



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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**INTRODUCING CLEAR YOUR GEAR: A NEW COLLABORATIVE EFFORT DEDICATED TO
REDUCING THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF MONOFILAMENT ON WILDLIFE**

*More Than 100 Reported Wildlife Destroyed Annually by
Monofilament and Fishing Hooks Left in Environment*

SANIBEL, FL: Seven Sanibel-Captiva area conservation groups have united to create a new environmental campaign called “Clear Your Gear.” The official launch is Sunday, October 16, at the opening day of the 27th annual “Ding” Darling Days on Sanibel.

Clear Your Gear will work to educate the fishing public on the harmful effects of fishing line (monofilament) and other fishing gear discarded in the environment, and thereby reduce the number of injured or destroyed wildlife. The effort will focus on Southwest Florida and with success, ideally expand its scope of education and information.

“Our goal is to reduce as significantly as we can the amount of monofilament in the environment, because monofilament can last over 500 years,” says Dr. Heather Barron of CROW, one of the leaders of Clear Your Gear. “Doing so, we’ll have a better environment for fishermen and their crafts, and a safer environment for people and wildlife.”

Currently, Clear Your Gear has established more than 20 monofilament recycling stations on Sanibel and the Sanibel Causeway. These stations are located in high-traffic fishing areas, and serve as easy-to-use collection bins for excess monofilament, helping keep fishing line out of the environment. These are identified with Clear Your Gear signage and include a handy QR code and contact information should fishermen need assistance with wildlife entangled in monofilament. An instructional ‘how-to’ video is also available at the Clear Your Gear website demonstrating the proper way to unhook a bird.

“Sea birds and turtles frequently present to CROW for hook and line injuries, and this is a problem that should be preventable,” Dr. Barron says. According to CROW records, more than 100 wildlife are currently lost each year due to monofilament or hook injuries.

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The organizations collaborating on Clear Your Gear include: City of Sanibel Natural Resources Department, CROW (the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife), J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, J.N. “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, Monofilament Busters, The Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation and the Sanibel Sea School.

To learn more about Clear Your Gear, where recycling stations are located, how to unhook a bird and more, visit www.ClearYourGear.org.

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