



**"REEF BALLS"**

**PROJECTS 2000 – 2001**

**PROJECT A.W.A.R.E. FOUNDATION**



## **I. Introduction**

When the Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation purchased the Reef Balls from the Reef Ball Foundation in the year 2000, the concept was presented in Europe for the first time. This is a documentary on the experiences the Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation has gathered within the first two years of its engagement.

In the first chapter general information on our foundation is presented as well as the way the single projects are realised. The second chapter evolves the single projects in detail. In the conclusion all results are shortly summarized and a brief outlook on the upcoming plans granted. The appendix contains a brief survey on all projects as well as reports from our website.

## **II. Main Body**

### 1. General Information

#### 1.1. Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation

The Foundation of Project A.W.A.R.E. is a non-profit organisation located in Winterthur, Switzerland, since the beginning of 2002.

It was founded in 1995 by Jack Lavanchy and Jürg Beeli, the presidents of PADI Europe AG, the European division of the world's largest dive training organisation. Shortly afterwards it was acknowledged officially as a institution of public utility, specialised in the protection of coastal areas and waters.

The name of the foundation is created from the initials of the worlds **A**quatic, **W**orld, **A**wareness, **R**esponsibility and **E**ducation and symbolizes both our name and mission.

#### 1.2. General conditions of the realisation of the Reef Ball-project

In order to realise the "Reef Ball"-projects the Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation cooperates mainly with PADI members and PADI Dive Centers (subsequently referred to as DC).

The interested participants have to fill in an application form. After being scanned thoroughly, they receive preparation material to get themselves ready for the following procedures.

The most important requirement is the official permission of local or superior authorities. In general after being given a profound presentation of the project, the offices in charge are mostly open. Nevertheless it takes an average of 2 months to complete the administrative side of the projects.



After the requested documents have been handed in, the applicants have to wait some time before the construction can start, due to the numerous requests to the Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation. Many coordinators use this time to organize the necessary technical equipment and reassure the logistics like a suitable production area. In many cases local entrepreneurs are willing to sponsor the event. Without their commitment, not to mention all the countless volunteers, the projects not would have been possible at all.

The construction of the Reef Balls itself can vary depending on rather obvious factors like the number of volunteers or the amount and size of balls. But it can also be delayed for rather unexpected reasons, such as unusual weather conditions. Mainly a period of six weeks to two months have to be estimated in between shipments. During the construction the "Reef - Builders" are free to provide the Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation with reports on the work process that will be published on our website.

Because the official settlement of the forms should be a public and official event, it does not have to take place immediately after the construction is finished. Many organizers prefer to wait for a later occasion, so that they can generate the attention of the local community and especially the media. In all cases the immersions attracted many people and turned out to be enjoyable and very commemorative days appropriately covered by the press.

After the immersion a steady monitoring and documentary of the development of the Reef Balls over a period of three years is expected. All coverage is published on our very regularly updated homepages.

## **2. Presentation of the Projects**

### 2.1. Pilot project in the year 2000

#### 2.1.1. Wädenswil/ Switzerland

The Foundation Project A.W.A.R.E. is proud that its pilot project in Wädenswil, a small village on the borders of Lake Zurich, coincided to the first ever to be conducted in Europe. It was very considerate of Todd Barber and Kathy Kirbo from the Reef Ball Foundation and Prof. Dr. Richard Spieler to honour the event by coming all the way from the United States to support us with their invaluable expertise.

Kurt Amsler, both project adviser of the foundation and well-known underwater photographer, and the DC "Baer Sports" formed the organisation committee. They were greatly supported by many volunteers as well as local entrepreneurs that provided them with the necessary logistics.

The two reefs each consisting of 30 Reef Balls were officially immersed in September 2000. The memorable and festive event was covered by many media representatives from local and national newspapers, radio and television stations.



Only after 48 hours the first signs of life were observed and within three months the cement was completely covered with underwater flora. Despite this early success the forms had to be replaced after half a year, because the site originally chosen proved to be not favourable for the development. The change has allowed a very gratifying and promising evolution of the habitat ever since.

## 2. 2. Projects of the year 2001

### 2.2.1. Bosmolenplas/ Netherlands

The first stop of the Reef Ball tours in the following year was the region of Bosmolenplas. It is no coincidence that the first site beyond Switzerland was in the Netherlands. The Dutch DCs are in general very conscious about environmental issues and eager to get involved.

Geert Huyskens, the owner of the DC “Aegir-Stingray”, was inspired by our presentation at the fair “Boot” in Düsseldorf/ Germany and recognized particularly the qualities of the concept in case of lifeless areas. Although the gravel pits in the waters of Bosmolenplas were just the place for the concept’s unique possibilities to unfold, the government officials were not easily convinced about the idea.

But when the official immersion of the 50 Reef Balls was celebrated joyfully on June 23, the mayor of the community of Heel, Mr. Van Soest, insisted on uncovering and sinking the Reef Balls himself. From there divers of the “Stingray Diver Society” took over and transported the forms to the actual position. To make sure the ordinary diving activities were not disturbed and a maximum of security was guaranteed, the event had begun in the late afternoon.

