



## **Personal Artificial Reef Permitting, Frequently Asked Questions** **Escambia County Environmental Permitting Division** **October, 2009**

### **How do I obtain approval to deploy reef materials in the Gulf of Mexico?**

Escambia County manages a federal artificial reefing permit issued to the county by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The County's Environmental Permitting (EP) staff handles additional requests from citizens wishing to deploy personal reefs through an "authorization" process, based on the compatibility of the proposed materials as outlined in the Corps permit criteria. The county must receive the document "[\*Application for Inspection of Materials for use as Artificial Reefs\*](#)" to start the process. After applicant reviews the document, if it's felt that the materials meet the Corps' requirements, the form should be completed & send it in as instructed to schedule an inspection with staff.

A copy of the actual Corps permit (authorization) is also available for review at the link:  
<http://myescambia.com/Bureaus/CommunityServices/ArtificialReefs.html>.

### **Where can I deploy artificial reef materials?**

There are currently 2 Large Area Artificial Reef Sites (LAARS) located in **federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico** (9 miles & greater offshore) that are authorized for deployment of artificial reef materials. One is LAARS East, east of Pensacola Pass, the other is LAARS West, west of Pensacola pass. LAARS East consists of an 11 X 7 mile area predominately used for *public* reefing projects such as the Oriskany Reef, Pensacola Bay Fishing Bridge Reefs, I-10 Bridge Reefs, etc. The west site is a 7 X 6 mile area encouraged for the use of "*personal*" reefs. Artificial reef materials are currently **not authorized** to be placed outside the 2 LAARS areas, in inshore waters (bays, sounds, bayous) or in near-shore waters (Gulf of Mexico state waters, less than 9 miles offshore). More information regarding public reefs can be found at the following link: <http://www.myescambia.com/Bureaus/CommunityServices/ArtificialReefs.html>

### **Aren't there reefs currently outside these federally approved areas & why can't I put mine there?**

Many popular reefs are located outside these 2 federally authorized reefing areas. Reefs in these locations may have been placed their prior to permitting requirements, as part of previous reef permitting programs since expired (i.e. 1990's) or current government projects, were placed their illegally (unpermitted), were sank accidentally on the way to their intended deployment site (Oops barge), or could have been moved there by previous storms. Deploying reefs in areas not authorized by the jurisdictional agency(s) or deploying reefs in the approved areas without a valid permit could result in removal or relocation of the reefs, enforcement action, &/or fines.

### **Who keeps my exact reef coordinates once I've deployed my reefs?**

The only agency that retains this information is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Once the applicant consults with the county & submits the required "Post Deployment Notification", the County will confirm that the reef(s) were deployed within the authorized areas & will then mail the form/information confidentially to the Corps. Escambia County does not keep records of the applicant's reef coordinates on file. Public reef coordinates are made available for public use but personal reef coordinates are not kept by the county or released to the public.

### **How long does it take to get an authorization & how long do I have to deploy my reefs once I get it?**

This information is relayed in further detail in the "Application" link in question #1, but basically if the proposed materials meet the permit conditions & no objections are received by the coordinating agencies, the authorization to deploy can be issued at the end of a 5 working-day inspection & commenting period. The applicant will then have 30 days to deploy the reef(s). The applicant's coordination with the County is strongly encouraged throughout the permitting process to ensure permit compliance, answer any questions that may arise, & help facilitate delivery of the required reporting documents to the Corps.

The Environmental Permitting Division can be reached at (850) 595-3475 for any further questions.