

Texas Mid-Coast

Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program 2026 Operational Procedures

v1.2 January 24, 2026

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department closes the Bay to crab fishing for 10 days each February and encourages volunteers to pick up abandoned/derelict traps in the Bays. SABP will organize volunteer activities to make the cleanup as comprehensive and systematic as possible. This document describes the event and procedures for volunteers who participate in coordinated activities.



Life's better outside.®

Funding provided by the
Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust

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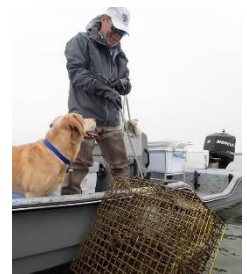
Thank you for volunteering to cleanup of our bay systems! What you need to know:

1. **Closure Period** – Friday Feb 20 thru Sunday March 1, 2026
 - a. Friday Feb 20 – Aerial reconnaissance, weather permitting. Data will be available for volunteers on Saturday morning via Field Maps App described below.
 - b. Friday, Feb 20- Dallas Zoo on the water
 - c. Saturday Feb 21 will be Kickoff Day for coordinated volunteer activities.
 - d. Saturday Evening Feb 21, Celebratory Party is planned in Port O'Connor Community Center
 - e. Volunteer opportunities continue during the entire closure period.
 - f. Saturday Feb 28 is bad weather fallback for Saturday Feb 21.

Note: we are generally boat limited. We have a limited number slots available and will match volunteers with captains needing crew.

2. Rules for the Day

- a. Be Safe. As Boat Captain, you and your crew are responsible for your own safety. See Safety considerations later in this document.
- b. Have Fun. The event is family friendly and provides an opportunity to enjoy a day on the water for good cause.
- c. Count your traps and collect trap data with cellphone-based app “Field Maps” (explained below)
- d. Equipment. This year’s event is funded by [Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust](#) . Hooks, gloves, wire & rope snippers, and tarps for your boat deck are available. Contact Allan to get yours.
 - a. Waders are essential. Many traps require getting out of the boat.
 - b. Binoculars are helpful!
- e. E-signup sheets will collect captain name and area desired. Captains will set their schedules and launch site. Start picking up traps after you have arrived in your area. On the way back, pick up anything you see. Other boats not associated with the systematic effort may be in your area—the more help the better.
- f. If you have a boat, but need crew, let me know. If you have a crew, but no boat, I can help!
- g. Trap Disposal locations:
 - SA Bay System: dumpsters at TPWD POC Dock, Charlie’s Bait Camp, Austwell Boat Ramp, Seadrift Marina and Sanders Park/Swan Point Boat Ramp for the SA Bay System.
 - Lavaca Bay: none
 - Matagorda Bay: Matagorda Harbor, Palacios Railroad Harbor
 - Aransas Bay: Goose Island State Park boat ramp, South Conn Brown & Ransom Channel Ramp
- h. In addition to derelict traps, volunteers are requested to pick up loose crab trap floats, buckets and crates from the shoreline. Reporting will be via the Volunteer Report on page 11.
- i. Liability release: TPWD requires that all volunteers that participate execute the release shown on page 14. E-mail the signed form to AllanRBerger@outlook.com



