

# Managing Environmental Impacts In The Marine Recreation Sector

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## WHY WE CREATED THIS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

This self-assessment checklist has been developed to help you assess where your company stands in integrating responsible environmental practices. The checklist is divided into several sections. The initial 13 questions are relevant to all forms of marine recreation, while three additional sections offer supplemental questions for providers in specific sectors: interactive marine wildlife trips, recreational fishing, and snorkeling, diving and snuba. Each question addresses a key issue and proposes a good practice.

In addition to providing a useful tool to marine recreation providers, this checklist is being used by major tourism companies, including tour operators, cruise lines and hotels, to identify and select responsible service providers. For companies looking to set performance standards for their marine recreation providers, the assessment checklist may be adapted to create an environmental policy. While each company and service provider may use the checklist differently, the adoption of this common reference system could be used as a standard framework for the development of voluntary certification schemes through the marine recreation industry.

Major contractors of marine recreation services are increasingly showing a preference for providers that adopt environmental good practices. Thus, for marine recreation providers—from dive operations to boat rentals to wildlife viewing tours—improving environmental performance can not only contribute to marine conservation and the economic development of coastal communities, it can also improve business, by increasing your attractiveness to companies seeking responsible suppliers.

## A COMPLIMENTARY PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

*A Practical Guide To Good Practice: Managing Environmental Impacts In the Marine Recreation Sector* has been developed to support this self-assessment checklist. The practical guide is designed for marine recreation providers seeking to understand and adopt environmental good practices. For eight key topics associated with marine recreation, the guide offers a brief summary of the potential impacts, the rationale for good practice and suggestions on how to reduce these impacts. Recognizing that an extensive amount of information on environmental good practices for the marine recreation industry already exists, the guide also offers sources for further information at the end of the handbook.

This ***Self-Assessment Checklist*** and ***A Practical Guide To Good Practice: Managing Environmental Impacts In the Marine Recreation Sector*** can be downloaded at [www.celb.org](http://www.celb.org), [www.toinitiative.org](http://www.toinitiative.org) and [www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org).

## THIRTEEN CORE QUESTIONS FOR ALL MARINE RECREATION PROVIDERS

1. Does your company abide by all local, regional, national and international environmental laws and regulations? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please list actions taken to support and educate customers about local, regional, national and international environmental laws and regulations:

**Issue:** Removal of key biological species and improper disposal of wastes on coral reefs can cause significant declines in ecosystem health. Overharvesting of reef fish, urchins, shells and other reef animals as ornamental objects and seafood is contributing to the degradation of coral reefs around the world. Additionally, overharvest of pelagic fish species can lead to ecosystem decline and negatively affect food resources for local communities.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can support healthy reefs by abiding by all environmental laws pertaining to issues such as toxic and human waste disposal, and by not harvesting resources to sell as ornamental objects or serving threatened or endangered species as cuisine. Boat crews can educate tourists about relevant laws governing fish harvesting and consumption in a given region and ensure that all recreational excursions and fishing trips comply with these laws.

2. Does your company provide trainings, briefings or literature for employees and tourists regarding good environmental practices for snorkeling, diving, kayaking, various types of boat tours and other marine recreation activities? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please list actions taken to provide environmental education for employees and tourists:

**Issue:** Many impacts to coral reefs and other marine environments are caused by a lack of knowledge and understanding of the marine environment by marine recreation providers and tourists.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can supply training manuals for employees and onboard literature and briefings for tourists that address relevant environmental issues and highlight marine recreation practices that minimize impacts to coral reefs and other marine environments.

3. Does your company provide information for employees and tourists regarding the potential impacts of motorized vessels and poor boating practices on coral reefs and other marine environments? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please list actions taken to provide information on the potential impacts of motorized vessels and poor boating practices to employees and tourists:

**Issue:** Poorly conducted or irresponsible boating practices, such as operating in shallow water environments, can increase sedimentation as a result of propeller wash and wave creation. This disruption can cause severe damage to coral reefs, seagrasses, mangroves and other marine environments.

