

## **Community Engagement to Reduce Crab Trap Abandonment**

### **Contract 52**

#### **Status Report as of August 31, 2025**

- SABP has been unsuccessful in identifying an appropriate candidate to fill the role envisioned by the grant.
- We re-grouped in June 2025. The plan forwarded centered on SABP's new project manager, Bejat McCracken, and her extensive experience in working with indigenous peoples in Ecuador that she finds is similar to working with the predominantly Vietnamese commercial crabbing community in Seadrift. She proposed an approach to key crabbers that she thinks might yield progress. Her efforts were initiated in July and are continuing.
- Additionally, progress has been made on the Retired Trap Disposal program described in the grant. That progress is listed below.
- The initial invoice for expenses incurred thru August 31, 2025 is submitted separately.

### **Community Engagement**

#### **Recent Efforts**

Bejat McCracken has been spending time in the Seadrift community, which is predominantly Vietnamese, but also Anglo and Hispanic. The Seadrift crabbing community is embedded in deep history. The identity of Seadrift, Texas, is inextricably linked to the tides and a tenacious community whose character has been forged through shared purpose, economic hardship, and profound historical conflict. For decades, this small town has been a vital hub for the Texas blue crab fishery, with a culture built around the rhythms of the San Antonio Bay. This heritage, once dominated by established Anglo-American families, was profoundly reshaped in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The arrival of Vietnamese refugees, many of whom were highly experienced fishers displaced by war, marked a pivotal and tumultuous chapter in the town's history. Their entry into the established fishing grounds ignited a period of intense and sometimes violent conflict. Rooted in a tense combination of economic competition for the same limited resources, cultural misunderstandings, and overt racism, the clashes in Seadrift became a national focal point, drawing in outside agitators like the Ku Klux Klan and leaving deep scars on the community. The clear lines of segregation, both on the water and in town, defined this era.

The Vietnamese community, through perseverance and skill, became an indispensable and integral part of the Gulf Coast seafood industry. While the memory of the conflict remains, the rigid segregation has blurred as families have worked alongside each other, sold their catch to the same seafood houses, and raised children who see Seadrift as their shared home.

Today, the descendants of both the Anglo and Vietnamese pioneers often find themselves in the same boat, facing a new set of unifying challenges. Volatile market prices, high fuel costs, strict state regulations, and the ever-present threat of hurricanes and environmental shifts are pressures that affect the entire fleet, regardless of its origin.

Ultimately, the story of the Seadrift crabbing community is a powerful symbol of coastal resilience, not only against storms but also against social upheaval. Now a blended community, they are the joint custodians of a vital and evolving Texas heritage, embodying the enduring, and often difficult, connection between people, place, and the natural resources that define the Gulf Coast.

Bejat has been working with the Seadrift crabbers to help spread the word for the retired crab trap event by engaging the crabbers in-person at multiple bait shops, the crab processing facility, local businesses, and the Vietnamese Catholic Church. She spent a full day documenting their stories, alongside their hard day of work, where she learned about the business of crabbing and their care for the environment. These relationships, built on trust, promote future encounters aimed at continuing to develop a plan for windstorm trap recovery and hosting retired crab trap events each year. Ultimately, the goal is to work together to develop these strategies and share them with a broader audience.

### **Retired Trap Disposal**

- In the fall of 2024, Allan was in conversation with Dockside Marina, a major Seadrift commercial crabber, regarding a stack of retired traps at their facility. Allan agreed to appropriately dispose of them if Dockside would prep and crush.
- In October 2024, SABP transported 212 crushed traps to Victoria recycling facility.
- As part of TPWD's ACTRP in Feb 2025, Dockside agreed to crush abandoned traps in the TPWD bin to aid in SABP efforts to increase recycling. Volunteers extracted the cleaner traps, prepped them, and Dockside crushed them. SABP hauled them to the Victoria recycling facility for disposal.
- In June 2025, Dockside and SABP agreed to sponsor a community-wide retired trap disposal program.
- Toward that end, SABP mailed a flyer to all licensed commercial crabber license holders with the details and invited them to bring their traps.
- On Aug 9, SABP recruited 9 MCTMN volunteers and Dockside supplied 3 and the yard and the machinery. In less than 2 hours, 260 traps from 6 crabbers were prepped, crushed and stacked.
- On Aug 11, SABP recruited three volunteers to transport the traps to the recycling facility in Victoria.
- The use of Dockside's yard and the availability of a trailer eliminated the need for a roll off bin.

**Windstorm Trap Recovery**

- Several offers by mail and conversations with crabbers have been unsuccessful to date in generating sufficient interest or a way forward on this project.

**Recommended Way Forward**

- Extend Contract for 2 years to August 31, 2027.