3. Data Collection

- a. There are two data collection protocols:
 - i. TPWD requires that the number of traps removed and effort expended be reported. The Volunteer's Removal Report sheet is shown on Page 11 of this document. The Team Captain is responsible for ensuring the info is reported to Allan. **The summation of this form provides the basis for reporting to TPWD—not Field Maps.**
 - ii. Using the Field Map App to collect trap data will help identify root causes. Teams are expected to mark the specific location of each collected trap, input info on trap owner, and note critter entrapment using the App. No other cleanup effort is collecting this data. But if we are to reduce trap dereliction, data is key to knowing what to do. I think we are making progress, albeit incremental. Your continued efforts are appreciated.
- b. The Field Map App is free to download to all smart phones. The app sends data to a database. It has been used for several years and found to be user friendly. We ask that a crew member be assigned as "Data Deckhand" (to keep their hands clean for phone use).
- c. **The Data Deckhand must contact Allan to obtain the sign-on needed for the Field Map App.**
- d. Instructions for downloading and using the Field Map app will be provided on the SABP website (an update of the existing instructions will be done asap.) **The download of app and an upload of area maps must be done with a Wi-Fi connection prior to getting on the water.**
- e. Derelict traps spotted during the aerial surveys on Friday, Feb 20 in the SA Bay and Aransas Bay Systems, Lavaca Bay & Powderhorn Lake and Matagorda Bay will be viewable in the Field Map App and used by boat teams to find & remove the traps. **Note that you must sync the App with a Wi-Fi connection to download the pilot's observations.** The experience with the aerial surveys to date is that weather is problematic, and the locations noted are not very precise.
- f. Data to be collected by Boat Teams via the Field Map App:
 - Location per Field Map App GPS
 - Trap owner (from Tag) / Float #
 - Trap Contents – Number
 - Blue crabs
 - Stone crabs
 - Fish of any kind entrapped
 - Turtles entrapped—please take pictures and comment on species
 - Float attached trap? yes or no
 - Comments – unusual or unique observations
 - Data Hand's initials
 - Attach photo of any unusual or unique observations, turtles trapped
- g. **Virtual training sessions are tentatively planned for Field Map on Thursday Feb 12 and Wednesday Feb 18, both at 7pm. If you have signed up to participate in the removal effort, Allan will you send the link and the sign-in ID individually.**



- h. If you have a boat or hand-held GPS, it would be extremely helpful if you could also provide your actual search route in a kmz format. This insight reduces duplicative searches later in closure period.

4. **Routes / Search Areas**

- a. Map below shows the search and the spreadsheet describes. The intent is to be efficient and cover the bay. Areas should include both the shorelines and transect across the open water.
- b. Signups for all Bays systems will be accomplished via an online Google sheet that will be made available in early January 2025 when volunteer solicitation will begin. It will be distributed via Constant Contact -- so check your junk mail folder!



