



Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Artificial reef to support, increase marine habitat off Louisiana coast

Construction began today on a one-acre inshore artificial reef that will support oyster reef habitat and increase the supply of valuable finfish for Louisiana fishermen. The reef is located in lower Lake Pelto, La., on a site formerly known as Bird Island. Situated near Isle Dernieres (Last Island), Bird Island was once an emergent island composed of relic oyster shell and dominated by dense stands of black mangrove.

"These inshore artificial reefs are a natural solution to Louisiana's marine habitat loss due to coastal erosion. They are manageable in size and can be accomplished at the local, community level. Rebuilding shorelines and diverting river water may protect our coastline, but they will not replace hard-structure habitat for our fisheries," said John Walther of Houma, president of the Bayou Chapter of CCA Louisiana.

The Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana, along with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Lafayette Office), coordinated the Bird Island project. Funding, which exceeded \$100,000, has been provided by Bayou CCA Chapter, Cajun Kingfish Association, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, NOAA Community-Based Restoration, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana and the Fish America Foundation. In-kind contributions have been provided by LDWF, NOAA Lafayette, the LSU Agricultural Center, Bertucci Contractors, Vulcan Materials and T. Baker Smith and Son.

"Constructing this reef is exciting because it will improve our marine habitat, which is good for our coast—and for Louisiana fisherman. We are very grateful to the organizations and people that have helped make the Bird Island project a reality," said Bill Bass of Lafayette, state chairman of CCA Louisiana's Conservation and Habitat Committee.

CCA Louisiana Executive Director Jeff Angers said the reef will benefit Louisiana's burgeoning recreational fishing industry, which has an annual impact of over \$1.25 billion on the state's economy.

"Good fishing conditions attract more anglers and more fishing trips. This translates into more money being pumped into the Louisiana economy through purchases of boats, trailers, fishing camps, fuel, tackle, bait and many other items. Over the past decade, coastal Louisiana has experienced a boom of motels, restaurants and residential developments dedicated to recreational fishing. The Bird Island reef is a long-term project, which will make the area even more attractive to anglers," Angers said.

The reef is constructed of approximately 4,200 tons of limestone, the material of choice for the creation of reefs such as the one on Bird Island. The limestone was transported directly

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ARTIFICIAL REEF TO BENEFIT MARINE HABITAT/ADD1-1-1

to Lake Peltó from Vulcan Material's quarry in Kentucky via the Mississippi River and Intracoastal Waterway. The reef material was unloaded and placed on the floor of Lake Peltó (coordinates 090°43'26" X 29°03'33") by Bertucci Contractors.

Oyster reef habitats in the Terrebonne and Timbalier Bay systems have experienced significant loss through subsidence, coastal erosion and saltwater encroachment. With the continuing efforts of coastal restoration in the state, these projects can reduce coastal erosion and restore hard-bottom habitat where it had previously existed. Oyster reefs provide a diversity of microhabitats that may support complex ecological communities including many fish and invertebrate species. Recent studies of natural, restored and artificial reefs indicate however that oyster reef communities in many areas are highly diverse and include species not found in adjacent soft-bottom habitats.

CCA Louisiana and its local chapters are involved in projects such as Bird Island related to marine conservation, including scientific studies, artificial reefs and support of marine law enforcement. LDWF will manage the Bird Island reef as part of its artificial reef program. The location of the reef will be disseminated on the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries web-site at www.wlf.state.la.us and CCA's web-site at www.ccalouisiana.com.

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Bird Island Artificial Oyster Reef Restoration Project

Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana • Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Lafayette Office

Sponsors:

Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries - Artificial Reef Program
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - Shell Marine Habitat Program
Louisiana State University Agricultural Research Center
Fish America Foundation - NOAA Restoration Center
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana - NOAA Fisheries Community-Based Restoration Program
Cajun Kingfish Association
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Vulcan Materials Company
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