



ENVIRONMENTAL WIN

COLLIER COUNTY'S 1,000 REEF CHALLENGE

The algae crisis of 2018 was an eye-opener for the region. People were forced to recognize the urgency to protect our waterways.

Florida-based Ocean Habitats takes an easy-to-adopt approach. Its lightweight, artificial reefs mimic ones that would be present in healthy ecosystems to attract filter feeders that naturally clean the water.


After installing thousands of reefs through Marco Island and Fort Myers, the founder, David Wolff, is focusing on

Collier County “We just keep adding more filtration and life into the area to help restore some of what we lost,” he says.

He’s challenging the county to install 1,000 reefs by June 2021.

When Joseph Wagner—co-founder of StepChange, a Naples brand that sells socks and T-shirts made from recycled plastic bottles—heard about Wolff’s project, he jumped on board. His company funded a reef near La Playa Beach Resort, which inspired the resort to follow suit.

The initiative relies on citizens, Wolff says. Most of the reefs currently installed are floating inconspicuously under residential docks, including one at Wagner’s home.

The mini reefs cost \$187 for freshwater and \$297 for saltwater, and can shelter hundreds of fish, crabs, oysters and other invertebrates. Once the reef is populated, its guests can clear an average of 30,000 gallons of water per day. Just think: 1,000 reefs can result in about 81 billion gallons of cleaner water annually. —J.B. 

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