authorization to remove derelict traps and trap debris
- Must be an organized cleanup event
- Strict trap laws; also apply to derelict traps




Warning
Did you know that it is a **FELONY** to tamper with traps that do not belong to you?

Tampering with traps (or their contents), lines or buoys without written permission could result in the revocation of your fishing privileges, a fine of up to \$5,000 and a third degree felony conviction.

To report illegal activity, call 1-888-404-FWCC
You may remain anonymous

FWC Spiny Lobster, Stone Crab, and Blue Crab Trap Retrieval Program

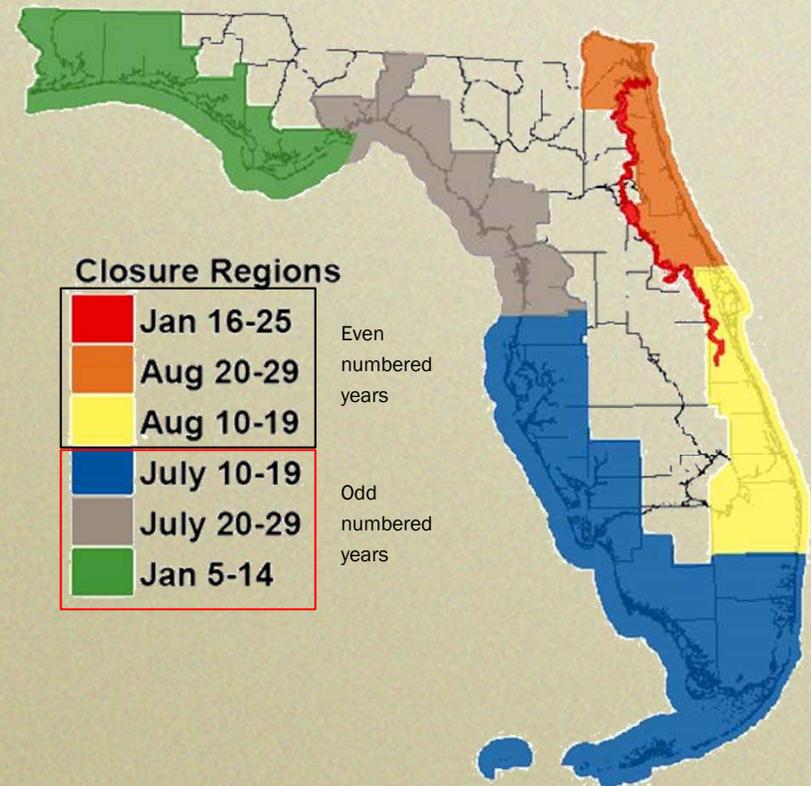
- Focus operations from Monroe through Wakulla Counties
- Target buoyed traps left in the water after end of trap pulling extension periods
- Remove approx. 5,000 traps annually



FWC Blue Crab Trap Retrieval Program

- Statewide program
- Six 10-day closure regions
- In the first year (2009), removed approximately 5,000 traps
- Rely on volunteer group cleanups to help cover large areas

Blue Crab Trap Closure Regions



- All closures except the St. John's River system extend to three miles offshore.
- Blue crab traps attached to private property (e.g. docks) are excluded from closures
- The July 20-29 closure includes all waters of the Ochlockonee River and Bay and the Ochlockonee River and Bay is excluded from the January 5-14 closure



Program Results

- Approximately 40,000 derelict traps removed from 2007 through 2014
- 76% of these traps were removed by FWC Trap Retrieval Programs
- 24% of these traps were removed by volunteers participating in authorized derelict trap cleanup events.



What happens to the traps?

- All traps and trap debris removed is destroyed and disposed of at local landfills
- Traps owners are assessed a \$10 retrieval fee for each trap removed
- Trap owners also lose the \$25-\$30 invested to build each trap



How does this apply to BBRCT?

- BBRCT can help the Trap Retrieval Program by forwarding locations of derelict traps
- BBRCT can help make recreational and commercial trappers aware of upcoming closures (every other year for blue crab)



Questions?



FWC Trap Retrieval Program

Division of Marine Fisheries Management

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