



Woodrow Wilson Bridge Creates Fish Reef in Chesapeake Bay September 25, 2006

Teaming with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project hosted a media event around the creation of a fish reef in the Chesapeake Bay with portions of the demolished Wilson Bridge. From a football-field-sized barge, 50-foot concrete sections of the old bridge were deposited into the water at Point No Point in St. Mary's County to create reef habitat for various species of fish, oysters and other aquatic life. The reef creation initiative will improve the health of the Bay and benefit recreational and commercial fishing.

In keeping with our efforts to focus public attention on the project's innovative environmental programs (helping reverse outdated conventional wisdom that highway projects, on balance, do grave damage to the environment), the event generated enormous media attention. The environmental success story was featured from Richmond to Baltimore, with key placements including the front-page of the *Baltimore Sun*, front-page of the *Washington Post* Metro section, *Washington Times*, *Washington Examiner*, WTOP and an hour-long radio discussion show on WAMU, Washington, DC's NPR affiliate.

Thank you again to all involved!

-John Undeland, Michelle Holland & Colleen Coghlan



Major Highlights

- ▶ At least **5 million** were reached through news stories.
- ▶ An estimated broadcast audience reach of over **1.5 million** viewers.
- ▶ A combined circulation of **3.5 million** readers for print and online mentions.
- ▶ Coverage in 3 major markets including Washington, DC; Richmond, VA & Baltimore, MD.



PRINT HITS

1. Southern Maryland Online

[Pieces of Demolished Wilson Bridge to Find New Home in Bay near Ridge](#)

September 15, 2006

2. The Associated Press as seen in:

-Baltimore Sun on Sept. 16th

-Washington Times (Online)

-Richmond Times Dispatch (Online)

-WTOP News.com

[Wilson Bridge sections to become artificial reef](#)

September 15, 2006

3. The Daily Record (Baltimore, MD)

[The Woodrow Wilson Bridge in St. Mary's County has a watery end](#)

September 18, 2006

4. Washington Examiner

[Former section of Wilson Bridge to be used as artificial reef](#)

By: Dena Levitz

September 18, 2006

5. The Enterprise

[Artificial reef created by debris](#)

September 25, 2006

6. Washington Post **front page Metro section*

[Swimming With the Fishes](#)

[Slabs of the Old Wilson Bridge Find New Life as a Bay Reef](#)

By Megan Greenwell

September 26, 2006

7. Baltimore Sun **front page photo*

[Fish to find home in a sunken commuter](#)

[curse: Old Wilson Bridge wreckage dumped for a giant anglers' reef off Southern](#)

[Maryland](#)

By Candus Thomson

September 26, 2006

8. Southern Maryland Newspapers

[Pieces of Wilson bridge dumped in Chesapeake as part of fishing reef](#)

September 27, 2006

By Jason Babcock

9. The Washington Post

Southern Maryland Extra

[Bridge Overboard! Span Debris Dumped in Bay To Help Fish and Business](#)

By: Megan Greenwell

September 28, 2006

10. Washington Post

[Week In Review Sept. 24-30 - Wilson Bridge Is Reborn as a Reef Concrete Slabs Are Dumped in the Bay](#)

October 1, 2006

Not Included

-Brief mention on DCist.com 9/27/06

BROADCAST HITS

Report Summary:

Total Hits: 36

Total Audience Impressions: 1,571,464

Total Publicity Value: \$64,614.72

* NCDC= NewsChannel 8

1) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 7:00am Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: NC8 News

2) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WJLA Affiliate: ABC Show: Good Morning
Washington 6:00

Estimated Audience Number: 54,498 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$2,467.12

3) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: News 4 Today

Estimated Audience Number: 88,212 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$3,993.35

4) Market: Richmond-Petersburg. VA [RP] [60] HUT: 510,770 DMA%: 0.46
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WWBT Affiliate: NBC Show: 12 News Today

