



St Joe Community Foundation Aids Artificial Reef Programs in Northwest Florida

Recently, the Mexico Beach Artificial Reef Association (MBARA) received wonderful news from The St Joe Community Foundation in the form of \$25,000 grant to support its artificial reef program. Bob Cox, President of MBARA, said that this is a significant boost to our non-profit organization's goal of building 1,000 artificial reefs in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Mexico Beach, Florida.

Bob says, artificial reefs soon become live habitat mimicking natural reefs that are an essential ingredient in the conservation of our fisheries and marine ecosystems. The Gulf of Mexico is an important natural resource we need to manage and preserve with creation of habitat cultivating our fisheries to meet our increasing subsistence and recreation demands. Artificial reefs also play a vital role in our economy. In addition to the fishery values, they also serve ecotourism for divers and snorkelers wishing to explore nature. Artificial reefs also sustain beautiful ornamental fish and other non-game species exciting wildlife observers. People often travel to the Caribbean to see what we have locally in our coastal waters. We have a wonderful resource and we need to build reefs to enhance/conservate it for present and future generations.

With the help of The St Joe Community Foundation, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and US Fish and Wildlife Service, the MBARA has plans to construct 10 more Super Reefs in the Gulf of Mexico in 2016. Bob says the project will cost \$120,000 and has great potential to become larger with growing support from additional grants and donations pending in 2015.

Along with general reef building, the MBARA has a memorial reef program that's growing in popularity. People are looking for alternatives to traditional burials or honor their loved ones. Memorial reefs provide a lower cost solution and are considered environmentally green. The green aspect is that the memorials provide marine habitat and a beautiful aquarium-like resting place for loved ones where families can visit and see the wonders of nature take place on these living reefs. To learn more about memorial reefs, visit MBARA's website at WWW.MBARA.ORG

If you would like to learn more about artificial reefs, how to help, and why they are environmentally and economically important, please visit MBARA's website at WWW.MBARA.ORG . It's loaded with underwater photos, videos, survey reports, and information to help the public see what treasures we have off our Gulf coast.

About The St. Joe Community Foundation, Inc.

Since its inception, the Foundation has provided more than \$18 million in grants to improve the quality of life in the communities it serves. The Foundation provides charitable grants primarily in Bay and Walton Counties that

embrace the arts, strengthen education, protect the environment and improve healthcare. These efforts help build healthy, caring, long-lived communities. For more information, visit www.joefoundation.com.