Texas Mid-Coast Search Areas

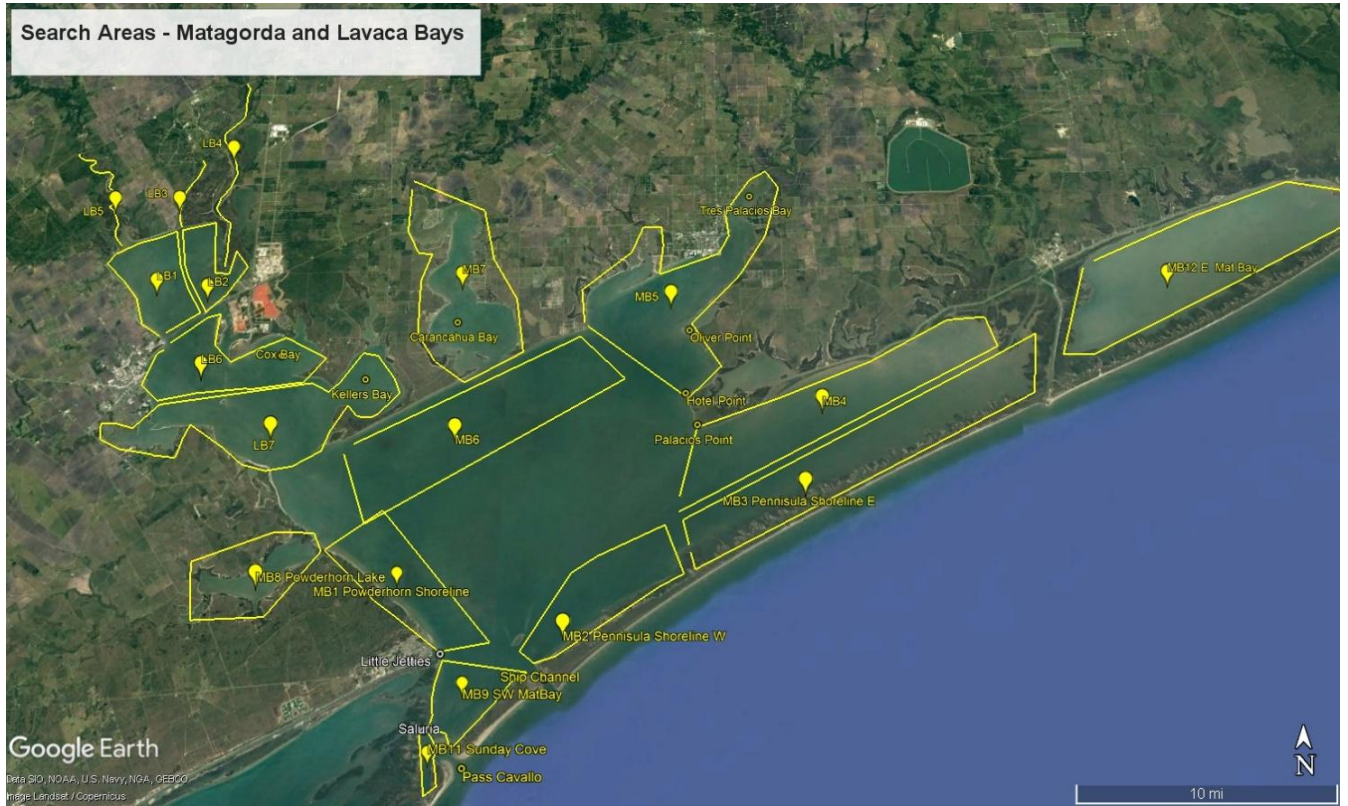


Number of Search Areas	
Matagorda Bay	9
Lavaca Bay	7
Espiritu Santo Bay	10
San Antonio Bay	13
Aransas Bay	18
Total # Areas	57
Boats Needed	57
Approx. Volunteers Needed	171

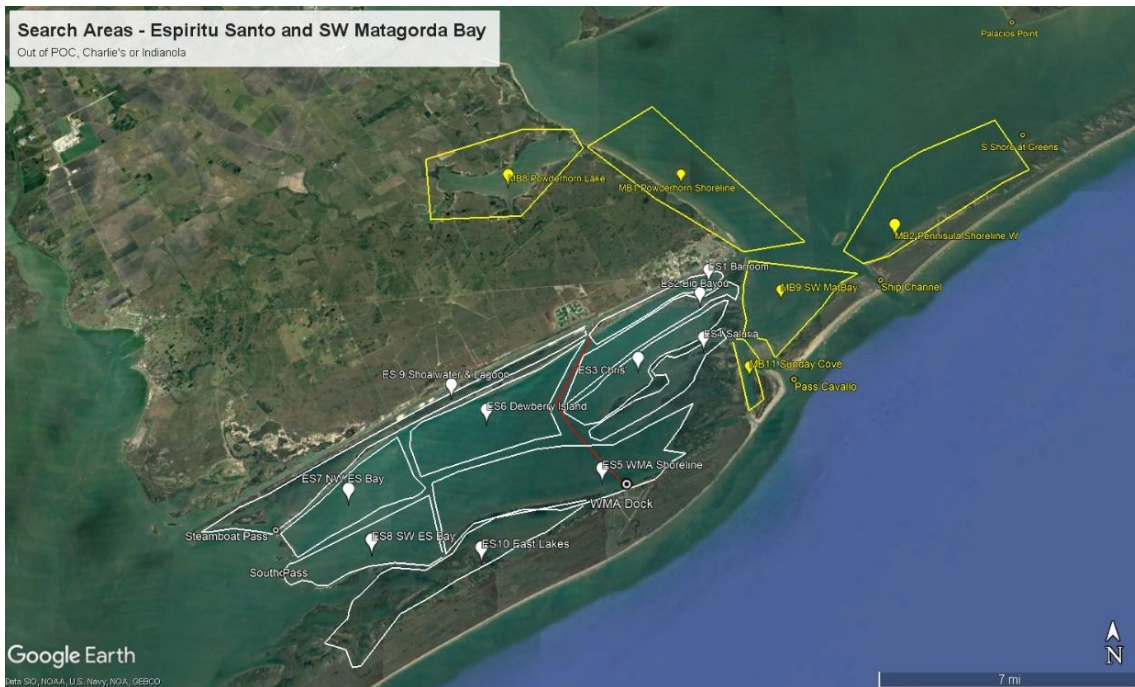
Opportunity to sign up will be provided starting in January with final assignments communicated the week prior to the closure period.

