

**St. Johns County Recreation & Parks and Mandarin High School
To Create the High School Reef**

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Lex Waters

563-3357 or 262-5001

JACKSONVILLE, FL (June 16, 2003) – Weather permitting, 200 Reef Balls that are used in the construction of artificial reefs, will be deployed on Tuesday morning, June 24, near the Duval/St. Johns County line, about 8 miles offshore to create what will be known as the High School Reef. With a grant written by Administrative Manager Shorty Robbins of St. Johns County Recreation & Parks, the concrete artificial components called Reef Balls, will be towed offshore by a tug and barge to the designated location offshore. High school marine science students at Mandarin High School and St. Augustine High School have, for the past 3 years, been making concrete artificial structures known as Reef Balls. Currently, the Reef Balls are on a barge in Green Cove Springs at the MOBRO Marine facility who will be towing the Reef Balls to the location offshore.

The Mandarin High School Reef Ball project has had much success in the 3 years since it won the National SeaWorld/Busch Gardens Environmental Excellence Award in 2000. Local businesses, organizations and individuals have provided much-needed support over the years to make this project continue to be successful. With a grant from the St. Johns County Recreation & Parks department to pay for the towing costs, it has been possible to get the Reef Balls in the water to make the High School Reef. Tarmac America, Inc., has been donating concrete for all three years, as well as Jensen Civil Construction, Briggs Equipment and Neff Rental, who have donated forklifts to move the 4,000 pound Reef Balls around the campus. Sunbelt Transport is donating flatbed trucks to transport the Reef Balls from Mandarin High School to the MOBRO facility in Green Cove Springs. Also, Jacksonville Marine Charities has donated funds to help facilitate the construction of the Reef Balls.

Topside and underwater video and photos will be available free upon request for those interested in covering the story but will not be able to make the event. Also, boat transportation is going to be arranged for those who will be able to cover the event for themselves.

Reef Balls have been used in the restoration of reefs all over the world. To date, there have been over 500 projects worldwide that have used Reef Balls to help restore reefs lost to a variety of factors, some natural and some manmade. To learn more about them, go to www.reefball.com.