Maryland Environmental Service

Reef Ball Pour Training and Demonstration
Tilghman Island – March 2004

The Maryland Environmental Service (MES) and Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) co-sponsored the Reef Ball training and demonstration pour. Participants produced six Reef Balls in various sizes. The following day, MES conducted production pour training for the MES artificial fishing reef staff. Reef Innovations, Inc., a Florida based Reef Ball contractor, was hired by MES to provide training and technical support. Reef Ball molds for the pour were obtained with grant support from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, FishAmerica Foundation, Exxon-Mobil Foundation, and Reef Ball Foundation, and program research and development support from MES.

The combined training session and demonstration was designed to support both organization's efforts to expand use of Reef Balls in support of Bay reef restoration activities. The event also introduced designed reef technology to participants and provided pourer training for individuals already involved or planning to become involved in making Reef Balls. Participating organizations included the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center (CBEC), Maryland Saltwater Sportsfishermen's Association (MSSA), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Chesapeake Bay Program Office.

CBEC, in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and MES, is undertaking deployment of about 120 Reef Balls with grant support from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and FishAmerica Foundation. MSSA chapters that participated in the training are producing smaller sized Reef Balls and have placed over 150 "Lo Pro" Reef Balls on Memorial Reef south of Gales Lumps. A CBF representative also participated in the production training pour to develop additional insight that could be applied to volunteer-based oyster restoration activities.

MES has several projects underway that are scheduled to deploy over 200 Reef Balls at various artificial fishing reef sites. Grant support is being provided by the Abell Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Trust, and FishAmerica Foundation. Partnering support is being provided by the Maryland Charter Boat Association, Solomons Charter Captains Association, MSSA's Southern Maryland Chapter, Coastal Conservation Association, and others. DNR is providing fisheries and reef management policy and technical advice and coordination.

The Reef Balls used in these projects can weigh up to 1,600 pounds apiece and are up to 3 feet in height. Each Reef Ball provides complex reef structure for attachment by marine organisms including filter feeders and vegetation. The modules will be placed in clusters to magnify their biological effectiveness relative to use by fish populations. The Reef Balls will be monitored to assess their performance.

*Check the MES website at **www.menv.com** for additional information about the Maryland Environmental Service and the agency's environmental restoration work involving oyster recovery, the Poplar Island Environmental Restoration Project, Hart-Miller Island South Cell Habitat Development and artificial fishing reefs. Information about Reef Balls can be found at **www.reefball.com**.*

July 22, 2004

Training Pour – Reef Ball Mold Setup





Training Pour – Reef Ball "Hatching"