Estimated Audience Number: 41,658 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$1,885.85

5) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 5:00am Aired On: WUSA Affiliate: CBS Show: 9News at 5am

Estimated Audience Number: 32,818 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$1,485.67

6) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 10:30pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: Late Night Report

7) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 10:00pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: Late Night Report

8) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 9:00pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: NC8 9pm Report

9) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 7:00pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: Zone Report

10) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 7:00pm Aired On: WUSA Affiliate: CBS Show: 9News Tonight

Estimated Audience Number: 78,114 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$3,536.22

11) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 5:00pm Aired On: WJLA Affiliate: ABC Show: ABC 7 News at 5:00

Estimated Audience Number: 126,716 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$5,736.43

12) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 5:00pm Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: News 4 at 5

Estimated Audience Number: 117,025 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$5,297.72

13) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 5:00pm Aired On: WTTG Affiliate: FOX Show: FOX 5 News at 5

Estimated Audience Number: 108,067 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$4,892.19

- 14) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 5:00pm Aired On: WUSA Affiliate: CBS Show: 9News at 5pm
Estimated Audience Number: 57,524 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$2,604.11
- 15) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 4:00pm Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: News 4 at 4
Estimated Audience Number: 98,210 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$4,445.96
- 16) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 3:00pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: Afternoon Report
- 17) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 2:00pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: Afternoon Report
- 18) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 1:00pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: Afternoon Report
- 19) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 12:00pm Aired On: WJLA Affiliate: ABC Show: ABC 7 News at Noon
Estimated Audience Number: 49,107 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$2,223.07
- 20) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 12:00pm Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: News Report
- 21) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 10:00am Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: News Report
- 22) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 10:00am Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: News 4 at 10
Estimated Audience Number: 88,827 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$4,021.19
- 23) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 9:30am Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: WRC Local Cut-In
Estimated Audience Number: 67,592 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$N/A
- 24) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 9:00am Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: WRC Local Cut-In
Estimated Audience Number: 76,551 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$N/A
- 25) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 8:00am Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: NC8 News
- 26) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 7:00am Aired On: NCDC Affiliate: IND Show: NC8 News
- 27) Market: Baltimore. MD [BA] [24] HUT: 1,089,220 DMA%: 0.98
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WBFF Affiliate: FOX Show: FOX 45 Morning News
Estimated Audience Number: 12,092 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$547.40
- 28) Market: Baltimore. MD [BA] [24] HUT: 1,089,220 DMA%: 0.98
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WUTB Affiliate: MNT Show: My 24 News at 6am
Estimated Audience Number: 0 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$
- 29) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: News 4 Today
Estimated Audience Number: 88,212 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$3,993.35
- 30) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WTTG Affiliate: FOX Show: FOX Morning News at 6
Estimated Audience Number: 45,381 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$2,054.39

31) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 6:00am Aired On: WUSA Affiliate: CBS Show: 9News at 6am
Estimated Audience Number: 57,835 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$2,618.19

32) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/25/2006 Time: 5:00am Aired On: WUSA Affiliate: CBS Show: 9News at 5am
Estimated Audience Number: 32,818 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$1,485.67

33) Market: Baltimore. MD [BA] [24] HUT: 1,089,220 DMA%: 0.98
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 7:30pm Aired On: WMPT Affiliate: PBS Show: Outdoors Maryland
Estimated Audience Number: 11,584 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$524.40

34) Market: Baltimore. MD [BA] [24] HUT: 1,089,220 DMA%: 0.98
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 4:00pm Aired On: WJZ Affiliate: CBS Show: Eyewitness News at 4
Estimated Audience Number: 37,324 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$1,689.65

35) Market: Richmond-Petersburg. VA [RP] [60] HUT: 510,770 DMA%: 0.46
Date: 09/26/2006 Time: 12:00pm Aired On: WTVR Affiliate: CBS Show: CBS 6 News at Noon
Estimated Audience Number: 30,682 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$1,388.97

