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VOLUNTEERS AND FISHERMEN CLEAR LOBSTER TRAPS FROM LOCAL BEACHES

Santa Barbara, CA - On Saturday, April 20th, twenty-five volunteers with Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and members of the commercial fishing community and Tidy Seas worked together to remove more than fifty lobster traps that had washed ashore between Goleta Beach and More Mesa.

This is the fourth year of shoreline cleanup collaborations for Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara, and the organizations were pleased to welcome Tidy Seas as a new partner at this year's event.

During the lobster season, wave action and stormy weather can dislodge traps set by fishermen and send them adrift. When lost traps such as these are carried by currents, they can entangle marine organisms, and pose safety hazards to vessels. When they wash up on shore as debris, they can also be hazardous 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 Goleta Beach and More Mesa. As the 2024 lobster season approached its end date in March, Channelkeeper staff and local fishermen began planning to clear traps from this 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 hauled through the surf to one of two fishing vessels, F/V the Bella B, owned by fisherman, Chris Voss and the F/V Rainman, owned by Ray Kennedy.

Ryan Wong helped prepare traps for transport and Randy Hughes, Adrian Stimson, and Ava Schulenberg ferried the buoy line back and forth from boat to shore by longboard and kayak. Randy, Adrian, Ava, Billy Eggers, Chris Voss, and Ray Kennedy from the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara loaded the traps onboard the vessels and transported them to Santa Barbara Harbor for proper disposal. Commercial lobster fishermen Charlie Graham and Raleigh Sharp assisted in the extensive offload process once back in the harbor.

In addition to the lobster traps, the team cleared metal fencing, a few bags of trash, construction materials, and two shopping carts from the beach.

“Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara is grateful to have partnered with Channelkeeper's Watershed Brigade on another successful beach cleanup! No fisherman wants to lose their gear, but unfortunately, there are some irresponsible folks who don't clean up after themselves,” said Ava Schulenberg. “We have had a couple of severe storms the past two seasons causing an uptick in debris on the beach, but we want our community to know that cleaning it up is our number one priority. The volunteers who participated on Saturday were outstanding. Handling lobster gear is no easy task, but this group gave it their all, and having them on the beach really helped make the process more efficient.”

“This cleanup was a great success. We're happy to partner with local fishermen to remove the traps that washed ashore,” said Channelkeeper's Program Assistant Veronica Moran. “We also appreciate the outstanding volunteer effort. Some traps are buried in the sand, and it takes a lot of work to dig them out. By working together, we were able to remove approximately 2,500 pounds of fishing gear that could have remained on the beach for years.”