Reef Construction

The reefs are made of “Reef Balls,” perforated concrete domes specially designed to create habitat for marine organisms. Groups of about a hundred are placed around shell pads left over from oil drilling operations.

Artificial reefs provide more productive fish habitat while enhancing recreational fishing. These ‘islands’ of relief on the otherwise flat, soft lake bottom attract and support a wide variety of life. They disrupt water currents and provide critical hard structure, which makes better habitat for bottom-dwelling organisms. These invertebrates form the base of the food web and support large species including sport fish.

Reef Monitoring

Since deployment the reefs are periodically checked by divers from the University of New Orleans. Results so far show an increase in numbers and diversity of bottom-dwelling invertebrates, juvenile shrimp and sport fish.

Monitoring is ongoing. Sonar studies show that the reef balls have not moved during hurricanes.

If you fish one of the reefs, you can help track their progress by filling out LPBF’s confidential online survey:

saveourlake.org/fish_survey.htm

Important Warnings

Trawling over the reef sites is hazardous. Trawlers should not approach within ¼ mile of the reef center coordinates.

All reef sites have reduced draft with a minimum clearance of 10 feet. Heavy seas may develop quickly. Small craft should exercise caution.

Captains should drop anchor upwind of the reef site and allow their boat to drift in close enough for casting over the structure.

Creation of unpermitted artificial reefs in state waters is illegal and strongly discouraged by LPBF and LPARWG.

Site Descriptions

LPARWG’s first reef experiment (Site ‘L’) was built in 2001. It is a 1 acre group of 2’ high limestone rubble piles placed in 16’ of water near Lakefront Airport. Though successful as a reef, this design was abandoned in favor of lower-cost, purpose-built structures.

The westernmost reef (A), built in 2009, surrounds a 1/2 acre shell pad in 10’ of water.

The 3 Jefferson Parish reefs (B, C & D), built in 2003, are in a triangle 1/4 mile on a side. They are 1/2 to 1 acre, located in 13’-15’ of water.

The Orleans Parish reef (F), built in 2009, surrounds a 3/4 acre shell pad in 15’ of water.

The middle north shore site (G), built in 2003, has reef balls completely surrounding a small (30’ diameter) shell mound in 13’ of water.

The other north shore sites (E & H), built in 2009, are both about an acre in 12’ of water.