



Tugboat to be used as Kyle Conrad Reef en route to Treasure Coast

By Ed Killer

Tuesday, January 11, 2011

MARTIN COUNTY — A steel tugboat built over a century ago and originally powered by a steam engine soon will begin a new chapter in its history of service.

The tugboat Tuff-E-Nuff has begun its 200-plus-mile tow from just north of Jacksonville to where it will eventually find its final resting place, on the sea floor about 10 miles northeast of St. Lucie Inlet.

John Burke, founder of the MCAC Reef Fund, said if all goes as planned, the unique vessel will be sunk next week and take on its new name, the Kyle Conrad Memorial Artificial Reef. More than 100 friends and family of Kyle Conrad, the 21-year-old former soccer star from Jensen Beach High School and Lynn University, raised more than \$20,000 since Conrad's untimely accidental death Dec. 11 in Fort Lauderdale. Conrad grew up fishing, spearfishing, diving and participating in all watersports as he grew up in Jensen Beach, his family has said.

The tug was cleaned, salvaged and prepared for sinking by Think It Sink It Reef It, a reef-building organization based in Jacksonville. MCAC Reef Fund purchased the tug from the organization. The tug Dawn Star piloted by Capt. Tim Lawton of Fort Pierce is towing the decommissioned work boat to temporary dockage at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute until it can be deployed.

"We'll be waiting for a suitable weather window to take it offshore to sink it near where the Ted Glasrud Reef is," said Burke, referring to the sinking of a tugboat in February 2010 which preparation costs were underwritten by Martin County and Minnesota-based real estate developer Ted Glasrud.

The permitted area is in about 150 feet of water about 10 miles northeast of St. Lucie Inlet where the Wickstrom Reef also is located, as well as several other reef projects placed there by Martin County, the MCAC Reef Fund and various supporters.

Dr. Chris Wigley, a Conrad family friend and Jensen Beach dentist, is glad to see the project moving along so quickly.

"We hope to be able to find dockage in a public area to enable folks who contributed to the reef to see it," Wigley said.

Burke said the tug will most likely be towed to sea through Fort Pierce Inlet when the time comes for its deployment. Shoaling of the St. Lucie Inlet may make for uncertain passage, Burke said, and he would hate to have it become grounded on its way to sea.

KYLE CONRAD REEF

- Donations for the memorial artificial reef bearing Kyle Conrad's name are still being accepted at any area TD Bank through the MCAC Artificial Reef Fund.
- Donations also can be dropped off at the office of Dr. Chris Wigley, 914 N.E. Jensen Beach Blvd. Checks should be made payable to the MCAC Kyle Conrad Memorial Reef Fund.
- For more information, go to www.MCACReefFund.org. For photos and video of the tugboat visit www.tisiri.org/tuffenuff.



Tugboat Tuff E. Nuff to be sunk, used as Kyle Conrad Reef off St. Lucie Inlet