36) Market: Washington. DC (Hagerstown. MD) [DC] [8] HUT: 2,252,550 DMA%: 2.04
Date: 09/30/2006 Time: 5:30am Aired On: WRC Affiliate: NBC Show: News 4 This Week
Estimated Audience Number: 72,407 | Estimated Publicity Value: \$3,277.86



Southern Maryland Online

Visitors per Week: 17,954.75

Pieces of Demolished Wilson Bridge to Find New Home in Bay near Ridge

September 15, 2006

Now that the original Woodrow Wilson Bridge, that connected Maryland to Virginia across the Potomac River, has been demolished, what to do with all of the remaining debris? The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has a plan. 50-foot sections of the bridge will be dropped into the Chesapeake Bay to create an artificial fish reef. The placement of materials will enhance fish habitat within an established artificial reef site in the Chesapeake Bay. The site is located just off of Point No Point in St. Mary's County. The materials will be deployed off of a football field-sized barge.

Point No Point is located just off the shoreline of the Chesapeake Bay in Ridge, MD. Normally, lighthouses are placed at various point of land along a waterway. For example, within southern Maryland we have Point Lookout, Piney Point, Cedar Point, and Cove Point. Since a lighthouse was required near Ridge where there is no point of land, the lighthouse was thus named "Point No Point."

The Associated Press

Wilson Bridge sections to become artificial reef

DNR says parts of old span will help provide more habitat for aquatic life

September 15, 2006

POINT NO POINT -- Long a parking lot over the Potomac, sections of the Wilson Bridge are heading downriver to a spot where anglers will one day dally in leisure instead of anger.

Portions of the much maligned bridge demolished last month will be used to build an artificial reef just north of where the Potomac meets the lower Chesapeake Bay in St. Mary's County.

Fifty-foot concrete sections of the center span will be dumped Wednesday off a football-field sized barge, said Aaron Kraus, a spokesman for the Department of Natural Resources.

"It's going to be pretty visually stunning," Kraus said.

The sections will add to an established artificial reef site, providing more habitat for fish and other bay denizens and more chances for recreational fishermen to land the big one.

Reef building is one of a number of environmental projects using materials from the bridge construction. River mud dredged at the bridge site has also been used to reclaim strip-mined land to restore farm production on a historic plantation near Richmond, Va.

The old six-lane drawbridge which opened in 1961 and connects Maryland and Virginia on Interstate 495, has long been too small for commuter traffic from burgeoning suburbs on both sides of the river. It is being replaced with two new drawbridges.

A half-mile section of the bridge came down in August when longtime commuter Dan Ruefly, who won a contest to find the person with the "toughest bridge commute," pushed a symbolic plunger that started the demolition.

Circulation:

Baltimore Sun - 248,808

Washington Times (Online) – 117,354.25

Richmond Times Dispatch (Online) -137,007

WTOP News.com - 46,873.5

Total: 550,042.75

The Daily Record (Baltimore, MD)

Circulation: 5,523

**The Woodrow Wilson Bridge in St. Mary's County has a watery end
September 18, 2006**

What happens to an old bridge when its time is up? In the case of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, some of its sections are being placed in the Chesapeake Bay as a fish habitat. On Wednesday, Department of Natural Resources Secretary C. Ronald Franks will lead a tour of people to observe the placement in bay waters off St. Mary's County of 50-foot sections of the original Wilson bridge, which connected Maryland and Virginia before its replacement by a newer span.

Washington Examiner

Circulation: 260,942

Former section of Wilson Bridge to be used as artificial reef

By: Dena Levitz

September 18, 2006

Alexandria - Call it the ultimate in recycling.

Come Wednesday, remnants of the old Woodrow Wilson Bridge will see a second use deep underneath Maryland's Chesapeake Bay in the form of an artificial reef experts hope will help increase area marine life considerably.

