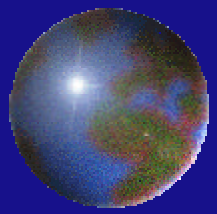


Coral Reefs and the Recreational Dive Industry: *Stewardship, Education and Awareness*

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Stakeholder Forum

Washington, D.C.

27 February 2003

Presenter: Drew Richardson

Sr. Vice President, PADI Worldwide

Defining the Dive Industry: Participation

- The Outdoor Industry Association's *Demographics of Enthusiasts Report* in 1997, estimated 14.6 million scuba diving participants in the U.S.
- Mean age of divers: 29 years
- Gender of divers: 65% male, 35% female

Defining the Dive Industry: Participation

- PADI has certified more than 10 million divers and adds nearly one million additional certifications to that population annually

Defining the Dive Industry: Stakeholders

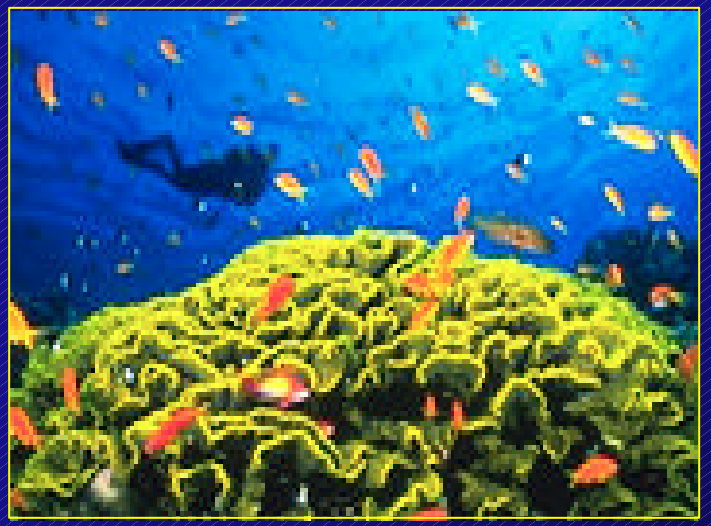
- Charter dive boats/live-aboards
- Training Agencies
- Dive Centers
- Dive Resorts
- Diver training professionals: Divemasters and Instructors
- Media
- Associations and Clubs
- Manufacturers

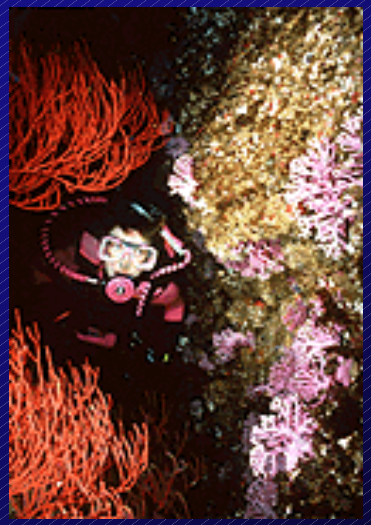
The Size of the Dive Industry: Stakeholders

- Economic worth: 4.5 billion U.S.D. (approx)
- Number of Dive Centers and Resorts: 4726 affiliated with PADI (65-70% of market)
- 100,000 dive training professionals
- 170 countries of operation

Importance of Healthy Coral Reef Areas to our Industry

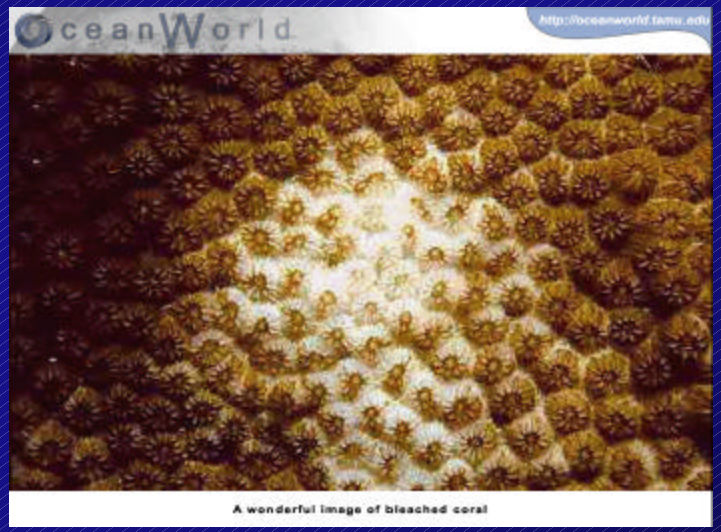
- The recreational scuba diving industry depends on healthy coral reef environments for business and livelihood.
- Coral reefs are the main attraction for visitors in resort environments.
- Healthy coral reef environments = healthy dive/snorkel tourism = healthy economy/industry





Responsibility of our Industry: Perspective

- Divers have a unique perspective of coral reefs – a window to the underwater world. They can see first-hand reef decline from natural pressures and damage from humans.
- Divers can minimize personal impact to the coral reef.



