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Engineering Ecosystems

A Community Vision, Soon to be a Thriving Underwater Environment

- Innovative engineering and science driving Australian first habitat enhancement
- Safer fishing experiences for families in small boats
- Transforming underwater deserts into underwater forests

WA's latest purpose built artificial reef, 'King Reef', has been installed in the Exmouth Gulf, awaiting the fishing community to pay it a visit!

A mixture of six giant steel structures integrated with concrete modules will form the reef's 55 module arrangement. The reef is situated across two acres on the ocean floor, and resides only 10 minutes from local boat ramps.

Recfishwest CEO Dr Andrew Rowland said improved and safer fishing opportunities in the sheltered waters of Exmouth Gulf, close to the best boat ramp in town, have been a long held priority and vision of local Exmouth fishers.

"After many years working on bringing this vision to life, the local community and project partners are thrilled to see Exmouth's new purpose built fish habitat structures settled on the barren, sandy sea floor of the Exmouth Gulf," Dr Rowland said.

"The Exmouth Integrated Artificial Reef project brings together world leading engineering solutions and science driven habitat enhancement to benefit the environment and recreational fishing."

"With over 27,000m³ of new habitat being introduced, the reef will quickly become home to a range of different fish species as well as food sources and a colonising organisms such as algae, coral and sponges enhancing ocean biodiversity and fishing experiences for generations to come," Dr Rowland said.

"Essentially the project is transforming underwater deserts into underwater forests!"

The project is a collaboration between Recfishwest, BHP, NERA (National Energy Resources Australia), Subcon International and Curtin University. Through Recfishwest the project also has support from the passionate Exmouth community and the Western Australian State Government, through the Recreational Fishing Initiatives Fund.

This cross-sector partnership has allowed for the creation of Australia's largest integrated artificial reef thanks to 6 large repurposed steel reef structures kindly donated by BHP. These structures have been modified with additional features creating the unique environmentally safe habitat for fish.

The 'King' name has strong links to the Exmouth Gulf and fishing in Exmouth in general, with marine surveyor Lieutenant Phillip Parker King naming Exmouth Gulf in 1818, and the late George King a popular pioneer of charter fishing in Exmouth and Coral Bay in the 1960's and 70's. Fittingly the newest edition to the fishing landscape in Exmouth is named 'King Reef.'

The local Exmouth community will continue to be involved with their new reef, monitoring the growth of the reef via the Recfishwest Reef Vision Program, with assistance from Curtin University.

For more, see our Frequently Asked Questions at www.recfishwest.org.au

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