

Shearwater's sinking as Delaware artificial reef addition debuts on DNREC YouTube Channel

DOVER (Feb. 12, 2016) – A [DNREC YouTube Channel video premiering this week](#) shows there was a little drama on the high seas before the latest addition to Delaware's artificial reef system could go below the Atlantic Ocean to occupy a new berth as marine habitat.

The [video](#) shows how Shearwater, a 180-foot-long former coastal freighter and military survey ship turned menhaden boat, was sunk by DNREC last December – but not before the ship insisted on navigating its own course to the bottom. “We wanted the ship to settle upright on the sea floor, (making it) more attractive to reef divers,” Jeff Tinsman, DNREC environmental scientist who leads the Division of Fish & Wildlife's artificial reef program, says in the video. “We made considerable effort to flood the three interior compartments in advance, thinking that would reduce the tendency of the ship to roll over on the surface before sinking.”

But Shearwater had other ideas, [as the video shows](#) the ship listing to port, then capsizing with eight feet of her bow remaining above the surface – before reef contractors cut holes in the hull, allowing air to escape and onrushing water finally to flood Shearwater and send her down stern-first in 120 feet of water and onto the Del-Jersey-Land artificial reef some 26 miles off Lewes.

The ship “came to rest on her side, from what we can tell at this time,” Tinsman said, “and while upright would've made her more appealing for divers, the fish don't really care one way

or the other” how Shearwater’s positioned – artificial reefs (including ships and smaller vessels such as tugs, not to mention the 1,300-plus former New York City subway cars that help comprise Delaware’s system) have been proven to be up to 400 times richer as marine habitat than bare ocean bottom.

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