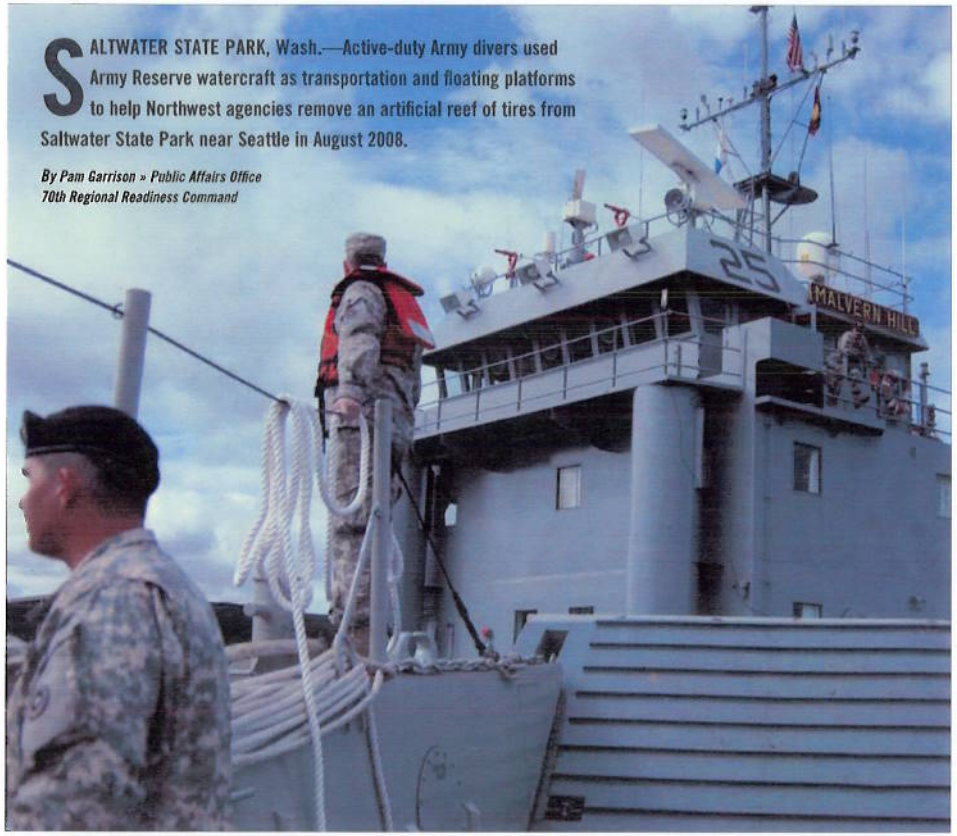
ARMY RESERVE COMMUNITIES

HELPING THE ENVIRONMENT

GOING GREEN

SALTWATER STATE PARK, Wash.—Active-duty Army divers used Army Reserve watercraft as transportation and floating platforms to help Northwest agencies remove an artificial reef of tires from Saltwater State Park near Seattle in August 2008.

By Pam Garrison » Public Affairs Office
70th Regional Readiness Command



The Army Reserve landing craft Malvern Hill, 170 feet long by 40 feet wide, dwarfs the LCM-8 Mike boat preparing to tie up alongside it. The Malvern Hill was used as a dive platform for the Innovative Readiness Training project to remove an artificial reef of old tires from Saltwater State Park in Puget Sound near Seattle. (Photo by Pam Garrison)

Pam Garrison

Automobile tires that hadn't seen the light of day for 30 years are lowered to the deck of the Army Reserve's 175th Transportation Company's LCM-8, or Mike boat. Army divers from the 544th Engineer Dive Team from Fort Eustis, Va., prepared the tires for removal by attaching bunches to a float bag, seen suspended above the tires and floating the tires to the surface where they were picked up by a crane aboard the landing craft Malvern Hill and swung aboard the deck of the waiting Mike boat.

The tires were placed there 30 years ago, but wildlife didn't grow well on them, nor were other forms of life attracted to them, and they were found to exude toxic substances.

They had to come out.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) sponsored a plan submitted as an Innovative Readiness Training request for the Army's help. Once approved, the Northwest Straits Commission coordinated all the pieces that came together in August at Saltwater State Park near Des Moines, Wash., halfway between Seattle and Tacoma, to remove about 500 tires in 50 to 60 feet of water, across 55 acres.

Soldiers from the Army Reserve's Pier 23 units in Tacoma—the 709th Transportation Co., 175th Transportation Co., 481st Transportation Co. and 467th Transportation Co.—manned the LCU 2000, named the Malvern Hill, and two of the LCM-8s, otherwise known as "Mike" boats. The Malvern Hill is 170 feet long and 40 feet wide. The Mike boats are smaller and have limited space below decks. The divers are using the Malvern Hill as a "base" to prepare for dives and the Mike boats are used to carry the tires to a predesignated site ashore where they are loaded into a container.

"That's the biggest load we've had yet," said Watercraft Operator Spc. Joel Siemienczuk of the 175th Trans. Co. "Yesterday we only had 17 but the divers are kind of getting into their groove now."

The divers are active-duty Soldiers of the 544th Engineer Dive Team, from Fort Eustis, Va. Twenty of them tackled the work of removing the tires.

The removed tires will be shredded and put into a landfill.

That part of Puget Sound is cleaner and can "heal." The area will be prepared for the construction of a reef made of rocks, pre-cast concrete posts and "artificial kelp." These materials are stable and are environmentally safe and the WDFW hopes the reef will provide habitat for marine wildlife.