

Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, Inc.

Activity Report for the Period February 9 - April 12 2012

Activity Summary

During this period there were 2 Reef Monitoring Trips. On March 17, a dive monitoring trip was made to the 091124 Great Wicomico Pogy Boat 517F13 in FH-13 (29°59.527'N / 88°30.610'W). On April 1, a dive monitoring trip was made to the 031125 Gwen Tide Reef 417F13 (29°59.560'N / 88°31.870'W), the 060624 Gerald C. Corcoran Reef 435F13 (29°59.527'N / 88°30.610'W), and the Great Wicomico Pogy Boat.

Dive Summaries

The Great Wicomico is a 175' Pogy Boat that was donated by Omega Protein and deployed in FH-13 on November 24, 2009. This reef has been monitored closely since her deployment showing earlier, the development of multitudes of juveniles and baitfish to her current collection of quality game fish. Fish sightings on this March 17, 2012 visit included Red Snapper (100-150/2-20 lbs), Mangrove Snapper (6-8/1-3 lbs), Cobia (1/20 lbs), Black Grouper (1/3 lbs), Sheepshead (20-30/2-6 lbs), and Spadefish (50-75). There were also some sightings of Arrow Crabs and a lone Spotfin Butterfly. Visibility was not ideal due to recent rough weather, but some good Video was obtained showing a multitude of game sized Red Snapper feeding on the reef. There has been a steady noticeable increase in the Red Snapper population both in numbers and size, probably due to the strict regulations. At the same time, populations of baitfish, urchins, and other invertebrates are on the decline. Some concern may be warranted about an imbalance of species populations on the reefs due to regulations. While there was some increase of Sheepshead sightings compared to Winter and Summer observations, there seemed to be less than previous Spring observations. Video and Pictures at http://gallery.primofish.com/2012/Fishing_Diving/MGFB/120317_FH-13_Wicomico/

The trip on April 1, 2012 was met with even worse visibility. There was a layer of clear water between 30 and 45 feet. Below that, it was very murky which hampered pretty much all sightings on the Structure with the exception of a few Red Snapper and Sheepshead although Red Snapper could be baited up into the clear water layer. It has been difficult to assess the Gwen Tide Supply Boat's damage from Hurricane Katrina, and this visit was no different. Some depth readings around the gunwale show 80 feet on the side and 83 feet at the railing. The highest reading was 71 feet at some structure and at the top of a pipe that had a Stone Crab residing inside. A few arrow crabs were also observed. The Gerald Corcoran visit was similar but unlike the Gwen Tide, it did show a good population of Spadefish. Some Structural damage was observed possibly due to an Anchor that was seen entangled around the wheelhouse. The Radar Mast was knocked over and the Spot Light is missing from it's frame. Red Snapper populations were down possibly indicating commercial utilization of the reef or poachers. The visit to the Wicomico showed a good population of Red Snapper that were baited up into the clear water layer for some Video. Video and Pictures at http://gallery.primofish.com/2012/Fishing_Diving/MGFB/120401_FH-13_Gwen_Tide_LS_PB_VK69/

