

[FEATURE]

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SSCI Environmental, TPWD work to create artificial reef

You have heard the saying "one man's junk is another man's treasure." In the case of artificial reefs, the saying might go "one man's junk is a fish's treasure." Separation Systems Consultants Inc. (SSCI) has been working with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) on a project to clean up and then sink the Texas Clipper to create an artificial reef.

from there, the food chain grows to angelfish, snappers, groupers and predatory fish such as mackerel and sharks. Where there are fish, there will be fishing and other recreational activities such as diving to watch the fish. These new commercial fishing and recreational activities are expected to eventually boost the local economy by as much as \$50 million annually.

The creation of artificial reefs can change the flat sand and mud bottom of portions of the Gulf of Mexico into a haven for marine life. Texas has been involved in artificial reef development for close to 50 years. Initially, items smaller than a transport vessel were used to build artificial reefs. Tires, cars, even construction debris were used to build the first

artificial reefs. Experience and time demonstrated, however, that these items were no match for the strength of the waves and winds of Gulf storms. Now, reefs tend to be constructed from obsolete ships and oil rig platforms. Since 1990, oil and gas companies have donat-

ed more than 60 obsolete petroleum platforms in cooperation with the "Rigs-to-Reefs" program.

SSCI completed the hazardous materials assessment and is now monitoring decontamination of the Texas Clipper in preparation for her final launch into the sea. The Texas Clipper was originally commissioned by the Navy in 1944 and served proudly as a troop transport ship, the USS Queens. From 1948-1958, the Clipper was commissioned as the S.S. Excambion and, with a little remodeling, served as a cruise ship to Mediterranean ports. After 1958, the Texas Clipper was returned to the Navy's mothball fleet, where she rested briefly until 1965 when she was commissioned as the Texas Clipper. The Texas Clipper served first for the Texas Maritime Training Academy and later for Texas A&M University. She served until 1996 providing students and researchers with the opportunity to serve and learn on the oceans of the world.



The Texas Clipper, which once served as a troop transport ship for the Navy, will soon be sunk off the Texas Gulf Coast and converted into an artificial reef.

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This year, the Texas Clipper will be sunk 17 miles south of the Texas coast. This event will mark another important achievement in the Texas Artificial Reef Program. Soon this junked transport ship will be covered with marine life such as barnacles, corals and clams. And

SSCI is a woman-owned environmental engineering, consulting and remediation firm with offices in Houma, La., Houston, Dallas, and Austin, Texas. 2006 marked its 20th year in business.

For more information on the Texas Clipper project or SSCI, contact Doug Jackson of SSCI at (800) 324-7724 or Dale Shively of TPWD at (512) 389-4686. You can also visit www.sscienvrntal.com or www.tpwd.state.tx.us. □