

Update: February 28, 2025

**Mid-Coast Sea Turtle Rescue (MCSTR)
Mitigation Project – Progress Report**



An unprecedented third cold stunning event occurred during the third week of February which coincided with Texas Parks and Wildlife’s annual Abandoned Crab Trap Removal program of which San Antonio Bay Partnership coordinates in our region. Several boat crews who were signed up to remove abandoned crab traps were also trained MCSTR volunteers and were reprioritized to search for cold stunned sea turtles. Twenty Houston Zoo and the Dallas Zoo employees who were scheduled to participate in the crab trap removal program and were deputized to search for and handle cold stunned turtles. Ground searches began on February 21 before conditions allowed boat searches. Two U-Haul trailers were rented and a third donated by the First United Methodist Church. The trailers were positioned to transport turtles from Seadrift, Port O’Connor and Matagorda. On February 23 conditions were favorable to searching the bays and twelve boats launched searched the bays for cold stunned turtles. A total of 67 volunteers recovered 21 cold stunned turtles that were transported to the Texas State Aquarium over the 4-day event. Thirty-three old dead turtles were also documented.

February 16, 2025

In the summer and fall of 2024 rescue supplies and volunteer appreciation items were purchased. These included items to create kits needed for cold stunned sea turtle rescue. Each kit includes:

- A jumbo size ziplock bag to hold items.
- 20 green and 10 pink* armbands, and 1 white and 1 pink* paint pen to label each turtle with the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network (STSSN).
- A green towel and a red towel* (embroidered with the MCSTR logo and red one embroidered “FP”) to wipe the turtle’s shell to be able to mark shell with the paint pen.
- A sharpie marker to write the STSSN number on the arm band.
- A clipboard with STSSN forms for documenting dead sea turtles.
- A pen to complete the STSSN form.
- A can of red spray paint to mark dead turtles left in the field.
- A rubber band to hold the forms down on the clip board.
- A quart size ziplock bag with 10 latex gloves.
- A flexible measuring tape to measure dead turtles.
- A printed guided to MCSTR Sea Turtle Rescue process & procedures.
- A MCSTR sticker to label the kit.

*Note: Sea turtles can have a skin condition called FP. To prevent cross contamination of non-FP turtles and for clear recognition of FP turtles by handlers, pink arm bands and pink paint pens are used on FP turtles and a red towel is used to wipe FP turtles.

Additional rescue supplies include tarps used in vehicles for transporting turtles, concrete mixing tubs with nylon rope for sleds used to haul turtles, and two professional made slings for lifting turtles from boats.

In October 2024, ninety volunteers completed the mandatory State training for inclusion on the USFWS List of Authorized individuals. Those who completed the mandatory training were invited to attend the Mid-Coast Sea Turtle Rescue’s Annual Meeting to review local processes and distribute supplies. Drinks and snacks were provided at this meeting. Volunteers were given winter caps embroidered with the MCSTR logo and program logo stickers.

In January 2025 the Mid-Coast Sea Turtle Rescue responded to two cold stunning events (January 11 and January 21 – 25). During these events we rented U-Haul trailers to transport turtles from Port O'Connor and Seadrift to the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi, and from Matagorda to Lake Jackson. Volunteer drivers were reimbursed for their gasoline. Airboats are critical to the success of reaching cold stunned turtles and they were provided with HEB gift cards to reimburse their gasoline expense.

During the January 11 cold stunning event effort included 89 volunteers, 11 boats and 7 vehicles recovering 49 cold stunned sea turtles.

The second cold stunning event spanned several days January 21 – 25. The effort included 82 volunteers, 17 boats, 22 vehicles, 154 turtles recovered.

Prior to each cold stunning event, members of the public who came forward to help were provided last minute training and were deputized to help with the cold stunning event. A total of nineteen people were deputized (7 on 1/10/25, 12 on 1/20/25) and supported the search, rescue and transport efforts.