

## **GEHR Watershed Minute #25**

### **Artificial Reefs: (232 words)**

Starting in 1984, the New Jersey Bureau of Marine Fisheries started building artificial reefs in the ocean between 2 and 25 nautical miles offshore from Sandy Hook to Cape May. The purpose is to create a network of artificial reefs in the ocean waters along the New Jersey coast to provide habitats and homes for fish, shellfish and crustaceans, fishing grounds for anglers, and underwater structures for scuba divers.

Artificial reefs are constructed by intentionally placing dense materials, such as old ships and barges, train cars, obsolete army tanks, concrete and steel demolition debris, and dredge rock on the sea floor within designated reef sites. Within each reef site, which range in size from one-half to over four square miles, numerous "patch reefs" have been constructed. A patch reef is a one-half to 5-acre area where one barge load of material has been deployed.

In total, over 1200 patch reefs have been constructed on the state's 15 artificial reef sites encompassing a total of 25 square miles of sea floor as part of this Artificial Reef Program. The reefs are strategically located along the coast so that 1 site is within easy boat range of 12 New Jersey ocean inlets. Atlantic City, Great Egg, and Ocean City are three of the closest reefs, and all are now being used extensively by anglers and divers who catch sea bass, blackfish, porgy and lobster.