

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

MONTEREY MAN FOUND GUILTY OF SETTING CRAB TRAPS IN THE MONTEREY BAY MARINE PROTECTED AREA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CONTACT: Robin Duffy, Deputy District Attorney
(831) 755-5412**

Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that on November 11, 2016, Gerard Wetle, Jr., age 41, was found guilty by jury of 25 counts of setting baited crab traps in the Soquel Canyon State Marine Conservation Area and 3 counts of deploying baited crab traps without destruction devices. Judge Vanessa W. Vallarta presided.

On April 2, 2016, wardens with the Department of Fish and Wildlife found the defendant's 25 baited crab traps, which were intentionally set half a mile into the highly protected marine sanctuary. The following day, wardens located an additional string of the defendant's traps just outside of the protected area, three of which did not have required destruction devices. Every trap belonged to the defendant. The wardens removed all 28 traps from the Monterey Bay, and returned 214 live Dungeness and rock crab to the ocean.

The Monterey Bay is one of the most diverse and delicate ecosystems in the world. Environmental regulations - such as those prohibiting fishing in protected waters or requiring that traps self-destruct to prevent unchecked killing of animals - ensure that it will stay that way. Those who violate the law will be held strictly liable.

The defendant will be sentenced on December 7, 2016.

The case was investigated by Warden Justin Cisneros and Lieutenant Joseph Ames of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

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