



Connecticut Fund
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound

Before the Environment Committee

In Support with Modification

**SB 426 AN ACT CONCERNING ABANDONED FISHING GEAR IN LONG ISLAND
SOUND**

Submitted by: Bill Lucey, Soundkeeper

March 13, 2018

Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) is a non-profit organization with over 4,700 member households statewide. CFE, its bi-state program Save the Sound, and its Soundkeeper protect and improve the land, air, and water of Connecticut and Long Island Sound. We use legal and scientific expertise and bring citizens together to achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations.

Dear Sens. Kennedy and Miner, Reps. Demicco and Reyes and Members of the Committee:

Connecticut Fund for the Environment and its bi-state program Save the Sound (CFE/Save the Sound) writes to ask that you support and strengthen this important legislation. A study conducted by Cornell University Extension from estimated that there are more than 500,000 lobster traps at the bottom of Long Island Sound.¹

The group has pulled almost 15,000 traps from these waters since 2014. Results indicated that 90% of those traps were in poor condition but still catching. The majority of traps have an escape mechanism, however these openings may become encrusted or entombed over time. Bycatch results showed that 24% of the traps had one or more lobsters in them, some of which were dead of which were dead. They also found sea bass, crabs, and other sea creatures inside these abandoned traps. Having deck handed on a few lobster trips out of Port Jefferson, it was not uncommon for me to come across a lost string of gear with several tautog trapped inside.

As waters warm and blue crab become more common, it would behoove the fishing community to clear the bottom of old traps and other fishing gear, to clean the grounds for this potential future Long Island Sound fishery.

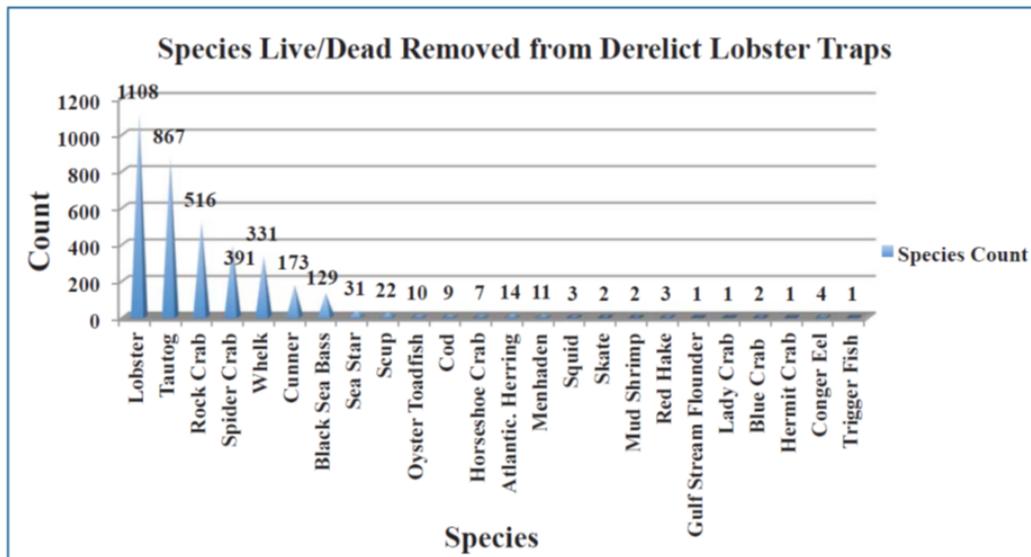
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https://s3.amazonaws.com/assets.cce.cornell.edu/attachments/18284/NOAA_Marine_Debris_Final_Report_2016.pdf?1477418931



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Bycatch data from 3,784 derelict pots recovered by Cornell Cooperative Extension.

We need better collection legislation to remove these traps. Current restrictions on who can retrieve these abandoned pots make it almost impossible to mount a full-scale cleanup. I urge you to strengthen and pass SB 426 to ease restrictions on who can retrieve abandoned lobster pots, and other gear, in Connecticut waters, by including a broader description of legal entities that may be permitted by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to conduct the work.

I commend the committee for taking the time to raise this issue.

Sincerely,

Bill Lucey
Soundkeeper

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