



**Escambia County Marine Resources Division  
Neighborhood and Environmental Services Department**

**Application for Inspection of Materials for use as Artificial Reefs within  
Large Area Artificial Reef Sites (LAARS) Permit No. 199402365 (IP-CP)**

Instructions: Fill out this LAARS Application form and mail, fax or deliver: Robert K. Turpin, Chief, Escambia County Marine Resources Division, 1190 West Leonard St., Pensacola, FL 32501 (FAX 850-595-3495). Pease read the materials criteria at the bottom of this page.

Upon receipt of this Application, Escambia County Marine Resources Division (ECMRD) will contact the Applicant to schedule an appointment for inspection of the proposed artificial reef materials. **Applicant must be present at the inspection.** A **\$25 fee per reef deployment voyage** (reef deployment voyage means the amount of reef material that can be safely put on a vessel for a single voyage) is due at the time of the inspection. Once the inspection has been performed, ECMRD will notify regulatory agencies and initiate a **5-DAY BUSINESS DAY WAITING PERIOD** to allow those agencies the opportunity to inspect the proposed artificial reef materials. After the **5-DAY BUSINESS DAY WAITING PERIOD**, ECMRD will issue authorization for the deployment of the artificial reef materials by regular mail, OR, Applicant may pick up authorization during regular business hours (8:00 AM to 4:30 PM; Mon-Fri) at 1190 W. Leonard St., Pensacola.

**(FILL OUT THIS LAARS APPLICATION FORM COMPLETELY!!)**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Proposed Artificial Reef Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity and description of Proposed Artificial Reef Materials \*\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PERMIT CONDITIONS**

\*\*\* Materials "shall be free of pollutants and toxins and composed of: non-productive oil platforms thoroughly clean in accordance with US Coast Guard and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, surplus military equipment (1/4 inch or greater in thickness thoroughly clean in accordance with US Coast Guard and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, steel hull vessels ballasted and thoroughly clean in accordance with US Coast Guard and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, natural limestone boulders weighing a minimum of 150 pounds each, clean

concrete rubble weighing a minimum of 150 pounds each, clean concrete prefabricated reef materials or modules weighing a minimum of **150 pounds** each, clean and structurally stabilized steel/aluminum/metal alloy boxes or structures (1/8 inch or greater in thickness) weighing 150 pounds or more.

**No reef materials shall be allowed to trap marine life**, and must be configured, cut or shaped, so as not to function as a fish trap [no exposed rebar >6-12inches]. All materials/structures must be configured and constructed to be **stable, durable, and provide habitat**. No material whatsoever may be deployed within one-quarter mile of the boundaries of the Large Area Artificial Reef Sites (LAARS). No other materials are authorized. **Materials expressly prohibited include cars and trucks and any parts thereof, white goods (i.e. appliances), shopping carts, bread trays, 55 gal drums, storage or fuel tanks, loose metal materials, plastics, fiberglass, materials that upon inspection by FWCC staff or designated agent are found to be potentially unstable or lack acceptable habitat qualities**". *From Permit No.199402365 (IP-CP)*

### **Large Area Artificial Reef Site (LAARS): Overview and Description**

The Gulf of Mexico seafloor off the coast of Escambia County is comprised mostly of sand, with less than 5% natural "hard bottom" reef habitat. This regional limitation of reef habitat restricts the potential for local fishery harvest (recreational and commercial). Artificial reefs are a widely-used and accepted solution to this dilemma. Federal (e.g., Clean Water Act) and state (chapters 403 and 370 Florida Statutes) laws and regulations govern the allowable materials and placement of artificial reefs. Generally, materials must be: free of pollutants; durable enough to provide long-term habitat; placed within permitted areas; and stable enough to remain within permitted sites in the event of hurricanes.

Escambia County has been building public artificial reefs (e.g., 3 barges, Avocet, Antares, Oriskany) for over three decades. Additionally, charter fishing/diving captains have been building artificial reefs for at least forty years. (The term "private" does not confer exclusive usage rights to an artificial reef; once the reef is built, anyone that finds it may utilize it.) The "Large Area Artificial Reef Site" (LAARS) concept was initiated to manage the deployment of "private" artificial reefs.

