

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF ARTIFICIAL REEFS

Lee County, FL



These are findings from a recent study of economic benefits associated with artificial reef programs in a six-county region of Southwest Florida (Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte and Lee counties). The full report, *Economic Impacts of Artificial Reefs for Six Southwest Florida Counties*, TP 178, is available from Florida Sea Grant, flseagrant.org.

At a glance:

- The results from a recent survey of the economic impact of artificial reefs show extensive use of the Lee County artificial reef system by residents, visitors, private boaters and for-hire clients.
- On a daily basis, an average of more than 1350 persons in Lee County – residents and visitors included – use artificial reefs.
- Fishermen and divers who use Lee County's 23 artificial reef sites spend nearly \$60 million in the county annually.
- Survey results document that artificial reefs help support the for-hire fishing sector (guides, charter and party boats) with clients spending nearly \$21 million on artificial reef-related trips.
- Visitors bring new money into the local economy (\$26.45 million), accounting for more than half of artificial reef expenditures.
- Expenditures on artificial reef-related activities generate nearly \$52 million in net economic impacts annually that support 575 full- and part-time jobs.
- Lee County government spends approximately \$30,000 annually on artificial reef. Construction funds are provided by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission statewide artificial reef program and other grant programs.
- With 50 miles of white sand beaches, more than 97 parks, beaches and national wildlife refuges, and more than 50,000 registered boats (4th highest in the state), Lee County is one of the premier visitor destinations on Florida's West Coast.

Public Support for Artificial Reefs

In general, what is your opinion regarding the use of public funds to provide and maintain artificial reefs for recreation in Florida's waters?

	Reef Users	Non Reef Users
Support	86%	69%
Neutral	9%	24%
Oppose	5%	7%

Annual Use of Artificial Reefs

152,723
Boat Days

500,457
Person Days

Annual Artificial Reef Related Expenditures By Users

\$59.77
Million

\$33.32
Million
(residents)

\$26.45
Million
(non-residents)

-- OR --

\$38.98
Million
(private boaters)

\$20.79
Million
(guide, party, charter clients)

Annual Economic Impacts

Economic Output **\$51.75**
Million

Total Income **\$28.48**
Million

Business Taxes **\$3.89**
Million

Full/Part-time Jobs **575**

