



The Reef Ball Development Group, Limited, a company comprised of twenty dive buddies and fisher folks, is producing artificial reefs with zeal. Their Reef Balls are attracting attention because they are attracting marine life. The group's mission statement charters them to design natural looking, environmentally sound artificial reefs. Helping to restore the world's ailing reef systems is their goal.

Patented Reef Balls were invented by a father and son team. The Barbors got their inspiration from their favorite reef off of Grand Cayman Island. The reef was destroyed by Hurricane Gilbert. Since waiting hundreds of years for the reef to rebuild itself would be impossible for them, they decided to do something about it. An awareness of man's pollution and abuse of the natural reefs in other areas fueled their cause.

The artificial reefs that existed at the time, including ships, oil platforms, bridge rubble, other man-made materials of opportunity, just couldn't match the beauty of the natural reef that was destroyed. Their challenge was to produce modules that looked natural. The team did not have thousands of dollars to access a barge or crane, but they needed to design something that would be heavy enough to be stable on the ocean floor.

The idea finally came to them, Jerry Barber, Todd's father, said, "Why don't we just buy some big beach balls, coat them with a layer of concrete, and roll them down the beach into the water? We can tow the modules out, and we can pop the beach balls to sink the reef module." With that thought, Reef Balls were born.

For a "vacation," Todd, his wife, and some of their best friends from college made the first Reef Ball prototypes in West Palm Beach, Florida. It was hard work, but the prototypes did float to their current resting place where they are thriving artificial reefs. After returning to Atlanta, Georgia, the group began to brainstorm about an easier way to make the modules. Before long, the Barbors and all of their friends were working night and day to develop the idea.

The group's volunteers have "kept the ball rolling." Over a thousand Reef Balls are now being used both in the US and in other countries. As an alternative to waste materials, Reef Balls make sense. They look natural, and they float to their drop sites without the use of any heavy equipment. They are cost effective and safe for the environment. They survived Tropical Storm Gordon by remaining stable on the ocean floor even though the storm had enough energy to tear Miami's famous artificial reef airplane in half.

What next? The group will continue to promote Reef Balls. They will continue to develop their ideas. They will continue to dive. Perhaps what is most important to the group is that their legacy will live on, and that their

children will be able to know what they have known — the remarkable beauty of the reefs.

The Reef Ball Development Group, Ltd., has launched the *Reef Balls Around The Nation Program*. The program's goal is to place 100 or more Reef Ball modules in every reef-building program in the nation. The program will be highlighted on CNN's *Network Earth* and *Earth Matters* shows. The footage was shot during the months of September and October and will be aired shortly after completion. Several projects are currently underway as sponsors are taking advantage of the program's reduced mold leasing costs.

BOY SCOUT REEF IN KEYS

The Boy Scout High Adventure Sea Base on Islamorada in the Florida Keys has been provided a mold by Charbon's Specialty Sports of Athens, Georgia. Four more molds have been sponsored by W. R. Grace, maker of the high tech admixes used to make Reef Balls last centuries. The five molds are being used to create a reef just off of the Tennessee Tower deemed "The Scout Reef." A section of the reef will be named "Charbon's Alley" in honor of the sponsor. Steve Zalvane, coordinator of the project, says the program ". . . provides reef builders with a practical invention to use to build reefs with the assistance of environmentally active groups, companies, and individuals. These concrete structures are cost-efficient, easy to build and deploy without special tools or equipment, and are also safe for the environment." Sam Wampler, Director of the camp, says, "This is an exciting project for our Scouts and Explorers. The boys and girls get to learn more about the sanctuary and marine life while helping to install reefs that will help preserve the marine life here." The Scout Reef is the only private permitted artificial reef site inside of the National Marine Sanctuary.

FT. LAUDERDALE REEFS

The Broward County Department of Natural Resources in Ft. Lauderdale is participating in the program to build several hundred modules for both a beach dive site and a deeper fishing/diving reef. A third reef, using a barge provided by the City of Hollywood, will be placed in about two months consisting of the new large Reef Balls. All three of RBDG's new mold sizes are used for the other reefs. The South Florida Diving Club will also help in the deployments. Ken Banks, Broward's artificial reef coordinator says, "We hope to find additional funding to purchase several mold systems to make this a permanent program . . . we are using the Bay Balls and Pallet Balls to be deployed by interested volunteers and the Reef Balls to be deployed by the barge." NOVA University's Dr. Spier is helping with studies and monitoring of the reefs as part of the project. NOVA is donating space for storing materials and Rinker Construction Materials is donating end of day concrete waste to produce the Reef Balls.

FUTURE REEFS

The Sarasota Department of Natural Resources plans to lease molds directly from RBDG to build several reefs around the county. The largest reef will consist of 200 Reef Balls on an artificial reef site called M-2. Mike Solum, the Artificial Reef Coordinator for the county, says, "We are being funded by a state grant that was originally intended for army tanks. The tanks became too costly, especially when compared with Reef Balls." Martin County and Hernando County are considering using similar grants for the same purpose.