



Positioning Your Vessel On Reef Structure

by Jeffery Carlson - Retired Fisheries Technician

There are several anchoring systems that may be utilized to position your vessel precisely over reef material. One method that works well is a modified bridling technique that can be accomplished using a single anchor. When fishing on shipwrecks or other reef structure, it is important to position your vessel over top of the selected target to assure maximum angling benefits.

With the ever-increasing cost of fuel it is vitally important to anchor your vessel on the first attempt. Failure to do so will result in the tedious task of retrieving the anchor and resetting. This delay not only results in consuming more fuel, but also cuts into valuable fishing time.

The modified bridling technique works very well for smaller center console and walk around vessels. This technique involves using just one anchor and enables the vessel to alter position by adjusting the steering wheel slightly.

When you are anchoring on a shipwreck you must first locate and mark the exact location using your GPS and depth finder. Once you have located the wreck, enter the exact coordinates and place two marker floats on the shipwreck, one at the bow and one marking the stern. After your floats are deployed and firmly holding bottom you may shut off your engine for several minutes, giving you the opportunity to analyze the effects of wind and tidal current. After drifting approximately 300 feet enter your current location into your GPS. Program your GPS to give you the distance and compass course to return to the marker floats. Once you have returned to the marker floats following the compass course, continue a few hundred feet on the same course past the floats to allow yourself enough room to set the anchor. Here you must take into consideration the depth of the water and the amount of anchor line needed to maintain a scope of 5:1. For example, if you are fishing in 75feet of water, you will need approximately 375feet of anchor line to maintain a firm hold on the bottom using a scope of 5:1.

When you have made the determined that you have traveled far enough up wind and up tide of the marker floats, deploy your anchor making sure you have an adequate length of anchor line. Pay out anchor line until your vessel approaches the floats marking the targeted shipwreck or structure. Hopefully you will have executed this procedure correctly and have positioned your vessel perfectly over target.

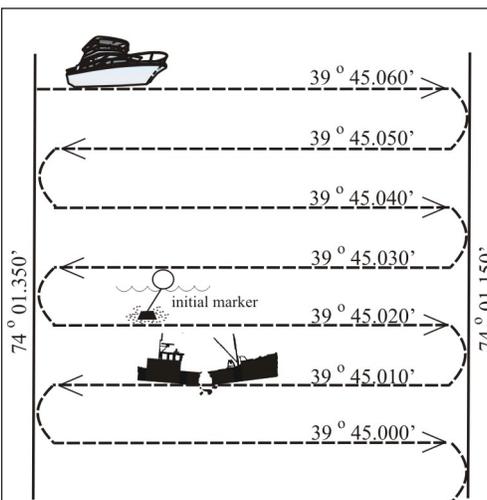
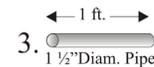
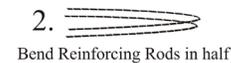
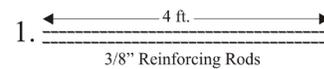
Should you discover that you are not precisely positioned due to slight variations in wind or tide, you have one more option to consider before retrieving and resetting the anchor. This option is to rig a modified bridle using 30 feet of half - inch nylon rope with a stainless steel snap hook on the end. Attach the snap hook over the primary anchor line after pulling in several feet of slack and tie off the other end on a midship cleat, either on the port side or starboard side. This will give you the ability to glide several feet towards the reef structure, simply by adjusting the steering wheel to port or starboard. Adjusting the half - inch line on the midship cleat and steering wheel position, you can slightly alter the vessel's position to find the sweet spot of the wreck. If the desired position is not achieved, try placing the half - inch nylon rope on the opposite side (port or starboard) midship cleat.

This method works quite well most of the time but it can become difficult if the wind and tide are opposing each other and there is not much drift.



Jeff Carlson, retired Fisheries Technician, aboard the R/V Reefbound, demonstrating the modified bridling technique.

How to Make a Reef Anchor



How to Find a Sunken Ship

1. Enter the lat/long numbers into your GPS and hit "go to."
2. Steer your course provided by your GPS.
3. When you have reached your target begin looking at your depth recorder for the wreck.
4. If the wreck isn't found begin a search pattern at a slow speed that goes West/East or North/South.
5. Once you have located the wreck set your marker buoys.