



Louisiana's Ghostly Problem: Derelict Crab Traps



In Louisiana's coastal ecosystem, ghosts lurk just below the water's surface. Blue crab traps that have been lost continue to capture crabs and other marine species through a process called ghost fishing.

Each trap that becomes derelict removes nearly 26 blue crabs from the fishery each year.

In 2004, the Louisiana State Legislature recognized the problem in our state and gave the authority to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to set brief annual closures of the blue crab fishery under R. S. 56:332 (N) to permit the removal of derelict crab traps.



Since the start of the program, more than 20,000 derelict traps have been removed from Louisiana waters. The success of the removal programs depends on the active awareness by all user groups.



Tips for preventing derelict crab traps:

1. Don't intentionally cut buoy 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 areas of high traffic.
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.
8. If possible, use easily degradable cull rings or hog rings to prevent ghost fishing.
9. Secure traps to boat while navigating.
10. Report derelict crab traps.



Sea Grant
Louisiana

SU
AgCenter
Research & Extension