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**VOLUNTEERS AND FISHERMEN CLEAR LOBSTER TRAPS FROM LOCAL BEACHES**

*Santa Barbara, CA* - On Saturday, April 22, twenty-three volunteers with Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and members of the commercial fishing community worked together to remove more than thirty lobster traps that had washed ashore.

This is the third year of shoreline cleanup collaborations for Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara. Last year the organizations partnered to clear sixty traps from Black Rock beach and in 2021, they removed forty traps from Ellwood Beach.

During the 2023 lobster season, a series of storms with unusually heavy swells dislodged many traps set by fishermen and sent them adrift. When lost traps such as these are carried by currents, they can entangle marine organisms, release microplastics, and pose safety hazards to vessels. When they wash up on shore as debris, they can also be dangerous to beachgoers and wildlife.

Approximately 6,500 traps are reported lost off the California coast each fishing season, according to The California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Without regular cleanups, dozens of traps can accumulate on certain beaches and pile up over time.

In recent months, volunteers with Channelkeeper's Watershed Brigade community cleanup program helped the organization locate lost traps. Through this community effort, Channelkeeper discovered a high concentration of traps that had accumulated between Leadbetter Point and Mesa Lane. As the 2023 lobster season approached its end-date in March, Channelkeeper staff began planning with local fishermen to clear traps from this mile-and-a-half stretch of beach.

During Saturday's cleanup, volunteers pulled the heavy, metal-framed traps from the rocks along the shore and carried them to collection points on the beach. The traps were clipped onto a

buoyed rope and winched through the surf to the Bella B, a commercial fishing vessel owned by fisherman, Chris Voss.

Nick Tharp from First Light Fishing Co. and Henry Hepp ferried the buoy line back and forth from boat to shore by kayak and paddle board. Kim Selkoe, Executive Director of Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara, and colleagues Ava Schulenberg and Chris Voss loaded the traps onboard the Bella B and transported them to Santa Barbara Harbor for proper disposal.

"We are grateful for a very positive and productive partnership with Channelkeeper on our annual spring beach clean ups," said Kim Selkoe, "and we're grateful that the fishing community has been able to come together to help one another relocate lost gear and make a coordinated cleanup effort following this unprecedented stormy season. We will continue to do more cleanup events as any more traps appear, both along the coast and at the islands."

"We are proud to partner with local fishermen to remove the traps that washed ashore," said Channelkeeper's Science and Program Manager Molly Troup. "We also appreciate the outstanding volunteer effort. Some traps are buried in the sand, and it takes significant work to dig them out. By working together, we were able to remove approximately 800 pounds of fishing gear that could have remained on the beach for years."