

Rigs-to-Reefs gives incentive to US Gulf operators

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Operators that decommission platforms and other infrastructure in the US Gulf of Mexico may face additional costs to haul away and dispose of old iron, *writes Caroline Evans*.

One option to mitigate these costs is the Rigs-to-Reefs programme, which gives operators an incentive to donate obsolete structures to become artificial reefs in the US Gulf.

An eight-leg structure can provide a home for 12,000 to 14,000 fish, while a four-leg structure can provide up to three acres of habitat for hundreds of marine species, according to the US Bureau of Safety & Environmental Enforcement (BSEE).

As of April of this year, 532 platforms previously installed on the outer continental shelf have been reefed in the US Gulf, according to the BSEE.

Fieldwood Energy chief executive Matt McCarroll says his company has used the programme to dispose of more than 50 platforms over the past four and a half years. "The best fishing in the Gulf of Mexico is around the existing platforms," he says.

"So taking those platforms completely out of the water impacts some of the marine life, and if we can find a way to leave them in the water, either where they were previously or at some designated reef site, it helps the ecosystem underwater, and it's a benefit to some cost savings to us. It's a great programme."
