

# FISHING FOR ENERGY: COMPLETED PROJECT SUMMARY



**Project Title:** Derelict Lobster Gear Assessment, Removal, and Prevention

**Grantee:** Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

**Location:** Western Long Island Sound, New York

**Award Amount:** \$52,785

## Results

- **20 sq. miles** assessed for derelict fishing gear
- **10** fishermen engaged
- **25.95 tons** of gear removed and returned, recycled or converted into energy
- Most traps (2,221) had the required escape vent but **1/3** were submerged and not working (77 traps did not have an escape vent)
- **478** lobsters were found in the traps. 459 were alive and 19 were dead.
- **New** grappling technique was created that will more efficiently remove traps in future efforts.



"Low quality" trap retrieved



Researcher sorting collected trap



Crushing unclaimed traps for disposal in *Fishing for Energy* bin

## Summary of Accomplishments:

Cornell Cooperative Extension conducted a total of 28 research trips from September-November 2010 to assess the presence and abundance of derelict fishing gear in areas of Western Long Island Sound. In addition to this assessment, they also piloted a trap retrieval program that engaged local fishermen. As a result of this project, 2,298 derelict lobster traps were removed (29.95 tons) and were recycled and processed into clean renewable energy at the Covanta Energy "energy from waste" recovery facility in Hempstead, NY. The success of this project was manifested through the cooperation of the lobster industry by the completion of industry surveys, planning sessions of operation field plans, and executing the field work. This pilot program proved that a substantial quantity of abandoned lobster traps have accumulated in the western sound and proven methodology was developed to successfully remove abandoned lobster traps in the future.

## Lessons Learned:

- Abandoned lobster traps are a problem in the study area, Northport/Huntington complex, within the Western Long Island Sound. Densities of traps exceeded expectations and are likely to occur in similar densities in other parts of the Sound.
- These traps not only contribute to the problems associated with marine debris, a significant number of them are still catching lobsters and are thus adding to the "fishing effort" for the area.
- A proven grappling methodology was developed as part of this project to successfully remove abandoned traps in the future.
- Approximately one third of the lobster traps were submerged in the mud rendering the escape vents ineffective while the entrance was still accessible for marine species to enter. Many marine species were unable to escape due to vent failure.



Trap retrieval site map

A video on this project and additional information about the projects and grant opportunities supported by the Fishing for Energy Program can be found at [www.nfwf.org/FishingforEnergy](http://www.nfwf.org/FishingforEnergy).