

# Trinity Bay and East Bay

## Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program (ACTRP)

### 2021 Operational Procedures

*Updated January 2021 by the Galveston Bay Foundation*



*Adapted from the San Antonio Bay Partnership Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program Operational Procedures*



*The statewide Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program is created and managed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)*



*With special thanks to the following Trinity Bay and East Bay site partners and supporters:*



# Important Contacts

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# **Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program (ACTRP) Summary**

*Information below pulled directly from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Website:*

## **What is the Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program?**

The Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program (ACTRP) was created by Senate Bill 1410 during the 77th (2001) Legislative session. This bill granted the TPWD Commission authority to create a ten-day crab trap closure that begins the third Friday of each February. Crab traps left in the water during this time are considered litter and may be disposed of appropriately. Before this law, only law enforcement officials could legally remove abandoned crab traps from Texas' marine waters. Since 2002, volunteers have removed 32,705 abandoned traps from Texas waters.

## **Why remove abandoned crab traps?**

Abandoned, lost or derelict crab traps have been identified as a significant source of mortality for a variety of organisms, many of which are recreationally or commercially important. They also create user conflicts, visual pollution and possibly have negative effects on sensitive habitats like seagrass. Not to mention the costly repairs or loss of valuable fishing time experienced by boaters and fishermen whose motors have come in contact with these lost traps.

## **When can crab trap removal occur?**

Laws allow you to remove crab traps for ten-day period starting on the third Friday in February. The closure will be from February 19, 2021 to February 28, 2021.

TPWD and other organizations will provide marked disposal facilities at various locations in each major bay system for abandoned crab traps. On February 20, 2021, TPWD will help facilitate volunteer efforts at certain sites from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Those that wish to collect traps during other times can contact their nearest TPWD Coastal Fisheries office for more information.

## **How can you help?**

Many volunteers are needed to make this program work. Volunteers are needed to collect traps in the field, unload traps at the dock and count traps as they are unloaded. Many shallow draft vessels, such as flats boats or air boats, are also needed. Larger vessels can be used to shuttle traps from the field to the collection sites.

## **Volunteer Roles**

*(updated with Covid-19 considerations)*

### **Boat volunteer: Boat Captain**

Volunteers with their own flat-bottom bay boats, airboats and other similar boats are needed to go out on the water and recover crab traps. The boat Captain should also be very safety-conscious and promote safety of his/her crew.

### **Boat volunteer: trap collector**

A boat captain should bring a volunteer with them who can help pull traps out of the water once they are located. This volunteer should also help stack the traps on the boat and secure the traps on the boat.

### **Boat volunteer: data collector**

A boat captain should bring an additional volunteer with them who is charged with collecting the data (see data collection instructions and data sheet) and turning in the data once it is complete.

### **Volunteers at the dock**

Arrange for a couple of trusted volunteers to be at the dock location where you plan to bring in the traps. They can help unload the traps, re-count the traps for accuracy, smash the traps flat, help prepare them for transport to a crab trap collection site, help you clean the boat and equipment, etc.