Martin Gary, a fisheries ecologist with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, said the state really lucked out when the bridge was blown up earlier this summer. Over the years, biologists have discovered that concrete is one of the better materials out there for the basis of a man-made reef — and the bridge certainly has a lot from which to draw.

To create the reef, crews will unload three huge barge loads of concrete at an established fish haven site off Point No Point in St. Mary's County.

“The premise is similar to that of a coral reef, but in the Chesapeake the natural reef is an oyster reef,” Gary said. “The concrete provides a good attaching point for the oysters. Then once you have oysters, you get fish and crabs, and larger predatory fish start to use the structure to feed on the smaller fish. Literally, you can take an area where you could not see much of anything, and over time it's almost equivalent to an oasis in the desert.”

Along with the increase in marine activity, the reef will enhance sport fishing opportunities for recreation enthusiasts, he added.

The last time any materials were placed deep in those waters was more than 20 years ago when two barges were sunk. The problem is that old bridges tend to be the primary source for artificial reef creation, and most such bridges are replaced in Baltimore, from where it would be costly to transport concrete.

“That's why the Wilson Bridge is a great thing. It provides a unique opportunity that does not come along often,” Gary said.

But Maryland's Department of Natural Resources does not want to stop at using only the center span of the bridge. According to Gary, he has been trying to get American Bridge Kraemer, the company that's responsible for the bridge, to release the Maryland approach so that even more reefs can be added in.

“Right now we're working on a small component,” he said. “But with the Maryland approach we could be talking about seven to eight times as much material.”

The Enterprise
Artificial reef created by debris
Sept. 25, 2006

Circulation: 16,000

An excavator pushes a chunk of the old Woodrow Wilson Bridge off a barge Monday into the Chesapeake Bay near Point No Point lighthouse. Bridge debris from three barges has been dumped in about 31 feet of water to create an artificial fishing reef. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources paid \$38,000 for 2,500 cubic yards of debris. It took the barges 12 hours to go down the Potomac River to the reef site.



*Staff Photo by Jesse
Yeatman*

Washington Post
Swimming With the Fishes
Slabs of the Old Wilson Bridge Find New Life as a Bay Reef
By Megan Greenwell
September 26, 2006; B01

Circulation: 724,242

The newest hangout for fish in the Chesapeake Bay is 3,900 tons of concrete that held 200,000 cars a day in its previous life as the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.



Yesterday, cranes pushed 65 slabs from the old bridge -- each the length of three compact cars -- from a barge into the bay at the southern tip of St. Mary's County, at a spot known as Point No Point. There, one-third of the oft-maligned bridge that tormented an estimated 73 billion commuters over 45 years will form an artificial reef for thousands of rockfish, sea trout, striped bass and other fish.

"This whole area is about to become a fish haven," said Gary Madjeski, who captains charter fishing boats from Drury's Marina in Ridge. "This concrete is going to just get better and better in terms of the number of fish."

The concrete will provide a habitat for barnacles and oysters, who have nothing to attach themselves to along the soft, sandy bay floor. Those organisms, in turn, will

lure fish, which will be inclined to stick around the artificial reef because the current will wash food sources directly over them.

"There are all sorts of nooks and crannies in the concrete that fish will love in an area that's been completely devoid of life," said Marty Gary, a fisheries ecologist with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "This will really change the character of this area."

Huge splashes rose as each concrete segment hit the water yesterday, and officials from the Department of Natural Resources and the Wilson Bridge Project celebrated the fulfillment of a project that took several years to plan.

Because placing the concrete in the bay cost significantly more than it would have cost to move it to a landfill or recycle it for the new bridge, fundraising had been a major hurdle. The Department of Natural Resources did not provide the cost of the project, but officials said the agency dedicated an initial \$38,000 from the sale of fishing licenses to get the effort going, and the contractors chipped in as well.

Project managers have not decided what to do with the remaining 9,000 cubic yards of concrete from the bridge, but it also could be headed to the bottom of the Chesapeake if more money comes through.

