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**ENVIRONMENT**

**Developer helps environment**

Reef Ball Development Group, a Bradenton-based developer of artificial reefs, is building 500 reef balls to be deployed about six miles off the coast between St. Augustine and Jacksonville.

The \$80,000 project, a collaborative effort between local schools and community organizations and local businesses, is being done to create a reef offshore for research.

Funding for the project comes from Reef Ball Development and individual and corporate donations.

Reef balls are concrete artificial reef modules that provide habitat for different types of marine life. Researchers will dive in the water to collect data from the man-made reefs.

There are several advantages to the reef balls.

Because reef balls can be placed on the sea floor, fish studies can be conducted by local schools and reef research teams.

In addition, students from local colleges and high schools will be trained to collect data, such as water quality and fish counts, to be added to a database of information on the productivity of reefs.

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