A Piece of History Repurposed:
WATER TANK TO ARTIFICIAL REEF

THE JOURNEY FROM 79° 52’ 18.449” W, 32° 47’ 18.161” N TO 80° 5’ 9.3” W, 32° 21’ 24.66” N

The Story

When Mount Pleasant Waterworks (MPW) constructed its first 100,000 gallon, 140-foot, elevated water tank in the Old Village neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, in 1934, community members took pride in the structure and local recreational boaters adopted it as a pre-GPS, navigational aid.

As Mount Pleasant’s population grew and water demand increased, the Old Village water tank was decommissioned to make way for larger capacity, ground storage tanks. Instead of removing what had become viewed as a historic structure, MPW found a new purpose for the tank by allowing cellular service providers to use it as a location for antennas. Over the years, MPW periodically conducted structural analysis reports on the tank knowing the harsh coastal environment could exacerbate conditions. In 2018, a report revealed significant structural concerns and highlighted the potential for failure during a high wind event. MPW held a public meeting in 2019 to discuss the findings and present repair or removal options. The decision to remove the tank was finalized in 2020.

Acknowledging the emotional ties many in the community had to the Old Village water tank, MPW explored opportunities to preserve the memory of the tank while advancing its mission of protecting the environment and water resources. The answer came by way of its partners at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR).

SCDNR manages a program to create and monitor artificial reefs off the coast of South Carolina. Artificial reefs are man-made structures placed on the sea floor. These structures provide habitat for a variety of sea life and increase biodiversity in an otherwise barren area by providing a spawning ground for fish and marine life. In addition to the environmental benefit, the reefs also create recreational opportunities for diving and fishing.

After initial discussions with SCDNR, the concept gained momentum. The Coastal Conservation Association of South Carolina and Sea Hunt Boats, both longtime supporters of the South Carolina artificial reef program, also came on board as partners.

The massive structure, now known as the Mount Pleasant Waterworks Old Village Water Tank Reef, is made up of a 250-foot retired barge, 12 shipping container boxes, and the Old Village water tank. The items were welded together and include cave-like passages and other unique spaces to benefit a variety of marine life and enhance the diving experience. A life-sized concrete replica of a great white shark was also created to provide an additional point of interest for divers. The artificial reef was submerged 60 feet and approximately 10 miles offshore where it is now easily accessible by the public.

MPW is honored to have partnered on this project and to have the Old Village water tank repurposed to provide environmental and recreational benefits for generations to come. MPW plans to host a community fishing tournament at the artificial reef site each year. The event will also serve as an opportunity to teach the importance of protecting the environment, our natural resources, and the value of clean water.

The Partners

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THE PARTNERS

- Mount Pleasant Waterworks
- Coastal Conservation Association of South Carolina
- Sea Hunt Boats
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources