

Indian River Lagoon

The Indian River Lagoon is a body of water 156 miles in length and links a series of three distinct estuarine systems from Ponce Inlet to Jupiter Inlet on the east coast of Florida. This famous estuary claims the highest biodiversity of any estuary in North America and is home to over 2,200 different species. To support so much diversity, an intricate and delicate balance of ecological systems is needed. The lagoon also supports multimillion dollar industries including fishing, clamming, tourism, agricultural and recreational activities.

The River Reefs Project is part of the Martin County Artificial Reef Program and is funded by the Florida Inland Navigation District, the South Florida Water Management District, Martin County Board of County Commissioners, Reefball Foundation, and the voluntary services of the Florida Oceanographic Society and the Martin County Environmental Studies Center.

MARTIN COUNTY ARTIFICIAL REEF PROGRAM



River Reefs Project

www.martinreefs.com

For more information or how you can get involved contact:

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The River Reefs Project is all about EDUCATION and RESTORATION

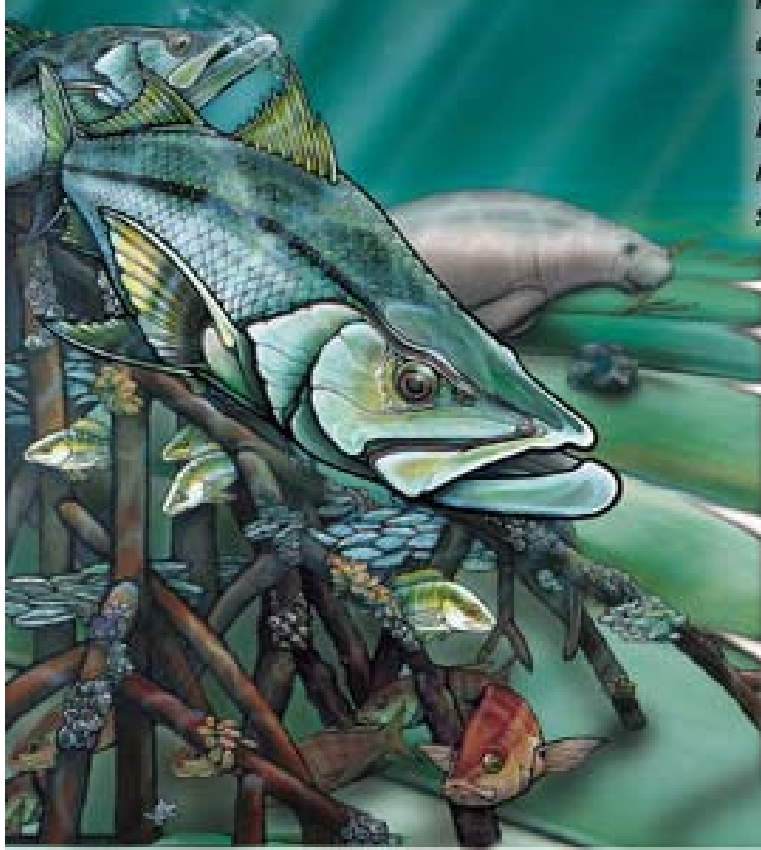
The Martin County Artificial Reef Program's **River Reefs Project** is a community based program that will enhance and restore marine habitat while promoting environmental awareness. Participants involved in the program will aid in the fabrication and deployment of Reefball™ artificial reefs while learning the values of preserving and restoring our marine environments.

What do River Reefs do ?

Martin County established the Office of Water Quality to ensure the County's goals and objectives of protecting, restoring and enhancing the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon. The County has worked closely with other agencies in the implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and related water quality and resources issues common to Martin County. The River Reefs Project will build on these efforts by focusing on habitat restoration in the estuarine environment of the Indian River Lagoon. These artificial reef habitats will provide hard substrate for the colonization of oysters, mussels, and other species such as bryozoans, tunicates and barnacles. The reefs will also provide valuable nursery habitat for a number of juvenile fish species within the Indian River Lagoon.

Why do we need River Reefs ?

There are a number of human-induced impacts that threaten the delicate ecological balance of the Indian River Lagoon. Habitat has been destroyed through coastal development and impoundments that have severed the links between marshland and mangrove communities to the lagoon. Over 75% of the emergent wetlands have been destroyed in this manner. Changes in water quality are also a problem. Drainage projects have changed the natural watershed and altered the timing of water flows into the lagoon. Finally, uncontrolled storm water runoff has had a significant negative impact on the estuarine water quality. The addition of artificial reefs will help restore habitat as well as provide substrate for a number of filter feeding organisms that aid in re-establishing better water quality.



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