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October 26, 2017

NOAA Office of Response and Restoration
1305 East- West Highway
SSMC4 Rm. 10239 N/ORR5
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Dear NOAA Marine Debris Program Staff and Removal Project Review Panel,

I am writing you today in support of the Ocean Aid 360 project proposal for detection and retrieval of derelict crab traps and fishing gear in Tampa Bay, Florida. This project proposal will be submitted in response to the NOAA solicitation: *FY18 Marine Debris Removal (NOAA-NOS-ORR-2018-2005335)*.

As Congressman for Florida's 13th Congressional District, which encompasses the Ocean Aid 360 project target site, and member on the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, I understand the dangers that these derelict traps pose to NOAA Trust Resources as they "ghost fish" unchecked throughout the Tampa Bay estuary and tributaries.

My District depends on healthy, living marine resources and habitats, to support our coastal economy through tourism, and both commercial and recreational fisheries. As such, this marine debris removal project proposal has wide community-stakeholder support, as evidenced by Ocean Aid 360's project collaborators at the Coastal Conservation Association of Florida (CCA) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

I believe that the proposed project will be innovative in its approach to mobilizing diverse groups of local stakeholders – boaters, anglers, watershed groups and private entities – who will be provided with education and oversight as they engage in sponsored Ghost Trap Roundups and a data-driven species inventory. Furthermore, we anticipate that the positive impacts of this project will be made sustainable, as local communities come to understand the impacts and prevention measures of marine debris through a hands-on approach.

Finally, Ocean Aid 360 has shared information with my office, related to the proposed project budget and line items, and I support their one year federal funding request which is anticipated to be approximately one hundred thousand dollars. I believe that the equivalent, non-federal, cost sharing which has been pledged by this organization demonstrates their dedication to the cause, as well as an opportunity to leverage public and community partnership toward quantifiable and long-term ecological habitat improvements for NOAA Trust Resources in Tampa Bay.

I thank you for your consideration and pledge the support of my office in this worthwhile endeavor.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist
Congressman for Florida's 13th District