

	<b>OFFICE OF MARINE AND AVIATION OPERATIONS</b>	POLICY 0309	VERSION 1.0
		EFFECTIVE DATE November 23, 2010	
	AUTHORIZED BY:  RADM Jonathan W. Bailey Director, Office of Marine and Aviation Operations	REVIEW DATE November 23, 2013	
		RESPONSIBLE POSITION NOAA Diving Program Manager	

## NOAA VOLUNTEER DIVING PROGRAM

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy specifies the requirements for and administrative management of volunteer divers within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Diving Program.

### 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all NOAA Volunteer Divers.

### 3. POLICY

#### 3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The Federal Government may only accept voluntary services as provided for by statute. Two laws that allow NOAA to accept volunteer services for certain activities are the Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978 [16 USC 742f] and the National Marine Sanctuary Act [16 USC 1442].
- 3.1.2 The Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act authorizes Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce (inclusive of NOAA) to recruit, train, and accept the services of volunteer workers for or in aid of programs related to fish and wildlife programs or activities. The Act also authorizes provision of incidental expenses such as transportation, lodging, awards, and subsistence to volunteers without regard to their place of residence.
- 3.1.3 The National Marine Sanctuaries Act states that NOAA may accept donations of funds, property, and services for use in designating and administering National Marine Sanctuaries.
- 3.1.4 NOAA Volunteer Divers conducting approved diving work authorized by the Fish and Wildlife Act, as amended, or other applicable statutes will in most circumstances be considered federal employees for purposes of liability protection under either the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 USC 2671, et seq., the Suits in Admiralty Act, 46 USC 30901, et seq., or the Public Vessels Act, 46 USC 31101, et seq., and for purposes of workers' compensation coverage under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, 5 USC 8101, et seq.
- 3.1.5 Volunteers must submit proof of training and experience to the appropriate NOAA Unit Diving Supervisor (UDS) for review. The UDS shall forward documentation, along with his/her recommendation, to their Line/Staff Office Diving Officer (LODO/ODO). The LODO/ODO shall forward documentation, along with his/her recommendation, to the Diving Program Manager (DPM). The DPM shall review the documentation and recommendations from the UDS and LODO/ODO, and determine if the individual meets the criteria for certification. If qualified, the DPM shall issue a letter of authorization to dive as a Volunteer under NOAA auspices. The DPM will notify the LODO/ODO and UDS of his/her decision.

## 3.2 Eligibility

- 3.2.1 NOAA Volunteer Divers must be sponsored by a NOAA program or office. An appointing officer from that program or office is responsible for meeting all federal requirements of administering and managing the work of the volunteer and serves as the point of contact to the DPM.
- 3.2.2 Divers in good standing with organizations with whom NOAA has an active Reciprocity Agreement for diving, and who meet the requirements of Section 3.4 below, may be accepted as volunteers based on their diving credentials as reciprocity divers.
- 3.2.3 If a person is not an employee of an organization with whom NOAA has reciprocity, then that person must become a NOAA-certified diver consistent with the requirements and procedures prescribed in either the NOAA Scientific Diving Standards and Safety Manual or the NOAA Working Diving Standards and Safety Manual, as applicable.

## 3.3 Authority for Accepting Volunteers

- 3.3.1 Final authority for certifying volunteers as NOAA divers rests with the DPM.

## 3.4 Minimum Diving Requirements

- 3.4.1 Successful completion of a medical examination, equivalent to those standards outlined in the NOAA Diving Medical Standards and Procedures Manual, and a voluntary drug test as prescribed in the NOAA Diving Standards and Safety Manuals
- 3.4.2 Proof of training and/or experience equivalent to that of a NOAA Diver as determined by the NOAA Diving Control and Safety Board (NDCSB) and verified by the UDS. A minimum of 25 logged dives for Scientific Divers and 100 logged dives for Working Divers.
- 3.4.3 Current certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), first aid, and oxygen administration (American Heart Association, American Red Cross, or equivalent) and verified by the UDS.
- 3.4.4 Successful completion of a written test of knowledge as determined by the NDCSB and verified by the UDS.
- 3.4.5 Successful completion of an open-water checkout dive equivalent to that required for NOAA Divers and conducted by the UDS, or designee.
- 3.4.6 Successful completion of applicable NOAA specialized training (e.g., Harness Weighting System, Reserve Air Supply System (RASS), Line-tended Standby Diver) verified by UDS.
- 3.4.7 Approval of the DPM.

