Fiercely Local News

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Fiercely Loyal Readers



RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

JANUARY 2015

River project creating fish habitat completed





By Greg Walsh Resident Community News

There's a new housing development on the St. Johns River – or should we say IN the river. And if aquatic researchers' predictions are confirmed, the fish and other marine life are going to greatly benefit from the Jacksonville Reefing project.

In early December, workers placed tons of large chunks of concrete from barges at two sites in the river about one-quarter south of the Fuller-Warren Bridge as part of an effort to create underwater structures that enhance the food chain and biological diversity, according to the Jacksonville Chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA).

The goal of the project championed by CCA member and Ortega resident Payton Scheppe is to provide shelter to juvenile species, increase fish populations, and provide sustainable recreational fishing opportunities, project supporters said.

"Payton has worked for four years to get this project accomplished," said CCA member Charles Holt, who grew up in San Marco and operates Charles and George's Carwash at the Roosevelt Square Mall. . "When he first brought it up I felt like it would never happen because the government bureaucracy would overpower him. The government turned out to be time consuming, but also mainly tried to help. In fact Jody McDaniel of the City of Jacksonville was so helpful that she was given an award by the Coastal Conservation Association at the ceremony."

One of the reefs is named after Holt's late brother, George, and the other is named the Coastal Conservation Association Reef, to honor the contribution of the association and its volunteers. The late Holt was raised in Jacksonville and was a long-term supporter of CCA.

The reef sites – averaging about 4 feet tall and covering areas about 200 feet by 200 feet – are in depressions in the river bottom where the concrete chunks will go and won't pose a danger to river boat traffic. The sites also are in spots a sufficient distance from the riverbank to cause any problems for recreational boaters.

In addition to state officials, the U.S.

Coast Guard and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reviewed the plans and approved of the reef sites, which measure about 200 feet by 200 feet, officials said.

Funding came from a \$30,000 grant from CCA's national office and a matching grant from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Several companies are donating the reef materials, CCA says, including Vulcan Materials Co., which is providing more than 50,000 cubic feet of "concrete rubble."

The St. Johns Riverkeeper is a supporter of the reef project as well.

"We are very excited about this project and commend the CCA for their efforts," said Avondale resident Jimmy Orth, Riverkeeper executive director. "Not only does it provide important habitat for fish and aquatic organisms, it attracts more people to the river. When people use and experience the St. Johns, they are more inclined to advocate for its protection. As sea level has risen and the channel has been dredged deeper and deeper, saltwater has pushed farther upstream, killing submerged grasses and freshwater wetlands. These reefs can help to a certain extent by providing some habitat where natural vegetation no longer exists in the St. Johns River."

More reef sites in the river are possible but won't occur for at least three years to provide Jacksonville University a chance to study the impact of the first two.

The initial discussion began in 2011 at Jacksonville University when city officials met with the representatives of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Jacksonville Offshore Sport Fishing Club, JU Marine Science and CCA. Also involved was the group Think It Sink It Reef It, or TISIRI, a non-profit organization that builds reefs off the coast of Northeast Florida.

Boaters can find the reefs at the following GPS locations: Latitude: 30.17.973N Longitude: 81.40.290W and Latitude: 30.18.484N Longitude 81.40.026.

Visit http://ccaflorida.org/typography/jacksonville-reefing-project for more information.

Subject: LNMs, Charts, Chart Corrections, or Light Lists

Email Address: ahnorwood@comcast.net

Mail Sent from Web Server: 01/05/2015 03:30:40

Dear Sirs:

Is there a note in the LNM district 7 for the two newly created Jacksonville Florida downtown artificial reefs? I sail in that area with a deep keel (8 ft), and would like to know if I'm at risk.

I believe the reefs were dumped into the river in December 2014.

2015-1161 - Inquiry Regarding LMNs, Charts, Chart Corrections, or Light Lists

Sent TIS-PF-NISWS@uscg.mil On: Jan 08, 2015 11:38 AM By: On Behalf TIS-PF-NISWS

Good morning,

Thank you for contacting the USCG Navigation Center. We received information from United States Coast Guard Sector Jacksonville. Below is the name of the project and the box coordinates, which are permitted by the ACOE Jacksonville. Both projects are out of the navigational channel in the St. Johns River. Expected completion is October 2023.

George Holt Reef: 0.3 mile south of the Fuller Warren Bridge

Northwest Corner: 30.3083 Northeast Corner: 30.3083

-81.6674 -81.66688

Southwest Corner: 30.3078 Southeast Corner: 30.3078

-81.6674 -81.6668

Coastal Conservation Association Reef: 0.8 mile south of the Fuller Warren Bridge

Northwest Corner: 30.299806 Northeast Corner: 30.299806

-81.671811 -81.671181

Southwest Corner: 30.299278 Southeast Corner: 30.299278

-81.671811 -81.671181

For further information please contact the USACOE Jacksonville

http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Home.aspx

or by phone: 904-232-2233

http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Home.aspx%20or%20by%20phone%20904-232-2233

Please do not hesitate to contact us again with any further questions, comments, or concerns you may have regarding this issue. We hope this addresses your inquiry. In our continuing efforts to provide high quality services to our customers, please let us know if you found the provided answer helpful.

Sincerely,
Navigation Information Service
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NAVCEN MS 7310
7323 Telegraph Road

Alexandria VA 20598 – 7310

Tel: 703-313-5900

http://www.navcen.uscg.gov