The original (LAARS) Permit (No. 199402365 IP-SS) for the two sites off Pensacola (see Diagram 1) was issued by the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in 1994. These two sites, "Escambia East" and "Escambia West", encompass a total seafloor area of 118 nautical miles<sup>2</sup>. When Florida established the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the LAARS Permit was transferred to FWC. The LAARS Permit was re-authorized (after a lengthy public input and review process) by the Corps on July 25, 2001 with modifications, notably:

- reduction of steel materials thickness from ¼ inch to 1/8 inch
- minimum weight of 150 lbs for individual artificial reef units
- mandatory reporting of precise final artificial reef deployment locations (using GPS only)
- mandatory compliance monitoring of 20-25% of all artificial reef deployments

Only the following materials will be allowed (from Army Corps Permit):

Materials "shall be free of pollutants and toxins and composed of: non-productive oil platforms thoroughly clean in accordance with US Coast Guard and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, surplus military equipment (1/4 inch or greater in thickness thoroughly clean in accordance with US Coast Guard and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, steel hull vessels ballasted and thoroughly clean in accordance with US Coast Guard and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards, natural limestone boulders weighing a minimum of 150 pounds each, clean concrete rubble weighing a minimum of 150 pounds each, clean concrete prefabricated reef materials or modules weighing a minimum of 150 pounds each, clean and structurally stabilized steel/aluminum/metal alloy boxes or structures (1/8 inch or greater in thickness) weighing 150 pounds or more.

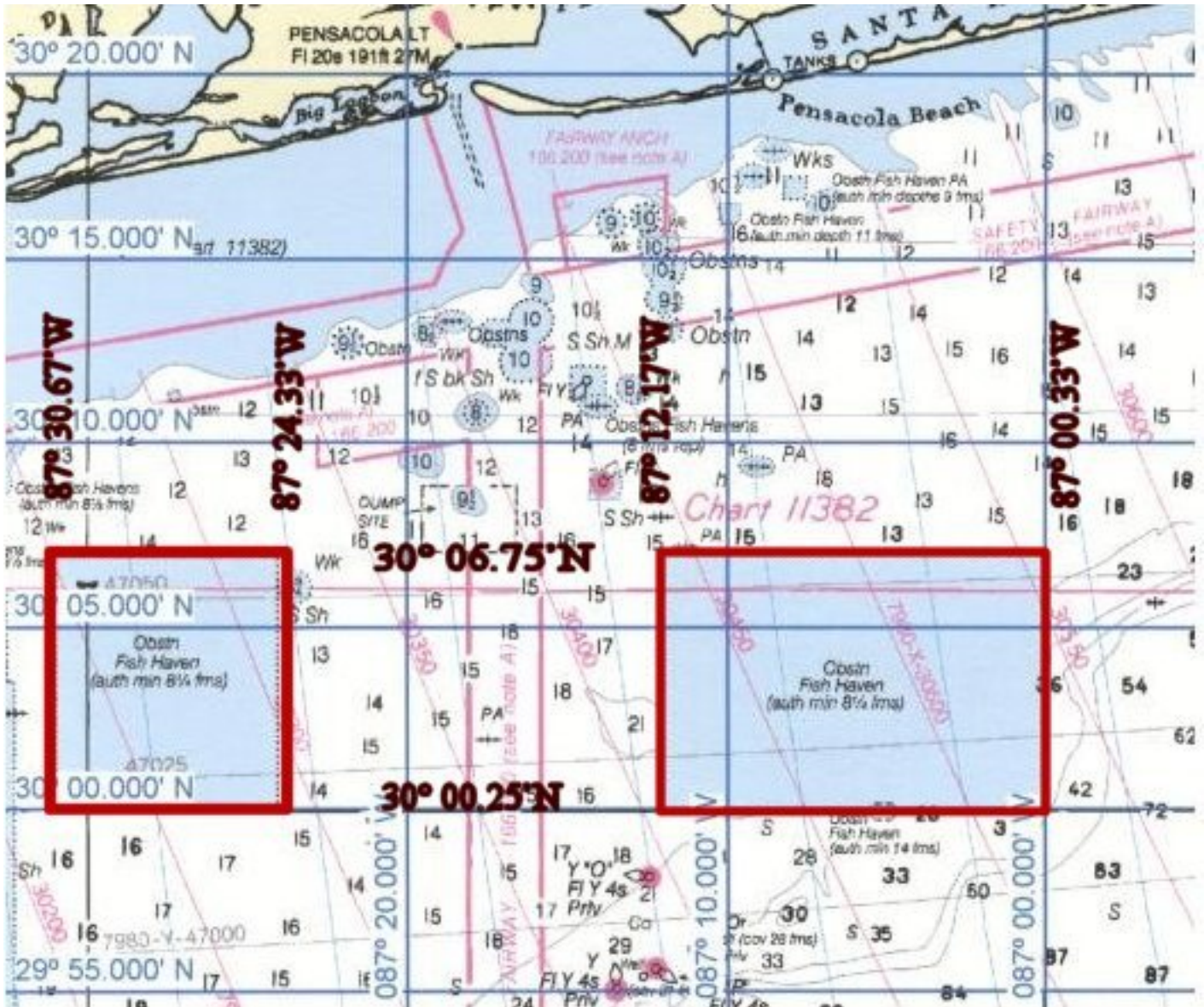
No reef materials shall be allowed to trap marine life, and must be configured, cut or shaped, so as not to function as a fish trap. All materials/structures must be configured and constructed to be stable, durable, and provide habitat. No material whatsoever may be deployed within one-quarter mile of the boundaries of the Large Area Artificial Reef Sites (LAARS). No other materials are authorized. Materials expressly prohibited include cars and trucks and any parts thereof, white goods (i.e. appliances), shopping carts, bread trays, 55 gal drums, storage or fuel tanks, loose metal materials, plastics, fiberglass, materials that upon inspection by FWCC staff or designated agent are found to be potentially unstable or lack acceptable habitat qualities". *From Permit No.199402365 (IP-CP)*

