

Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, Inc.

Partial Activity Report for the Period April 9 - May 13, 2004

Summary

During this period, there was 1 Reef Monitoring Trip conducted by PRIMOFISH.COM. Spotter Operations for the month may be covered by the DMR under a separate report. On April 10, video and observations were taken on the Corps Barge in FH-2 and the Abstract Barge in FH-13.

011114 Corps Barge 259F2

Position: 30°04.776'N/88°34.608'W 12426.5/47042.3/29600.3

Observations on this April 10 visit revealed a nicely developed reef although not many game size red snapper were sighted. There were many bait fish that included blue runners, tomtates, and pinfish as well as several cocoa damsels, urchins, arrow crabs, and hi-tops. Two adult Blue Angels were also seen as well as Triggerfish (25-50), spades (50-75), and Mangrove Snapper (5-8). Toward the end of the dive a game sized Warsaw Grouper was seen (~15 pounds). Sheepshead were plentiful (100-150/4-8lbs) as is typical in the spring.

030708 Abstract Barge, 409F13

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

Following the above dive, video and observations were conducted on the Abstract Barge in FH-13. Only about 9 months of age, this reef was already holding keeper size red snapper (100-150/2-4lbs.), however, catching them thru the thick schools of triggerfish (75-100/1-2lbs.) proved difficult. Additionally there was a particularly great abundance of sheepshead (200-250/4-8lbs.) Which seem to displace most all of the fish off of the immediate deck of the barge. Most of the red snapper are hovering above in the mid-water. In addition, many of the smaller constituents of the food chain that were sighted on a previous visit were not present on this visit. Even under the placed webbing that was believed to be providing protection. Perhaps the multitude of larger fish have preyed them out. Also, some of the webbing was damaged which allowed at least one spade fish to get inside and get trapped. Overall, however, the enhancements that were made to this reef proved very worth while. As previously reported, this reef seems to hold many more fish than similar reefs that were not enhanced. In fact, it appears to be even attracting fish away from nearby reefs. More time is needed to study if the effect is completely beneficial or if it has any negative side affects. For instance, there could be more predators than prey which might not sustain a balanced reef in the long run. But so far the enhancements appears to make the reef much more productive.

