



For immediate release  
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## **Derelict Crab Trap Removal Event Set for January 23**

*Ruskin, FL*- On the morning of Saturday, January 23, Tampa Bay Watch, in partnership with the Sea World Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, the Florida Airboat Association and ReelCycle, will conduct a derelict crab trap removal effort at E.G. Simmons park in Ruskin focusing on the waters of Little Manatee River, Wolf Branch and the Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve.

The Florida Airboat Association will provide airboats to aid in locating and retrieving ghost or derelict traps. The primary objective of this project is to remove abandoned traps from the environment and to reduce unnecessary entrapment of marine organisms, such as blue crabs, stone crabs, small commercial and recreationally important fish and brackish water turtles. Manatees, dolphins and sea turtles can also become entangled in the trap line causing injury or death. Other benefits include the removal of marine debris from the environment, reducing boating safety hazards and increasing public awareness on the problems of derelict crab traps.

"This event is great because it gives the opportunity for the Florida Airboat Association and community volunteers to get involved in cleaning up marine debris and helping to keep marine life from needlessly getting caught and killed in abandoned traps," said Serra Herndon, Habitat Restoration Director for Tampa Bay Watch.

It is estimated that there are thousands of derelict crab traps that have been accumulating for decades in Tampa Bay. Each year, Tampa Bay Watch performs surveys to identify derelict traps and conducts clean-ups to remove them. Having conducted 34 crab trap removals since May 2004, Tampa Bay Watch has successfully removed 1,629 traps from the waters of Tampa Bay.

The Tampa Bay Watch derelict crab trap program is conducted by trained volunteers that have a clear understanding of what constitutes a derelict trap. A derelict trap is defined as any trap found in the water during closed season for that species or any fishable trap during open season that lacks at least three of the following: buoy, line, current trap tag, current commercial saltwater products license. If derelict traps are found, do NOT remove them. Instead, record location of the trap either on a GPS or chart and any other pertinent information, then call Tampa Bay Watch to report your findings. For more information identifying derelict crab traps, please contact Serra Herndon at [sherndon@tampabaywatch.org](mailto:sherndon@tampabaywatch.org).

Tampa Bay Watch will be partnering with ReelCycle for this important crab trap removal event. ReelCycle ([www.reelcycle.org](http://www.reelcycle.org)) is a 501(c)(3) entity that focuses on waste reduction and sound management practices for the fishing industry. Devin Sanderson, ReelCycle's Founder and President, said the following about this event: "Each year, hundreds of tons of derelict gear is discarded in landfills or illegally dumped, which can result in 'ghost fishing' or 'ghost traps'. Ghost traps that are lost or abandoned continue to catch crabs and fish in large numbers, threaten stocks, and damage the marine environment. ReelCycle works to create recycling programs for undesirable gear, from collection through disposal, providing both conservation and socioeconomic benefits. ReelCycle will take the crab traps collected during the project and deliver the traps to a metal recycling who will process and melt down the traps to ultimately reuse into a another product. The non-metallic material collected such as stone crab traps, ropes, and floats will be incinerated and converted into energy through a waste-to-energy program. ReelCycle will be able to upcycle these traps into a renewable resource as opposed to being discarded in a landfill."

*Tampa Bay Watch is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) stewardship program dedicated exclusively to the charitable and scientific purpose of protecting and restoring the marine and wetland environments of the Tampa Bay estuary encompassing over 400 square miles of open water and 2,300 square miles of highly- developed watershed. Tampa Bay Watch involves more than 10,000 youth and adult volunteers each year in hands on habitat restoration projects. For more information, visit [www.tampabaywatch.org](http://www.tampabaywatch.org), or call 727-867-8166.*

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Media is welcome at this event on Saturday, January 23, but must arrive at E.G. Simmons Park, 2401 19th Avenue Northwest, Ruskin 33570 by 8:00am. Tampa Bay Watch will have a skiff available at the boat ramp to transport media for on-water interviews with volunteers. To reserve a spot on a Tampa Bay Watch boat or for more information, call Rachel Arndt at 727-867-8166 x233 or email at [rarndt@tampabaywatch.org](mailto:rarndt@tampabaywatch.org). Serra Herndon, Habitat Restoration Director for Tampa Bay Watch, is the day of the event contact. If you should need to reach her on the morning of Saturday, January 23, her cell phone is 813-777-7175.