Further, a shore side volunteer opportunity is described on page 10.

Search Areas - Matagorda and Lavaca Bays



Matagorda Bay		
MB1	Powderhorn Shore	Lake Entrance to POC Little Jetties, including Boggy Lakes
MB2	Peninsula Shore West	Ship Channel to Greens
MB3	Peninsula Shore East	Greens to River
MB4	North Bay Shore	Palacios Point to River
MB5	Tres Palacios Bay	Hotel Point to Turtle Bay
MB6	NW Bay Shore	Well Point to Sand Point
MB7	Carancahua Bay	
MB8	Powderhorn Lake	Indianola to Coloma Creek
MB9	SW Mat Bay	POC to Saluria, Decros to Ship Channel
MB11	Sunday Cove	Old Coast Guard Station into Sunday Cove and Pass
MB12	East Matagorda Bay	
Lavaca Bay		
LB1	West	Causeway north between w shore & Vernado
LB2	East	Causeway north between e shore & Vernado
LB3	Vernado Creek	
LB4	Lavaca River	H616 to Bay
LB5	Garcitas Creek	H616 to Bay
LB6	Central	Causeway to Cox
LB7	South	Kellers - Chocolate
LB8	Placedo Creek	



	<u>Bay Section</u>	<u>Description</u>
<u>Espiritu Santo Bay</u>		
ES1	Barroom Bay & Blackberry Shore	Fisherman's Cut: Barroom Bay & old canal, Blackberry Shoreline to Army Cut
ES2	Bill Day Reef & Big Bayou	Big Bayou entrance, Bill Day's Reef & west into ES Bay to Army Channel
ES3	Bayucos and Grass Islands - N Shores	Chris's Cut & west into Bay & along Bayucos & Grass Island shores to tip Grass Island
ES4	Saluria	Saluria west to Bayucos Point and to south Grass Island and Farwell Island
ES 5 N	Big Pocket and Lighthouse Cove	Both shores of big Pocket and into Mules Slough, then Lighthouse Cove-- to TPWD Dock
ES5 S	Vandeever	TPWD WMA Shoreline to Rahal / Contee entrance
ES6	Dewberry Island	Shoreline & Bay from Army Cut west to Charlies Cut
ES7	NW ES Bay	North half of West ES Bay, from Charlies Cut to Steamboat chain
ES8	Southwest ES Bay	West ES Bay from Contee Entrance to South Pass--Start at South Pass, work north
ES9N	Lagoon	Lagoon east to Army Cut:
ES9S	Shoalwater	Shoalwater Bay
ES10	Mat Island Lakes- East	Pringle to Contee /Fifth
<u>SW Matagorda Bay</u>		
MB1	Powderhorn Shoreline	POC to Powderhorn Lake Entrance
MB2	Penninsula Shoreline	Ship Channel to Greens
MB8	Powderhorn Lake	Powderhorn Lake
MB9	SW Mat Bay	POC to Saluria, Decros to Ship Channel
MB11	Sunday Cove	Old Coast Guard Station into Sunday Cove and Pass



San Antonio Bay		Description
SA1	Mission Lake	including Traylor's Cut and Schwings
SA2	Guadalupe Bay	
SA3	Delta Marsh	include Hynes Bay marsh; airboat
SA4	Hog & Goff Bayous	Launch at Hog Bayou H35- GBRA to cover
SA5	River	
SA6	Hynes Bay	
SA7	Upper W SA Bay	Refuge Shore, Live Oak Point to McDowell Pont
SA8	Lower W SA Bay	South of GIWW, West of Panther Point --to Third Chain
SA9	South Island Shore	Panther Point to Ayres
SA10	Lakes Shores & Coves	Long Lake south to Panther Point
SA11	Lower E SA Bay	South of GIWW, West of South Pass; to Panther Point
SA12	Upper East SA Bay	Seadrift to Turnstake / GIWW
SA13	Welders Flats	Airboat
SA14	Refuge Blackjack Sh	Airboat



