



Newsletter, June 18th, 2021



Ghost-Fishing has a Culprit

Ghost fishing” is a part of the global marine debris issue that impacts marine organisms and the environment. Lost or discarded fishing gear that is no longer under a fisherman’s control becomes known as derelict fishing gear (DFG), and it can continue to trap and kill fish, crustaceans, marine mammals, sea turtles, and seabirds.

Common types of DFG includes but is not limited to gillnets and crab pots and crab traps. In many cases DFG is the culprit of, killing non-target organisms such as birds and endangered/protected species, damaging coral reefs and benthic fauna, diminishing the health of the habitat while increasing the levels of marine pollution.

This problem can impose a variety of harmful impacts, including: the ability to kill target and non-target organisms, including endangered and protected species; causing damage to underwater habitats such as coral reefs and benthic fauna. This type of carelessness also poses a threat to ocean vessels, as surface and near surface level DFG can be caught in the crafts propeller to damage or even disable it. Stray gear can be caught in the propeller of a boat, damaging, or even disabling it and as global fishing operations increase to accommodate the human throng of consumers, the situation will continue to increase in severity.



As bottom trawls or lobster pots sink to the bottom and/or get dragged along the reefs by storm actions and currents, the destruction of fragile corals to include their natural inhabitants can be imminent. Even habitat types positioned in remote locations are susceptible to substantial damage from DFG and ghost fishing when trap gear drops to the ocean bottom to decimate the creatures that inhabit the areas just under the sediments, such as worms, crabs, seagrass and the like.

Factors that cause gear to become DFG include poor weather conditions, gear conflicts with other vessels or bottom, gear overuse, and too much gear being used. Studies conducted within this decade show fisheries can be negatively affected by a variety of factors, including costs of replacing lost gear, costs of buying new gear to comply with new regulations, and decreased populations of target organisms due to mortality in DFG. It is estimated up that to 90% of DFG caught sea-life are of commercial value. For fishermen, this destructive type of competition contributes significantly to revenue losses.

Measures can be implemented reduce the likelihood of DFG from fishermen which include but are not limited to:

1. Improvement of gear design (failure/snag proof gear design).
2. Smart Gear Marking (integrating GPS on apparatus for state/port monitoring, and gear inspection).
3. Fisheries zones (assists in pinpointing location of gear in the ocean and avoids gear divergence).
4. Lowering lifespan of fishing gear (biodegradable materials to dissolve or disable the gear over time).
5. Provide affordable port disposal facilities and incentives to discourage improper disposal at sea.

While we ease out of the Covid-19 global emergency, developing and acting for cooperative relationships between governments, industry and private sector shareholders will greatly assist in decelerating the effects of DFG. Join us at OceanSaviours.com as we join the fight in designing strategic avenues to contain our self-developed menace to the marine ecosystem and humanity.