

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Closure Memo**

To: Lynn Dwyer
From: John Wright
Date: March 19, 2014

Project: Removing Ghost Fishing Gear to Restore the Sound for Long Island Fisheries (NY)

Number: 1401.11.028553

Grantee: Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Suffolk County

Project Description: Reduce the decline of and restore 25,600 acres of marine habitat for: American lobster, blue crab, horseshoe crab and other marine fisheries. Project will remove 2,250 “ghost fishing” lobster traps and one ton of ropes, buoys and other marine debris, using Long Island lobsterman in Northport, Huntington and Oyster Bay.

Final Products: Remove and attempt to identify at least 2,250 derelict lobster traps and at least 1 ton of associated gear and floatable debris from the study sites by employing the experience and expertise of commercial lobstermen from the area in an effort to mitigate “ghost fishing” impacts. All traps retrieved will be evaluated for New York State (NYS) lobster trap tags. NYS lobstermen will be notified of any retrieved traps. Species retrieved from “ghost fishing” traps will be identified and recorded. All live species will be immediately returned to the marine environment. This effort will reduce the mortality of marine species along with Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Collected gear will be recycled by Gershow Recycling facility in Huntington, NY. Methods from the successful 2010 Derelict Lobster Gear Assessment, Removal and Prevention pilot study will be followed.

CCE completed a successful removal program with experienced commercial lobstermen. During 45 vessel trips a total of 3,310 derelict lobster traps were removed from the Northport/Huntington Complex study area, which was equivalent to a total weight of 165,500 lbs (75.70 metric tons). 25,600 acres of marine habitat was improved by removal of the ghost traps. SCGN species removed from the traps included American lobster, tautog, cunner, oyster toadfish, blue crab and horseshoe crab. The lobster traps were catalogued for their condition based on physical appearance (excellent, moderate, poor, checked for the presence/absence of trap vents on working and non-working traps, and if there were NYS lobster trap tags present. CCE also cataloged the encrustation of the retrieved traps as follows: 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-100%. Traps that were cataloged as excellent included working legal escape vents and could be returned to the water to fish for lobsters, moderate condition traps needed some repairs to catch lobsters, and poor condition traps could not be repaired to catch lobsters. Traps that were in working condition were catching lobsters when they were retrieved and traps that were categorized as non-working were damaged to the extent that they were not able to catch lobsters. CCE identified and contacted the owner of 30% of the traps retrieved by the NYS lobster trap tag. The other 70% of the traps retrieved did not have trap tags. CCE returned 4% of the retrieved derelict lobster traps to their owners and 26% of the

identifiable traps were recycled by the Gershow Recycling facility after the owners were contacted and did not want them.

NFWF award: \$ 98,556.27
NFWF funds spent: \$ 98,556.27
Match requirement: \$ 71,712.00
Match spent: \$ 72,227.26

I recommend closing this grant.