Aransas Bay		
#	Name	Description
AB1	Mesquite Bay	Ayres Reef to Third Chain
AB2	Carlos Bay	Third Chain to Shell Reef
AB3	Dunham Bay	North of GIWW
AB4	E St Charles	Refuge Shoreline from Dunham to Burgentine
AB5	N St Charles	Cavazos to Burgentine - N Shore
AB6	W St Charles	Goose Island to Cavazos Point
AB7	Spalding	Spalding Bight to Jay Bird Point
AB8	Jay Bird to Long Reef	Jay Bird Point to Long Reef
AB9	Long Reef to Allyns	Long Reef to Mud Island
AB10	Mud Island	Mud Lake to Lighthouse Lakes
AB11	Lighthouse Lakes	
AB12	Estes Flats	Flats to South Bay / Causeway
AB13	N Aransas Bay	Estes to Key Allegro
AB14	Central Aransas	Causeway to Key Allegro
AB15	E Copano	Redfish Point to Turtle Pens
AB16	Central Copano	Redfish Point to Mission Lake
AB17	W Copano	Long Tree Reef to Aransas River
AB18	Port Bay	including Salt Lake

Shore Work Detail – Recycle Crab Traps

Volunteers are needed to assist in unloading traps and in prepping traps for metal recycling at the TPWD POC Dock , which would include the following:

- Sort relatively clean traps
- Cut off rope and float (might already be accomplished by boats)
- Pull PVC bar
- Pull any plastic basket from bait compartment
- Cut cords holding doors
- Leave plastic escape rings
- Crush trap to save space
- Place in separate Recycle bin—Trash Service will take to metal recycler. The dirty traps will be discarded to the landfill bin.
- Count recycled traps.

A crew of 4 is requested to work at the dock Saturday, Feb 22, 2pm to 5pm to process traps as boats bring them in, and again on Sunday if not caught up.

Similar opportunities might be developed at other sites if volunteers are available.

Volunteer's Crab Trap Removal Report, February 2026

Date: _____ Assigned Area: _____

Captain: _____ Email: _____

Number of Traps Collected: Total _____ (SABAY _____ Mat Bay _____ Aran Bay _____)

Extra: # Loose Trap Floats _____ # Buckets or Tubs _____ #Crates _____

Total # of Volunteers (incl Captain): _____ Start Time _____ Stop Time _____

(Include time on water collecting traps, boat transportation, shoreside efforts.)

Segments of assigned area not searched: _____

Traps deposited at: _____

Team's Affiliation: _____ CCA _____ TMN _____ GBRA _____ LNRA
 _____ GBRT _____ USFW _____ TPWD _____ SABP
 _____ Family/Friends If a Company, which? _____

Was ARC-GIS Field Maps used to mark collected traps? _____ Yes _____ No

Route KMZ file: Can you send Allan your tracks from boat GPS? _____ Yes _____ No

Data Collector's Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Most interesting observation:

Suggestions for improvement next year:

CREW

Name: _____ Email address: _____

Name: _____ Email address: _____

Name: _____ Email address: _____

Name: _____ Email address: _____

Signature: _____ Printed: _____

Safety Reminders

1. Boat captains & volunteers are responsible for monitoring weather conditions and making operational decisions.
2. Boats must be in compliance with TPWD Boat Safety requirements. See: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/boating/required-safety-equipment>
3. Volunteers must complete the Liability Release form on page 14 and send a photo to their Bay coordinators.
4. Winter water hazards include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Strong winds, particularly related to cold fronts that can capsize boats.
 - b. Cold water and air that can lead to hypothermia.
 - c. Fog that interferes with navigation, resulting in collisions, grounding, or stranding.Volunteers should:
 - Monitor local weather conditions and forecasts.
 - Dress warmly, wearing clothes that are waterproof or made of quick drying materials.
 - Carry dry, warm clothes in case someone gets wet.
 - Carry extra water.
 - Advise responsible persons of water destination and schedule.
 - Carry a cell phone in a dry bag.
5. Handle the traps with caution. Use hooks to snare float/rope. Wear protective gloves to guard against cuts from barnacles or trap wire. Have current tetanus vaccination. Carry first aid kit on boat.
6. Securely strap down traps being transported back to dock to avoid shifting weight and the possibility of traps blowing into crew. Do not overload the boat and risk capsizing.
7. Put these number in your cell phone:
 - a. US Coast Guard 361-983-4313
 - b. Calhoun County Sheriff 361-553-4646
 - c. Calhoun County EMS 911
 - d. Matagorda County Sheriff 979-245-5526
 - e. Matagorda County EMS 911
 - f. Aransas County Sheriff 361-729-2222
 - g. Aransas County EMS 911

