



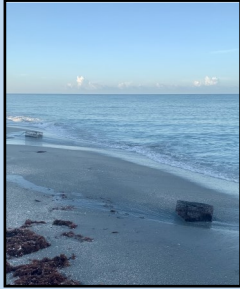
# A CRAB TRAP CONUNDRUM

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## PROBLEM

On Manasota Key in southwest Florida, Coastal Wildlife Club (CWC) turtle patrollers regularly encounter crab traps washed onto our beaches. Some are in good condition with current permit and identification tags. Others are clearly trash. In neither case was it permissible to remove the traps from nesting habitat. In Florida, touching or moving traps without authorization is a third-degree felony (Florida Administrative Code 68B-55). We were unsuccessful in finding guidance to address this debris problem despite contacting local and state government agencies.



Traps remained, often for years, obstructing the progress of sea turtles and posing hazards to beach walkers.



## SOLUTION

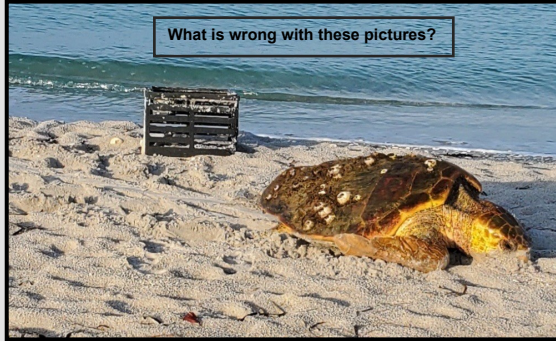
At the Florida Marine Turtle Permit Holder Meeting (FMTPHM) in January 2020, we learned that Florida's Marine Debris Program includes a permitting process authorizing legal removal of crab traps during special clean-up events, in many cases organized by groups such as ours. These were typically one-day, in-water clean-ups but trap removal on the beaches could be authorized as well and over a longer period.

Monitoring about 14 miles of beach daily during the May through October (west coast) sea turtle season, CWC patrollers are ideally situated to document trap locations and to remove traps from the beaches.

The solution was hiding in plain sight!

We requested a permit for the sea turtle season. Upon approval, a group of CWC turtle patrollers completed training using FWC protocols for trap removal. To streamline communication, we added several procedures appropriate to our area. Charlotte and Sarasota counties gave us access to secure areas for trap disposal. Training and identifying secure disposal areas were requirements of our permit.

Because traps wash in all year, our current permits authorize year-round removal from the beaches and waters of Charlotte and Sarasota counties.



We find blue crab traps (above), that are light weight and made of wire. Most, though, are stone crab traps (left), now usually plastic but older ones are wooden. Concrete slabs are added to both.

## OUTCOMES

- Cleaner, safer and more debris-free beaches for sea turtles and for people
- Increased public awareness about this project
- Collaboration with staff in both Charlotte and Sarasota counties
- Relationships with the crab fishing community whom we contact for pick-up of fishable traps

**4/30/2020—12/31/2024:  
REMOVED: 217 TRAPS**

## FOR THE FUTURE

- Continuing all of the above
- Addressing the challenge of traps in the water close to shore, many of them clumped together, partially buried, and in tangled lines



**SPECIAL THANKS** to the CWC Crab Trap Removal Team: Jill Auman, Jo Ellen Blake-Wingate, Robbie and Don Brooks, Will Howell, Gene McCoy, Lori Newton, Pauline Logsdon, Doug Stone, Karen Gilbert, John Kesch, Norma Jean Zvosek, Judy Peck Demiersman, Ted Johnson, Helen Dumond, and  
To staff in Charlotte and Sarasota counties, Ranger Metairie Luse at Stump Pass Beach State Park, Pamela Gruver, FWC, Division of Marine Fisheries Management, Karen Blackford, Friend of CWC; and  
To The Englewood Sun and The Englewood Review for their support; and  
To Steve Daniel, Dottie Johns, Emily Rizzo, Su Young, Lori Newton for the PHOTOS.

[coastalwildlifeclub.org](http://coastalwildlifeclub.org)



**The trouble with traps**  
It's illegal to touch one, so this group stepped in  
By STEVE HEBLY  
SUN LOCAL NEWS  
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission oversees and enforces laws regarding traps, trap construction, trap placement, and trap use. It also oversees a permit process for trap use. The commission's permit process is a third-degree felony conviction, with fines of up to \$5,000 and the possibility of a year in prison.  
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