

Amendment II
to
Louisiana's Artificial Reef Plan
Special Artificial Reef Sites

Introduction

Since the development of Louisiana's Artificial Reef Program, several unforeseen and seemingly beneficial opportunities have arisen that involve the creation of artificial reefs outside of designated planning areas. For example, a large drilling rig, owned and operated by ODECO located in South Timbalier 86, collapsed in 1986 during Hurricane Juan. This very large structure has become a very popular diving and fishing spot but not located within one of the eight original Louisiana Artificial Reef Planning Areas. While program coordinators and council members believe inclusion of the structure in the reef program is desirable, they also feel expansion of an existing planning area to encompass the ODECO structure would set a bad precedent.

The creation of a "Special Artificial Reef Site" (SARS) program category would provide the council and program the flexibility of establishing selected artificial reefs under such "unusual" circumstances. Each SARS in inshore, nearshore, or offshore waters of Louisiana would have to meet the following qualifications and criteria.

Definition

A Special Artificial Reef Site (SARS) is an artificial reef site created and maintained by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries under the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program as described in Amendment II of the Louisiana Reef Plan (this amendment).

The purpose of a SARS is to allow the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program to take advantage of materials of opportunity located outside designated planning areas that would benefit Louisiana's Artificial Reef Program with minimum negative user group impacts. A site, and materials contained in that site, would qualify as a SARS when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- A. There is a historical or biological significance associated with that site. For example, if a particular area is a successful fishing spot frequented by fishermen and/or divers, or if the site provides good fishery habitat,
- B. the site is part of a cooperative effort between the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program and other state, federal or private groups,
- C. the site contains shipwrecks or other derelicts which cannot be practicably removed or relocated, and provide benefits to the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program, or
- D. the site forms an integral part of experimental or demonstration projects undertaken by the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program.

Criteria

For a site to be considered as a SARS it must meet the following criteria:

- 1) designation as a SARS would provide benefit to recreational and/or commercial fishing, or fish habitat,
- 2) removal of existing material from that site would have a negative impact on fish

- populations,
- 3) designation as a SARS would not pose a threat to navigation,
 - 4) the area does not occupy currently trawlable bottom, (those water bottoms that are free of obstruction, such as existing oil & gas infrastructure)
 - 5) inclusion of the special artificial reef site in the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program would have an overall positive impact on user groups,
 - 6) for every "SARS" constructed, an area of equal size (not containing permitted or established artificial reefs) would be eliminated from an existing, adjacent planning area; a reasonable effort will be made to remove an area of higher shrimp effort, according to the best information available,
 - 7) except for possible trace amounts, the structure would be free and clear of any hydrocarbons or other hazardous materials as listed in current regulations promulgated by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, and
 - 8) the structure must be standing and undamaged by storm or other disaster

Procedure

The following steps will be taken to establish a Special Artificial Reef Site:

- 1) The Louisiana Artificial Reef Coordinator will draft a proposal to establish a SARS for submission to the Artificial Reef Council. The proposal shall include: a) location, b) clearance, c) bottom profile, d) condition of structure and list of potential hazardous material, and e) justification that the criteria outlined above are met.
- 2) Following acceptance of the proposal by the Louisiana Artificial Reef Council, the intent to create a SARS will be announced through a Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries News Release.

- 3) Thirty days following news releases, if no major objections are received, the Louisiana Artificial Reef Coordinator will apply for necessary permits. In the objections are received, a public hearing will be held to provide further information before a final determination by the Council.
- 4) If appropriate, an Act of Donation will be agreed upon by the donor and recipients of the reef material.
- 5) The Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries shall sign all necessary permits and the Acts of Donation.