

## City Installs Five New Clear Your Gear Stations



Monofilament Busters volunteers Doris Hardy and Claudia Burns stand next to one of the new Clear Your Gear signs and monofilament recycling stations installed at Clam Bayou with Joshua Holler, beach and parks manager for the City of Sanibel

photos by Jeff Lysiak

by Jeff Lysiak

Last week, a volunteer representing the Monofilament Busters conservation group oversaw the installation of five new monofilament fishing line recycling stations completed by the City of Sanibel's Department of Public Works, expanding the scope of the three-year-old Clear Your Gear campaign.

Clear Your Gear, a collaborative effort among Sanibel and Captiva conservation organizations, aims to reduce the amount of monofilament line and fishing gear left in our environment, which is often detrimental to wildlife.

- Clam Bayou box culvert
- Blind Pass
- City Boat Ramp

According to volunteer Claudia Burns, the effort was established in 2013 by seven Sanibel-Captiva conservation organizations in response to the observation of ongoing environmental problems and an increase in wildlife injuries caused by monofilament line and other fishing gear. Currently, participants include the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW), Sanibel Sea School, JN "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, the "Ding" Darling Monofilament Busters, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) and the City of Sanibel's Natural Resources Department.

"For many years, the JN 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge conducted seasonal cleanups of abandoned fishing gear from their mangroves. As the amount of derelict gear increased, the cleanups became weekly, year-round," said Burns. "As time went by, it became apparent that the quantity of fishing tackle tangled in mangroves was increasing, as was the number of birds, reptiles and mammals entangled, injured and killed by the abandoned gear."

Doris Hardy, another Monofilament Buster volunteer and president of the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, was thrilled to see additional stations installed throughout the city.



Peter Tomaszewski and Joe Spirito, both with Sanibel's Department of Public Works, installing a new Clear Your Gear station at Blind Pass



In addition to a PVC tube receptacle, the Clear Your Gear station includes signage with a QR code

Birds – like pelicans, as depicted on the signs positioned above the PVC tube receptacle – reptiles, raccoons and other critters either get caught in the monofilament line or mistake the fishing line for food. If ingested, the line (and any attached hooks) can prove to be fatal for those animals.

On July 14, city workers installed five new Clear Your Gear stations. Locations include:

- Bowman's Beach main beach access
- Bowman's Beach kayak launch

"This looks just great... way beyond my expectations," said Hardy. "We've been waiting a long time to get this done."

Burns noted that in addition to the verbal information depicted on the Clear Your Gear signs, a QR code – giving mobile device users more details about the campaign – provides an additional benefit. "You can get a lot of information by using the code... if only one person uses it, it'll be worth it," she added.

Prior to last week's five new installations, there were 18 local Clear Your Gear monofilament recycling stations, including 12 along the Sanibel Causeway, seven throughout the "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and one at the Sanibel Fishing Pier. A new recycling station is scheduled to be installed at the pier once renovations to the facility are completed. That is expected to be done by early August.

In addition, monofilament fishing line may be disposed of at The Bait Box, located at 1041 Periwinkle Way on Sanibel, and at West Marine locations throughout Lee County.

Funding for the design of the signs was provided with support by the West Coast Inland Navigation District while production of the recycling bins was paid for through a Solutions To Avoid Red Tide grant. ❖