### 2.2.2. Magadino/ Switzerland

After that the moulds continued to the South of Switzerland, the Ticino.

Philip Simha, PADI Member and Learco Benaglio, owner of the DC “No Limits Blue”, picked the small Lake of Verbano as site of settlement. This was excellent choice, because the lake is located close to a national park, so that the Reef Balls are very well protected and enrich the habitat of the area even more.

On July 28 the official immersion took place. Project A.W.A.R.E. was represented by Roberto Raffaelli and Nuria Palou from PADI Europe AG. The moulds were placed at a range of 7 to 15 meters (approximately 2.5 to 5 feet). The minimal depth of 7 meters was requested by the local authorities in order to prevent the moulds from being visible at the surface, but suited our usual requirements perfectly.

Since then a careful monitoring by the DC and the local office of environmental issues has been provided.



### 2.2.3. Villeneuve/ Switzerland

As soon as we have received and elaborated the coverage on the third project that year, it will be delivered to you.

### 2.2.4. Delta-Works, Zeeland/ Netherlands

As mentioned the Dutch are very enthusiastic, so the project in the south-western province of Zeeland turned out to be a major one.

Bastian Mathijsen from the DC "Duikzentrum de Kabbelaar" launched the idea at the Dutch Dive Show early 2001, to create a cooperation of several DCs to increase the quantity of the forms. His plan to build three different reefs, each consisting of 100 moulds, was supported by two other DCs, the "De Grevelingen" and the "Waterworld". When the national divers association, The Nederlandse Onderwatersport Bond, volunteered to arrange for financial and technical support from the Dutch Government all problems were solved.

A small harbour in the Grevelingen Sea offered ideal building conditions. All 300 Reef Balls were built within six weeks, thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of everybody. Also a so called Dive Mobile came in very handy, as it prevented everybody from being inhibited by the permanent rain.

Bastian Mathijsen's reef was the first one to be immersed on October 11. He chose his home waters of the Sharendyke as site of settlement and even mustered the Royal Army to place the numerous Reef Balls.

The settlement of the 200 remaining forms is scheduled for the spring of 2002 in the region of "De Grevelingen".

### 2.2.5. East Sea, Kieler Förde/ Germany

Despite the approaching winter season the next project was initiated in Germany by Joachim Warner from the Diver's association "Fördetaucher". His cooperation partner was the DC "Baltic Dive Center", located just a few 100 meters away from the selected immersion site

The site was an almost lifeless and sandy plain in the so-called Kieler Aussenförde. It was a location of an approximately 13 - 14 meters depth that could easily be reached from ashore. A local company provided for the cement and the German Navy supported them with the heavier technical equipment. The latter also supported them at the immersion day with the shipment of the moulds from the production area to the actual immersion site.

Ten days after the official immersion on November 11 the first animals were observed. Ever since a relentless settlement has taken place, observed closely by "Fördetaucher" and the University of Kiel. In order to protect the fragile site, the exact location of the balls will not be published before the resettlement has been accomplished successfully.



#### 2.2.6. Lake of Iseo/ Credaro/ Italy

In November 2001 the Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation was able to cross the boarder to Italy for the year's last project. The construction site was the small village of Lovere at the Lake of Iseo.

Some years ago the DC involved "Adrenalin Water Sport Center" set the goal to persuade the public that not only the Mediterranean, but also the Italian lakes in general are very attractive diving resorts. In order to make the small Lake of Iseo more competitive against the famous lakes like Lake Maggiore or Lake Como, he was very interested in the concept of Reef Balls.

After being given a diversified and substantial presentation by the shop owner Massimo Catarsi, the authorities of the province of Bergamo were not only willing to grant the permission, but also to support the project financially and scientifically.

Subsequently the local experts agreed on constructing one reef of 30 balls with the original Reef Ball moulds in Lovere and additionally two with a completely round shape in Tavernola and Predore. The different shape of latter reefs was chosen on purpose to see if it had consequences for the quality, quantity and kind of development.

As this was the first project ever to be realised in Italy, a careful monitoring of the habitat for the minimum of three years was granted easily. In addition they consented on making observations once a month in the first year and to use the results to trigger more sensitivity for environmental issues especially among the young. For that purpose they focus on arrangements with schools and the media.



### **III. Conclusion**

Ever since the Reef Balls were transferred to Europe for the first time in 2000 by our Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation, they have proven to be very successful.

Our pilot project was conducted in September 2000 in Wädenswil, Switzerland, followed by six other projects in the year 2001. All but one were located in Mid-Europe. The survey attached to this report shows that two of them were launched in Germany and Italy and three respectively in Switzerland and the Netherlands. In general one reef of varying 30 to 50 moulds was immersed, but in two cases this amount was increased substantially to several hundred.

Everybody involved embraced the idea of being able to support the environment. As the popularity of the concept seems to be even increasing, Project A.W.A.R.E. receives new requests almost weekly. The development did not amaze due to a win-win-situation for all parties involved.

Further Project requests – there are requests for two more big projects in the Mediterranean – the applications are already in-house and we look forward to report in the near future on these.

Please feel free to contact us at anytime, if we can assist with questions and will be happy to share further input.

Best regards,

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