

Protect Our Environment

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👤 By Francois Burman, Pr. Eng., M.Sc.



Dive operators can preserve their ocean ecosystems by reporting illegal fishing activities and anchoring their boats properly (or better yet, using mooring buoys). Photo by Stephen Frink

Developing your environmental sustainability plan

Damage to the dive environment threatens the life within it and diminishes the attraction of the site for divers. Preserving the ecological structure of the dive environment requires active participation by all who dive in our waters — and it is our collective responsibility for our planet.

Dive businesses, professionals, divers and the broader dive community should be aware of the harm their activities could cause. Pollution, damage, invasion by nonendemic life-forms, removal of protected species, trampling, and removal of artifacts reduce the attractiveness of the dive location. Bleached reefs, water with reduced visibility, pollution, litter and empty wrecks can destroy the entire dive-tourism economy in the area.



It is not the sole responsibility of environmental protection agencies and local marine parks to set regulations and ensure compliance. Policing alone does not preserve the environment.

The process of protection and reducing harm starts with the dive operator, who should be committed to setting the requirements for their activities. Staff need to be aware, trained, encouraged and monitored: They need to be “greened” so they in turn can serve as role models for their clients.

Promoting environmental education, providing interventions and corrections when rules are broken, participating in cleanup activities, supporting local authorities and ecoinitiatives, and creating a general awareness go a long way to protecting both the surface and underwater environments.

There are a few simple steps to consider in the management and prevention of further harm to the environment. These considerations apply to everyone who is engaged in or benefits from diving, including hotel and restaurant owners, service and sales centers, dive operators and professionals, and all visitors to the area.

- Properly manage, collect and dispose of the following:

■ compressor waste fluids, oils and used filter cartridges

■ condensate from compressor separators

■ oils and fuels in boat bilges

■ lubricants and engine exhaust waste products

■ workshop and cleaning waste products

■ general product- and food-related waste

■ Use biodegradable and ecofriendly cleaning agents.

■ Discourage the use of single-use plastic materials.

■ Recycle, and encourage others to do so.

■ Control sewage and wastewater outlets.

■ Utilize renewable energy sources.

■ Take action to protect and preserve flora and fauna around dive shops and dive sites.

■ Refrain from displaying marine life and other artifacts collected from the sea.

■ Avoid touching, disturbing or making accidental contact with corals or sensitive underwater plant species.

■ Prohibit the removal of artifacts, creatures, shells or other items belonging to nature.

■ Encourage the use of long-sleeved tops and hats to protect skin from excessive exposure to the sun. If sunscreen products need to be used, educate staff and visitors to ensure the use of ecofriendly (nonoxybenzone and nonoctinoxate) sunscreen products.

■ Encourage divers to eat sustainable seafood.

■ Actively participate in beach, underwater and ecologically sensitive area cleanups.
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- Organizing reef cleanups empowers divers and enhances their dive sites.
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