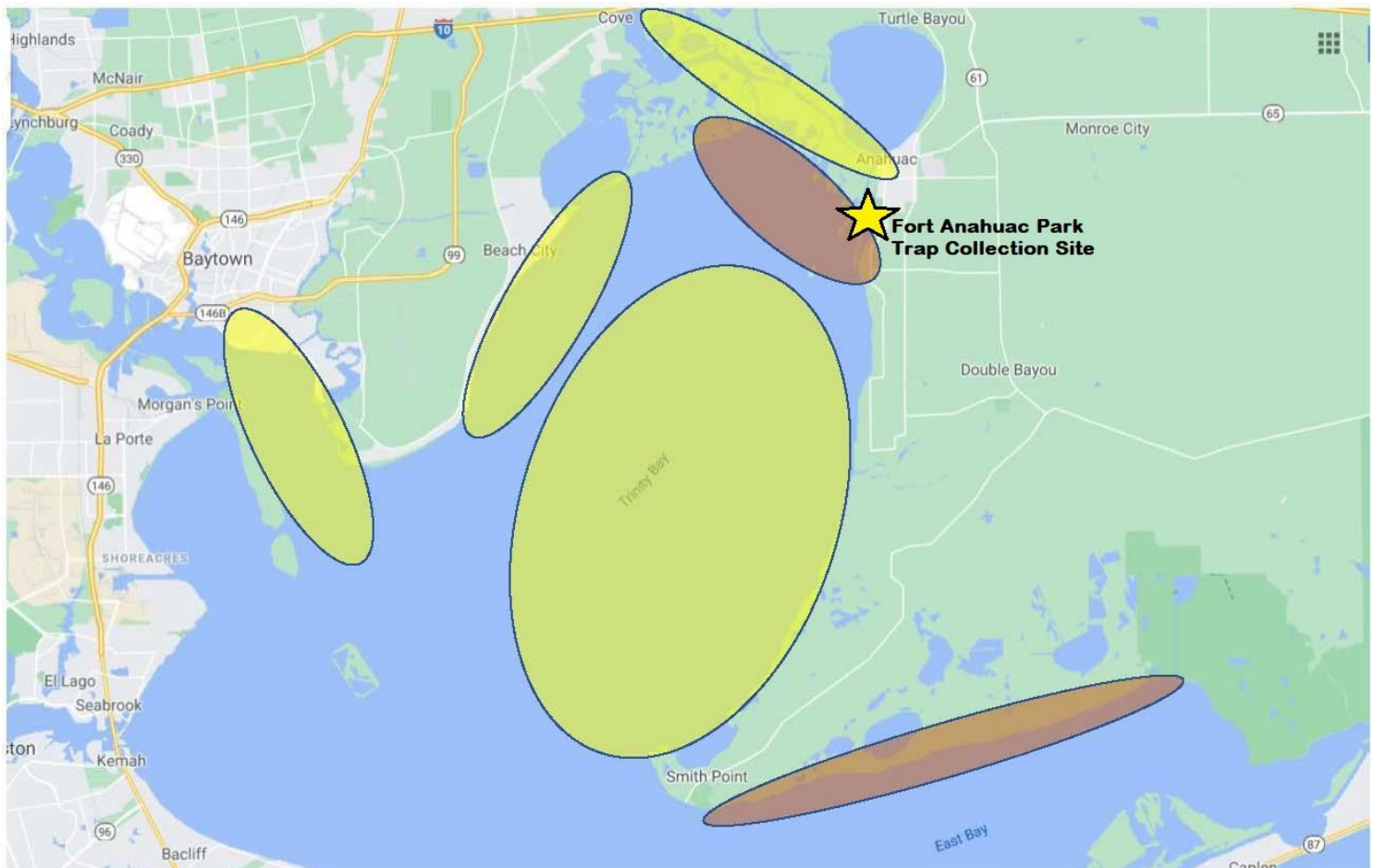
## Locating, Removing and Trashing Crab Traps

Some of the crab trap collection sites have public boat ramps (see list of crab trap collection sites to follow). We have a couple of recommendations on where to look for traps below, but you are welcome to search anywhere in Galveston Bay that you feel is appropriate.

### LOCATION OPTION 1: TRINITY BAY



## TRINITY BAY Potential Crab Trap Locations



There is a public boat ramp at Fort Anahuac Park, and this is also a crab trap collection site (there will be dedicated dumpsters for crab traps at the boat ramp).

## LOCATION OPTION 2: EAST BAY



Stingaree Restaurant & Marina on Bolivar has boat ramp and a dedicated dumpster for crab trap collection... also a great place to grab lunch!



## Scanning the water for crab traps:



***At low tide, look for the tops or sides of crab traps sticking out of the water. BE CAREFUL! Boats can get stuck easily at low tide!***



***On more open water, look for these round, white buoys. These are attached to crab traps.***



## Removing & handling crab traps:



***Use hooks or thick rubber gloves to pull up traps.  
Release live animals back into the water.***



***Secure traps on your boat so they don't fly off!***



***Flatten traps before dumping.  
Stomping with close-toed shoes or  
boots works well.***



## Where to take the traps once collected:

Please take all collected crab traps to one of the official collection sites, so that the trap collection can be monitored by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and partnering agencies. Collection sites are:

