



Volunteer Diving At Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary



Volunteer Diving and the National Marine Sanctuary Program

The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSPP) is a federal program that manages a system of 14 National Marine Sanctuaries around the United States, including Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. Within all sanctuary boundaries, natural and cultural resources held by many to be national treasures, are protected and managed for this and future generations. There is keen interest by citizens in many of the communities that surround national marine sanctuaries to support the mission of their local sanctuary and help meet the goal of protecting the resources they value. The Team Ocean Dive Program is one approach that the NMSPP uses to build local, regional and national stewardship and to provide volunteers with unique opportunities to participate in the management and protection of these unique resources.



Our goals for the Team Ocean Dive Program and our volunteers

- 1) To engage local area divers and dive clubs in supporting the NMSPP and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary mission.
- 2) To provide an interactive program that public can participate in to support, protect, and enjoy the natural and cultural resources protected by the NMSPP.
- 3) Increase community participation in research and monitoring, education, underwater projects, office and administrative tasks, and in representing the sanctuary at certain events and functions.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

Gray's Reef comprises one of the largest near shore sandstone reefs in the southeastern United States. It is located 32 kilometers (17.5 nautical miles) off Sapelo Island, Georgia. Sanctuary boundaries protect 17 square miles of open ocean. Sandstone outcroppings and ledges up to three meters in height separate the sandy, flat-bottomed troughs in a reef that combines temperate and tropical qualities. The rocky platform, some 60 to 70 feet below the Atlantic Ocean's surface, is wreathed in a carpet of attached organisms and is known locally as a "live bottom habitat." This flourishing ecosystem provides not only vertical relief, but also a solid base for the abundant invertebrates to attach to and grow upon. For more information go to <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Volunteer Dive Programs at Grays' Reef

Gray's Reef Team Ocean Divers will be able to participate in several exciting activities at the sanctuary, including: *Marine Debris Monitoring and Removal* – Team Ocean Divers will assist sanctuary staff in conducting field surveys to track the location and accumulation of marine debris across the sanctuary as well as support removal efforts to extract the debris from the Sanctuary.

Reef Fish Monitoring – Team Ocean Divers will be trained to identify fish species at the Sanctuary and to conduct fish surveys based on the Reef Environmental Education Foundation roving diver protocols. With these new skills divers will conduct fish surveys across the sanctuary from Sanctuary dive platforms to build upon the existing long-term fish monitoring program at the Sanctuary. <http://graysreef.noaa.gov/monitoring.html>

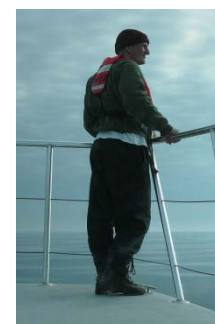
Acoustic Fish Tagging Program – Team Ocean Divers will support Sanctuary staff with a project where snapper and grouper are caught and tagged with an acoustic "pinger" which will identify the fish's movement as the sounds are recorded on receivers which are placed on the ocean floor. The receivers have to be periodically recovered and the information downloaded.

Team Ocean Diver Certification Requirements Summary

Team Ocean Divers will be certified as NOAA Science Divers. In summary this certification requires that the candidate divers:

- 1) be certified at an advanced open water and rescue diver level by a national certification program
- 2) pass the NOAA dive physical and Science Diver exam
- 3) complete a in-water swim evaluation (500 yard swim, 25 yard underwater swim and 30 minute tread water drill)
- 4) complete a check-out dive with the GRNMS dive supervisor
- 5) be over the age of 18

Once certified, Team Ocean Divers are required to maintain current first aid, CPR, and Oxygen administration certifications, and are required to conduct a dive (on personal or official volunteer time) every six weeks.



For More Information Contact:
Greg McFall

Greg.McFall@noaa.gov
Phone: (912) 598-2416

10 Ocean Science Circle
Savannah, GA. 31411