



PRESS CONTACT
Ben Landry
Director of Public Affairs
Omega Protein
(713)-940-6183
blandry@omegaprotein.com

New Video: Omega Protein's Former Fishing Vessel Takes on New Role as Artificial Reef in the Gulf of Mexico

MOSS POINT, Miss. (Omega Protein) – June 17, 2015 -- Last week's intentional sinking of Omega Protein's decommissioned fishing vessel, the *Barataria Bay*, marked the company's third successful partnership with local government and nonprofit organizations in the Gulf of Mexico to find new purpose for the company's former fishing vessels as artificial reefs. Today, Omega Protein has released a new video chronicling similar, successful efforts in 2009 using their retired vessel the *Great Wicomico* to improve habitat for marine life in the Gulf of Mexico. The *Great Wicomico* was sunk six years ago to help rebuild habitats after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast. Recent SCUBA expeditions to the site reveal that marine life is now flourishing on the former fishing vessel.

Since 1999, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) Artificial Reef Program has partnered with donors such as Omega Protein to implement several inshore and offshore reefs to develop and conserve reef habitat for Mississippi fishermen. In 2005, about 90 percent of Mississippi's artificial reefs were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. After the *Great Wicomico* was retired in 2009, the 176ft vessel was donated, cleaned, stripped, and sunk to help rebuild these reefs.

After bubbling down to the sea floor of the Gulf of Mexico on November 24, 2009, the vessel has become an ecological hotbed, covered with a variety of marine life and home to diverse fish species.

The *Great Wicomico* experienced a historic career before becoming an artificial reef. The ship was completed in 1945 to be used as a Freight and Supply vessel for the U.S. Army and served in three wars: World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. After its service in the military, the vessel became a university research ship before being purchased by Omega Protein in 1977.

The reef project is a continuing effort and partnership between the MDMR Artificial Reef Program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and organizations like

Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks, Inc. (MGFB). As part of the Omega Protein's commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR), the company has been a frequent contributor to the program, donating not only the *Great Wicomico* in 2009 and the *Barataria Bay* in 2015, but also a third vessel, the *von Rosenberg*, in 2000. Through its CSR initiatives, the company strives for the highest standards of products, service, and sustainability.

The Artificial Reef Program supports the still-rebuilding coastal Mississippi economy by fostering the development and success of recreational fishing. Artificial reefs are also popular attractions for recreational divers. By ensuring the continued success of programs such as the Artificial Reef Program, MDMR, Omega Protein, and their partners assist both the local community and environment of coastal Mississippi.

About Omega Protein Corporation

Omega Protein Corporation (NYSE:OME) is a century old nutritional company that develops, produces and delivers healthy products throughout the world to improve the nutritional integrity of functional foods, dietary supplements and animal feeds. Omega Protein's mission is to help people lead healthier lives with better nutrition through sustainably sourced ingredients such as highly-refined omega-3 rich fish oil, specialty proteins and nutraceuticals.