

## Artificial Reef Named After DMF Employee

*Nancy Fish, Marine Fisheries*

MOREHEAD CITY - Artificial Reef 455, located offshore of Brunswick County, was officially named the "Dale Ward Reef," on Thursday, October 3 at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. ceremonies at the Southport Marina, in Southport.

The U.S. Open King Mackerel Tournament, along with the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with the Long Bay Artificial Reef Association, requested the name designation to honor Division of Marine Fisheries employee Dale Ward and recognize his outstanding contribution to conservation of North Carolina's recreational fishery resources.

On October 4, the day after the naming of the reef, Dale died after a battle with cancer.

Dale had been a division employee since 1974. He spearheaded many recreational programs, including the North Carolina Governor's Cup Conservation Billfish Tournament Series and has

worked closely organizing fishing tournaments along the coast.

The "Dale Ward Reef" is located in Long Bay, 7 miles south of Oak Island, off Brunswick County. The material on this reef site is in 46 feet of water and consists of 10 box cars, about 650 pieces of concrete pipe and man-hole sections, and 200 reef balls.

Artificial reefs are comprised of man-made structures such as decommissioned vessels, railroad cars, and concrete reef balls, pipe and large pieces of concrete rubble. They are called artificial reefs because they provide the same benefits as naturally occurring reefs — food and shelter for marine life. Once a structure is colonized by marine organisms, small baitfish move in, followed by larger fish prized by anglers.

North Carolina has one of the most aggressive artificial reef programs in the nation, with 39 ocean sites and seven estuarine sites. Each artificial reef is assigned a Global Position System "address" for easy location by anglers.

## Aquarium Wins Awards, Renews Accreditation

*Bob Roush, NC Aquariums*

The recently enlarged NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher has finished its first six months of operation with record-breaking attendance, a pair of impressive awards, and accreditation renewal from the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA). The facility reopened on March 22 after a 28-month construction project that more than tripled its size.

"From the ribbon-cutting to the end of September we've counted more than 480 thousand visitors," said visitor services director Martha Latta. "Before, we were happy to get 300 thousand in an entire year," she said. "We're very pleased to see the effect the expansion has had on our numbers."

But record attendance is only one reason for celebration. The Aquarium recently learned it has been granted AZA accreditation for another five years. The

announcement was made by the AZA's Accreditation Commission during the organization's 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Fort Worth, in September.

In another AZA announcement, the Aquarium was named winner of the sixth annual Munson Aquatic Conservation Exhibitory Award (M.A.C.E.) for its 22,000-square-foot "Cape Fear Conservatory" exhibit. The M.A.C.E. Awards recognize excellence in aquatic exhibits that focus on education. The award includes a \$25,000 grant for use by the Aquarium's education department.

Finally, the Wilmington chapter of the American Institute of Architecture (AIA) recently selected the Aquarium for its annual design award for Community Improvement. The award cites "outstanding expansion and renovations . . . providing a landmark education facility."

Jim Lanier, director of the Aquarium at Fort Fisher, was inducted as a member of

AZA's board of directors during the Fort Worth conference, and accepted the M.A.C.E. award on behalf of the Aquarium. "These awards say what our visitors have been telling us ever since we opened," said Lanier. "We've got a terrific new facility that helps us accomplish our mission better than ever."

On October 28 in Greenville at the N.C. Travel Council Fall Leadership Conference, the N.C. Aquariums and N.C. Aquarium Society were recognized as the 2002 G. Lynn Nisbet Award winner. The annual award is for an organization or business making significant contributions to the state's travel and tourism industry. Well-know winners since the award was implemented in 1965 include Biltmore Estates, Historic Cherokee Association, WRAL-TV and Discovery Place. The award is named after the founding president of the N.C. Travel Council (1960) and N.C. Association of Afternoon Daily's bureau chief.

## Coastal Reserve Educator Honored

*Brian Long, Coastal Management*

Amy Sauls, an educator at the Rachel Carson National Estuarine Research Reserve in Beaufort, has been named Informal Educator of

the Year by the Mid-Atlantic Marine Education Association (MAMEA).

The award recognizes a marine educator who works in a non-classroom setting. The association honored Sauls for her body of work,

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