

Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, Inc.

Partial Activity Report for the Period August 15 - October 9, 2003

Summary

During this period, there was 1 construction trip to replace the FH-11 Lighted Marker Piling, and 3 Dive Monitoring Trips to the Abstract Barge, Rubble 020919, the DISH Wreck, Rubble 011003, Rubble 020911, and the Corps Barge. Other Spotter Operations for the month are covered by the DMR under a separate report.

FH-11 Lighted Marker Piling

Position: 30/15.548°N / 88/53.962°W 12226.3/47081.2/29447.7

T&W Marine was contracted to replace the FH-11 lighted piling which had been reportedly broken off by a shrimp boat. On September 9, 2003, they were met onsite and a 60 foot piling was driven. Dayboard markers and a flashing light were mounted. The top of the piling is about 15 feet above the water. Tide level was 1.3 feet with a range of 0.7' (853PM) to 2.2 feet (1033AM). Conditions were windy, with south winds at about 16 to 20 knots and numerous scattered showers. The piling was placed in the same position as the previous marker.

030708 Abstract Barge, 409F13

Position: 30/03.673°N / 88/32.137°W 12452.0/47038.0

On September 14 a visit was made to this new reef, just deployed on July 8. This 130'X45'X6' deck barge was enhanced by welding a mirage of steel designs on the deck. It was desired to get ongoing observations of this developing reef. The August report stated that fish seem to be avoiding the webbing, but observations on this trip revealed damselfish, arrow crabs, and small bait fish taking advantage of the webbing to gain protection from predators. Observations included Red Snapper (50-75/1-4lbs.), Triggerfish (30-40/1-2lbs.), Black Snapper (10-15/1-3lbs.), TomTates (20-30/<1-lbs.), Spadefish (30-40/1-lbs.), Red Grouper (2/2-3lbs.), Hard Tails (20-30/1-lbs.) and an assortment of bait fish, damselfish, wrasses, hi-tops, and arrow crabs. There was also a FAD which extended up to about 20 feet from the surface which was attracting hard tails. For pictures see <http://gallery.primofish.com/03Sept/index.htm>. Following a dive was made on 020919 Rubble, 281F13, Position: 30/03.241°N / 88/31.715°W 12456.2/47036.2/29623.3 which was the ninth load from the Seaway Clearing Project. Observations showed a nicely progressing reef.

011207 DISH Wreck (Deer Island South Hampton Reef), 260F13

Position: 29°59.829°N/88°30.109°W 12472.4/47022.1/29625.0

On September 20, 2003, a trip was made to the DISH Wreck in FH-13. It was desired to make observations on the vessel as well as a few of the concrete satellite reefs. However, visibility was poor near the bottom and only the upper deck of the vessel was visible. Therefore efforts were abandoned to proceed with the Rubble Evaluation. Visibility in the upper water was extremely good, perhaps 100 feet or so. Fish observations were much weaker than previous visits and may suggest increased fishing pressure on this reef. The observations included Red Snapper (15-20/1-8lbs.), Black Snapper (4-6/1-3lbs.), Sheephead (6-8/1-4lbs.), Blue Runners (75-100/1-lbs.), Spadefish (10-15/1-lbs.), Triggerfish (10-15/1-3lbs.). Dives were then conducted on nearby oil rigs to obtain hi-res digital pictures in the upper clear waters.

011003 Rubble, 255F2

Position: 30/05.429°N / 88/33.208°W 12440.9/47044.8/29617.0

On October 4, a trip was made to this rubble which is the northeast satellite to the northeast barge reef complex in FH-2. Initially it was desired to make observations of this satellite and it's Host Reef. However, a boat anchored up on the host reef, so only observations of the satellite were made and the following dive was made on a satellite to the Corps Barge as well as it's Host Reef, the Corps Barge. This rubble was progressing very nicely as a reef and sported some decent game fish as well as many smaller damselfish, sea urchins, arrow crabs, sand bass, wrasses, and hi-tops. Sand Dollars also riddled the bottom. There was some twisted metal in the material which was working very well as reef material and was providing a home for a Blue Angel. Fish counts included Red Snapper (50-75/1-3lbs.), Black Snapper (10-15/1-4lbs.), Triggerfish (10-15/1-2lbs.), Scamp (2/1-lbs.), and Gag Grouper (2/4-12lbs.).

020911a Corps Barge Rubble North Satellite, SCR5, 277F2

Position: 30°04.820°N/88°34.630°W 12426.3/47042.4/29600.2

This satellite rubble reef is located 300 yards north of Corps Barge in 58 feet of water. The dive started on this rubble and then continued across the bottom to the Corps Barge itself (the Host Reef). The observations showed fewer fish on the satellite reef, but the reef was indeed productive. It was also interesting to note that en route to the Host Reef, a smaller piece of rubble was encountered that was providing habitat for about a dozen juvenile Red and Lane Snappers as well as juvenile wrasses and hi-tops. This shows that scattered small rubble pieces on the outskirts or in between satellite reefs help contribute to the juvenile populations. Another note-worthy observation was that there was a noticeably higher profile in the bottom as the Barge was approached that was riddled with shells. Fish sightings increased considerably as this boundary was crossed. Fish counts on the rubble included Red Snapper (10-15/1-3 lbs.), Black Snapper (2-4/1-3lbs.), and TomTates (30-40). Fish counts on the Corps Barge were much higher and included Red Snapper (50-75/1-3lbs.), Blue Runners (75-100/1-lbs.), Black Snapper (15-20/1-4lbs.), Spadefish (10-15/1-lbs.), TomTates (50-75), Triggerfish (15-20/1-4lbs.), Grouper (2-4/1-8lbs.), Blue Angel (1). Growth on the top of the Barge was quite heavy and provided excellent habitat for damselfish, arrow crabs, wrasses, and small bait fish.