

DMR teams up with oil companies to create artificial reefs

Just one of the many exciting programs being implemented by the Department of Marine Resources is its “Rigs to Reef” program. “Rig” reefs are viable habitats for many Gulf species. When a rig is no longer useful to its company, it is dismantled and returned to shore to be scrapped. Removal of a long-standing rig removes the habitat that many varieties of marine life have adopted as their home. To prevent this habitat loss, in 1999 the Mississippi Legislature passed state statutes 49-15-15(1)(q) and 49-15-17(1)(b) allowing the DMR to accept donations, apply for federal permits for construction and maintenance of artificial reefs in federal waters and establish a special account for donated funds. Funds can be received from public or private sources and are earmarked for monitoring and maintaining artificial reefs. Two rig reefs have already been placed in Mississippi’s rigs to reef site, which is located 60 miles south of Biloxi in Main Pass Block 132. The first “rig” reef was donated by Apache Corporation of Houston, Texas. The second one came from Vintage Petroleum of Tulsa, Okla.