The bravery of America’s Merchant Marines helped the Allies win World War II. Now, fourteen World War II ships that carried supplies and oil into the most dangerous fronts of the war serve as artificial reefs off the coast of Texas. Located in six readily accessible reef sites, they offer divers and recreational anglers an encounter not only with magnificent reefs, but also with America’s maritime heritage.

The Matagorda Island Liberty Ship Reef is composed of three Liberty Ships, the Dwight L. Moody, the Jim Bridger and the George Dewey. Nine other Liberty Ships are located at other reef sites along the Texas coast. Brochures for these reef sites are available from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The Dwight L. Moody made the perilous Atlantic crossing several times during World War II; one convoy was attacked, with two ships torpedoed. Both the Jim Bridger and the George Dewey served in the Normandy invasion, transporting Army and Navy personnel and cargo. The crew of the George Dewey received the Operation and Engagement Star for their participation in the initial phases of the invasion. The crew of the Jim Bridger later received the Philippine Liberation ribbon for services including a landing at Mindanao.

At a French port ammunition receives priority handling from Liberty ship to railway box car for quick dispatch to the front. Off loading by pallets permitted the handling of 30 boxes at one time, with each box containing 60 projectiles for the 105 mm howitzer, the backbone of the U.S. field artillery.
Texas Artificial Reefs
A Tribute to the Lone Star State
Texas has been involved in artificial reef development for nearly 50 years. Numerous reef building materials have been used over the years. However, the first highly successful artificial reef development occurred during the mid-1970's when 12 obsolete Liberty Ships were sunk at five different sites in the Gulf of Mexico. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Artificial Reef Program has added materials to most of these sites and created others through programs like Rigs to Reefs, in which petroleum companies donate obsolete petroleum platforms to the Program. At these sites, anglers may encounter numerous fish species including amberjack, snapper, cobia, Atlantic spadefish, triggerfish, tarpon, sharks (such as the blacktip, tiger, dusky, and hammerhead), and grouper. In addition, divers may see colorful damselfish, butterflyfish, blennies, and countless invertebrates. To date, 24 artificial reef sites have been established to benefit the environment by creating habitat for marine organisms, and to provide areas for increased fishing and sport diving opportunities.

Type EC-2 Liberty Ship
441 feet overall

Matagorda Island Liberty Ship Reef
28° 06' 58.806" N
96° 05' 14.542" W
21 nm from Matagorda Bay bearing 139°.
Three ships.

The water depth at the Matagorda Island Liberty Ship Reef is 105-107 feet, and the depth to the wrecks ranges from 85-105 feet.