

FOIR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 16, 2017

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Editors note: Photo and video available, see link below

New Artificial Reefs to Attract Fish, Anglers and Divers

Two new artificial reefs are now in place in the Gulf of Mexico, just six miles off the coast of Port O'Connor. The nearshore reefs will create marine habitat that will attract a variety of sea creatures, which will in turn draw anglers and divers for recreational opportunities.

The project is part of Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation's fundraising effort *Keeping it Wild: The Campaign for Texas*. Coastal Conservation Association's (CCA) Building Conservation Trust, CCA Texas and Shell Oil Company generously contributed funds for these reefs, which were leveraged with state dollars from the Texas Artificial Reef program.

"Protecting and preserving the environment is no easy feat, and no one can do it alone. That is why Shell partners and engages with organizations like Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF)," said Bruce Culpepper, President of Shell Oil Company. "The Artificial Reef Program is a prime example of how our partnership with TPWF has enabled us to find new ways to power progress together in conservation and to help make the future better now and for generations to come."

The two adjacent reefs consist of 700 concrete pyramids that have been placed in waters 66-70 feet deep. The 2,500-pound pyramids have holes large enough for fish to swim through, with limestone embedded outside to provide marine life such as worms and other invertebrates with a hard substrate to burrow into. The structures also have an opening at the top large enough to allow any sea turtles to escape if they wander in. The structures are now placed within a 381-acre reef site, the second largest site ever permitted in Texas waters.

"These new artificial reefs have all the features needed to attract a variety of marine species," said Dale Shively, who leads the Texas Artificial Reef Program. "The process of attracting sea life happens fairly quickly, and we expect that within six months, the reef will become quality marine habitat. We're very grateful to the partners who have made this possible."

Artificial reefs not only enhance fishery resources, but also fishing and diving opportunities off the Texas coast. Hundreds of thousands of anglers and divers travel offshore each year for the recreational opportunities the reefs create.

“This reef combines everything an offshore angler could want with close proximity to the iconic launches of Port O’Connor, and it is emblematic of what can be accomplished in great habitat partnerships,” said Sean Stone, Executive Director of Coastal Conservation Association’s Building Conservation Trust, which provides funding for conservation and restoration projects across the country. “Through this partnership effort, we are improving the nearshore marine environment in Texas waters while increasing access to the resources anglers and divers love. This is truly an exciting time in marine habitat creation.”

An interesting feature of the new reef site is that two decommissioned petroleum platforms are within its 381-acre footprint, making them ideal candidates for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Rigs-to-Reefs program. This program re-purposes old oil rigs, creating marine habitat as well as saving significant dollars from the cost to remove them. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officials are currently working with the Texas General Land Office on plans to convert the two platforms into reefs in the future, which will further enhance the site.

Dropbox link with photos and video: <http://bit.ly/2pPqW6C>

Video link: <https://youtu.be/giG7BxtleT8>

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Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation raises private funds to advance Texas’ proud outdoor traditions and conserve our state’s wildlife, habitat, recreational areas, and natural resources. Since 1991, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation has raised more than \$150 million in private philanthropy to ensure that all Texans, today and in the future, can enjoy the wild things and wild places of Texas.

The ***Building Conservation Trust (BCT)*** was founded in 2010 as the national marine habitat program of Coastal Conservation Association. BCT is a 501c3 non-profit organization exclusively dedicated to providing funding for local, state and national fisheries, habitat conservation and restoration projects. BCT has created a model for the successful collaboration of business, non-profit organizations and government agencies to revitalize critical habitat and establish a vibrant foundation for the marine ecosystem.

Coastal Conservation Association Texas (CCA Texas) is a non-profit marine conservation organization comprised of tens of thousands of recreational anglers and coastal outdoor enthusiasts. Founded in 1977, CCA started in the great state of Texas and has grown to include state chapters along the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Seaboard and Pacific Coast. The stated purpose of CCA is to advise and educate the public on the conservation of marine resources. The objective of CCA is to conserve, promote and enhance the present and future availability of these coastal resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public.

Shell Oil Company is an affiliate of the Royal Dutch Shell plc, a global group of energy and petrochemical companies with operations in more than 70 countries. In the U.S., Shell operates in 50 states and employs more than 20,000 people working to help tackle the challenges of the new energy future.

Environmental stewardship is one-way Shell has continued to share benefits with communities over the past 100 years. Since 1999, Shell has focused our partnerships with many organizations in the U.S. to protect more than 13 million acres of wetlands, clean and remove 600,000 pounds of debris from shoreline, and conserve more than 1.8 million acres of critical habitat.

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