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STAY IN THE HEART of HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

FRANCIS MARION HOTEL

## Patriots Point takes step closer to sinking Clamagore





**The USS Clamagore submarine sits in Charleston Harbor near the USS Yorktown aircraft carrier. Artificial Reefs International is looking for an entity to convert the submarine into a reef. (Photo/Ashley Heffernan)**

By Ashley Heffernan

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A Cold War-era submarine that was decommissioned in 1975 and is now part of the [Patriots Point](http://www.patriotspoint.org/) (<http://www.patriotspoint.org/>) fleet of attractions could become an artificial reef off the Florida coast.



**The USS Clamagore submarine will have to be cleaned up before it can be converted to a reef. (Photo/Ashley Heffernan)**

The Patriots Point Development Authority voted today to give exclusive rights to [Artificial Reefs International](https://arireefs.com/) (<https://arireefs.com/>) to find an entity that will convert the USS Clamagore into an artificial reef. The organization has until Dec. 1 to find, negotiate and finalize an agreement with an entity that will need to raise between \$3.5 million and \$6 million to clean, move and sink the vessel.

Patriots Point Executive Director Mac Burdette said Artificial Reefs International's plan is to have the submarine converted to a reef by June 2017, but he thinks that's an ambitious timeline since the [U.S. Navy](http://www.navy.mil/) (<http://www.navy.mil/>) will have to approve the project in conjunction with the state's [Historic Preservation Office](http://shpo.sc.gov/Pages/default.aspx) (<http://shpo.sc.gov/Pages/default.aspx>) and [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](https://www3.epa.gov/) (<https://www3.epa.gov/>). Burdette said he expects it to take at least a year once an entity is found.

"If we don't get rid of that ship, we're about to spend a ton of money on her," Burdette said. "If this doesn't work, I don't have a lot of other solutions. We've got to find a place to reef it, or she goes to (a scrap yard in) Brownsville, Texas, and gets cut into razor blades. Nobody wants that to happen."

It would cost Patriots Point about \$6 million to restore the submarine, which has been deteriorating for years. Severe weather

could cause much more expensive problems.

"If you get a hurricane, and she gets banged around out there, and the saddle tanks get ruptured, and she turns over, and it fills up with water, she's on the bottom of the Charleston Harbor," Burdette said. "Then we've got a real cost. We've got an environmental issue. The bottom line is this board has made the prudent business decision that we've got one too many ships, and it's the Clamagore."

Artificial Reefs International wants the submarine to be part of a military underwater memorial off the Florida coast, Burdette said, that would include other Navy vessels.

“At least then you’re making some statement about the value of the ship in terms of remembering those who served on them and their sacrifices,” he said. “It’s not just a piece of steel you’re putting on the bottom for fish to gather around.”

If the organization doesn’t secure an agreement by the Dec. 1 deadline to have the submarine moved, the authority can extend the agreement or find someone else to act as an agent, Burdette said.

“Diving reefs are very, very lucrative for the state of Florida. People love to go diving, love to go snorkeling, and they want to look at something when they’re down there,” he said. “A submarine sitting down there would be incredible.”

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