

Larry Beggs

REEF INNOVATIONS | PRESIDENT | SARASOTA

Fifth Generation Floridian Champions Reef to Land Protection

With climate change driving sea level rise and storms, erosion and flooding are more concerning for Florida's coasts than ever before. Instead responding to this threat with harmful seawalls, innovators are helping Florida employ nature-based solutions like well-sited artificial reefs and mangrove restorations, to dissipate wave energy and provide habitat for fish and other wildlife. These features can create calm-water shorelines to halt erosion and attenuate storm surge, enable seagrass and marshes to reestablish, and provide a substrate for invertebrates like oysters that clean the water and drive the food web. Larry Beggs has been innovating with artificial reef technology for more than 20 years, creating jobs, habitat, and community resilience from his Tampa-based business, Reef Innovations.

Beggs is a fifth-generation Floridian who began his career on the land, specifically in his family business with horses and cattle. At nineteen years old, a friend talked him into trying scuba diving, leading him to develop a passion for the sport. As Chairman of a volunteer-led reef restoration project off the coast of Cape Canaveral, he researched ways to build artificial reefs. The research led him to an article about reef ball prototypes in a YMCA publication, and the rest is history.

Today, Beggs is the President of Reef Innovations, a Sarasota-based company and a worldwide contractor for reef balls. With over 23 years of experience, Beggs and his crew build projects of all sizes utilizing local labor and material, providing economic stimulus and community ownership. With the singular goal of reef restoration in mind, project locations vary from remote islands to metropolitan areas, and Beggs' team designs reef modules of all sizes and shapes to fit into unique ecosystems.

Beggs sees the direct connection between reef preservation and land conservation. When high levels of nutrients from runoff and agriculture end up in our waterways, the resulting algal blooms have a devastating impact on Florida's reefs and marine life. "Everyone needs to understand that what you do on land, on your street, and in your cul-de-sac drains out of your home or into the stream behind their house and ends up in the bay, the ocean, and ultimately the reefs," he explains. "Our reefs and our land are not two separate resources, they benefit each other and when one becomes damaged, the others do too."

The future of his work is focused on educating residents and decision-makers on the importance of reef restoration and protection. As a natural climate solution, artificial reefs and reef balls are a critical tool in a community's toolbox, and Beggs advocates for more streamlined permitting as the need for coastal protection becomes increasingly urgent.

To learn more about Reef Innovations, Eternal Reefs, and the Reef Ball Foundation visit www.reefball.org



Nature-based solutions to erosion create habitat, community resilience and jobs.

