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REEF BALL UPDATE

By Todd Barber, President & CEO, Reef Ball Development Group, Ltd.



Reef Innovations has moved production operations back to Sarasota and is now set up and producing Reef Balls in Sarasota.

There will be a Reef Ball booth set up at "Take Pride in Okeechobee" on April 1st at the Army Corps facility in Clewiston. This is in conjunction with the Reef Ball project which is placing 100 Reef Balls in Lake Okeechobee this spring.

National Marine Fisheries Service has set up a hotline for reporting Jewfish sightings at 1-800-367-4461. When you are diving Reef Balls, please keep an eye open for these majestic fish. They are especially looking for reports on smaller individual fish. Look for a rounded tail as a clue that the grouper you see is a Jewfish. The smaller individuals often have a patchy coloration of black and white squares.

Manatee County revealed its five-year artificial reef development plan and it includes 9 sites with Reef Balls including experimental arrays for studying deployment spacing. Each site will ultimately contain between 100 - 300 Reef Balls.

120 Reef Balls will be deployed late this spring off Fort Lauderdale in conjunction with a scientific study by NOVA Southeastern University.

Todd Barber and Tanya Streeter (World Record Freediver) are leading a Reef Ball coalition trip from April 18th - 25th to celebrate "Dive Into Earth Day". During the week long trip to the Island of Dominica the volunteers will be building and deploying Reef Balls in a location that will be designated as a marine reserve.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency published in the "Demonstration Projects Series" a report titled "Punta Gorda Waterfront Juveniles Fisheries Habitat Project" about Reef Balls. We encourage everyone interested in Reef Balls under docks or in estuaries to order a copy of this publication. EPA842-F-00-005S (Call 513 - 489 - 8190 ; it's free.)

The article summary is as follows:

"LESSONS LEARNED"

- The Reef Balls colonized with oysters and other marine organisms much more quickly than expected under private docks.
- Within weeks of deployment, large numbers of juvenile and adult fish were utilizing the structures deployed under private docks.

- Water monitoring efforts over the last twelve months around the Reef Balls under private docks have shown "better than expected" levels of dissolved oxygen.
- Reef Balls placed in the harbor were colonized quickly, but crab predation scoured larger organisms. However, regrowth occurred and different species of fish are now attracted to the area.
- Obtaining permits required considerable time and effort. The great success of the project has encouraged state agencies to allow this innovative project to be duplicated in other areas of Florida.

Some nice quotes:

"The project was initiated by a group of conservation-minded fishermen who formed the Charlotte Harbor Reefs Association. During the planning phases it was determined that concrete Reef Balls were the most environmentally compatible and appropriate type of fishery habitat for the project."

"It is expected that the great success of this project (Reef Balls under docks) will encourage state agencies to allow this kind of project to be conducted in other areas of Florida."

"The response from private residences to have Reef Balls placed under docks was overwhelming. More than 150 waterfront residents were willing to pay for Reef Balls to be placed under their docks."

"Requests for further information regarding this project continue to come in. The State of Florida is looking at this project as a potential form of mitigation for wetland projects."

There is a full copy of this article on our website at www.reefball.com.

For more information on ReefBalls, access

The Reef Ball website at: www.reejball.com

or The Reef Ball Coalition: www.reefballcoalition.org

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