Jones Lake State Ramp (Fat Boys)

Dickinson Bayou SH 146 Bridge Public Boat Ramp

Fort Anahuac County Park Boat Ramp

Chocolate Bayou State Boat Ramp FM 2004

TPWD Dickinson Marine Lab —during business hours (M-F, 8am-5pm)

Stingaree Restaurant and Marina (Bolivar)

**At the collection site, look for a large dumpster with this (or similar) banner on it. This is where you toss the crab traps.**



## HELPFUL EQUIPMENT

You may be able to get some of this equipment from Texas Parks and Wildlife. Please contact **Christine Jensen** at the TPWD Dickinson Marine Lab for available equipment, 281-534-0100 or [Christine.Jensen@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Christine.Jensen@tpwd.texas.gov)



## COLLECTING DATA

This crab trap removal program is most effective when we are backing it with data. We need to know the number of traps you collect, what kinds of live animals you find in the traps, and more.

**Data collection form:** On page 21 of this manual. Please fill this out while collecting traps and submit it after you are done (submission instructions are on the form). Be prepared to supply location information, trap count, wildlife data, etc.

You will want to print the form and have it with you on the boat, easily accessible and kept dry. Bring a pencil and clipboard.

**Wildlife Visual ID Guide:** On page 16 of this manual. Use this guide to identify animals that you find in the traps, dead or alive, and document them on the data collection form.

**Protected Wildlife:** Pages 18-20 of this manual. Follow instructions on these pages if you see dolphins, sea turtles or diamondback terrapins.

## Safety

1. Boat captains are responsible for monitoring weather conditions and making operational decisions.
2. Boats must be in compliance with TPWD Boat Safety requirements. See: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/boating/required-safety-equipment>
3. Volunteers should complete the **Liability Release form on page 14** and send a scan or photo to the TPWD ACTRP Coordinator.
4. Winter water hazards include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Strong winds, particularly related to cold fronts that can capsize boats.
  - b. Cold water and air that can lead to hypothermia.
  - c. Fog that interferes with navigation, resulting in collisions, grounding, or stranding.Volunteers should:
  - Let someone know when they will be going out on the water, where they will be going out on the water, and when they plan to be off the water.
  - Monitor local weather conditions and forecasts.
  - Dress warmly, wearing clothes that are waterproof or made of quick drying materials.
  - Carry dry, warm clothes in case someone gets wet.
  - Carry extra water and snacks.
  - Carry a cell phone in a dry bag.
  - Carry a marine radio if you have one (strongly recommended).
5. Handle the traps with caution. Use hooks to snare float/rope. Wear protective, thick gloves to guard against cuts from barnacles or trap wire. Have current tetanus vaccination. Carry first aid kit on boat.
6. Securely strap down traps being transported back to dock to avoid shifting weight and the possibility of traps blowing into crew. Do not overload the boat and risk capsizing.



7. Put these emergency numbers in your cell phone:

- |                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| a. US Coast Guard Search and Rescue | (409) 766-5630 |
| b. Galveston County Sheriffs Office | (409) 766-2302 |
| c. Chambers County Sheriffs Office  | (409) 267-2500 |
| d. Galveston County EMS             | (409) 765-2503 |
| e. Chambers County EMS              | (409) 267-2491 |



*Image shows use of hooks to pull traps out of the water*



*Image shows best personal protective equipment for crab trap removal, including polarized sunglasses, life jacket, thick rubber gloves, long sturdy pants and close-toed anti-slip shoes or boots*

## COVID-19 GUIDELINES

During this time, we strongly recommend that all Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program participants and volunteers follow the below Covid-19 guidelines:

- Keep your boat team small, limit to trusted family or friends.
- When 6ft distance cannot be maintained, wear a mask.
- Bring and use hand sanitizer.
- If you feel unwell or have fever, do not participate in this activity. Please stay home.
- If you have tested positive for Covid-19 within 14 days prior to your planned date of participation in crab trap removal, please cancel your participation and stay home.
- If you have been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19 within 14 days prior to your planned date of participation in crab trap removal, please cancel your participation and stay home.
- Even if you have received your Covid-19 vaccination, it is still recommended to practice social distancing and to wear a mask.

