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MIAMI RECEIVING MAJOR NEW ARTIFICIAL REEF

Miami-Dade Reef Guard Association: fostering the protection of coral reefs by creating and maintaining artificial reefs and mooring buoys for recreational users.

MIRA: www.reefguard.org, and on facebook

Miami, FL – The coral reefs off Miami-Dade County’s shores will be getting some relief from the pressure of recreational divers and fishermen with the sinking of a large freighter as an artificial diving and fishing reef. The Miami-Dade Reef Guard Association (MIRA), in carrying out its mission of protecting and safeguarding Miami-Dade’s coral reefs, has arranged for the placement and sinking of *Ophelia Brian* – the largest ship ever purposely sunk as an artificial reef in Miami-Dade County by and for sport diving.

The 210 foot freighter, built in 1965 by J.J. Sietas in Hamburg, Germany christened *Hoheburg* and lastly called *Sea Taxi*, will become *Ophelia Brian* when she is sunk at a pre-permitted site off Key Biscayne at the end of December. The artificial reef created by the wrecksite will provide recreational diving, ecotourism and fishing to the residents of Miami-Dade County and visitors from all over the world. MIRA’s purchase of *Ophelia Brian* was made possible by a generous donation from the Brian and Lavinia Snyder Foundation. They have chosen to rename the wreck after their daughter, Ophelia, for her eighteenth birthday next year. The *Ophelia Brian* artificial reef site will assist in diverting diving and fishing pressure from natural coral reefs in the area.

MIRA continues to work with its project partners on final preparations for *Ophelia Brian* to be sunk in late December at a site several miles east of Key Biscayne on a sandy bottom in 100 feet of water. Sara Thanner from Miami-Dade’s Department of Environmental Resource Management (DERM) has been vitally involved as well as Bruce Schurger and Company for the cleaning and sinking of the wreck.

Artificial wrecks such as *Ophelia Brian* have a life span of decades and provide habitats for marine fish and corals as well as providing recreational fishing and diving opportunities. MIRA is very excited that the addition of this sizable artificial reef, Miami-Dade County’s largest, will reduce mounting pressure on the area’s natural reefs.

MIRA will begin selling medallions and stickers throughout the Miami-Dade County dive shops and participating boating centers for \$10.00 per year to fund the mooring and artificial reef projects. The local dive businesses that have helped to fund MIRA’s initial costs are: RJ Diving Ventures, Underwater Unlimited, Austin’s Dive Center, South Beach Divers, Grove Scuba, Gary Hunt and James Daley of ClickNdive.com, Tarpoon Lagoon, and Ocean Safari.

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