



Jacksonville Waterways Commission

Don Redman, Chair

JACKSONVILLE WATERWAYS COMMISSION ARTIFICIAL REEF SUBCOMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 7, 2012
City Council Conference Room A
9:30 a.m.

In attendance: Commissioners Scott Shine (Chairman), Lane Burnett, Ralph Hodges, Stephen Swann; Waterways Coordinator Captain Jim Suber; Jody McDaniel, Planning Department; Dana Morton, Aquatic Biologist; Dave Roman, Mayor's Office; Vince Seibold, Gary Weise, Environmental Quality Division; Betsy Deuerling, Environmental Engineer; Dr. Quinton White, Jacksonville University; Joe Kistel, Executive Director, Think It Sink It Reef It (TISIRI); Ed Kalakaukis, Chuck Darner, Jacksonville Offshore Fishing Club; Payton Scheppe, Coastal Conservation Association; Lex Waters; Jessica Stephens, Legislative Assistant; John J. Jackson, Council Research Division.

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. and announced that the charge of the subcommittee was to identify funding to expand the artificial reef program and facilitate the expertise and research already on hand. Discussion should focus on near-shore and inshore artificial reefs. The subcommittee's findings would be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the Jacksonville Waterways Commission, March 14, 2012.

Research is needed to demonstrate the economic impact of artificial reefs for Jacksonville's economy.

Jody McDaniel explained that the University of Florida's Sea Grant program could undertake a study. (Sea Grant is a nationwide network of 30 university-based programs administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). The study would cost between \$80,000-100,000 and require two years to complete. A joint effort by five Northeast Florida counties to seek a grant for an economic study was considered. Ms. McDaniel found that other counties are not interested owing to the state of the economy; some felt that rather than utilize funds to pursue grants, the funds should be allocated to deploy additional reefs.

Dana Morton said that the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission was favorably disposed to inshore reefs as mitigation to the recent fishing grounds closures (for over-fishing) and added fuel costs for fishermen.

Vince Seibold observed that State Senator John Thrasher had sought and put in the Legislature's budget funding for a study of the St. Johns River lower basin but that the

Governor had vetoed the allocation.

Dr. White noted that Senator Thrasher had, in fact, secured some funding for a study of the economic impact of the entire river: residential, recreational and economic impacts. He added that some counties had good data bases for research in the area, others did not.

Dr. White and others posited the prospect of having graduate students in local colleges undertake some aspects of a study.

Should a study materialize, it was suggested that the research go back as far as 2000, that the further the study went back, the better. In more recent years, the Fish & Wildlife Commission's fishing ground closures and the economy have dampened the productivity of artificial reefs.

Dr. White observed that an economic impact study should not only weigh the fishing from boats but also take into account the fact that considerable fishing is done from the shore and on bridges.

In discussing potential sites for inshore and near-shore artificial reef sites, Mr. Payton Scheppe of the Coastal Conservation Association talked about programs that have been successful, referencing Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay as the best example. Locally, the CCA has identified potential artificial reef sites between the Fuller Warren and Buckman Bridges, on the east side of the channel in depressions. There would be no impediments to navigation. CCA would commit to assist in raising the necessary funds. CCA was committed to promoting habitats in the river; near-shore artificial reefs are supported by the association, as well. The locations were designated because there was plenty of scour at the sites and they were accessible with three boat ramps in the vicinity.

The use of concrete reef balls was discussed, particularly a program that Lex Waters was familiar with at Mandarin High School that involved the making and deploying of reef balls.

As possible inshore sites for artificial reefs, Dana Morton suggested Mill Cove and Chicopit Bay (near Fort Caroline). Possible silt problems were raised.

Jody McDaniel reported that she recently had a conference call with representatives of the Department of Environmental Protection, the National Marine Fisheries, the Imperiled Species Division of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ascertain what Jacksonville was required to do to seek permits for the deployment of inshore artificial reefs. Two sites in the St. Johns River have been identified in San Marco.

When the subcommittee turned to potential funding sources for artificial reef deployments, Jody McDaniel said that we could pursue a matching fund construction grant from Florida Fish & Wildlife; funding from this grant would enable the deployment of a reef 11 miles off the coast of Ponte Vedra. The subcommittee voted to recommend to the Waterways Commission that Jody McDaniel prepare an application to Florida Fish & Wildlife for a

matching grant.

Commissioner Shine suggested that the Northeast Florida Congressional delegation be approached for assistance, particularly in view of the closures of fishing areas. He further recommended that municipalities put a surcharge on fishing vessels.

Ed Kalakauskis, Jacksonville Offshore Fishing Club, suggested that we research what funding might be available through the Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund that the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund created (1988) to restore and enhance sport fishing.

There being no further business, the subcommittee adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

John J. Jackson, Council Research Division (904) 630-1729

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Posted: 3:00 p.m.