

Team Ocean: NOAA Science Diver Program

Volunteer Diving in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

Volunteer Diving in the National Marine Sanctuaries

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) manages a system of 14 marine protected areas around the United States, including Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. Within all sanctuary boundaries, natural and cultural resources are protected and managed for this and future generations. There is keen interest by citizens in the communities adjacent to national marine sanctuaries in supporting the mission of their local sanctuary and in helping to meet the goal of protecting the resources they value. The Team Ocean Dive Program is one approach that the ONMS uses to build local, regional and national stewardship and to provide volunteers with unique opportunities to participate in

enhancing the understanding and protection of sanctuary resources. Our goals for the Team Ocean Dive Program and our volunteers include:

- 1) To engage local area divers and dive clubs in supporting the ONMS and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary mission.
- 2) To provide an interactive program in which members of the public can participate and support efforts to protect the natural and cultural resources of the sanctuary.
- 3) To increase community participation in research and monitoring and other underwater projects in the sanctuary.
- 4) To engage divers in education and outreach activities that raise awareness of the natural resources of the sanctuary and to inspire others to help protect our marine environment.



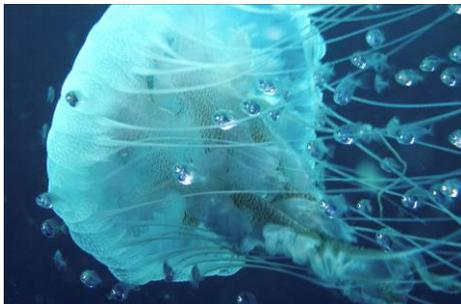
Moray eel



Small-spine sea stars



Loggerhead sea turtle



Jelly with juvenile fishes

What Are Volunteer Divers Doing at Gray's Reef?

Gray's Reef Team Ocean divers participate in a variety of interesting field activities underway in the sanctuary. Projects vary seasonally and annually, but include habitat, fish and invertebrate monitoring activities to support evaluations of the Gray's Reef Research Area. Team Ocean divers have also worked with sanctuary staff in their efforts to track the movement of fish within the sanctuary. This can involve dives to capture, tag and track fish or retrieve instruments placed around the sanctuary to detect tagged fish. Volunteer divers have also been involved in sea turtle surveys, invasive lionfish removals and underwater photography and videography. Diving operations are typically conducted during a single day but participation in multi-day missions aboard a NOAA ship is also available to Team Ocean volunteer divers.

Summary of Team Ocean Diver Certification Requirements

Team Ocean Divers will be certified as NOAA Science Divers. This certification process requires significant effort and commitment on the part of the volunteer. Candidates for NOAA scientific diver certification must provide proof of the following:

- 1) SCUBA diving certification, above the basic entry level, from a nationally or internationally recognized diver training agency;
- 2) Rescue Diver certification, or equivalent as determined by the NOAA Diving Control and Safety Board, from a nationally or internationally recognized diver training agency;
- 3) A minimum of 25 logged dives;
- 4) Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, including adult AED;
- 5) First Aid (American Red Cross, American Heart Association or equivalent); and

6) Oxygen administration (by a NOAA-approved agency).

In addition, candidates must:

- 1) Pass the NOAA dive physical and Science Diver exam;
- 2) Complete an in-water swim evaluation (500 yard swim, 25 yard underwater swim and 30 minute tread water drill);
- 3) Complete a check-out dive with the GRNMS Dive Supervisor;
- 4) Be over the age of 18.

Once certified, Team Ocean divers are required to conduct at least three dives every three months.

If you are interested in more information about Team Ocean volunteer dive opportunities, please contact Sarah Fangman (sarah.fangman@noaa.gov), 912-598-2428

