

# Newest artificial reef takes dive

## ■ Hailey Glasrud Reef sinks in 187 feet of water off St. Lucie Inlet

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As sinking ships go, this one was textbook perfect.

King Neptune blessed the MCAC Reef Fund and officials with the Martin County Coastal Engineering Department and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission with perfect weather conditions for the sinking of a 224-foot bulk cargo freighter.

Shortly after 10 a.m., the Hailey Glasrud Reef officially landed on the sea floor in 187 feet of water to become the Treasure Coast's latest addition to its artificial reef system.

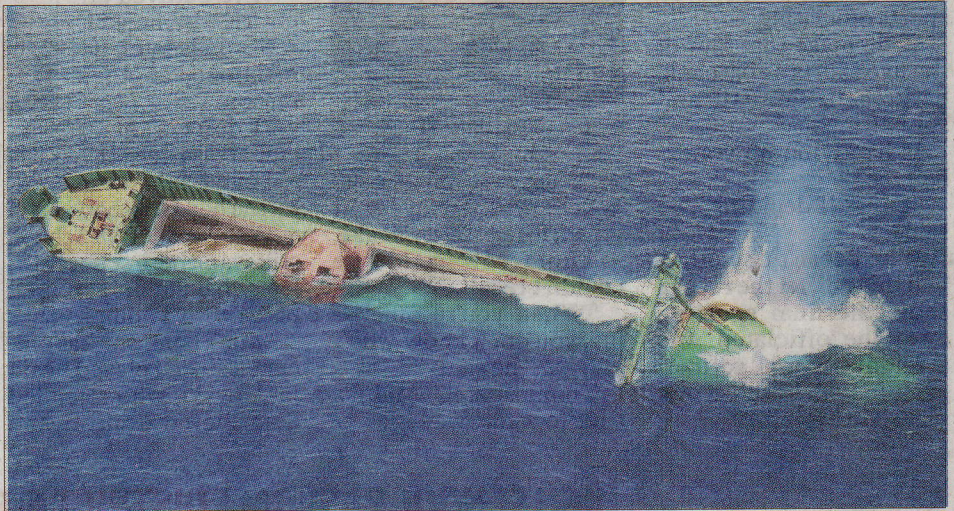
About two dozen vessels from a 16-foot flats skiff to the Safari I party boat carried observers who wished to welcome the decommissioned ship as the area's latest fish habitat.

Soon, groupers, snappers, amberjacks, sea bass, porgies, corals, crustaceans and sea anemones will convert the steel hull of the ship into a residential fish development.

The coordinates where it sunk are: 27 degrees 12.600 minutes north latitude and 80 degrees 00.255 minutes west longitude in about 187 feet of water, said John Burke, president of the MCAC Reef Fund, the nonprofit fundraising organization that assists Martin County's Artificial Reef program in acquiring and deploying artificial reef materials.

Thursday's reef was the fourth vessel sunken by the MCAC Reef Fund in its 11 years to go along with thousands of tons of concrete bridge rubble and other structures such as steel towers.

"It's great we have projects like this to help continue to strengthen our fisheries, which is how many of us on the Treasure Coast feed our families,"



KRISTA SIMPSON/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This image by Island Marine Services captures the 224-foot-long Hailey Glasrud Reef as it begins to slip beneath the surface of the Atlantic Ocean on Thursday about 9 miles northeast of the St. Lucie Inlet.

### MCAC REEF BUILDERS

Since its formation 11 years ago, the nonprofit MCAC Reef Fund and its benefactors have sent four vessels and tons of concrete rubble to the sea floor to increase fish habitat. Reefs are constructed with donations from fishing and boating clubs, private sponsors, memorials and fishing tournament proceeds.

Here are the four vessels sunk:

**Wickstrom Reef, Jan. 21, 2013:** 168-foot steel ship; 187 feet of water; 27 degrees 13.492 minutes north latitude; 80 degrees 00.318 minutes west longitude.

**Ted Glasrud Reef, Feb. 24, 2010:** 65-foot steel tugboat; 165 feet of water; 27 degrees 12.698 minutes north latitude; 80 degrees 00.259 minutes west longitude.

**Kyle Conrad Memorial Reef, Jan. 17, 2011:** 68-foot steel tugboat; 167 feet of water. Near 27 degrees north latitude, 80 degrees west longitude.

**Hailey Glasrud Reef, April 24, 2014:** 224-foot cargo ship, 187 feet of water; 27 degrees 12.600 minutes north latitude; 80 degrees 00.255 minutes west longitude. For more information or to find out about the MCAC Reef Fund fishing tournament and Lionfish Roundup on July 11-12, go to [www.mcreefs.org](http://www.mcreefs.org).

### TCPALM HAS MORE

To view a photo gallery of images from Thursday's reef construction and see a video as the ship sinks, go to [www.TCPalm.com](http://www.TCPalm.com).

said Butch Scott, first mate aboard Safari I party boat out of Pirates Cove Marina in Port Salerno. "Fishing is the livelihood for thousands around here."

Jim Weix, a Martin County Realtor, said the annual MCAC Reef Fund fishing tournament each July helps raise valuable funds for artificial reef

projects such as the Hailey Glasrud Reef.

"What we draw in from entry fees plus sponsors is critical to us being able to place these reefs here to help fishing and diving," Weix said.

Burke explained the Hailey Glasrud is part of Martin County's Sirotkin Artificial Reef permit zone and is in line with

the Wickstrom and Ted Glasrud reefs, as well as other towers and barges sunken previously for habitat creation.

As for the Hailey Glasrud Reef, commercial divers will inspect the vessel to ensure it sunk upright and therefore maximizing the surface area the vessel provides for habitat development of corals and more.

It sunk relatively quickly without explosives. Holes pre-cut into the vessel were unplugged at about 9:36 a.m. by crewmen working for Fort Pierce's McCulley Marine Services.

The ship began silently filling with water. The stern filled first and the ship began listing toward its port side as more water entered the hold.

Although it is not yet known, it was believed to have righted itself as it slipped beneath the surface of the flat, calm, azure blue ocean. The entire vessel was gone by 10:06 a.m.

For more on the program, go to [www.mcreefs.org](http://www.mcreefs.org). For more on Martin County Artificial Reefs, go to <http://martinreefs.com/index.html>.