

# DERELICT BLUE CRAB POT SURVEY RESULTS

Jim DelBene, Andrew Scheld, Donna Bilkovic

## SURVEY OVERVIEW

In early 2019, a mail survey was distributed to all **1,032 watermen** licensed to deploy hard pots in Virginia. The survey aimed to gather watermen's perceptions on derelict crab pots (also known as ghost pots). Derelict pots are crab pots that have been lost, abandoned, or otherwise discarded in the water.

430 watermen returned a survey packet (**42% response rate**)

## SURVEY RESPONSES



Respondent demographics:

- o 16% did not commercially fish for hard crabs in 2018
- o 56% rely on commercial crabbing for a majority of their income
- o 34 years of commercial crabbing experience on average
- o Generation of waterman:
  - 1st – 28%
  - 2nd – 18%
  - 3rd – 27%
  - 4th – 14%
  - 5th or more – 14%



Perceptions of derelict pots:

- o On average, respondents reported **losing 10% of pots fished in 2018**
- o Main reasons pots become derelict:
  1. Commercial/recreational vessel traffic
  2. Storms/severe weather
- o Respondents perceived derelict pots to impact the Bay
  - positively – 10%
  - negatively – 29%
  - both positively and negatively – 31%
  - no impact – 30%
- o Main negative impacts:
  1. Costs required to replace the lost gear
  2. Captures and kills fishes and crabs



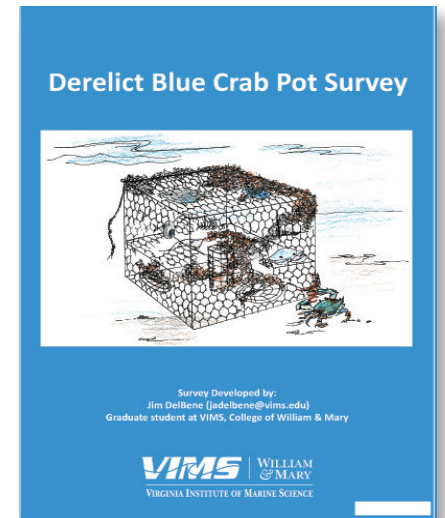
Average willingness to participate in hypothetical mitigation activities:

- least preferred
- Watermen would need to **be paid...**
- \$1,449 to modify pots to reduce derelict pot impacts
  - \$1,384 to attach an identification tag to pots
  - \$954 to check pots every 72 hours
  - \$712 to participate in a 3-day derelict pot removal program
  - \$638 to only use galvanized wire pots

- most preferred
- Watermen would **willingly participate in or support...**
- Recycle all old pots at a facility on land
  - Educate recreational boaters



**Cash payment** and a **daily pot limit increase of 5-10%** were the only incentives preferred by watermen that increased their willingness to participate in mitigation activities.



Respondents were **37% more likely** to participate in mitigation activities if they believed derelict pots cause only a **negative impact**.