



WE'RE HAVING A GHOST TRAP ROUND-UP TOURNAMENT, AND YOU'RE INVITED!

The **Ghost Trap Rodeo event series** is a successful marine debris removal project proven in Tampa Bay. This habitat restoration design, developed and implemented by **Ocean Aid 360**, supported by **CCA**, and funded first by **NOAA**, is inspired by the understanding that shallow water anglers – *redfish flats flyrodders, mangrove snook pluggers, and commercial crab trappers, alike* – know local waters as well or better than anyone. The project utilizes anglers' local knowledge and their shallow draft vessels to find and remove derelict/abandoned crab traps, which cause sea turtle and marine mammal entanglement even while they catch and kill finfish and damage essential habitat – for years at a time. The Ghost Trap Rodeo is our chance to do something about these traps and other high priority debris, lost to storms, cutoffs, and human error. Further, this event is an opportunity to connect with fellow watermen and waterwomen, while improving sensitive marine habitat and building the community knowledge base on entanglements and marine debris. What's more, the Rodeos are a family-friendly opportunity to compete through a familiar 'tournament' model for fishing tackle prizes donated by well-known fishing industry sponsors.

Today, the Ghost Trap Rodeo uses social media, radio, and tv advertising to promote community awareness of marine debris challenges facing the Tampa Bay watershed, while mobilizing recreational and commercial angler volunteers toward the detection and retrieval of Ghost Traps, abandoned fishing gear, and other types of marine debris observed in an aerial-visual baseline assessment performed by Ocean Aid 360. Participants provide a trap species bycatch inventory and the location of each trap collected so that Ocean Aid 360, FWC and NOAA can improve ghost fishing prevalence/impact data sets.

The Ghost Trap Rodeo project was resourced between August 1, 2018 and July 31, 2019 with a federal grant and matching community cost share. These resources are bound by federal Agreement to afford the needed volunteer supplies, printed info materials, bycatch data collection kits; volunteer refreshments, prizes, event staff hours, and debris disposal. By the end of the project period, The Ghost Trap Rodeo event series exceeded its collection target of 15,000 lbs. of marine debris by 75%, actually collecting 26,391 lbs. (including 411 derelict/abandoned traps) - *a big step toward an improved Tampa Bay fishery.*

I thank you for reading up on The Ghost Trap Rodeo, and sure hope you'll support this project. After recent environmental threats to Florida coastlines, it's clear our fisheries need us more than ever, and this is one great way to make an impact. Please don't hesitate to contact our Ocean Aid 360 staff with questions or ideas related to habitat restoration and entanglement prevention for Florida's marine life.

Please note, event dates are planned to coincide with FWC seasonal trap fishery closures (closed season), where possible; and adhere to all FWC trap determination criteria during scheduled open season events.

Sincerely,

Capt. Stephen Neill Holland; President, Ocean Aid 360, Inc.; CaptNeill@OceanAid360.org; 727-200-7781

Ocean Aid 360, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) IRS tax-exempt nonprofit organized to design, manage, and implement research-based environmental and ecological interventions, through public and private partnerships, to improve and secure the health of vulnerable marine, coastal, wetland, and inland waterway habitats toward their renewed and/or continued ability to support future generations of healthy flora and fauna, as well as marine-dependent communities.

