

Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, Inc.

Activity Report for the Period July 9 thru August 13, 2009

Summary

During this period there was one reef monitoring trip. On July 25, a Dive Trip was made to FH-7 to visit the Jumbo Barge and the Rowan Crew Quarters.

860701 Jumbo Barge, 125F7

Position: 30°00.391'N / 88°30.906'W 12529.9/46920.6/29578.0

This large Sea-Going Barge was deployed in 1986, but few details were recorded at the time. It is estimated to be around 400 feet in length with a two story wheel house. The bow was determined to be about 23.5 feet above the bottom in 1989. On this visit, the bow of the Vessel was just above the Murk Layer yielding some observations, but Technical problems with the Video Camera yielded no footage and therefore no recorded measurements. There was a good population of Red Snapper (150-175/4-12 lbs.), but only very few juvenile Amberjack being sighted and none of keeper size (28" fork length). There was a pair of Spoffin Butterflies and a couple Blue Angels sighted. Encrustation and Urchin growth was observed, but limited. Overall the Reef was still performing well despite it's 23 years of service.

931101 Rowan Crew Quarters, 133F7

Position: 29°37.230'N/88°23.863'W 12536.8/46922.1/29587.2

This 120' X 35' X 35' derelict crew quarter structure was deployed by Rowan Drilling Company on November 1, 1993 while the "Perfect Storm" was causing havoc in the Northeast. Sitting in 128-130 feet of water, this structure used to rise to a depth of about 96 feet providing an excellent reef for Amberjack, Grouper, and Snapper. Depth readings on this visit showed the structure rises to only 118 feet denoting the significant scouring into the bottom by Storm Surge. Unfortunately, the visibility was only good down to about 100 feet, so fish observations were severely hampered. The last visit to this reef was made in August of 2005, just before Hurricane Katrina. Those observations showed the reef to be doing well and a point was made to denote that no scouring was evident as had been seen on Vessel Reefs. Fish Observations were plentiful although Amberjack populations were on the decline. Amberjack populations were record setting just a couple years earlier in 2003. Today the existence of adult Amberjack is near zero on reefs in this area. Red Snapper Populations were reportedly very low in the last few years, but observations on this visit indicates a return with numbers ranging from 150-175 and the sizes mostly in the 4 to 10 pound class, but a few of them approaching 30 pounds. Trying to catch these fish on Rod and Reel proved very difficult due to the high population of small Sharks. Perhaps these Sharks have an impact on the Amberjack Population as well. It was interesting to note that the scouring effect was much more noticeable on this reef and not so much so on the Jumbo Barge. Perhaps this is due to the much larger size and/or north-south orientation. Due to the significant Murk Layer, dives were not made on the Von Rosenberg, Tug, or Deck Barge.