**Good Practice:** In order to minimize boating impacts to coral reefs and other marine environments, operators should follow proper navigation and mooring principles, avoid fast motoring in shallow reef areas and educate tourists who rent boats about relevant environmental issues and good boating practices.

**4. Does your company actively use, and support the use of, mooring buoys as an alternative to anchoring around coral reef ecosystems? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to actively use, and support the use of, mooring buoys:

**Issue:** If used improperly, anchors and the long chains associated with them can cause severe damage to coral reef ecosystems.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can significantly reduce anchor damage through the use and support of a mooring buoy program at popular coral reef sites. Additionally, companies that rent boats can provide information to tourists on basic seamanship, navigation and location of mooring buoys in coastal regions. This can include education regarding the damage that anchors can cause to coral reefs and a waterproof map of the location of mooring buoys at popular snorkel and dive sites. Marine recreation providers and companies that rent boats can encourage drift dives, where no anchor is dropped, when a mooring buoy is not available at a particular site.

**5. Does your company have an environmental code of conduct to guide the actions of motorized and non-motorized boat operators and tour guides when they come into contact with, or viewing distance of, marine wildlife such as turtles, manatees, dolphins and whales? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to abide by the environmental code of conduct:

**Issue:** Marine wildlife, such as turtles, dolphins and whales, can be easily disturbed if not viewed properly. These disturbances can affect mother/calf pairs, resting periods and use of feeding and breeding grounds.

**Good Practice:** The most appropriate way to view marine mammals is at a slow speed from a distance that does not change or alter the animals' behavior. Avoid approaching animals head-on and never chase the animals. One-hundred meters is a commonly agreed upon minimum distance for watching large whales.

**6. Does your company take actions to prevent accidental discharge of toxic substances or other waste into the environment? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken and methods and procedures used to prevent accidental discharge of toxic substances or other waste into the environment:

**Issue:** Hazardous materials such as fuels and oils can threaten the health of coral reefs and other marine environments in popular tourist destinations. Inadequate or improper boat maintenance can lead to accidental or otherwise unintentional discharge of toxic chemicals into the marine environment.

**Good Practice:** Regular boat maintenance and record keeping, particularly regarding engines, fuel tanks and other potential leakage areas, can significantly reduce the amount of pollutants a boat discharges into the marine environment.

**7. Has your company taken actions to reduce use and ensure proper disposal of toxic antifouling bottom paints, fuels, cleaning agents and other hazardous materials? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken and methods used to reduce the use of toxic paints and chemicals and ensure the proper disposal of wastes while operating at sea or during drydock operations:

**Issue:** Antifouling bottom paints contain known carcinogens and heavy metals. When introduced into the marine environment, they can threaten the health of both coral reefs and human consumers of seafood. When used in excess, not properly contained or improperly disposed of, many hazardous materials such as paints, fuels, oils and cleaning agents associated with boat operations can negatively impact the marine environment.

**Good Practice:** Manufacturers have developed, tested and made available antifouling bottom paints that are produced from biodegradable products and are significantly less toxic than paints of the past. Additionally, boat operators can replace other onboard chemicals with alternative environmentally friendly and biodegradable products, and ensure that all hazardous materials associated with at-sea operations or drydock repairs are disposed of in a proper manner.

**8. If applicable, does your company use alternative, clean-burning technology such as four-stroke outboards for smaller boats or biodiesel fuel for larger vessels with in-board propulsion systems? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken or future plans to use alternative, clean-burning technology:

**Issue:** Older models of gasoline boat engines, particularly two-stroke designs, are inefficient and discharge as much as 30 percent of consumed fuel unburned into the marine environment.

**Good Practice:** Many marine manufacturers have developed highly efficient four-stroke outboard engines in recent years. Replacement of older, less fuel-efficient models with these new designs will significantly reduce pollution in the marine environment. For inboard engines, retrofitting for use of biodiesel as an alternative fuel source can significantly reduce toxic discharge into the marine environment.

**9. Does your company take steps to minimize discharge of untreated sewage and wastewater from boats? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken and methods used to minimize discharge of untreated sewage and wastewater:

**Issue:** The discharge of raw or partially treated sewage in coastal waters poses a health threat to coral reefs and other marine environments as well as to human populations.