"This could help up to 12 different artificial reefs in the bay and perhaps create two new reefs in St. Mary's County, but we're going to need funding," said Mike Baker, an environmental manager with the Wilson Bridge Project.

For the moment, concrete from the bridge will link two barges that sank 60 yards from each other in the mid-1980s. Those barges are both encrusted with oysters so fish should be drawn to the area immediately, Gary said.

That's good news for commercial and recreational fishermen, who have long faced dwindling fish populations in the Chesapeake. Adding the concrete will draw hundreds of anglers to the region and provide a major boost to the economy, several local residents said.

The number of fishermen in the region has seen a steep decline over the years, putting many charter boat companies and bait stores out of business.

Madjeski said his company has already heard from fishermen eager to test the new site. A friend of his, Bill Miles, sat in his boat while the concrete slabs dropped into the water yesterday and planned to fish all afternoon.

"I plan to be out here fishing a lot," Miles said. "This is about to become the best fishing for miles."



Baltimore Sun

Circulation: 236,317

Fish to find home in a sunken commuter curse: Old Wilson Bridge wreckage dumped for a giant anglers' reef off Southern Maryland

By Candus Thomson

September 26, 2006

Ridge // The old Woodrow Wilson Bridge sleeps with the fishes.

Chunk by chunk, the bridge that linked Maryland to Virginia and was the bane of commuters in the Interstate 95 corridor, is being hauled to the waters off this St. Mary's County community to create a home for striped bass, bluefish and oysters.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Bill Curry, president of the Coastal Conservation Association's Maryland chapter, as a massive backhoe shoved a slab of concrete off a barge and into the water yesterday. "This is a huge boon for recreational anglers on the Chesapeake Bay."

Artificial reefs are nothing new. Maryland has 20 others in the bay - from just off Pooles Island in the north to Tangier Sound in the south - and several offshore from Ocean City.

But the demolition of the Wilson Bridge in August created a wealth of fish habitat, enough to fill 60 barges - each the size of a football field - for the waters here and to augment reefs off Solomons and Tangier islands.

"There is just a mother lode of material, sitting, waiting. What we don't have is the funding to get the job done," said Marty Gary, a fisheries biologist with the state Department of Natural Resources. "The [Wilson Bridge] contractor is willing to share costs, but that's money the department doesn't have."

The DNR diverted this year \$38,000 in funds generated from fishing license sales to get the program going. It is looking to the legislature and fishing and conservation groups to keep it on track.

"We can reach about a dozen sites from the Wilson Bridge," Gary said. "Reef building is one of our highest priorities,"

Artificial reefs have a checkered past in Maryland.

The state had an active reef-building program from 1980 to the mid-1990s, when it fell victim to budget cuts.

In 2001, Ocean City officials cited pollution concerns when they canceled a contract that would have allowed the New York City Transit Authority to dump as many as 1,300 subway cars in the Atlantic Ocean to form an artificial reef. Federal environmental officials said the fears were unfounded, and the cars were instead dumped 19 miles off the Delaware shore.

But the Ocean City Artificial Reef Foundation, a nonprofit group, has sunk everything from old warships to broken concrete to Army tanks off the coast. More recently, the state has embraced

efforts by school groups and organizations such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association to place "reef balls" and chunks of rubble from Memorial Stadium on the bay floor.

However, some charter boat captains complain that the reefs aren't always placed where they can do the most good.

"We have some that are duds, for sure," Gary acknowledged. "But we've already got a site here that we know fish are using. We're really optimistic it will work here."

The budding reef is within an area called Point No Point, just north of Point Lookout State Park and the mouth of the Potomac River.