Responsibility of our Industry: Advocacy

- Divers are often the strongest advocates for healthy marine environments – it is their playground and their passion.

Responsibility of our Industry: Awareness

- Divers see themselves as visitors in this underwater environment, with a responsibility to preserve it for future guests.

Dive Industry Action:
The Role of Education as a Mitigating Factor

- The recreational scuba diving industry is pro-active in educating and involving participants in coral reef conservation initiatives.
- Divers have supported many initiatives including marine protected areas

Dive Industry Action:

The Role of Education as a Mitigating Factor

- We have developed public awareness campaigns specifically addressing the need to protect living reefs.
- Through these campaign materials, millions of divers have been introduced to messages about coral reef conservation and responsible dive tourism.

Dive Industry Action:

The Role of Education as a Mitigating Factor

- The impact of education has been established as a way to reduce the number of contacts a diver or anchor has with the reef (Townsend, 2000).

Dive Industry Action:
The Role of Education as a Mitigating Factor

- We have implemented training courses for all levels of divers about coral reef conservation and proper diving techniques.

Dive Industry Action:

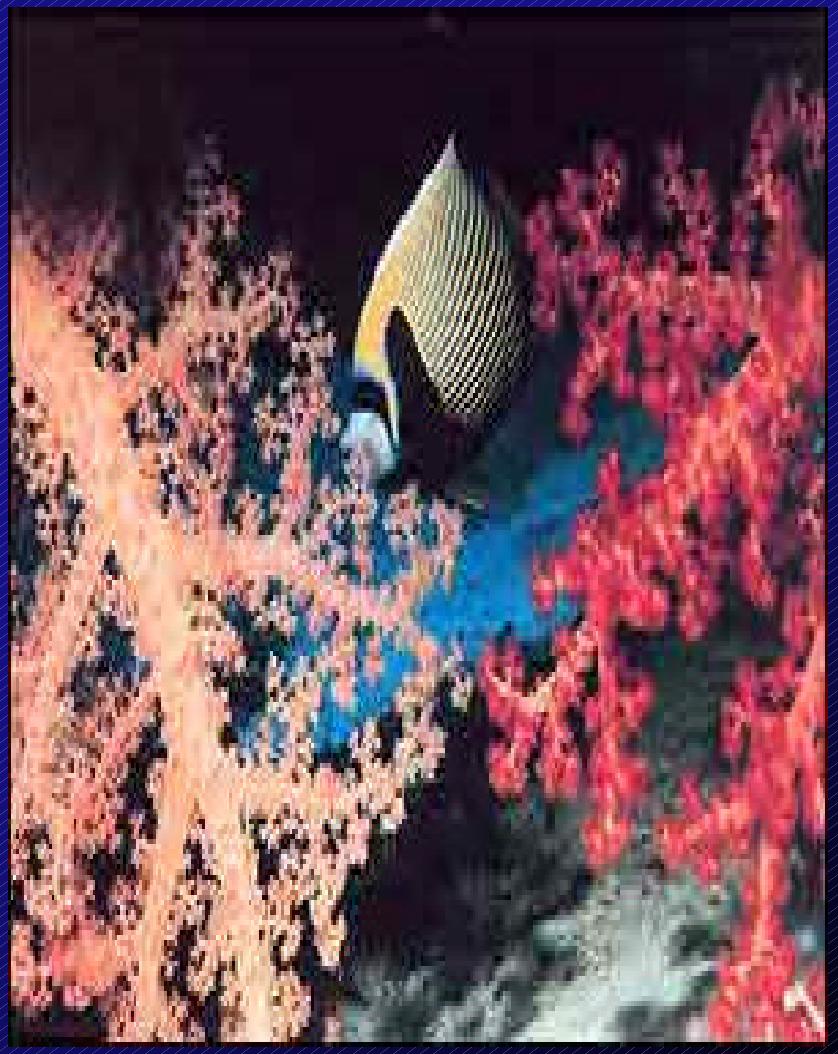
The Role of Education as a Mitigating Factor

- We support and encourage monitoring efforts by recreational divers to contribute to information about the health of coral reefs.
- Valuable data have been gathered and compiled into a global information system established for managers and scientists.

Dive Industry Action:
The Role of Education as a Mitigating Factor

- We've established a nonprofit organization, Project AWARE Foundation, dedicated solely to preserving the aquatic environment and its resources through:
  - direct funding
  - grass roots projects
  - education and outreach

www.projectaware.org

Future Hope

- It's what we're doing now collectively that will reverse the trend of reef decline and contribute to the recovery of the world's coral reefs.