

Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, Inc.

Activity Report for the Period September 10 thru October 8, 2009

Summary

During this period there was 1 Reef Monitoring Trip and 9 Construction Trips. On September 20, a Dive Trip was made to FH-13 and FH-2 where dives were conducted on the Joe Curtis-Mary Landry Reef, the 070306B Pyramids, the Captain Kevin, the St. Elmo and FH-2 Reef Balls. Culverts were deployed in FH-8 on September 16, in FH-9 on the 18th, at Cat Island on the 22nd, in FH-13 on the 24th, in FH-2 on the 30th, and in FH-13 on October 8. Reef Ball Deployment was attempted in FH-6 on the 23rd but was aborted due to high seas. Reef Balls were successfully deployed in FH-6 on the 25th and in FH-1 on October 6.

Dive Summaries

On September 20, a trip was made to the Joe Curtis/Mary Landry Reef in FH-13 (originally known as the 4-Boys). It was desired to see if the Goliath Grouper that was observed on the October 4, 2008 visit was still there and to make general reef observations. The Goliath Grouper was not seen, but the reef was producing the usual multitude of Spadefish (150-175), Triggers (25-30/1-3 lbs), Red Snapper (50-75/1-4 lbs), Mangrove Snapper (20-25/2-8 lbs), Lane Snapper (10-15/1-2 lbs), Gag Groupers (6-8/1-5 lbs), Sheepshead (15-20/1-5 lbs), and even smaller Cocoa Damsels, Hi-Tops, Tom-Tates, and a single 25 pound Cobia. Depth measurements indicated a maximum depth of 75' under the bow and 73' under the Stern. The Stern Corners read 65' on both Starboard and Port. The Wheel House Roof read 57' and the bow pulpit 59'. The minimum depth read was 53' on the port boom. The measurements do not differ much from those taken a year ago; However, since that visit it appears a shrimp net entangled the starboard and rear booms. The booms were pulled down and lay on the bottom along the starboard side. Not all is lost as the booms now serve as a nursery for small Hi-Tops and other smaller reef dwellers. Soft Corals were also noted growing off the Wheel House Roof. Since the visibility was above par at the bottom, additional dives were conducted at the 070306B Pyramids in FH-13, as well as the St. Elmo, the Captain Kevin, and the 081002b Reef Balls in FH-2.

The Pyramids were showing a good population of Red Snapper (150-175/2-8 lbs.) along with small baitfish like tomtates and Hi-Tops. The Red Snapper were swimming freely inside the Pyramid. Urchins were also noted. Depth measurements showed 71' at the base and 64' at the top. Scouring was evident and the bottom window was half way below grade.

The St. Elmo was an enjoyable dive with an unusually large school of Menhaden (Pogies) circling above the structure. A single Cobia of about 15 lbs was sighted along with the usual host of Red Snapper (75-100/2-8 lbs), Spadefish (75-100), Grouper (2-6/1-2 lbs), Scamp (1/1 lbs), Sheepshead (10-15/2-5 lbs), Mangrove Snapper (15-20/1-6 lbs), Trigger Fish (12-16/1-3 lbs), and a single juvenile Amberjack (2 lbs). Cocoa Damsels and Sand Bass were also observed. Depth measurements were taken as follows: 45' Mast Top, 49' Wheel House Roof, 53' Bollard, 50' Railing, and 61' at the bottom under the Stern at the Rudder. This reef is developing very nicely.

The Captain Kevin still shows some good relief with a depth measurement of 34' at the highest point, although this is down from 29' measured during a May 2008 visit. The top of the Wheel House was 50' down from 46' on the May visit which indicates some Scouring. Other measurements taken were 56' at the Bow Pulpit, 66' on the bottom at the Bow, 60' on the rear deck, 54' at the boom, 62' where the descending boom meets the bottom. There were descent Red Snapper swimming freely through the wheel house and a nice population of Sheepshead, Mangroves, and Spades. A few Grouper were also sighted.

The Reef Balls were performing nicely and appear to be better structure than the Florida Limestone Pyramids at the moment, but more observations are needed to form a conclusion. Lack of relief does seem to be a detriment for our area as little barnacles and encrustation are taking hold on units sitting on the bottom. However, one unit landed on top of another and has significantly more barnacles and encrustation taking hold on the top unit. This unit had a FAD (Fish Attraction Device) suspended above it as well, rising to a depth of 37 feet in the 56 feet of water. All of the Spadefish on this reef were congregated at this location. The fish actually looked like they were "Home" freely swimming in and out of the Reef Balls through their holes. In particular the Mangrove Snapper setup residences. Some of the units were broken and seemed to add another benefit for the smaller Damsels, Spotfin Butterflies, Hi-Tops, and Arrow Crabs. A large Gag Grouper of about 15 pounds was also sighted as well as the usual population of Red Snapper, Trigger Fish, and Sheepshead. Following the September 22 Culvert Deployment, an additional Dive was made here again to obtain more Video. On that dive, a large Sting Ray was also observed transiting the reef.



Deployment Summaries

On September 16, a Barge Load of Culverts was deployed in FH-8 over 3 separate targets. The surrounding depth was 16 feet. The first load was placed on top of previous rubble deployment 010628.

On September 18, a Barge Load of Culverts was deployed in FH-9 over 3 separate targets. The surrounding depth was 19 feet, the tide was 1.5 feet, winds were South at 10 knots.

On September 22, a Barge Load of Culverts was deployed at the Cat Island Site over 3 separate targets. The surrounding depth was 12 feet with a minimum depth of 6 feet recorded. The tide was 0.3 feet, winds were South at 12-18 knots.

On September 24, a Barge Load of Culverts was deployed in FH-13 about 150 feet east of the Tuan Phong 060909b. The winds were East at 12 knots, the tide was 1.0 feet. The surrounding depth was 75 feet with a minimum depth of 66 feet recorded. Following the deployment, a dive was made on the FH-2 Reef Balls to obtain more video and make observations.

On September 25, a Barge Load of Reef Balls was deployed toward the South End of FH-6 at 2 separate Targets. Winds were East at 12 knots, the tide was 0.5 feet, the surrounding depth was 60 feet. There were some problems with Anchor drift so 2 numbers were given for the first group and some individual reef balls may be found even further to the east of 090925A2. On the second drop, the highest concentration is at 090925B with more found to the South-Southwest of those numbers.

On September 30, a Barge Load of Culverts was deployed in FH-2 about 100-150 feet to the Northeast of the Marguerite Barge. Winds were northeast at 16 knots, the tide was 1.7 feet, the surrounding depth was 58 feet.

On October 6, a Barge Load of Culverts was deployed in FH-13 near Borries BargeA. Most of the material landed just north of the Barge. A second Barge loaded with Reef Balls was deployed at FH-1 Barge A. The intent was to deploy most of these on the Deck of the Barge. While some landed on the deck, many landed just off the north and west edges of the Barge. The Winds were South at 10 knots, the Tide was 0.7 feet. The Surrounding Depth was 64-68 feet at FH-1 and 76 feet at FH-13. The minimum depths were 53 feet at FH-1 and 67 feet at FH-13.

On October 8, a Barge Load of Culverts was deployed in FH-13 near the old Ingalls Rubble 020919. The Ingalls Rubble consisted of large columns and Tees that ended up in a scattered donut shape pattern. The desire was to augment the existing material with a concentration of Culverts in the center of this donut. Winds were from the South at 12 knots, the Tide was 0.0 and the surrounding depth was 68 feet. The minimum depth recorded was 64 feet.

View the Online Report at <http://mgfb.org> to see Pictures and Video.

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