**Good Practice:** Disposal of sewage at pump-out facilities on land is the best way to minimize impacts to the marine environment. If pump-out facilities are not available, it is recommended that boats treat sewage mechanically and with nontoxic, biodegradable chemicals to reduce solids and pathogens. Boats should proceed as far as possible offshore before pumping out, in order to prevent the pollution of bottom sediments, coral reefs and coastal waters. Alternatively, boats can use self-contained toilets, which can be removed from vessels and dumped at onshore facilities.

**10. Does your company take actions to prevent the introduction of garbage or solid waste into the marine environment? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to prevent the introduction of garbage or solid waste into the marine environment:

**Issue:** Garbage in the environment is unsightly and threatens the health of many forms of marine life. Plastic objects, fishing line, cigarette butts and Styrofoam debris are often consumed by turtles, seabirds, fish and marine mammals and cause the death of millions of these animals every year.

**Good Practice:** Garbage bins on tour boats can be contained or kept inside to minimize the chance of debris blowing overboard. Additionally, long-lasting products made of plastic and Styrofoam can be replaced by more biodegradable material, such as paper.

**11. Does your company support good environmental practices to avoid catching and serving rare, threatened or endangered marine species for seafood consumption? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list the actions taken to avoid catching and serving rare, threatened or endangered species:

**Issue:** In recent years, many popular game fish and other marine species have declined significantly and have been listed as endangered or threatened. This list includes many species of groupers, jewfish, jacks, marlin, tuna, snappers, lobsters and crabs, among others. By removing key predators and herbivores, overfishing directly threatens the health of coral reefs and other marine environments throughout the world.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can support healthy coral reefs and other marine environments by not harvesting rare, threatened or endangered marine species to serve as seafood. Fishing charters can protect healthy fish stocks by practicing catch-and-release programs. Moreover, boat crews can educate tourists about which species in a given region are rare, threatened or endangered, and thus should be avoided.

**12. Does your company support good environmental practices and educate customers about the negative environmental impacts of harvesting marine species from coral reefs and other marine environments to sell as ornamental souvenirs? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to support good environmental practices and educate customers about the potential negative impacts of ornamental souvenir collection:

**Issue:** Removal of key biological components in coral reefs and other marine environments can cause significant damage to ecosystem health. Overharvesting of reef fish, urchins, shells and other marine animals to sell as ornamental objects is contributing to the decline of coral reefs and other marine environments around the world.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can support healthy coral reefs and other marine environments by not harvesting marine species to sell as ornamental objects. Additionally, boat crews can educate tourists about the potentially damaging effects of collecting marine species as souvenirs.

**13. Does your company contribute to biodiversity protection and conservation projects in the local region of its operations? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

Please list the actions taken to protect and conserve biodiversity in your local region:

**Issue:** Environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity is an issue affecting all regions of the world. Local, regional and international conservation projects are working to protect terrestrial (land) and marine ecosystems, and regularly need support through funding, volunteers and other resources.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can help protect the environment through financial, in-kind or material support of local and regional conservation projects and terrestrial and marine protected areas. This support may include making financial contributions to local coral and other marine parks in which marine recreation providers operate, lobbying government agencies in support of environmental legislation, participating in local or regional environmental planning and motivating tourists to make financial contributions to local conservation projects.

## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR INTERACTIVE MARINE WILDLIFE TRIPS

These five additional questions are relevant to providers of interactive marine wildlife experiences, such as swimming with dolphins or rays, turtle or whale watching, reef walking or tidal pool exploration.

**1. Does your company provide trainings, briefings or literature for employees and tourists regarding good environmental practices for marine wildlife interaction? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to provide environmental education to employees and tourists:

**Issue:** Many impacts to marine wildlife are caused by a lack of knowledge and understanding of these animals on the part of marine recreation providers and tourists.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can supply training manuals for employees and onboard literature and briefings for tourists that address relevant environmental issues and highlight practices that minimize impacts to wildlife in the marine environment.

