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While conducting the environmental baseline study for the Idd el Shargi oil and gas project in Qatar, Occidental employees became aware that scientists and government officials had concerns regarding the pressures on Qatar's marine environment and potential consequences for the commercial fishing industry. Scientific papers published on the fisheries in the Arabian Gulf identified a loss of habitat and an increased demand on available fish stock. They indicated that, in addition to improved fisheries management, intensive artificial reef programs would improve habitat availability and diversity, helping to stabilize the ecology and economics of the area.



Taking the lead, Occidental contacted the Reefball Development Croup Ltd. (RDG), sponsored the construction of artificial reefs and engaged the Qatar Scientific Club to manage the project. The artificial reefs (known as reefballs) have an expected life of 500 years. Occidental is the first oil company to sponsor a reefball program, according to RDG.



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