



Application to Assist the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Save the Sound, and Project Oceanology with Abandoned Lobster Pot Removal

Public Act 18-54, passed in 2018, amended Section 26-23 of Connecticut General Statutes to allow for removal of derelict lobster gear "by an authorized representative of the commissioner" of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). This change to state law was intended to provide an avenue for DEEP to establish a cooperative program for removal of abandoned lobster pots from the Connecticut waters of Long Island Sound. Cornell University Cooperative Extension, in cooperation with the NY commercial fishing industry, has conducted an abandoned lobster pot removal program in the NY waters of Long Island Sound since 2010. This program has removed over 20,000 abandoned lobster pots from the Sound to-date.

In 2020-21, DEEP used the authority created by Public Act 18-54 to authorize the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Save the Sound, and Project Oceanology (hereafter referred to as the "partner organizations") to conduct abandoned lobster pot removal activities in Connecticut waters of Long Island Sound. DEEP worked with the partner organizations during 2020-21 to establish operating procedures for pot removal activities and facilitated a public meeting with commercial fishermen in March 2021 to gather input from the fishing industry. The partner organizations also established a collaborative relationship with Cornell University Cooperative Extension that created opportunities for training and funding for pilot removal trips in Connecticut waters. In 2022, the partner organizations received federal funding via a congressional appropriation that will allow them to initiate pot removal activities in Connecticut waters in cooperation with commercial fishermen. This work is slated to begin in the final quarter of 2022.

The partner organizations are currently recruiting for commercial fishermen to participate in abandoned pot removal trips. Commercial fishermen selected by the partner organizations will receive a per-trip financial stipend for participation. Applications are currently available at:

https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2531/lobster_pots_survey_v2.pdf

Questions regarding the program should be directed to the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk via e-mail to: [**lobsters@maritimeaquarium.org**](mailto:lobsters@maritimeaquarium.org)

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