## Environmental Compliance - Wildlife

One of the highlights of a day on the water is the opportunity to see a variety of wildlife, and some animals are protected or are of interest to researchers. Please read the information below on some key animals, and how to help them by following regulations and/or reporting them to the proper entities:

**Sea turtles:** Green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricate*), Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*)- activities will be done in February, outside the nesting sea turtle season (March 15 to October 1). In addition, in the event turtles are present boats will maintain a minimum distance of 150 feet and if sea turtles approach the vessel within 150 feet engines are to be placed in neutral until the animal safely departs.

**Report stranded, sick or injured sea turtles to 1-866-TURTLE5 (1-866-887-8535)**

**Shore birds, wading birds:** When walking along shorelines, driving or moving equipment, please be aware of shorebirds. Common shorebirds are pelicans, herons, egrets, terns, skimmers, plovers, pipers, willets and gulls.

**Report injured birds to (646) 585-0490**

**Diamondback terrapin:** Often referred to as the "jewel of the marsh", this beautiful turtle is the only species of turtle that resides in brackish water. They are named for the design on their shell. These turtles are of interest to many researchers and are considered indicators of the health of Galveston Bay. Diamondback terrapins face threats of habitat loss and accidental drowning in derelict or abandoned crab traps.

**If you find a terrapin, whether healthy or in distress, please let the folks at the Environmental Institute of Houston know at (281) 283-3950**

**Bottlenose dolphin:** The only marine mammal that resides in Galveston Bay. The Bottlenose dolphin is a true dolphin, NOT A PORPOISE. These charismatic animals are often seen following shrimp boats and riding the bows of large ships. Bottlenose dolphins are protected under Federal Law. If you see dolphins, do not approach, feed, chase, interact with or harass them. Keep your boat at least 50 yards (150 feet) away from dolphins at all times. Threats to dolphins include boat strikes, entanglement in trap lines, nets and other discarded fishing gear, disease, and other forms of human interaction.

