



**NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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**NOAA Removes Lost Fishing Gear in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary**  
***Underwater robot deployed during three-year project***

Using an underwater robot, NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary completed a three-year effort to find and remove potentially harmful lost fishing gear from deepwater habitats (up to 1000 feet) in the ocean. The operation successfully retrieved hundreds of feet of rockfish gill net, a variety of crab pots and spot prawn traps, and 600 pounds of lead weights. Additional fishing gear, including a large, intact trawl net and a 50-foot sunken sailboat, were located during HD video surveys.

On October 23, the sanctuary began its third Deepwater Lost Fishing Gear Removal cruise, searching for gear at locations identified by the sanctuary and the National Marine Fisheries Service, as well as locations identified by local fishermen. Gear that is "lost" by fishermen — nets, lines, pots, traps and other equipment — can entangle creatures including fish, crustaceans, and even marine mammals such as whales and seals. Fishermen occasionally lose their gear due to mechanical problems, or when gear becomes entangled on rocks, or if their gear gets caught on other submerged fishing gear.

"NOAA surveys confirm that the most abundant type of gear found is monofilament fishing line," said Karen Grimmer, deputy superintendent, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and principal investigator for the project. "Lost fishing gear made of synthetic materials doesn't decompose in seawater and can remain in the ocean for years, impacting wildlife and underwater habitat. It also poses a nuisance and a hazard for boaters, divers and fishermen."

In 2011, the study area expanded to the remote Big Sur Coast at Point Sur as well as Monterey Bay locations within and outside the State Marine Conservation Areas. Newer gear found outside the state marine protected areas may remain intact longer and be more likely to trap fish and invertebrates.

An HD video camera mounted on the remotely operated vehicle captured footage of the gear and documented a diversity of fishes, invertebrates and habitats in the sanctuary. California Academy of Sciences and Steinhart Aquarium collaborated to study and catalogue specimens found on the nets, such as sponges, brittle stars, tunicates and crabs.

The collaborative project is funded through a federal settlement to conduct restoration projects in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Other key contributors include Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, UC Davis' SeaDoc Society, California

Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, Marine Advanced Technology Education Center, Marine Applied Research and Exploration, California State University Monterey Bay and fishing partners.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) supports national and international efforts to research, prevent, and reduce the impacts of marine debris. The MDP serves as a centralized capability within NOAA, coordinating and supporting activities within NOAA and with other federal agencies, as well as using partnerships to support projects carried out by state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry to reduce, reuse and recycle debris which is of increasing concern in the marine environment.

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On the Web:

Lost Fishing Gear Project Overview:

<http://montereybay.noaa.gov/resourcepro/resmanissues/lostgear.html>

Lost Fishing Gear Project Images: <http://www.facebook.com/MBNMS>

NOAA Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary: <http://montereybay.noaa.gov/>

NOAA Marine Debris Program: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/>