**DIAGRAM 1**

Escambia County “Large Area Artificial Reef Sites” (LAARS) in the Gulf of Mexico off Pensacola, Florida. These two LAARS locations, highlighted (in pink) below, encompass a total seafloor area of 118 nautical miles<sup>2</sup>.

(From NOAA Chart No. 11360, 38th Ed., Jan 1998).

Scale: 10 nautical miles



(Soundings in fathoms (6 feet))

# **Large Area Artificial Reef Site (LAARS)**

## **Permit Implementation Procedures**

Robert K. Turpin, Manager  
Escambia County Marine Resources Division  
1190 West Leonard Street, Pensacola, FL 32501  
(850) 595-4395; Fax 595-3495  
Email; robert\_turpin@co.escambia.fl.us

### **I. LAARS Implementation Procedures**

LAARS permit is issued by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Permit # 199402365 (IP-CP) authorizes the placement of inspected and approved artificial reef materials in two large area artificial reef sites (LAARS), known as Escambia East and Escambia West located in federal waters south of Pensacola, Florida. The USACE has included a number of special conditions in the permit that any entity authorized to utilize the LAARS is required to comply with.

### **II. Steps for individual artificial reef construction**

- 1) Applicant must submit a completed LAARS Application Form to Escambia County Marine Resources Division (1190 West Leonard Street, Pensacola, FL 32501) to schedule an inspection (8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday – Friday) of the materials proposed for deployment as an artificial reef. The LAARS Application Form is intended to give the Applicant the opportunity to ensure that the proposed materials meet the LAARS Permit conditions, and use foresight in placement location decisions. This should reduce the number of materials "Rejections".
- 2) Upon receipt of a completed LAARS Application Form, ECMRD will schedule an inspection of the proposed materials. Every effort will be made to schedule the inspection (8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday – Friday) within 2 business days of receipt of the LAARS Application Form. The **Applicant must be present at the time of the inspection**. ECMRD will meet applicant at reef materials staging location (within Escambia County or Santa Rosa County only) and will inspect the physical artificial reef materials to determine compliance with the LAARS permit (see Permit No. 199402365 (IP-CP)). The artificial reef materials will be photographed. Permit paperwork will be completed by ECMRD and individual artificial reef builder must have determined latitude/longitude of proposed reefs. Individual, numbered tamper-proof tags will be attached to each separate reef material by ECMRD. These metal tags shall not be removed, and shall remain attached to the reef materials at all times throughout loading, transport, and deployment onto the seafloor. Escambia County Board of County Commissioners established an Artificial Reef Application Fee of \$25.00 to recover costs associated with management (inspections, monitoring, etc.) of the LAARS program.

The \$25.00 Application Fee is due at the time of the inspection, and is assessed on each vessel load of artificial reef materials per deployment voyage.