**2. Does your company support a no-contact policy when viewing turtles and other reef-dwelling organisms, such as urchins, octopus and corals? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list the actions taken to enforce a no-contact policy when viewing marine wildlife:

**Issue:** Handling of marine turtles and reef animals can lead to stress and abandonment of primary feeding and reproductive grounds.

**Good Practice:** Establishing a no-contact policy helps prevent disturbance and protects the health of marine animals.

**3. Does your company discourage the feeding of marine wildlife, such as sharks, reef fish and other marine animals, by employees and tourists? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list the actions taken to discourage the feeding of marine wildlife by employees and tourists:

**Issue:** Feeding marine wildlife can change their behavior and population sizes, in turn negatively affecting coral reefs and other marine environments. When animals become adapted to human food, they can lose their natural ability to forage. Additionally, once certain fish species become adapted to human food, they often swarm and bite tourists.

**Good Practice:** Establishing a no-feeding policy protects the health of reef fish and other marine animals at popular coral reef sites and other marine systems.

**4. Does your company support and educate employees and tourists about all national laws and regulations protecting turtles, marine mammals and other marine wildlife? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken by your company to support and educate employees and tourists about all national laws and regulations protecting turtles, marine mammals and other marine wildlife:

**Issue:** Unnecessary and illegal harassment and harvesting has led to a decline in turtles, marine mammals and other reef wildlife in some areas.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can support healthy coral reefs and other marine environments by abiding by all laws and regulations protecting turtles, marine mammals and other reef wildlife and by educating employees and tourists as to their importance and relevance for marine activities.

**5. If marine wildlife is used in shows or exhibits, does your company ensure that all animals are purchased in a legal manner and that entertainment activities do not negatively affect the health or stress levels of the captive animals? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list the actions taken by your company to ensure that animals are legal and are healthy and not stressed:

**Issue:** In recent years a lucrative trade has developed for marine wildlife such as dolphins and small whales. Much of this trade is illegal and is done in a manner that leads to injury and death for many animals. Furthermore, once animals are in captivity, they are often used in ways that many critics consider to be cruel and lead to high stress, injury and even death.

**Good practice:** Companies that participate in the purchasing of marine wildlife for entertainment shows should engage in all purchases solely through legal channels. Additionally, these companies should ensure that animals are properly and adequately cared for by professionals and are not used in ways that are cruel or threaten the health of the animal.

## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING PROVIDERS

These three additional questions are relevant to providers of recreational fishing trips.

**1. Does your company practice catch-and-release fishing programs, particularly for any species that has been severely reduced in stock or listed as threatened or endangered? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list methods used to ensure an effective catch-and-release fishing program:

**Issue:** In recent years, many popular game fish, including groupers, jewfish, jacks, marlin, tuna and snappers, have declined significantly and have been listed as endangered or threatened.

**Good Practice:** Recreational fishing charters can improve fish stocks and protect the fishing industry by practicing partial or total catch-and-release programs, particularly when threatened or endangered species are involved. The success of catch-and-release programs can be enhanced by using practices and technologies such as the ARC "de-hooker" that reduces mortality in released fish.

**2. Does your company ensure that monofilament line and other forms of debris are not discarded in the ocean and that tourists are educated about this issue? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to ensure that monofilament line and other forms of debris are not discarded in the ocean by staff and clients:

**Issue:** Garbage in the marine environment, such as monofilament fishing line, is long-lasting and can be fatal to wildlife such as fish, turtles, seabirds, sharks and marine mammals.

**Good Practice:** Recreational fishing charters should ensure that no monofilament line or other fishing gear is discarded into the marine environment and that all other vessel garbage is properly stowed. Additionally, boat crews can educate customers about the dangers of fishing gear and garbage in the marine environment.

**3. Does your company comply with and educate clients about all national laws and regulations governing the harvest of fish species in your region of operations? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to comply with and educate customers about national laws and regulations governing the harvest of fish species:

**Issue:** In recent years, a number of popular game fish species have been overharvested in many regions of the world. Fisheries regulations are established to maintain recreational and commercial fishing as viable industries, yet many have not proven effective at ensuring healthy fish stocks.

