

Reefs: Marine life find home in Dartmouth

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...the reefs are made of concrete and are placed in the area where the tide periodically inundated by UNMS Dartmouth scientists.

"We will try to place the reefs just to see how the organisms attach," she said. "We'll be placing them up current, some down current and some in mid-current."

The state originally zeroed in on a site 75 yards off Nauset Island last summer, but later switched to Saffers Point after islanders raised some concerns and after deciding the Dartmouth site would be closer to a local marine science center at Fort Rodman and better sheltered than the Nauset location.

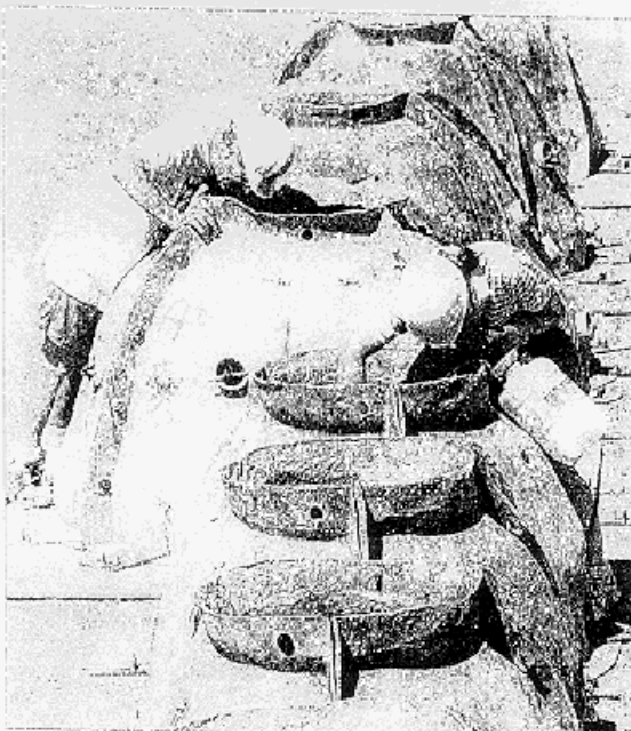
The reef balls, weighing 2,000 to 3,000 pounds, are about 4 feet high and 4 feet in diameter. Smaller reef pellets weigh 1,200 to 1,400 pounds and are about 3 feet high and 4 feet in diameter.

Mr. Beggs said over a two-year period artificial reefs grew to roughly half a natural reef.

"Four or five years and you won't be able to tell a man-made reef from a natural reef," he said.

The concrete features a micro-silica that added strength, is abrasive resistant and has a pH content suitable to natural sea water. The fiberglass molds are painted with sugar water to make them sticky and more receptive to the concrete.

A bladder and inflated balls are used inside the molds to govern thickness of the walls and create openings.



Staff photo by Michael...

Workers prepare the molds before the concrete is poured for new artificial reefs being made at Linberg Marine in Fairhaven. The reef balls will be barged to a site off South Dartmouth and deployed next week.

Ms. Rynga said the first units should be deployed by mid-July and by the end of summer a healthy crop of vegetation should take root.

She said the units should not interfere with marine traffic.

"They are low-profile and are not going to be a navigation hazard," she said. But she suggested anglers might want to avoid anchoring

inside the reef areas because it anchors could catch on the balls.

More than 10,000 reef balls have been deployed throughout the world over the past four years, according to Mr. Beggs. Reef Ball Innovator and Diving Specialists Inc. has been involved in projects in the Persian Gulf, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and the Caribbean. It is currently working on a year-long project to replace a damaged natural reef off Puerto Rico.

The reef units currently being made at Linberg Marine will be barged to the site next week.

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