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TOP STORY

## New target date set for hauling off submarine Clamagore to Florida

By Dave Munday [dmunday@postandcourier.com](mailto:dmunday@postandcourier.com) Mar 8, 2018



Efforts are still ongoing to raise the money to move the Clamagore from Patriots Point to Florida to become a diving reef and underwater museum. File/Staff

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Stay tuned for another chapter in the saga of the Clamagore, the deteriorating submarine at Patriots Point.

The Florida man who aims to haul the Cold War-era vessel to Florida to turn it into a diving reef and underwater museum says he's aiming to pull it out of the water and put it on a barge the first of May.

"We want to get this done before the hurricane season," said Joe Weatherby, senior project manager for Artificial Reefs International of Key West.

But he acknowledged there are still some hurdles to overcome, including raising the final \$1 million.

"We have a lot of big players looking at it," he said. "We have it in the red zone, and we're looking to push it into the end zone."

The spring moving date was included in an announcement on Wednesday that the Professional Association of Diving Instructors had endorsed the USS Clamagore Artificial Reef Project.

Backing by the world's biggest diving association will generate publicity for efforts such as outdoor clothing retailer Salt Life's campaign to support the project through the sale of Clamagore "On Eternal Patrol" T-shirts, Weatherby said.

The Patriots Point Development Authority gave Artificial Reefs until March 10 to come up with the \$4 million for the project. It's likely the panel will have to vote on whether to extend that deadline for the venture to continue. They approved a previous extension and have supported the idea so far.

The board would also need to see signed paperwork from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and from the Navy's Historic Preservation Program before the Clamagore could be released, according to Patriots Point spokesman Chris Hauff.

"We don't have a date," he said. "It's a very complex project, with so many different

agencies involved, and sometimes that takes a lot of time."

Artificial Reefs and officials with Palm Beach County Environmental Resource Management, which is overseeing the project, had hoped to move the sub last summer, but that didn't pan out. Palm Beach County promised \$1 million to move the sub if supporters could raise the other \$3 million for cleanup and installation costs.

The idea of turning the Clamagore into an underwater museum was first proposed about six years ago after officials for state-owned Patriots Point said they could no longer to afford to maintain the sub for \$250,000 a year or come up with \$6 million for needed repairs. But the proposal was put on hold to give veterans groups a chance to raise money to keep it afloat.

Patriots Point finally gave up on that possibility last year and gave Artificial Reefs the green light.

"I agreed with the veterans trying to save it," Weatherby said. "We're working to save this icon from the scrap yard."

The submarine is rusted, but the basic structure seems solid enough to withstand the move, Weatherby said. It's not stuck in the mud except at low tide.

Meanwhile, the vessel remains open for tours along the Mount Pleasant waterfront, along with the aircraft carrier Yorktown, destroyer Laffey and the Vietnam Experience.

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