

# Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, Inc.

## Activity Report for the Period August 12 - November 11, 2010

### Activity Summary

During this period there were 4 Reef Monitoring Trips and no Construction Trips. On August 25 a trip was made to the Gerald Corcoran in FH-13. On September 11, a trip was made to FH-13 visiting the Gerald Corcoran (Linda Susan), the Great Wicomico, the 070308a Pyramids, and the Southern Star. On October 9, a visit was made to FH-7 and dives made on the Rowan and the Jumbo Barge. On October 17, a trip was made to FH-13 visiting the Tiger Shark, the Gerald Corcoran, the Great Wicomico, and the Southern Star.

### Dive Summaries

The August 25 dive on the Gerald Corcoran showed a good abundance of Red Snapper (75-100/2-8lbs.), Spadefish (50-75), and a few Triggerfish (8-12). Visibility was not ideal and limited the observations. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdxZtSJ0Yg>

On September 11 the Diving Conditions were much better. We started at the Gerald Corcoran (29°59.527'N / 88°30.610'W) (Linda Susan) and was greeted with some descent visibility once below 20 feet. Surprisingly the visibility held out to the bottom, something that I haven't seen in several years. This gave us a chance to make observations below the gunwales and to penetrate the aft hold. Fish Observations included Red Snapper (200-250/2-25lbs.), Gag Grouper (12-15/3-20lbs.), Scamp Grouper (2/3-5lbs.), Spadefish (100-125), Mangrove Snapper (50-75/1-6lbs.), Triggerfish (8-10), and Sheepshead (15-20/2-5lbs.). Depth Readings were recorded as follows: 93' under Stern, 86' on Stern gunwale, 74' on top of Vent Hood, 68' on top of port hand rail at top of ladder that leads to wheel house deck, 51' on top of hand rail on wheel house roof, 55' at top of aft mast, 70' on horizontal of aft mast. A shrimp net was also noted entangled on the back deck. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xC9ZTcwqac> and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bl\\_v139w7Ms](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bl_v139w7Ms)

To take advantage of the good bottom visibility, it was desired to visit the Gwen Tide which previous visits had shown to be scoured badly into the bottom. We headed toward the Gwen Tide, but a vessel was fishing on it so we turned back to the Kay Eckstein Tug Boat (29°59.552'N / 88°29.700'W). This was the first good video of this reef since Katrina had wallowed her down into the bottom. The observations showed the Vessel's Stern had dropped below the mudline. Minimum Depth measurements of 80 feet were taken at the top of the Smoke Stacks and a measurement of 81 feet was taken on the handrail at the bow. Fish Observations included Red Snapper (75-100/2-15lbs), Gag Grouper (20-25/3-20lbs.), Mangrove Snapper (8-12/2-6lbs.), Sheepshead (6-8/2-5lbs.), and Spadefish (25-30) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hN11NaEQPTs>

The next dive was on the Great Wicomico Pogy Boat (29°59.794'N / 88°29.892'W) which was deployed in FH-13 on November 24, 2010. At 10 months of age, this reef is producing exceptionally well. Not only juvenile Red Snapper (300-350/<1lbs.), but also game sized Red Snapper (8-12/8-25lbs.) and Grouper (6-8/3-18lbs.). Sea Urchins cover the deck indicating good water conditions. Baitfish such as Tom Tates and Cigar Minnows are plentiful. Sheepshead (6-8/1-4lbs.), Triggerfish (8-10), and Mangrove Snapper (4-8/1-3lbs) were also observed. This reef is the picture perfect scene for artificial reef development. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxYwCwzCMWI>

To further take advantage of the bottom visibility, the next dive was made on the 070308a Pyramids (30°01.141'N / 88°29.531'W). This grouping showed 4 Pyramids close together with 2 landing upright and 2 landing on their sides. The fact that 2 landed on their sides seems to have actually enhanced the reef by adding a larger opening. Fish Observations included Red Snapper (50-75/1-3lbs.), Gag Grouper (4-6/4-8lbs.), Warsaw Grouper (1/4lbs.), and Triggerfish (2-4). Urchins, and Soft Corals are taking hold. It is worth noting that there seem to be significantly more sea anemones on this material when compared to our traditional reefs. A final dive was made on the Southern Star Shrimp Boat, but it was getting dark and visibility limited any significant observations <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMEuxbyT33k>

On October 9, a trip was made to FH-7 where dives were conducted on the Rowan (29°37.230'N/88°23.863'W) and the Jumbo Barge (30°00.391'N / 88°30.906'W). The Rowan shows a severely reduced height probably due to Hurricane Katrina. The Jumbo Barge seemed less affected, but also reduced height. A depth reading of 116' was taken on the bow and 114' recorded on the highest deck. Red Snapper were abundant (100-150/3-20lbs.), but it is worth noting that no Amberjack were seen. Populations in 2003 were recorded in the hundreds with 30-33 inch fork lengths. In 2005, less than a dozen were recorded. This visit yielded no observations of Amberjack. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Po0n1N3Tuj4>

On October 17, Diving conditions were back to poor visibility at the bottom 30 feet. Brief dives were made on the Tiger Shark (30°00.291'N / 88°29.700'W), the Gerald Corcoran, and the Great Wicomico Pogy Boat. Red Snapper season was opened up for the weekends in October and November due to it being closed during the BP Oil Spill. The observations revealed the damage from 2 weekends of this derby style fishing activity. A wounded Red Snapper with a speargun hole to the stomach lay dying on the roof of the Gerald Corcoran. Mangrove Snapper huddled inside the wheelhouse instead of lurching above the structure. Much of the fish population noted through the year has disappeared. The Great Wicomico lacked the 300+ juvenile Red Snapper seen on September 11, but the reef is still doing well. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIHG5KRW0pw>