

Protecting Terrapins and Preserving Fisheries

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Situation

Accidental drowning of diamondback terrapins in blue crab traps has prompted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to mandate bycatch reduction devices on all recreational blue crab traps in state waters (Fig. 1&2).

- FWC requested assistance with bringing traps up to compliance.
- Many recreational crabbers and marinas/tackle shops were unaware of rule change.

Methods

The University of Florida (UF) and Florida Sea Grant (FSG) partnered with FWC to develop an educational campaign:

- Funding was secured to purchase bycatch reduction devices.
- UF/IFAS Extension Offices statewide distributed bycatch reduction devices to recreational crabbers free of charge.
- Factsheet, videos, and social media content developed (Fig. 3).
- FWC Law Enforcement Officers conducted educational stops for one year post rule change. Factsheets and bycatch reduction devices were provided during the public interactions.

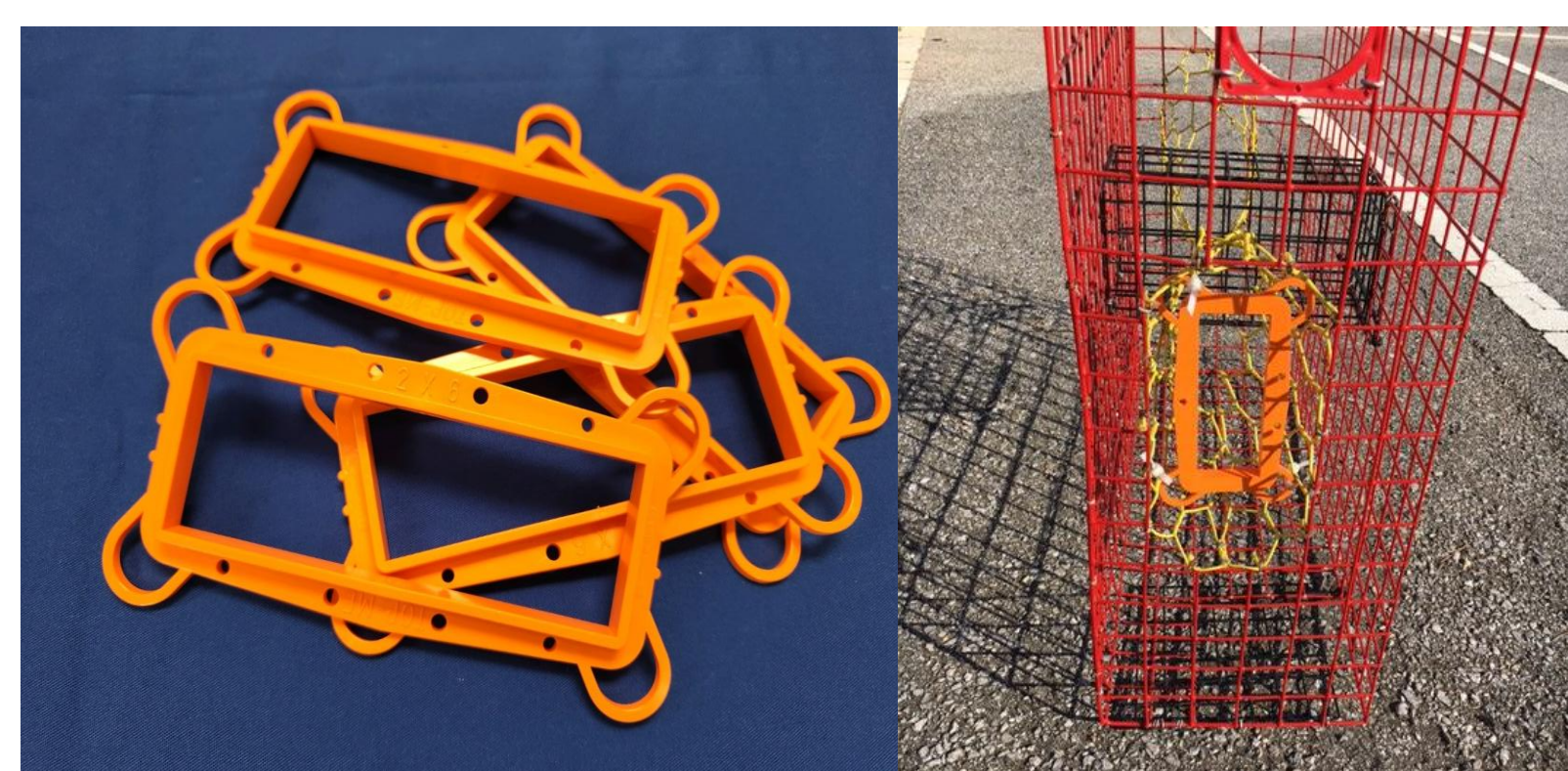


Figure 1. Bycatch reduction devices are used to ensure trap throat size is no larger than 2 inches by 6 inches at its narrowest point.



Figure 2. An ornate diamondback terrapin *Malaclemys terrapin macrospilota* accidentally drowned in a non-compliant recreational blue crab trap off Florida's Gulf coast. Photo Credit: FWC

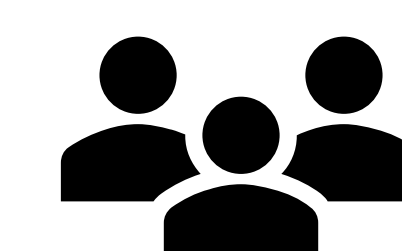


Figure 3. Educational materials were developed to help FWC reach recreational blue crabbers throughout the state of Florida.

SCAN TO LEARN MORE about diamondback terrapins!



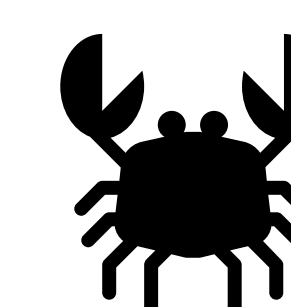
Results



391 People
Received Devices



6,372 Devices
Distributed Statewide



3,186 Newly
Compliant Traps



\$31,797 in Savings
For Fishers



Avoided \$1,593,000 in Fines,
Mandatory Court Dates, and
Potential Jail Time

Conclusion

The educational campaign not only facilitated compliance with the new regulations but also contributed to the broader efforts of terrapin conservation in Florida. The initiative showcased the effectiveness of partnerships, proactive outreach, and community engagement in promoting responsible practices among recreational blue crab fishers.