- 3) ECMRD will plot the proposed artificial reef deployment locations to ensure that the location is within the LAARS permitted area. A ¼-mile “buffer zone” was created around the inside perimeter of each LAARS to prevent artificial reef materials from being moved outside the permitted area during hurricanes. ECMRD will notify US Army Corps of Engineers, US Coast Guard, and FWC of the proposed artificial reef by sending (via facsimile) the LAARS Application Form, photographs, and other pertinent information. Notification of the above-listed agencies initiates a 5-(business) day "waiting period" for those agencies to inspect the materials, request additional information, or register an objection to the proposed artificial reef.
- 4) After the 5-day waiting period has expired, ECMRD will notify the applicant of the status of the Application. The status of the Application will be categorized into one of the following:
  - A. "Approved"- Artificial reef materials meet all LAARS Permit conditions; materials deemed to be stable and durable at the proposed location(s). For "Approved" artificial reef Applications, the "LAARS Authorization Form" will be mailed to the Applicant. At the request of the Applicant, the Authorization Form may be picked up (8:00 am to 4:30 pm; Monday - Friday) at 1190 West Leonard St., Pensacola.
  - B. "Conditionally Approved"- Artificial reef materials, configuration, location, and/or deployment depth may be modified to meet LAARS permit conditions for habitat, stability, durability, or other concerns. (For example, LAARS Permit Condition 1 prohibits the use of storage or fuel tanks; cylindrical tanks and other similarly-shaped objects may be required to be altered to prevent "rolling" on the seafloor during storm events. Additionally, artificial reef materials may be required to be placed in deeper water. For "Conditionally Approved" artificial reef Applications, the Applicant must schedule an appointment with ECMRD to discuss and agree to the additional conditions attached to the LAARS Authorization Form.
  - C. "Denied"- Grounds for denial may include: non-compliance with LAARS Permit conditions.
- 5) Upon **receipt of the LAARS Authorization Form**, the Applicant has **30 days to deploy** the artificial reef. **Artificial reef materials may be loaded, transported, and deployed during daylight hours only.** Once reef materials are inspected and photographed, they must remain in that configuration during loading/transport over the water, and deployment. **No disassembly/reassembly is allowed.** If the artificial reef materials are not deployed by the end of the 30-day deployment period, the LAARS Authorization Form. The Applicant must return the LAARS permit with last page (“Deployment Cancellation Report Form”) filled out and signed and all metal tamper proof tags to ECMRD. Applicant must abide by the terms and conditions of the LAARS Permit and Authorization Form. Applicant must notify ECMRD by faxing the “24-Hour Pre-Deployment Notification” to MRD at 850-595-3495. Applicant must also call 850-595-3474 and leave a message containing the information required on the “24-Hour Pre-

Deployment Notification”. Applicant must keep a copy of the Permit No. 199402365 (IP-CP) and Authorization Form onboard the deployment vessel at all times until the artificial reef materials have been deployed. As the materials are deployed, Applicant must record the exact coordinates of the artificial reef (see item #7 below).

- 6) As required by the LAARS Permit, **20-25% of all LAARS artificial reefs must be monitored for permit compliance** via: A) on-site verification by ECDMR; and, B) post-deployment verification.
  - A. On-site verification will be accomplished by ECMRD or FWC staff as the artificial reef materials are deployed. Materials must be as listed on the LAARS Authorization Form; the deployment location must be within the LAARS boundary, and as listed on the authorization Form. ECMRD will:
    - 1) Meet the deployment vessel on-site
    - 2) Meet the deployment vessel at the dock (or other location) and follow the deployment vessel to the deployment location; or
    - 3) Arrange to be transported to the deployment site via the deployment vessel.

Therefore, **for every artificial reef deployment, no less than 24 hours prior to departure from the dock, the applicant must call (850) 595-4395 and state the applicant's name, permit number, departure dock, and departure time. Deployment vessel must monitor VHF channel 16.**

- B. If “on-site verification” is not possible, ECMRD will confirm the location of the artificial reef deployment via visual inspection of the artificial reef materials. A Spot check presence-absence visual inspection of the artificial reef materials will be performed by hull-mounted fathometer and/or submersible camera based on a randomly selected sample of at least 20-25% of all private reefs deployed in the Escambia LAARS.
7. **Within 5 business days after the artificial reef has been deployed, the applicant must submit the “Post-Deployment” information to: Robert Turpin, 1190 West Leonard St., Pensacola 32501.** In compliance with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers LAARS Permit issued to the FWC, the exact location of the artificial reef deployment(s) shall be listed in latitude and longitude, recorded from a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver as follows: \_\_° \_\_. \_\_'N; \_\_° \_\_. \_\_'W. LORAN C coordinates or LORAN conversions to latitude and longitude are NOT acceptable. These coordinates will be used **ONLY** to verify the location of artificial reef materials. After verification of the artificial reef materials (within 30 days), ECMRD will send this information to FWC. **ECMRD WILL NOT KEEP PRIVATE ARTIFICIAL REEF COORDINATES ON FILE.** FWC will neither utilize these private reef coordinates for any work-related or personal fishing or diving uses nor include them in any public artificial reef databases accessible to the public. FWC will double check through plotting to ensure that those coordinates not selected for field ground-truthing are within the boundaries of the permitted area, in order to comply with permit terms and conditions.