Wilson Bridge to give fish new home



JED KIRSCHBAUM (SUN PHOTOGRAPHER)

A 50-foot chunk of the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge is dropped from a barge into the Chesapeake Bay off St. Mary's County. An artificial reef, intended to attract striped bass, bluefish and oysters, is being created there with pieces of the Interstate 95 bridge, which linked Maryland and Alexandria, Va. The Potomac River span, long famed and widely hated for its traffic jams and delays, was broken up and replaced. [ARTICLE, PAGE 1B]

The process of creating the reef began quite by accident in the mid-1980s, when a barge loaded with oyster shells foundered and sank. A few years later, another barge sank about 60 yards away.

Charter captains noticed that the two wrecks attracted fish the way other structures did, such as bridge pilings and docks, and lobbied for the dumping of more material.

Although the state supported their request, it was literally stymied in moving from the abstract to the concrete.

"It takes a lot of material to make a reef," said charter Capt. Greg Madjeski, who worked with the state on designing the new underwater structure. "And it's not easy to move it from a construction site onto the water."

Slightly more than 100 nautical miles from Point No Point, the old Wilson Bridge was a perfect match.

One of the two spans of the new \$2.4 billion Wilson Bridge opened for traffic in June. Before construction teams blew up a portion of the old bridge, the concrete decking - 130 sections in all - was removed and stockpiled.

The first load of slabs was hauled down the Potomac and dropped in the bay Aug. 2; the second barge load followed about three weeks later.

Gary said there's plenty more raw material at the construction site.

Gary and Madjeski say when the reef is finished, it will be an east-west underwater bridge about 20 feet high between the two barges and beyond that will cover 1,000 acres.

Fish - striped bass, sea trout and flounder - will congregate around the reef to catch their food, attracting anglers bent on the same goal. Oysters and crabs also will be drawn to the reef, said Madjeski, who likened it to an artificial reef off Virginia's Northern Neck that swarms with boats.

Southern Maryland Newspapers as seen in:

The Independent

Circulation: 24,500

The Enterprise

Circulation: 16,000

The Recorder

Circulation: 9,800

Pieces of Wilson bridge dumped in Chesapeake as part of fishing reef

Sept. 27, 2006

By Jason Babcock

It used to link Virginia to Maryland. Now it bridges two sunken barges at the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay.

Tons of roadway from the Woodrow Wilson bridge have been dumped into the water off Point No Point to add to a fishing reef.

A 300-by-100-foot barge sat out in the bay Monday morning with sections of roadway stacked up on its deck. The first segments to go over were 60 tons and the later ones were 30 tons, 44 feet long, 12 feet wide and 8 inches thick.

The contractor doing the demolition work on the Beltway bridge didn't have to bring the debris out into the bay. It could have been sent to a landfill or recycled.

However, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources saw an opportunity and found some funds to buy the old road sections.

The department bought the debris for \$38,000 from sales of fishing licenses, as the old bridge will become a destination for salt-water fishermen.

The material was being dumped in a gap between two sunken barges. The fishing reef there began accidentally when a barge full of oyster shells sank in 1987.

A second barge was later intentionally sunk about 60 yards away. The pieces of the Wilson bridge were dumped between the barges, perpendicular to the current, which runs north and south at that spot.

The placement of the roadway sections should create a "hydraulic jump" that provides shelter for fish, while the current brings food past, said Marty Gary, fisheries ecologist with DNR.

"We know it will attract fish," he said. "You'll see fish assimilate to this fairly quickly."

Already documented at the fishing reef have been rockfish, bluefish, sea trout, black sea bass, tautog, spot, Atlantic croaker, flounder and toadfish.

"It's going to be a big help" to the local charter boat economy, said Capt. Greg Madjeski. "If there's fish to catch, the people will come."

The reef is under 35 feet of water, and the new sections dumped there are not to be any higher than 15 feet from the bottom of the bay.

The artificial reef program was suspended in the 1990s because of budget cutbacks, Gary said. With the old Wilson bridge coming down, “We’ve got this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” he said. So far, three barge trips have brought 2,500 cubic yards of material to the reef, said Mike Baker, environmental manager for the Wilson bridge project.