**If you see an injured, entangled or distressed dolphin, please call 1-800-9MAMMAL**

# WILDLIFE VISUAL ID GUIDE

**Molly Sailfin**

*Poecilia latipinna*



**Red Drum**

*Sciaenops ocellatus*



Juvenile



**Atlantic Croaker**

*Micropogonias undulatus*



Juvenile



**Spot**

*Leiostomus xanthurus*



Juvenile



**Sheepshead Minnow**

*Cyprinodon variegatus*



**Black Drum**

*Pogonias cromis*



**Spotted Trout**

*Cynoscion nebulosus*

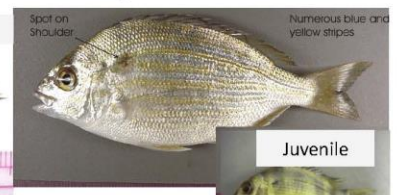


Juvenile



**Pinfish**

*Lagodon rhomboides*



Juvenile

**Bay Anchovy**

*Anchoa mitchilli*



**White Mullet**

*Mugil cerema*



**Puffer Fish**

*Sphoeroides parvus*



**Pipefish**

*Syngnathus scovelli*



**Silverside**

*Membras martinica*



**Striped Mullet**

*Mugil cephalus*



**Southern Flounder**

*Paralichthys lethostigma*



**Tongue Fish**

*Symphurus plagiusa*





## WILDLIFE VISUAL ID GUIDE, CONT.

**Mudflat Fiddler Crab**

*Uca rapax*



**Male Blue Crab**

*Callinectes sapidus*



Immature male



**Female Blue Crab**

*Callinectes sapidus*



Immature female



**Marsh Shrimp**

*Palaemonetes vulgaris*



**White Shrimp**

*Litopenaeus setiferus*



**Brown Shrimp**

*Farfantepenaeus aztecus*



**Sea Nettle**

*Chrysaora quinquecirrha*



**Lightning Whelk**

*Busycon sinistrum*



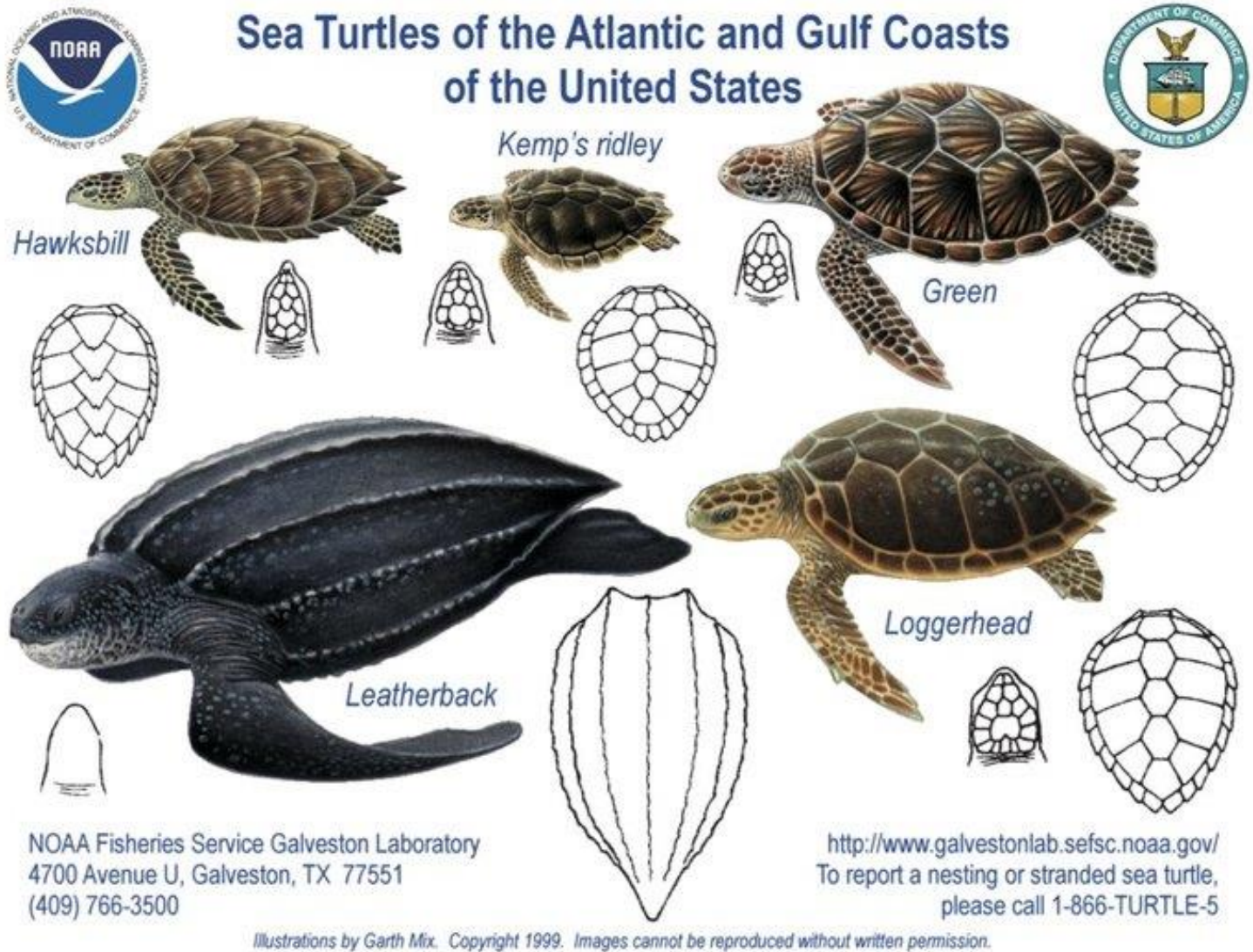
**Sea snot**

*Ctenophore*



## WILDLIFE VISUAL ID GUIDE: SEA TURTLES

### PROTECTED UNDER FEDERAL LAW!



- Protected under the Endangered Species Act
- Stay at least 150 feet away from sea turtles
- Threats include boat strikes, illegal harvesting, becoming cold stunned, and entanglement with derelict or abandoned traps, fishing gear, lines, nets, etc.

