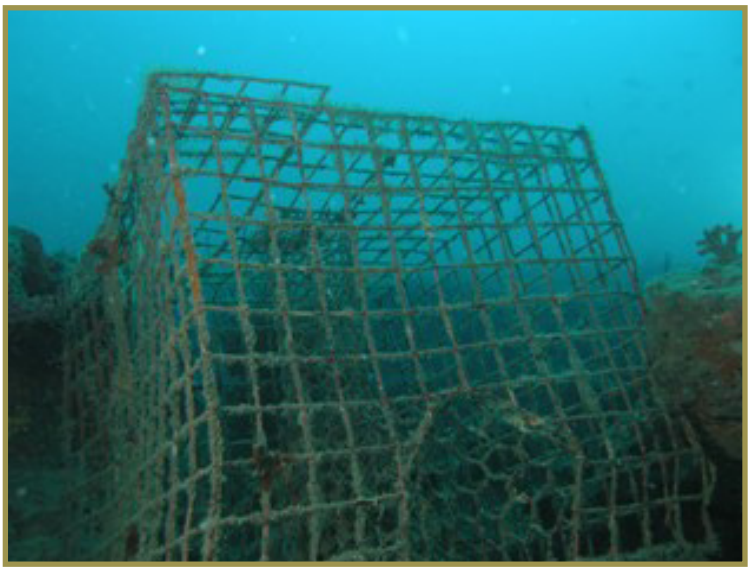
ATLANTIC

Recovery and Subsequent Disposal of Ghost Black Sea Bass Traps in the U.S. South Atlantic Fishery Management Area

The southern Black Sea Bass (BSB) (*Centropristis striata*) stock has been declared "overfished and currently overfishing" by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service. BSB fishing is conducted on hard bottom; the locations where the fish occur are well known. In the South Atlantic most traps are set in depths between 40 and 100 feet, depths well within the reach of SCUBA survey.



Derelict Black Sea Bass trap on the ocean floor.

To date no effort has been made to collect or quantify the numbers of traps lost in North Carolina waters nor has anyone attempted a diving survey of areas where traps are known to have been lost. This project employs towed video and recovery divers to undertake systematic trap removal using a statistically sound survey design.

The expected outcomes of this project include:

- Estimation of occurrence, configuration, and possible effects of such gear on fish stocks through unreported mortality
- Assessment of hard bottom habitat damage through video documentation
- Trap removal to prevent further ghost fishing, navigation hazards, and whale and turtle interactions
- Outreach and education to fishermen, divers, and the public

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

Marine debris is any manufactured or man-made solid material that enters the coastal or marine environment. It may enter directly when it is lost or dumped from a ship, or indirectly when debris washes out to sea via rivers, streams, and storm drains.

MARINE DEBRIS SOURCES

Sources of marine debris include land-based sources, such as littering, dumping, and industrial losses. Ocean-based debris can come from fishing vessels, cargo ships, stationary platforms, and other vessels.

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MANDATES

Mandates supporting NOAA's marine debris efforts include the following:

- Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act of 2006, S.362
- U.S. Ocean Action Plan
- Coral Reef Conservation Act
- Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1901 et seq.
- Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, (Title II) 33 U.S.C. §§ 1401 et seq.
- Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.

Removed derelict Black Sea Bass Trap.

PARTNERS

- NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Beaufort Laboratory
- Anthony Austin, Commercial Fisherman
- George and Robert Purifoy, Olympus Dive Center, Morehead City, NC
- North Carolina Maritime Museum, Beaufort, NC,
- North Carolina Aquariums (Roanoke Island, Pine Knoll Shores, and Fort Fisher)
- Marine Grafics

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

- Removal of Black Sea Bass (BSB) traps yield cleaner underwater habitat; no ghost fishing traps
- Reuse and recycling of recovered traps yields less garbage sent to landfills and serves as an educational tool
- Helps end overfishing of BSB stocks by presenting project results to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council with recommendations for BSB fishery management
- Produce and distribute pamphlets to create a broader awareness of derelict fishing gear and encourage more public participation and environmental stewardship
- Demonstrate scientifically sound marine debris collection and reach broad scientific audience through publication in peer-reviewed scientific journal
- Establish a partnership with North Carolina Maritime Museum and Aquariums to highlight importance of removing derelict fishing gear and emphasize how people can help through sharing information and producing a DVD

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