

# ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF ARTIFICIAL REEFS

## Hillsborough 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 Hillsborough County artificial reef system by residents, visitors, private boaters and for-hire clients.
- On a daily basis, an average of more than 570 persons in Hillsborough County – residents and visitors included – use artificial reefs.
- Fishermen and divers who use Hillsborough County’s 8 artificial reef sites spend more than \$30 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 over \$10.5 million on artificial reef-related trips.
- Visitors bring new money into the local economy (\$13.18 million), accounting for almost half of artificial reef expenditures.
- Expenditures on artificial reef-related activities generate nearly \$27 million in net economic impacts annually that support 284 full- and part-time jobs.
- The Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County uses approximately \$20,000 annually in Pollution Recovery Funds to operate the artificial reef program. Supplemental funds have been provided by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission statewide artificial reef program and the vast majority of materials and construction services have been donated by local marine contractors.
- As one of Florida’s most popular tourist destinations, Hillsborough County is home to Tampa Bay, Florida’s largest open-water estuary that stretches nearly 400 square miles and provides some of the state’s top fishing grounds and wildlife habitat.

### 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	90%	66%
Neutral	5%	31%
Oppose	5%	3%

### Annual Use of Artificial Reefs

**63,861**  
Boat Days

**209,655**  
Person Days

### Annual Artificial Reef Related Expenditures By Users

**\$30.25**  
Million

**\$17.07**  
Million  
(residents)

**\$13.18**  
Million  
(non-residents)

-- OR --

**\$19.67**  
Million  
(private boaters)

**\$10.58**  
Million  
(guide, party, charter clients)

### Annual Economic Impacts

**Economic Output** **\$26.95**  
Million

**Total Income** **\$14.61**  
Million

**Business Taxes** **\$1.95**  
Million

**Full/Part-time Jobs** **284**

