



Okaloosa County Public Works

Destin, Florida
July 26, 2012

AQUATIC LIFE ECOSYSTEM (ALE) REEF

The Aquatic Life Ecosystem (ALE) reef will be constructed in gulf waters next week. The ALE reef will be constructed with money provided through a Fish and Wildlife Conservation commission competitive grant and 5% matching funds from Okaloosa County Tourist Development Council.

The ALE reef was named through a competition open to all middle-schools in Okaloosa County. The Competition was won by an Advanced Science class at **Ruckel Middle School**. A commemorative plaque will be fixed to one of the reef modules acknowledging the class.

The ALE reef will be constructed in the County's Large Area Artificial Reef Site A approximately 22 miles southeast of Destin Pass in about 120 feet of water. The reef system will be comprised of 36 separate reef modules. Four modules will be deployed in the center of the reef complex and the remainder will be deployed in four arms radiating from the center of the reef complex. Each arm will have four sets of two reef modules each separated by approximately 400 feet.

Scott Henson, the Okaloosa County Artificial Reef Program Manager was asked why the reef system will be constructed so far from shore – **"Okaloosa County does not currently have any permitted reef areas in State waters. The FDEP has approved the permits for two new reef areas but we are currently awaiting approval from the US Army Corps of Engineers."** Mr. Henson stated that he hopes that the new reef permits will be available for use next year because the FWC grant application submitted this year is for the construction of reef sites in State waters.

Artificial reef construction may accelerate in the next few years. **Funding for artificial reefs through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process and the Recovery Act have high probabilities of selection.** Funding available through these programs is a result of Deep Water Horizon oil spill restoration efforts.

"Based on the success of the Conch Reef constructed last year, the ALE reef will become a favorite for the local fishing community. The coordinates of all of the reef structures will be posted on the County Artificial Reef Program webpages," Henson said. **The webpage address is http://www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/dept_pw_resources_reefs.html.**

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