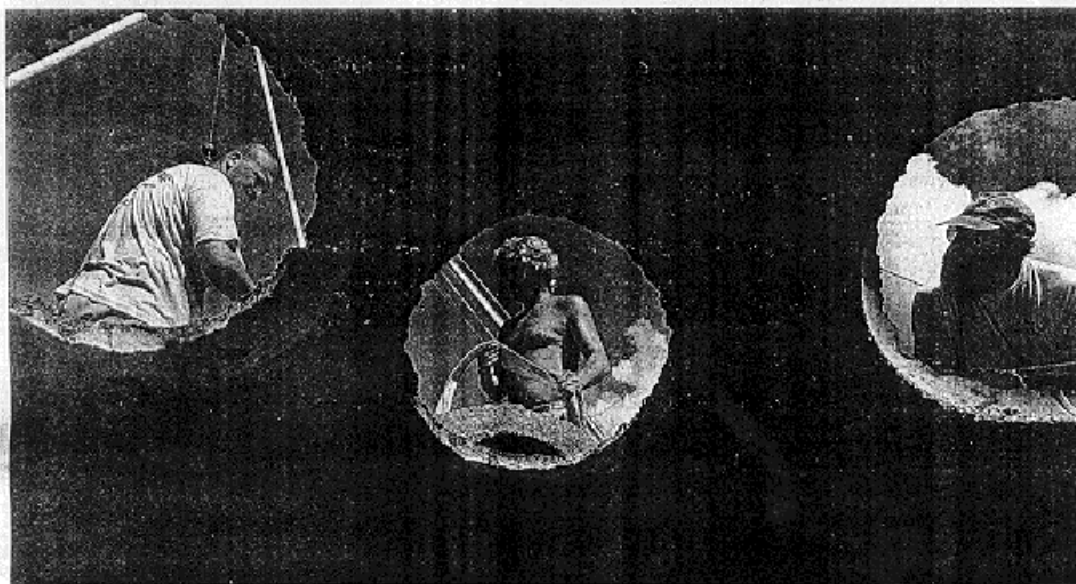


REEF IN THE ROUND



Doug Pender, left, Craig Wetterstrom and Brett Blaney, seen through the holes of a Reef Ball, work to deploy one of the sea wildlife habitats along the Doanus Hart Artificial Reef in Sarasota Bay on Wednesday morning. Photos by Ray Gray/Staff

Feb 27/97

NEWS

NAples Daily News

Front Page

New concept urged for Estero Bay

Reef Balls have shown promise in restoring marine habitats around the world; now proponents want them used here.

By KARIE PARTINGTON
Boca Raton Staff

Reef Balls are being deployed underwater all over the world to foster vegetation and boost fish populations, and there's an effort afoot to bring the odd-looking artificial reefs to Estero Bay.

While the local drive is in its early stages — the county's Division of Natural Resources Management is just beginning to investigate the possibility of using Reef Balls in Estero Bay — the balls are being used with great success in Sarasota, both in the bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

"We've got them in one spot about 10 miles out in 60 feet of water that used to be flat sand, and now there's about 20 types of fish and the plant life is beautiful," said Mike Solun, Sarasota County environmental specialist.

"There has been a lot of habitat destroyed in Estero Bay. Seagrass has been lost through stormwater run-off.

This is a monitorable tool we can bring to the bay to make it better."

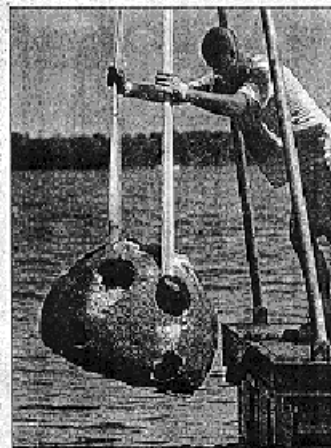
Chuck Listowski
Executive director of the West Coast Inland Navigation District

Reef Balls are made by pouring concrete into a fiberglass mold containing a central buoy surrounded by various sized inflatable balls to make holes in the concrete. The end result is a device with a flat bottom and a rounded, albeit hole-filled, top.

"The concrete is textured enough to allow life to cling to its surface, and the holes allow for circulation," Solun said. "It's the closest thing I've seen to a device that mimics a natural reef."

Chuck Listowski, executive director of the West Coast Inland Navigation District and member of the Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management, is a believer in the balls as well. Listowski is behind the push to bring Reef Balls to Estero Bay.

"There has been a lot of habi-



Doug Pender lowers a Reef Ball from a barge on Sarasota Bay.

See REEF, Page 4A