

Sport fish might call pier 'home'

Huntington considers plan to add to reef

By Ann Pepper

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HUNTINGTON BEACH — Instead of being ignominiously dumped into a landfill, the doomed old Huntington Beach pier might be given a burial at sea to be reborn as a haven for sport fish.

The city will demolish the 75-year-old pier starting Oct. 1. State fish and game officials are suggesting that the pilings and other rubble be added to an artificial reef about three miles off Bolsa Chica State Beach.

Besides providing a home for

fish, pieces of the old pier could be a boon to anglers and the city's budget.

"It's a good project," said Kimberly K. McKee, a marine biologist with the state Department of Fish and Game. "Halibut, sculpin, barred sand bass, lots of different perches, sheephead — all those sport fish like to live and produce more fish around a reef."

Participation in the Near Shore Sport Fish Habitat Enhancement Program also would keep dump trucks full of dusty debris off the city's streets and pare up to \$500,000 from the price of a new pier, Councilman Wes Bannister said.

"We could put all that concrete on a barge and haul it out there a lot more inexpensively than trucking it away to a landfill," Bannister said. "So I have asked the city to

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FISH: Pieces of Huntington pier may be added to artificial reef off Bolsa Chica State Beach

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look into the project."

Done properly, the reef could make everyone happy — fish, anglers, environmentalists, the city and Fish and Game, McKee said.

"Fish love a reef. They are attracted to things in the ocean the way cats are attracted to a sweater," she said. "A reef gives them a place to hide in, an opportunity to reproduce before they end up on somebody's dinner plate."

The idea is definitely feasible, said James Crumpley of Moffatt & Nichol Engineers, Long Beach. Crumpley manages the pier project for Huntington Beach. He said, however, that he is not sure the reef plan would save the city money.

"The contractor would be required to cut up the concrete into certain-size pieces, cut the reinforcing steel away for safety and take it out to the fishing reef. I don't know yet how much that will all cost," he said. "It may be more expensive than hauling it to a landfill."

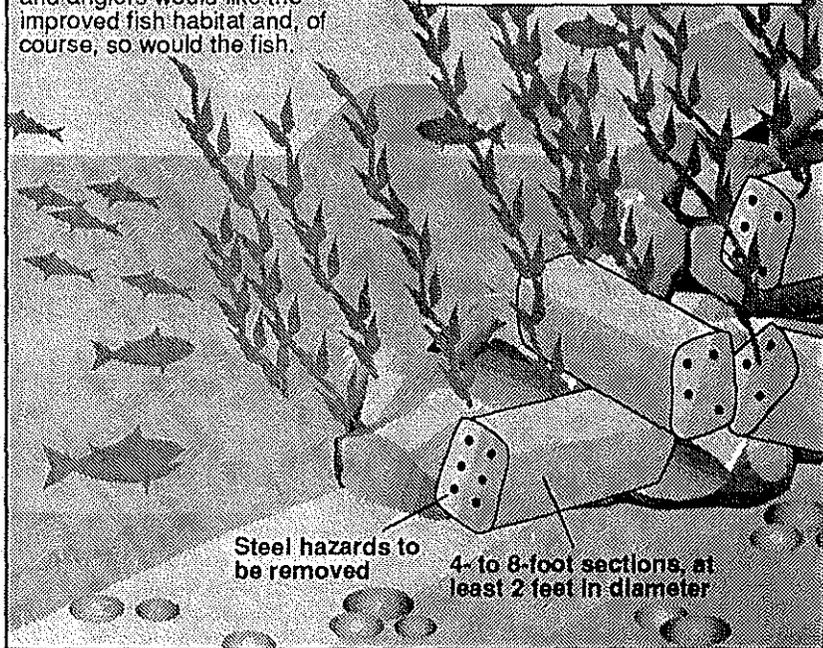
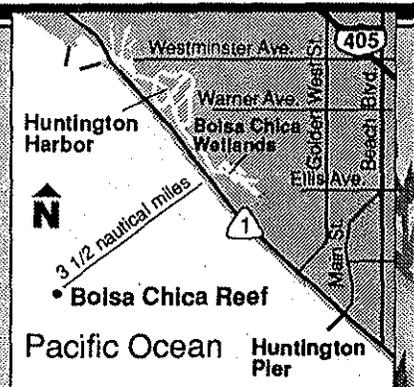
Crumpley's report on the specifics of the entire pier project will be ready for the city within two weeks. During that time, he and McKee will work out the reef project's costs and benefits.

"This will all have to be discussed in detail," McKee said. "I will only accept material suitable for kelp and barnacle growth, things that are going to help produce fish. The pieces will have to be cut into the right sizes, the (steel bars) trimmed to protect divers looking for the lobsters that like to hang out in the reefs."

The rubble would be dumped in three to 10 piles at a depth of about

Old pier, new life

State fish and game officials are suggesting that the rubble from the Huntington Beach pier be added to an artificial reef after the pier is demolished. The pilings must be cut into pieces and hazardous steel bars must be trimmed. If done properly, the project should please everyone concerned. Huntington Beach would save some of the money needed for landfill disposal, environmentalists and anglers would like the improved fish habitat and, of course, so would the fish.



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70 feet, she said.

Sport fishing fans would welcome a new reef, since sand is burying the existing one.

"A reef like that would be extremely valuable to us," said Joe Bairian of Bongo's Sportfishing Charters, Newport Beach. "The

area where the reef is now is sandy bottom, and fish ... need a structure. An artificial reef is perfect for them.

"In two to three years, the reef will hold a lot more sport fish around there, and I can't see any negative about that."