

How to fish RGV Reef

The reef materials from the 2017 deployment were primarily arranged for two simple productive fishing techniques, **drifting and trolling**. Of course anchoring so that the boat rides at anchor over a patch reef or one of the sunken vessels will usually be the most productive method, but takes extra effort, and sometimes anchors are lost, hung on the bottom. So the reef patches were laid out in lines and grids so they could be easily drifted or trolled.

Drifting the CCA Corner for Snapper. The southeast corner of the reef is called the CCA Corner, honoring their early, consistent, ongoing and substantial support of the reef. The Southeast corner of the reef is a grid of reef patches on 50 yard centers, each made up of three or four ten foot square box culverts with lots of concrete rip rap and some cinderblocks thrown in for good measure. The grid of reef patches is shaped like a triangle running both north and due west from -----, the point of beginning near the southeast corner of the reef. See the list of coordinates. You can start a drift there and under most wind and current conditions will drift to the Northwest over a reef patch every 50 yards, every few minutes. The grid extends 250 yards and will be significantly expanded in spring of 2018.

Drifting the Trolling Trails. The trolling trail running from the sunk shrimp boat, Max's Wreck up to the TIFT Tug is about a mile long. There are patches every 150 yards, except for in the the round **Exclusion Zone** where there is a covered sunk 18th century sailing vessel. The trail can also be drifted, but takes a little more skill and requires a GPS. Enter the points for the boats and generate a course line on your GPS. The trail is oriented North Northwest and under most weather conditions can be drifted by steering your drift to follow the course line between the boats, and watching your Right /Left of course indicator to stay on the trail. The usual drill would be to face the bow of the boat to the East so as to encourage the boat to "sail" to the east of a flat drift, because you would usually be blown off the line to the west. Outboards can also affect the drift by turning the steering/engines and tilting them in/out. Inboards will just bump the engines in and out of gear to maintain the line. You could also enter the coordinates for each reef patch to make sure you cut them all. Deeper

weighted baits will catch snapper and unweighted or lightly weighted mid-depth and surface baits will catch pelagics like king, ling, jacks, etc.

Trolling the Trails. There are lines of patch reefs mostly oriented in East - West lines on the North and South boundaries of the reef. Each patch is made up of three or four pyramids or concrete highway deviders, ten or twenty tons of concrete rip rap and a pallet or two of cinderblocks. The east west trails have patches on 200 yard spacings. Enter the beginning and end of the trails and troll away. There is a 4 mile square following the perimeter of the west side of the reef.

Fishing the Boats. Max's Wreck, named for Max Nichols, an early and continuing supporter of the reef is a 60' steel hull shrimp boat. Located on the south boundary of the reef in about the center, it seems to have more than it's share of kingfish and ling. It's the south end of a trolling trail that leads to the TIFT Tug another reef supporter, which is a more complex wreck. Get the coordinates by -----

Fishing the Squares. The West half of the reef is dominated by 250 pyramids and 250 concrete slabs with small rock and cinderblocks, arranged in a giant science experiment deployed in spring 2018. Follow the legend, some of the squares will have just one pyramid, some will have 4 pyramids. It's cover that's spread out, and may withstand fishing pressure well. If you're not catching in the denser East side, give the West a try. The pyramids in the squares were paid for by a Conservation Management Plan Grant of \$400,000 from the Texas General Land Office matched by \$400,000 from TPWD, unlike the rest of the reef, which was funded through Friends RGV Reef. This is lots of additional habitat for adult Snapper grown in the nursery reef patches.

Wastes of Time There isn't any structure around the bouy marking the center of the reef. It looks like a **Yellow Tube Bouy**. Please don't tie up to it, there'se no reef there, and because it is stupid expensive to replace and repair the bouy. That's just less money for putting material in the reef.

The reef was instantly covered with tens of thousands of hand size and thumb sized juvenile snapper within days of deployment in the summer of 2107. They were everywhere and on all the sizes of material. As time has passed larger snapper have/will push the juveniles off the higher

material and out onto the cinderblocks and small rock **Nursery Cover**. So if your fish finder shows fish close to the bottom, and no structure higher than about a foot, that's just the tee-tinies. They are bait stealers and a waste of time just now, but the unique part of RGV Reef, the only Gulf reef with a large nursery, and the future Snapper for the reef.