

Longest Vessel to Become Reef

By Hugh Carberry, Reef Coordinator

New Jersey's anglers and scuba divers will soon have the opportunity to catch fish and explore on one of the largest artificial reefs in the world. The former U.S. Navy warship, the U.S.S. Arthur W. Radford is currently being cleaned and prepared to be sunk as a reef later this year at the Del-Jersey-Land Reef, which is located 30 miles south of Cape May.

THE ARTHUR W. RADFORD is a Spruance-class destroyer that measures 563 feet in length, 55-feet in beam and displaces more than 9,000 tons. Sinking a vessel of this magnitude will provide immediate ecological, recreational and economic benefits and will last more than 100 years on the sea floor, providing essential marine habitat and recreational angling and diving opportunities for generations to come.

The Radford Reefing Project is being accomplished through a collaborative effort between the U.S. Navy and the states of New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. Each participant contributes equally toward the cost of cleaning, towing and scuttling which is the deliberate sinking by allowing water into the hull. New Jersey's entire share of the cost is being covered by a donation made to the Program by the Ann E. Clark Foundation. The Foundation has made significant contributions toward reef construction efforts over the past ten years accounting for hundreds of patch reefs throughout New Jersey's reef network.

Once the Radford is sunk it will lie in approximately 135 feet of water. The distance from the surface to top of the vessel will be 60 feet so novice scuba divers as well as experienced technical divers will be able to explore, spear gun hunt and catch lobsters. It is anticipated that the massive reef will be the premier dive attraction in the northeast.

The Radford's immense structure on the seafloor will provide unmatched habitat for pelagic and demersal fishes, meaning those that live in the open ocean not near the bottom and also fishes living on or near the sea floor, respectively. This vessel will be a great location to troll for bluefin tuna, drift for mako sharks or catch reef-associated species such as tautog and black sea bass.

U.S.S. ARTHUR W. RADFORD FACTS


- **Original Homeport:** Norfolk, Virginia
- **Keel:** Laid in 1974
- **Launched:** March 1, 1975
- **Commissioned:** April 16, 1977
- **Decommissioned:** March 18, 2003
- **Highlights:** Deployed in *Operation Enduring Freedom*
- **Visits to:** Venezuela, Panama, Argentina, Brazil, Senegal, Oman, Bahrain, Nova Scotia, Italy, Turkey and Azores. 



Photo from www.peoships.crane.navy.mil

Arthur W. Radford while in service off of Greece.