

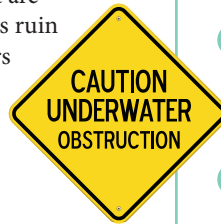


LOST AT SEA: abandoned traps snag bycatch and boats



Ten tips to prevent derelict crab traps and ghost fishing:

- 1 Avoid passing too close to trap buoys, accidentally cutting the lines.
- 2 Always check lines, knots and buoys for proper function.
- 3 Avoid setting traps in navigational areas.
- 4 Make sure traps haven't drifted into high-traffic areas.
- 5 Properly discard unfishable traps.
- 6 Attach a common float if you accidentally sever someone else's buoy line.
- 7 Remove traps before predicted major weather events (tropical storms and hurricanes).
- 8 If possible, use easily degradable escape rings to prevent ghost fishing.
- 9 Secure traps to boat while navigating.
- 10 Practice proper spacing of traps for easy vessel passage.



Ghosts lurk just below Louisiana's waters. Lost or abandoned blue crab traps continue to capture crabs and other marine animals through a process known as "ghost-fishing." Each derelict trap kills nearly 26 blue crabs annually. Considering that thousands of traps are abandoned each year, the impact to the fishery could be considerable.

Where do these traps come from?

Traps can become lost or abandoned— 'derelict'— for many reasons: accidental loss due to tides, currents or storm surges; weathering of buoys or lines; clipping of lines by boat propellers; unintentional capture and displacement by shrimp gear; deliberate cutting of buoy lines; theft and abandonment of cages; and improper disposal of old traps. Theft is another. Illegal fishers will steal and then abandon trap lines.

Are all derelict crab traps illegal?

Only derelict traps that have been lost or abandoned and are within an approved closure area are illegal.

Do derelict traps only affect animals?

No, shrimpers can snag derelict traps in their trawls, damaging nets and interfering with turtle excluder device (TED) efficiency. Derelict traps are also a safety and navigational hazard to boaters. Recreational anglers can lose fishing line, tackle and gear caught on unseen traps, adding to the marine debris problem. Plus, shorelines and marshes that are littered with old, abandoned traps ruin the beauty of our coast for visitors and residents alike.

If I see a derelict trap or snag it on my boat or fishing tackle, can I keep it?

As a rule, no. Only the owner of the crab trap may remove it. Shrimpers should add a common float (clean bleach bottle), return the working trap to water. Unfishable traps should be brought to shore for proper disposal.

What can be done about this problem?

Getting involved with the derelict crab trap program and following trap loss prevention tips are key recommendations.



! If you locate derelict traps, report them to LA Sea Grant at https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5atgRlrQyUB11RP??

