

How to Organise a **Dive Against Debris Event**

A RESOURCE FOR DIVE CENTRES AND DIVE LEADERS

Thank you for organising a Dive Against Debris event. You have joined hundreds of AWARE Leaders in 180 countries taking action against marine debris.

Any diver can complete a Dive Against Debris *survey* on any dive at any time. This resource is for dive centres and dive leaders organising a Dive Against Debris *event*. Events involve more divers, raise awareness of marine debris issues and promote your dive business.

Your Dive Against Debris event will protect sharks, turtles, whales and many more of the marine creatures we love. Your event helps in several ways:

- The data you report strengthens demands for improved infrastructure and policies that prevent debris from entering the ocean
- The underwater debris you remove makes the ocean healthier and safer for marine animals and seabirds
- The divers you involve learn about the issue, tell their friends, and change their habits
- The media promotion you achieve educates the public to dispose of their rubbish carefully

Follow these tips to make your Dive Against Debris event a success.

GETTING READY

Recruit an event organiser

Completing regular Dive Against Debris events need not take a lot of your time. You can recruit a regular customer, student or staff member to be your event organiser. People are keen to help when their work protects the ocean. Give them a good brief and trust them to deliver.

- You don't need an experienced diver to organise much of your Dive Against Debris event including recording and submitting data to Project AWARE. But be sure to have a dive professional oversee diving activities.
- Ask your newly certified Instructors and Divemasters to volunteer; they will appreciate the opportunity to gain experience.
- Your Divemaster candidates must supervise certified divers as a performance requirement, so have them organise a Dive Against Debris event as part of their course.
- Seek a new volunteer for this position through your My Ocean profile.

Select your survey site

Your survey site does not have to be a great dive. Dive Against Debris events are about protecting the ocean, for most divers that will be enough.

- Choose a site you can return to regularly. The more often you collect data from the same site, the stronger your results.
- Choose a site known to have marine debris.
- Choose a site within the limitations of your least experienced divers. Think of currents, entry and exit points, boat traffic etc.
- Check if you need permission to access the dive site from the land-owner or the waterways authority.



- When selecting a shore dive look for good parking and restroom facilities.
- Avoid survey sites that require expensive boat trips to participate. Keep your Dive Against Debris surveys inexpensive so your divers are happy to volunteer.

Recruit volunteers

Today's divers are concerned with environmental issues so your Dive Against Debris event is a great way to keep your divers active and bring new divers to your store.

- Create a My Ocean profile on the Project AWARE website where you can register your event, gain promotion through the Actions Map, and recruit event volunteers.
- Link your event announcements, photos and videos from My Ocean to your other social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Recruit divers through your business website and e-newsletter.
- Upload the Dive Against Debris web banner to your website
- Place a Dive Against Debris poster and sign-up sheet in your dive centre.
- For tools and materials to promote your event visit www.projectaware.org/resources

Tell the world!

Promoting your ongoing Dive Against Debris events educates the public about marine debris issues and places your business in a positive light within your community.

- Media coverage of your Dive Against Debris event is free publicity.
- Local newspapers, radio and TV news are always looking for local interest stories, so let them promote your event. Use the media release template at www.projectaware.org/resources
- Many other agencies promote conservation events. Try your local council or tourism authority, or look for what's on' listings in local papers and community websites.

Find partners and sponsors

Find a local business to join your events as a conservation partner. They could contribute funding, donate prizes, provide refreshments or recruit volunteers.

PREPARE YOUR DIVERS

Training

All participants including the event organiser must complete the free self-study course. This course gives divers all the knowledge they need to participate in Dive Against Debris.

- Find the Dive Against Debris course at www.projectaware.org
- Keep your Dive Against Debris survey data valid by only allowing trained divers to participate. At this point divers self verify they have completed training.
- Link the self-study guide through your website, emails and e-newsletters

Paperwork and gear hire

Have participants submit completed paperwork prior to the event to avoid long pre-dive delays.

