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TOP STORY

Retailer joins effort to turn South Carolina submarine into an artificial reef

By John McDermott jmcdermott@postandcourier.com Oct 16, 2017 Updated 23 hrs ago



The retailer Salt Life has joined an effort to move the Clamagore submarine from Patriots Point and convert it to an underwater reef. File/Staff

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A division of a South Carolina clothing company has joined an effort to turn a World War submarine on display at Patriots Point into an artificial reef off the Florida coast.

Salt Life, a brand owned by Greenville-based Delta Apparel, said it is working with the group that's raising money to move the U.S.S. Clamagore from Mount Pleasant to an underwater location near Palm Beach.

Terms of the partnership between the retailer and Artificial Reefs International were not disclosed.

Jeff Stillwell, president of Salt Life, said the Columbus, Ga.-based company "is proud to be part of such a historic and important project."

"The Clamagore project is going to have a tremendous positive impact on the local economy by bringing more ecotourism" to the Palm Beach area, Stillwell said in a written statement. "We hope the Clamagore reef will become a pilgrimage for divers for years to come."

Key West-based Artificial Reefs International said it hopes to start the project in early 2018. It's raised about more than a third of the \$3 million it needs to pay for the vessel's environmental cleanup, said Joe Weatherby, senior project manager.

Salt Life is donating the net proceeds from sales of a \$25 commemorative T-shirt.

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The proposed transfer of the submarine will require approval from the Navy, which still owns the Clamagore.

The Patriots Point Development Authority has said it can no longer afford to keep the vessel and that it would be turned into a man-made reef if veteran groups couldn't raise the money for an alternative plan. Maintenance costs run about \$250,000 a year, and the Clamagore is in need of \$6 million in repairs, according to the board.

The submarine was active from 1945 to 1975. It was based in Key West before being moved to state-owned Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum in 1981 for static display. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1989, as the only Guppy III submarine preserved in the United States.

Patriots Point spokesman Chris Hauff said "there's no timetable" for moving the vessel.

"For us, the Clamagore is still here. It's still open," he said Monday.

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On the web

Go to <http://www.clamagorereef.com/> to see a video on the proposed plan for the Clamagore submarine.

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