**Report injured, stranded or distressed sea turtles to 1-866-TURTLE5**



## WILDLIFE VISUAL ID GUIDE: DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN

### ANIMAL OF GREAT INTEREST!



- Named for the pattern on their shell
- Only brackish water species of turtle in North America
- Biggest threats are habitat loss and ghost fishing (getting caught in derelict or abandoned traps)

**PLEASE CAREFULLY FREE/RELEASE ANY LIVE TERRAPINS YOU FIND IN TRAPS!**

If you find a terrapin, **please let the folks at the Environmental Institute of Houston know!** Call their main office at 281-283-3950 or email [eih@uhcl.edu](mailto:eih@uhcl.edu) with the following information:

- Your contact information
- Date and time of spotting
- Specific location (GPS coordinates if available)
  - Any pictures you may have taken

**WILDLIFE VISUAL ID GUIDE: BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN**  
**PROTECTED UNDER FEDERAL LAW!**



- Only marine mammal that resides in Galveston Bay
  - **NOT A PORPOISE!**
- Fun to watch, but **DO NOT APPROACH!** It is illegal to interact with, approach or harass wild dolphins
  - Can get entangled in crab trap line

**IF YOU FIND A BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN ENTANGLED OR IN DISTRESS,  
CALL 1-800-9MAMMAL**



## 2021 ACTRP Data Reporting Form

<p>Location (Trinity Bay, East Bay, etc.): _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Boat captain: _____</p> <p>Email: _____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p> <p>Data collector: _____</p> <p>Email: _____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p> <p>Affiliation: _____ eg: CCA, USFW, TPWD, Boat Club, etc.</p>	<p>Crew and their email addresses:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>email _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>email _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>email _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>email _____</p>
<p># traps picked up: _____</p> <p>Traps deposited at: _____</p> <p>Were traps counted by TPWD staff? Circle Yes or No</p>	<p>Species and number of live animals and animal remains found in traps (eg: 10 live blue crabs, 4 dead blue crabs, 2 live trout, 7 dead shrimp, etc.):</p>
<p>Hours on the water looking for and collecting traps: _____</p>	
<p>Most interesting observation of the day:</p>	

**\*\*\*Please submit your report form in a timely manner to Emily Ford at [eford@galvbay.org](mailto:eford@galvbay.org)**

## **CRAB TRAP REMOVAL PROGRAM LIABILITY RELEASE**

I understand that I and/or the minor child under my care am/are participating in the Crab Trap Removal Program at my own risk and that Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), nor any organization assisting in the Program, does not have responsibility for my safety or the safety of persons under my care.

I understand that water activities pose risks of personal injury and property damage, including but not limited to drowning, animal stings or bites, and hypothermia. I understand that litter such as abandoned crab traps presents dangers of cuts, punctures, and other injury.

I will wear a personal floatation device (life preserver) at all times while in or on the water, will follow safe boating practices, and will use appropriate protective equipment to protect myself from injury due to litter, and I will ensure that all persons under my care do so as well.

In consideration for the opportunity for myself and/or the minor child under my care to participate in the Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program on or about February 20, 2021, I, individually and on behalf of any participating minor child under my care, agree to **RELEASE, DISCHARGE, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS TPWD, ITS AGENTS, EMPLOYEES, OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND CONTRACTORS, FROM ANY AND ALL CLAIMS, LOSSES, DAMAGES, DEMANDS, CAUSES OF ACTION, SUITS, AND LIABILITY OF EVERY KIND, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY CLAIM FOR LOSS, DAMAGE, OR DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, OR INJURY (INCLUDING DEATH), BY WHICH SUCH PERSONS OR ENTITIES, INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, MIGHT OTHERWISE BECOME LIABLE IN ANY MANNER IN CONNECTION WITH OR IN RELATION TO THE CRAB TRAP REMOVAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER SUCH LOSS ARISES IN WHOLE OR IN PART FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASED PARTIES.**

I have read this release and I understand all of its terms. I sign this release voluntarily and with full knowledge of the legal consequences.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer or Parent/Guardian  
(Parent/Guardian must sign if participant is under 18)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Volunteer

Names of Additional Participating Minors:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***\*Return completed waivers to Holly Grand, [holly.grand@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:holly.grand@tpwd.texas.gov)***