

# Bull Shark Barge

The Bull Shark Barge (Originally named “Vaughn Jordan”) is a Steel Barge that was mistakenly deployed in the wrong non-permitted area due to a Tugboat Captains error on December 3, 1986. It sits upside-down in 45 feet of water approximately 2 miles South of the St. Lucie Inlet due East of the St. Lucie Inlet State Park. It is now 19 years old.

It was initially intended for deployment in the Donaldson Permitted Area (which is North of the inlet) and it’s exact location remained unknown for a short time until some local boaters marked it on their Depth Sounder. Due to the magnitude of this blunder, it was given a less than family friendly name by the locals, and shall go, unmentioned in this report. The name was changed to the “Bull Shark Barge” when local Divers told harrowing tales of close encounters with numerous large Bull Sharks while spearfishing on the site. The Bull Sharks seem to be most numerous during the late winter thru spring.

Due to its location and the huge schools of baitfish that usually swarm around it, the Bull Shark Barge attracts a virtual floating city of boats on weekends and you can just about always find someone anchored on it most of the time. This can make Research diving and Data Collection difficult at times as we have to try and convince people to move away from a productive fishing spot long enough for us to do our work.

Though it was intact prior to deployment, The Bull Shark Barge is now in a state of collapse. Over the years most of the sides have fallen out exposing the skeleton and interior of the barge. Members of the F.O.S. Dive Team have long felt as though this deterioration is more extensive on the Bull Shark Barge due to its shallow depth and exposure to surge.

It is heavily encrusted and attracts a large number of fish and fishermen. Cobia, Kingfish, Gag Grouper and African Pompano are common catches. While diving, large schools of Snook and Barracuda are almost always encountered, as are several resident Goliath Grouper.

Members from the F.O.S. Dive Team recently removed several abandoned nets from the barge. There were hundreds of dead and dying fish of various species entangled in the mesh to include the skeletal remains of a 5-foot and 2 Juvenile Goliath Groupers and a Loggerhead Turtle. Laura Herren a F.D.E.P. Marine Biologist and Mark Perry of the Florida Oceanographic Society verified this. Abandoned nets are common on and around this site.

# Florida Oceanographic Society Research Dive Team

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Monitoring Grant

## "Artificial Reef Stability Assessment Survey"

Martin County Florida

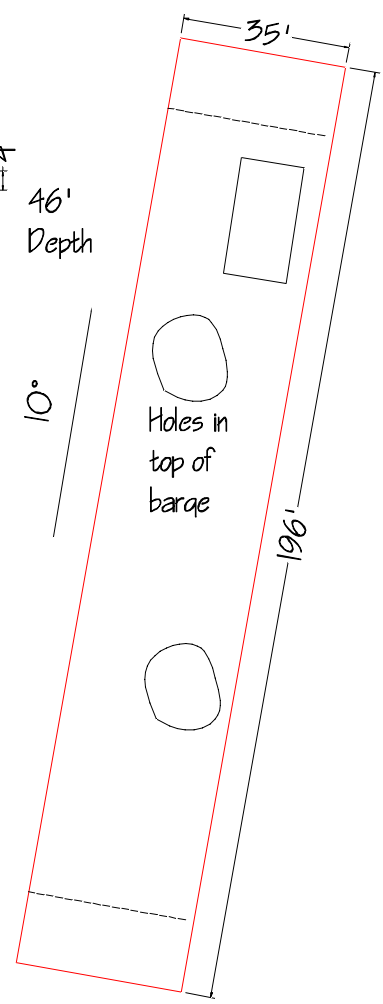
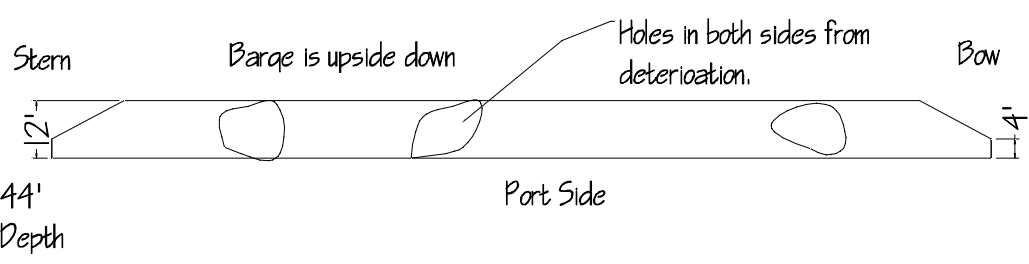
### "Bull Shark Barge"

Date of Survey: September 2, 2004

Kerry Dillon, Scott, Glover, Laura Herren, Fran Krawetz.

<b>Reef Material: Steel Barge</b>
<b>Orientation: North and South</b>
<b>Bottom Composition: Sand and Shell</b>
<b>General Condition of Material: Fair</b>
<b>Collapse: Some collapsed areas in deck. Not extensive.</b>
<b>Scattering: Minimal scattering.</b>
<b>Disintegration: A little more than half of the side panels are missing. Ribs are exposed.</b>
<b>Additional Observations: The Bull Shark Barge seems to be mostly intact for now but the steel structure of the Barge is definitely showing signs of future collapse.</b>
Heavy Benthic encrustation.

AN



"Bull Shark" Barge  
Mapped 08-31-04  
Drawn by BS 11-27-04

## Bull shark Barge

Survey Date: 1 September 2004

Benthic species listed below were identified using digital still images. Professionally trained divers spent 15 minutes on the Bull shark Barge photographing benthic invertebrates and macroalgae. All species were documented (to lowest recognizable taxon) and verified using reference guides. Some of the most relevant guides for the Martin County area include: 1) Littler and Littler's Caribbean Reef Plants: An Identification Guide to the Reef Plants of the Caribbean, Bahamas, Florida and Gulf of Mexico, 2) Hendler, Miller, Pawson and Kier's Echinoderms of Florida and the Caribbean: Sea Stars, Sea Urchins, and Allies, and 3) Paul Humann's Reef Creature Identification: Florida Caribbean and Bahamas. Documented organisms were also placed in one of the following abundance classifications for long-term analysis: Single (1), Few (2-10), Many (11-100) or Abundant (>100).

<u>Benthic Species Identified</u>	<u>Abundance</u>	<u>Comments</u>
<b>Green Algae</b>		
<i>Caulerpa brachypus</i> (attached)	Abundant	Low relative density.
<b>Red Algae</b>		
<i>Rhodymenia</i> sp.	Abundant	
<i>Halymenia</i> sp.	Single	
<b>Sponges</b>		
Encrusting sponges	Many	
Vase sponge ( <i>Ircinia campana</i> )	Few	
Black ball sponge ( <i>Ircinia strobilina</i> )	Few	
<b>Cnidarians</b>		
Branched hydroids	Abundant	
Regal sea fan ( <i>Leptogorgia hebes</i> )	Many	
<b>Sea Urchins</b>		
Purple urchin ( <i>Arbacia punctulata</i> )	Single	
<b>Tunicates</b>		
Compound tunicates ( <i>Eudistoma</i> spp.)	Many	