## 3.5 Limitations

- 3.5.1 Maximum depth and tasks authorized may be limited by the UDS, LODO/ODO, or DPM based on review of the divers' resumes and dive logs.
- 3.5.2 Unless approved by the UDS, Volunteer Divers shall be directly supervised by an on-site NOAA Divemaster or Lead Diver. If no Divemasters or Lead Divers are available, the UDS may assign supervisory responsibility to another NOAA employee, but only if the individual is knowledgeable in the diving activities being conducted and is ready, willing, and able to render assistance in an emergency.
- 3.5.3 Must be at least 18 years of age.

### 3.6 Equipment

- 3.6.1 Unless otherwise authorized by the UDS, Volunteer Divers shall be outfitted with their own diving equipment equivalent to that of NOAA divers, and annual service records will be provided to the UDS for review annually. The responsibility for any lost or damaged volunteer-owned diving gear or equipment rests with the sponsoring program or office.
- 3.6.2 When not provided by the Volunteer Diver, and with verification of appropriate training, NOAA shall provide (when required) the diver with a diver-carried RASS to be used while performing official NOAA dives.

## 4. GUIDANCE

Associated procedures will provide guidance.

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## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 5.1 NOAA Appointing Officer

- 5.1.1 Reviews and approves all requests for Volunteer Divers from a NOAA office/program perspective.
- 5.1.2 Signs all required volunteer forms acknowledging approval and acceptance of liability for the volunteer while providing volunteer service to the NOAA office/program.

### 5.2 NOAA Unit Diving Supervisor

- 5.2.1 Reviews documentation from the applicant for compliance with minimum requirements.
- 5.2.2 Inspects Volunteer Diver's equipment for proper operating condition and conformity with NOAA equipment requirements, reviews maintenance records, and replaces items not considered serviceable with other equipment provided by the diver or with NOAA equipment.
- 5.2.3 Administers the written examination and conducts, or delegates authority to conduct, checkout dive.
- 5.2.4 Forwards documentation to LODO/ODO along with recommendation.
- 5.2.5 Approves individuals to supervise volunteer diving activities.

### 5.3 NOAA Line/Staff Office Diving Officer

- 5.3.1 Reviews documentation and recommendation from the UDS and forwards to the DPM along with recommendation.

### 5.4 NOAA Diving Program Manager

- 5.4.1 Reviews documentation and recommendation from the UDS and LODO/ODO and makes final decision on acceptance of candidate.
  - 5.4.2 Reports decision to LODO/ODO and UDS in writing within 10 days of receipt of package from LODO/ODO.
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## 6. REFERENCES

Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act, U.S. Code, 16 USC 742f  
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/policiesandbudget/16USC742.html>

National Marine Sanctuaries Act  
<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/library/national/nmsa.pdf>

NOAA Scientific Diving Standards and Safety Manual  
[http://www.ndc.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA\\_Scientific\\_Dive\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.ndc.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA_Scientific_Dive_Manual.pdf)

NOAA Diving Medical Standards and Procedures Manual  
[http://www.ndc.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA\\_Medical\\_Standards\\_Procedures\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.ndc.noaa.gov/pdfs/NOAA_Medical_Standards_Procedures_Manual.pdf)

NOAA Working Diving Standards and Safety Manual (in press)

## 7. DEFINITIONS

<b>NOAA Appointing Officers</b>	Individuals with authority to approve the hiring of NOAA employees.
<b>NOAA Unit Diving Supervisors</b>	NOAA divers appointed by a NOAA Line/Staff Office (LO/SO) Diving Officer to oversee, direct, and approve diving activities conducted within their respective LO/SO unit and to administer to the needs of assigned divers.
<b>NOAA Line/Staff Office Diving Officers</b>	Individuals appointed to oversee and direct diving activities within specific NOAA LO/SOs and to serve on the NDCSB.
<b>NOAA Diving Control and Safety Board</b>	An appointed board of representatives from NOAA's Line and Staff Offices who report jointly to the Director, Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, and NOAA Chief Administrative Officer and have autonomous and absolute authority over and promote the safe and effective operations of the NOAA Diving Program.
<b>NOAA Diving Program Manager</b>	Individual responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs of the NOAA Diving Program and serving as the ranking NOAA diving official for matters relating to the interpretation and application of the NOAA diving regulations, policies, and procedures.

## 8. AUTHORITY

OMAO Policy 0301, Category 0300 – Diving

## 9. NOTES

Effect on other documents: None.

Distribution: All NOAA Divers and their Supervisors