WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A metal trap consisting essentially of pre-formed microspheres impregnated with an organic acid salt of a rare earth element.

2. The metal trap of Claim 1, wherein the pre-formed microspheres comprise kaolinite, montmorillonite, bentonite, attapulgite, kaolin, amorphous kaolin, metakaolin, mullite, spinel, hydrous kaolin, calcined hydrous kaolin, clay, or a mixture of any two or more thereof.

3. The metal trap of Claim 1, comprising at least 1 wt. % of the rare earth element, on an oxide basis.

4. The metal trap of Claim 1, wherein the rare earth element is lanthanum, cerium, ytterbium, gadolinium, yttrium, neodymium, or a mixture of any two or more thereof.

5. The metal trap of Claim 1, wherein the organic acid salt is a formate, acetate, a propionate salt, or a mixture thereof.

6. The metal trap of Claim 5, wherein the organic acid salt is a formate salt.

7. The metal trap of Claim 1, wherein the pre-formed microspheres have a particle size of from about 40-150 microns.

8. The metal trap of Claim 1, wherein the pre-formed microspheres have a pore volume of at least about 0.10 cm^3/gram.

9. A fluid catalytic cracking (FCC) catalyst composition comprising:

a zeolite component comprising a first microsphere; and

a separate non-zeolitic component consisting essentially of pre-formed second microspheres, impregnated with an organic acid salt of a rare earth element.

10. The FCC catalyst composition of Claim 9, wherein the pre-formed microspheres comprise kaolinite, montmorillonite, bentonite, attapulgite, kaolin, amorphous kaolin, metakaolin, mullite, spinel, hydrous kaolin, calcined hydrous kaolin, clay, or a mixture of any two or more thereof.

11. The FCC catalyst composition of Claim 9 wherein the rare earth element is lanthanum, cerium, ytterbium, gadolinium, yttrium, neodymium, or a mixture of any two or more thereof.

12. The FCC composition of Claim 9, wherein the organic acid salt is a formate, an acetate, or a propionate salt, or a mixture of any two or more thereof.

13. The FCC catalyst composition of Claim 9, wherein the rare earth element is present in a range of 0.1 wt% to about 20.0 wt% on an oxide basis.

14. A method of preparing a metal trap of claim 1, the method comprising contacting pre-formed microspheres with an organic acid salt of a rare earth element.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein the contacting step is selected from the group consisting of coating, spray drying, and impregnating.

16. The method of Claim 14, wherein the organic acid salt of the rare earth element is comprised in an aqueous medium comprising the organic acid.

17. A method of preparing a FCC catalyst composition according to Claim 9, comprising blending the zeolite component and the non-zeolitic component.

18. A method of cracking a hydrocarbon feed under fluid catalytic cracking conditions, the method comprising contacting the hydrocarbon feed with the FCC catalyst composition of Claim 9.

19. A method of passivating and/or trapping at least one metal contaminant from a hydrocarbon oil feed in an FCC unit bed, the method comprising contacting the hydrocarbon oil feed with the FCC catalyst composition of Claim 9.

20. The method according to Claim 18, wherein the at least one metal contaminant is vanadium.

21. A metal trap comprising pre-formed microspheres impregnated with an organic acid salt of a rare earth element, wherein the metal trap is directly mixed with a particle matrix.