There are still 9,000 cubic tons to remove from the old inner loop span, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources hopes to broker a deal for more material.

E-mail Jason Babcock at jbabcock@somdnews.com.

**The Washington Post
Southern Maryland Extra**

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Bridge Overboard!; Span Debris Dumped in Bay To Help Fish and Business

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This week's creation of a reef made of concrete sections from the old Woodrow Wilson Bridge could provide a major boost to Southern Maryland's fishing industry, experts say.

Giant slabs of concrete that once made up the roadbed of one of the spans crossed daily by thousands of area commuters were dropped into 35 feet of Chesapeake Bay waters Monday to create a fish habitat at Point No Point, near Ridge. The pieces of concrete -- each 44 feet long and 12 feet wide -- will provide a surface for barnacles and other fouling organisms to latch onto while creating plenty of small spaces for fish.

"It's a perfect habitat for all these creatures," said Marty Gary, a fisheries ecologist with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "The oysters love concrete, and the fish will want to stay around because the current will sweep the food right over them."

Before the reef was installed, the bottom of the bay at Point No Point was soft sand with no solid surfaces to which fouling organisms could attach themselves. Such creatures live most of their adult lives latched on to some sort of underwater surface or structure, and they create an attraction for fish. With such organisms absent from Point No Point, fish passing through the waters there found nothing to make them stop, Gary said.

"What we've created is essentially an oasis in the desert," he said.

Area business owners said such a fish haven would be a major draw for recreational and commercial fishermen. Gary said rockfish, bluefish, sea trout and other species would begin occupying the new reef immediately, so fishermen could start noticing better results right away.

Recreational fisherman Bill Curry said work had prevented him from trying out the new reef, but friends of his had already seen good results.

"They were nailing bluefish off this new stuff," Curry said. "It's exciting, definitely."

For local establishments -- from marinas to charter boats to many supporting operations -- that have seen their business decline because of dwindling fish populations and pollution concerns, the predictions about the reef's potential impact were welcome.

Gary Madjeski, who charts fishing boats from Drury's Marina, said he expected his business to increase as a result of the new reef.

"It's going to be a big help to all the fishermen in this area. Now everyone will be catching fish around here," Madjeski said.

He added that there would be no need to advertise the reef's presence because word would spread quickly in the fishing community.

"Once someone catches a few here, all their friends will be out here, too," he said.

Eddie Davis, who charters fishing trips from Ridge, said concerns about the bacteria that infect about 60 percent of the rockfish in the Chesapeake Bay have been responsible for the decline in business over the past several years. The Point No Point reef will recharge people's enthusiasm for fishing, he said.

"Business dropped off because of all the bad publicity that's been put on rockfish," he said. "This is good news that will definitely help the business and the tourism in [St. Mary's] County, and we need the help."

Curry, president of the Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland, said the reef's creation draws much-needed attention to the fishing business in the region. And it illustrates a commitment to provide some assistance when possible; the contractors building the new Wilson Bridge and the Department of Natural Resources spent more money to place the concrete in the bay than it would have cost to put it in a landfill or recycle it for the new bridge.

DNR officials did not provide cost figures for the new reef, but they said the agency committed an initial \$38,000 from the sale of fishing licenses to launch the effort, and the contractors also contributed.

"It shows they've heard the concerns of the fishermen and are ready to help," Curry said. "We had all the stakeholder groups at the same table."

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Week In Review Sept. 24-30 - Wilson Bridge Is Reborn as a Reef Concrete Slabs Are Dumped in the Bay

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Cranes pushed 65 slabs from the old Woodrow Wilson Bridge -- each the length of three compact cars -- from a barge into the bay at the southern tip of St. Mary's County. There, one-third of the oft-maligned bridge that tormented an estimated 73 billion commuters over 45 years will form an artificial reef expected to attract thousands of rockfish, sea trout, striped bass and other fish.