- Download required paperwork at www.projectaware.org/resources
- Confirm divers have completed the self-study training.
- Provide email or paper copies of required paperwork and ask divers to submit completed forms prior to the event.
- Take bookings for gear hire and arrange air fills.



TIME TO DIVE

Give divers the best supervision possible by having a dive professional organise the survey dive.

- Use the Dive Against Debris checklist found on www.projectaware.org/resources
- Review the survey technique with divers and remind them what to leave behind.
- Reinforce the value of their contribution, *they are protecting marine wildlife by removing debris and gathering data that leads to changes that will stop rubbish from entering the water.*

- Inform the Coast Guard, harbour or local council authority of your location, planned activity and number of divers in the cleanup team.
- Collect debris as outlined in training.
- Remind divers of safe diving practices.
- Mark the area with dive flags.
- Remind divers **not** to:
 - overfill their mesh cleanup bags
 - use their BCDs as a lifting device
 - use lift bags without appropriate training/experience



REPORT YOUR DATA

Involve everyone

Reporting your data is critical to drive changes that prevent rubbish from entering the water. Ensure participants are involved in the whole survey including recording data.

- Emphasise to your divers the importance of recording data, *they are completing a marine debris survey, not just a cleanup.*
- Build in time for data recording from the time of booking. Tell divers a finish time that includes time for data recording.
- Remind participants that this investment of their time will lead to fewer needless marine animal deaths.

Record your data

Some organisation will make data recording quick and accurate.

- Promote one diver to the rank of Data Captain and make them responsible for recording and reporting data.
- Sort debris items into groups using the same material of construction headings as used on the Dive Against Debris Data Sheet (plastic, rubber, metal, etc).
- Assign tasks, for example one buddy pair for each material group, or two divers sorting debris into material groups while others count individual items.
- Record all debris items onto one Dive Against Debris Data Sheet.
- Collect dive site information, estimate the underwater area covered by your survey and weigh all the rubbish that's been collected.
- Report your data online at www.projectaware.org

Make it public and gain publicity

Record your data in a public place, when passers by ask what you are doing tell them about the marine debris issue and how your dive centre is helping.

- Distribute store brochures and offer course or dive discounts for people who volunteer for future events.
- Ask passers by to join your next survey.
- Display Project AWARE's Dive Against Debris banner
- Take photos of everything: divers collecting debris underwater, recording data, piles of rubbish, group shots with full cleanup bags, weird items found etc. Use these photos for publicity and to create photo albums on your My Ocean page.
- Newspapers look for a good photo when deciding which stories to publish. Look at your local newspaper for photo ideas.
- Make it a social occasion and prepare a BBQ lunch for volunteers.
- Use your event to raise funds for marine conservation. Small personal donations, raffles, auctions and other activities can raise funds to support Project AWARE. Download fundraising ideas from www.projectaware.org/resources.

Before you leave

- Sort rubbish for recycling if facilities are available in your area.
- Dispose of rubbish responsibly:
 - Your local Council may collect the rubbish; contact them before your event.
 - Small amounts can be disposed in street bins.

- Use a trailer for transport to the local waste collection site to avoid water damage inside your vehicle.

THE FINAL TOUCHES

These final actions are as important as anything you have done so far.

- **Submit your data to Project AWARE www.projectaware.org**
- **Send your comments and feedback to DiveAgainstDebris@projectaware.org**

Promote your actions

- Update your My Ocean page and show your Dive Buddies the action you have taken.
- Update your website and include a report in your store e-newsletter.
- Announce the date of your next Dive Against Debris event.

Reward you volunteers

A simple thank you is a great start, but use store promotions to keep your volunteers coming back for more.

- Send a thank you email to participants and attach a good group photo.
- Give a special thank you to your event organisers.
- Give discounts on gear rental and air fills for event participants.
- Have prizes to award significant contributions.
- Present discount vouchers to participants for their next course.
- Download Be Thankful: Ways to Thank Your Volunteers for more tips on thanking and recognising volunteers.

Thank you for protecting our ocean planet - one dive at a time

