

# Long Beach Press Telegram

## Marine platform in need of CARE

Group wants bases for sea life to be kept in place.

By Joe Segura

Staff writer

**Thursday, November 20, 2003** - PLATFORM EDITH Willy the white-plumed anemone had been quietly rounding up a snack of marine munchies Thursday, when its mission at the base of this oil-producing platform was invaded by a small army of divers.

There was, however, little for Willy to worry about: The divers were either California Artificial Reef Enhancement, or CARE, program advocates, or photographers tagging along for the organization's public educational program.

Platform Edith, which is about nine miles southeast of Long Beach, is among 27 offshore structures along the California coast that face dismantling as their lease agreements with state and federal agencies expire in five to 10 years.

CARE wants the platforms or at least the submerged base 'jacket' portion to be kept in place, contending an abundant amount of marine life is generated on the artificial reefs.

"We think there's value there," said George Steinbach, CARE's executive director. "And we want people to know what's there."

Platform Edith originally was owned by Chevron, but now is owned by Houston-based Nuevo Energy, according to Steinbach.

The base is about 160 feet below the water surface, and it processes oil through well conductors on the top platform.

The lattice pattern of pipes crisscrossing the base provide the fish good protection from anglers, Steinbach said, adding it's especially a good haven for the adult fish, enhancing their opportunities to reproduce.

The bases of the 27 platforms offer a total of about 378,000 square feet of surface area where marine life can thrive, said Bob Wohlers, Diving Science and Technology president, as he conducted a diving tour that also benefited nondivers via a live remote-controlled telecast.

"Think of the bio-mass!" he said. "It's amazing."

The artificial reefs are important, according to Steinbach, because marine populations are vanishing rapidly due to poor management of the offshore waters, Steinbach said.

Steinbach said that while environmental groups are opposed to an extended life for the platforms once they're decommissioned, CARE believes the artificial reefs are environmentally safe, and constructed of a highly durable and stable material that will withstand displacement.

The platforms offer prime sport-fishing and recreational diving opportunities, activities that add to local economies, according to CARE.

"If it's beneficial, let's keep it in place,' Tom Raftican, president of United Anglers of Southern California, said of the platforms. "If it's a problem, we have no objection to its removal.'