

Artificial Reefs: An Overview and Case Study of New Jersey

An artificial reef as defined by the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), is “a structure which is constructed or placed in the navigable waters of the United States or in the waters overlying the outer continental shelf for the purpose of enhancing fishery resources and commercial and recreational fishing opportunities” (CFR Title 33, Volume 3, Sec 322.2). These reefs can be made from old ships, subway cars, ballasted tires, pre-fabricated concrete structures that replicate a natural reef, or any number of things provided the materials are durable, functional, stable, and compatible with the marine environment (Guidelines for Marine Artificial Reef Materials 2004). On a federal level, most legislation involving artificial reefs deals with the reallocation of decommissioned naval vessels and oil and gas platforms. At the state level, legislation and regulations can differ from state to state. To examine an example work of legislation from a state, the recently released (10/07/04-Draft) “Artificial Reef Plan for New Jersey”, provided by the Department of Environmental Protection Fish and Wildlife, was chosen. This draft plan for New Jersey was reviewed, noting the programs goals and objectives. A key item in the plan was the listing of risks and benefits associated with artificial reefs, a comparison that is lacking in some other sources of information. After reviewing the “Artificial Reef Plan for New Jersey” (draft), comments will be sent to the Department of Environmental Protection Fish and Wildlife. Specific future plans with this topic could include further review of New Jersey state regulations and actions to determine if those actions could be used on another state’s artificial reef project and possibly looking at a regional level of management including the New Jersey plan.