



Friends of the Environment

Marsh Harbour, Abaco, Bahamas

Ph. 242-367-2729

www.friendsoftheenvironment.org

Reef Ball Foundation
890 Hill Street
Athens, GA 30606 USA

Dear Kathy,

I am applying on behalf of Friends of the Environment, a Marsh Harbour based Bahamian nonprofit organization, to request the assistance of the Reef Ball Foundation in purchasing your Reef Ball molds at cost (40% off retail). Friends of the Environment would like to use the molds to build reef balls to address two important needs in our area:

- ?? The expansion of Mermaid Reef, located just off Marsh Harbour. Mermaid Reef is small set of coral heads that are heavily visited by tourists and locals. This reef is extremely important for education on Great Abaco - it's the only place any most students, especially low income students, get an opportunity to dive and actually see fish other then school masters, grunts and barracudas.
- ?? The need for Bahamian students to have hands-on scientific experiences in the marine environment that surrounds them. At a basic level many Bahamian students have never spent time in the water or on reefs, and don't understand why their preservation and protection is important. Also, it is important to build a cadre of Bahamian students who are interested in science, who can make a career of it and return to the Bahamas to help study, understand and preserve the Bahamian environment.

The plan is to purchase two reef ball molds, one large and one small, and use them to create artificial reef heads in the Mermaid Reef environment. This will take pressure off the existing coral heads and expand the reef area so more visit ors and locals can enjoy the reef, and more fish will have the opportunity to move into the protected area.

Three local schools have already committed to building, launching and securing their own reef balls to the ocean floor. A local business, Abaco Dive Adventures, who is concerned with these issues, has already volunteered to assist with this portion of the program.

These new reef balls will serve to expand the reef and provide a place for students to conduct experiments as fish move on to the new habitat. This work can continue for years and involve new students every year. The number of students who could benefit yearly is

limitless. Included in the project budget is money for snorkeling equipment, to ensure that every student can take part in the program, regardless of their family's resources.

We plan for initial monitoring of the area to begin in May and June before the schools let out for summer to establish baseline data for the area. In September, once school is underway, all of the pieces will be in place to build and launch the reef balls. Since several reef balls will be constructed each school can construct, launch and monitor their reef balls on a schedule that works best for them. All reef balls will be in the marine environment by November 2006. The various experiments that will be conducted by each school will then continue for years after. FRIENDS will be responsible for ensuring that these experiments will include the underwater taping required by the Reef Ball Foundation.

Results from the students' experiments will be disseminated throughout the other schools in Abaco, through the local paper, through FRIENDS's newsletters, and with the scientific community. The Reef Ball Foundation will always be given credit for their donation. The publicity will not only help to educate the community about the reef environment, it will help inspire other schools to get involved.

Although this will be a new program for FRIENDS, it builds on work we have already done with schools in the area, and the installation of mooring balls (to protect the reefs from anchor damage) in the Mermaid Reef area. As we have already successfully secured permits for our work with the mooring balls, FRIENDS does not anticipate having difficulty securing the necessary permits to place the reef balls on the sea floor.

Although there are other reef balls in the Abaco region, there are none in use that we are aware of in Marsh Harbour. Marsh Harbour is the third largest city in the Bahamas, and is the hub of activity for the Central Abaco region. By placing reef balls in Marsh Harbour, it will not only benefit students who live in Marsh Harbour, but the outlying communities of Hope Town, Man-O-War and Guana Cay, whose children travel to Marsh Harbour for high school education.

FRIENDS has applied to the Lyford Cay Foundation for our portion of the cost of the reef ball molds and the shipping expenses. We also have potential donors who are interested in the program and who may be willing to step forward if the Foundation grant application is not successful. FRIENDS is confident that we can raise the money required to purchase the reef ball molds at cost if you approve our request.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me:
Lindsey@friendsoftheenvironment.org or 242-367-2721.

Sincerely,

Lindsey McCoy
Executive Director