Environmental Compliance

One of the highlights of a day on the water is the opportunity to see endangered species, eg Whooping cranes or sea turtles. Below are NOAA's requirements:

Sea Turtles: Green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricate*), Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*)- activities will be done in February, outside the nesting sea turtle season (March 15 to October 1). In addition, in the event turtles are present boats will maintain a minimum distance of 150 feet and if sea turtles approach the vessel within 150 feet engines are to be placed in neutral until the animal safely departs.

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) and red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) – These shorebirds use the beach that vehicles may traverse to reach volunteer loading sites. Crews will stay out of the splash zone and avoid flushing the birds during the winter months.

Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) – Habitat includes salt marshes and tidal flats on the mainland and barrier islands. It is unlikely whooping cranes will be encountered in open water areas of the bay, it does overlap with the whooping cranes wintering season (October 15 to May 15). Therefore, volunteers will ensure a 1,000-foot buffer zone between trap removals and any cranes. If whooping cranes enter the 1,000-foot buffer, boats will be placed in neutral, and activities will cease until it has moved beyond the 1,000-foot buffer. If an encounter with a whooping crane results in the crane flying away, the sighting will be reported to the Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office in Corpus Christi at (361) 533-6765 and/or the Whooping Crane Coordinator at (361) 676-9953.

West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) – Manatees are rare in Texas but have been documented in the area. If a manatee is sighted during crab trap removals, the vessel will move slowly to avoid any potential encounters. If manatees approach the vessel within 300 feet, engines are to be placed in neutral until the animal safely departs. No water or food will be given to the manatee. Sightings will be reported to the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network at 1-800-9MAMMAL or the Service at (361) 533-6765.

CRAB TRAP REMOVAL PROGRAM LIABILITY RELEASE

I understand that I and/or the minor child under my care am/are participating in the Crab Trap Removal Program at my own risk and that Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), nor any organization assisting in the Program, does not have responsibility for my safety or the safety of persons under my care.

I understand that water activities pose risks of personal injury and property damage, including but not limited to drowning, animal stings or bites, and hypothermia. I understand that litter such as abandoned crab traps presents dangers of cuts, punctures, and other injury.

I will wear a personal floatation device (life preserver) at all times while in or on the water, will follow safe boating practices, and will use appropriate protective equipment to protect myself from injury due to litter, and I will ensure that all persons under my care do so as well.

In consideration for the opportunity for myself and/or the minor child under my care to participate in the Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program on or about February 16, 2024 through February 25, 2024, I, individually and on behalf of any participating minor child under my care, agree to **RELEASE, DISCHARGE, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS TPWD, ITS AGENTS, EMPLOYEES, OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND CONTRACTORS, FROM ANY AND ALL CLAIMS, LOSSES, DAMAGES, DEMANDS, CAUSES OF ACTION, SUITS, AND LIABILITY OF EVERY KIND, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY CLAIM FOR LOSS, DAMAGE, OR DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, OR INJURY (INCLUDING DEATH), BY WHICH SUCH PERSONS OR ENTITIES, INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, MIGHT OTHERWISE BECOME LIABLE IN ANY MANNER IN CONNECTION WITH OR IN RELATION TO THE CRAB TRAP REMOVAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER SUCH LOSS ARISES IN WHOLE OR IN PART FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASED PARTIES.**

I have read this release and I understand all of its terms. I sign this release voluntarily and with full knowledge of the legal consequences.

Signature of Volunteer or Parent/Guardian
(Parent/Guardian must sign if participant is under 18)

Date

Printed Name of Volunteer

Names of Additional Participating Minors:

SAN ANTONIO BAY



R.A.T.

Removing Abandoned Traps