**Good Practice:** Recreational fishing charters can maintain productive catch levels by following all laws and regulations that establish fishing catch sizes and seasons. Moreover, boat crews can educate tourists about relevant laws governing fish harvesting and consumption in a given region.

## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR SNORKELING, DIVING AND SNUBA\* PROVIDERS

These four additional questions are relevant to providers of snorkeling, diving and snuba trips.

**1. Does your company promote a policy of no-contact with corals and no handling or feeding of wildlife, such as sharks, reef fish and turtles, for boat passengers and crew? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to ensure staff and clients abide by a no-contact policy:

**Issue:** Contact with corals and handling and feeding of reef animals can lead to a number of negative impacts on overall reef health.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can support and promote reef health by establishing a no-contact, no-feeding, no-handling policy for participants in snorkel, dive or snuba operations.

**2. Does your company provide environmental education to onboard divemasters, videographers, photographers and crew regarding the effects that human contact and harassment can have on corals and marine animals? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to educate staff and clients on the effects that human contact and harassment can have on corals and marine animals:

**Issue:** Divemasters, videographers, photographers and boat crews often engage in excessive contact with corals and handling of marine wildlife in order to entertain tourists.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can significantly reduce impacts to corals and wildlife by providing environmental education and establishing a no-contact and no-harassment policy for divemasters, videographers, photographers and crews.

**3. Does your company provide an environmental code of conduct and/or onboard environmental briefings and literature for tourists, in order to reduce the impacts of snorkeling, diving and snuba on coral reefs and marine wildlife? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list the actions taken to reduce the impacts of snorkeling, diving and snuba on coral reefs:

**Issue:** Tourists are often unaware how their individual actions can impact coral reefs and the larger marine environment.

**Good Practice:** Marine recreation providers can offer onboard environmental literature and briefings to educate and sensitize tourists to the potential negative impacts that can result from contact with coral reefs by hands, fins, tanks and other equipment. Additionally, they can work with each other and the local government on issues of diver carrying capacity, in order to avoid overcrowding at popular sites.

**4. Does your company conduct refresher courses and buoyancy control orientation for new or out-of-practice divers and provide information on the importance of proper weighting and streamlining of gear? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

Please list actions taken to educate divers on buoyancy control:

**Issue:** Many divers come into contact with coral reefs as a result of inexperience and/or inability to maintain neutral buoyancy or properly streamline gear.

**Good Practice:** Dive operators can conduct buoyancy orientation and refresher courses for inexperienced or out-of-practice divers to help minimize diver impact by addressing important issues such as proper weighting and streamlining of gear.

\*Snuba is a relatively new water sport for non-certified divers that combines snorkeling and SCUBA. Participants breathe air from a standard regulator underneath the surface, but do not wear the buoyancy control device and air tank associated with traditional SCUBA. Instead, a tank is kept on a small raft at the surface, and air lines are fed underwater to participants.

## **THIS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST\* IS A JOINT INITIATIVE OF:**

### **THE CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS**

The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB) provides a new forum for collaboration between the private sector and the environmental community. Created in a partnership between Conservation International (CI) and Ford Motor Company, CELB operates as a division of CI and is governed by a distinct executive board of leaders from the business and environmental communities. CELB engages the private sector worldwide in creating solutions to critical global environmental problems in which industry plays a defining role. CELB's Travel & Leisure Program works with leading tourism companies to integrate conservation principles into their day-to-day operations and to influence the planning and management of key tourist destinations.

The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB)  
Conservation International (CI)  
Tel: +1-202-912-1000  
[www.celb.org](http://www.celb.org)

### **THE TOUR OPERATORS' INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

The Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI) is a network of more than 20 tour operators that have committed to incorporate sustainability principles into their business operations and work together to promote and disseminate practices compatible with sustainable development. The Initiative was developed with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO/OMT). The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business is an active partner of the TOI, providing technical and financial assistance.

Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI)  
Tel: +33-1-44371450  
[www.toinitiative.org](http://www.toinitiative.org)  
[unep.tie@unep.org](mailto:unep.tie@unep.org)

### **THE CORAL REEF ALLIANCE**

Since its founding in 1994 by conservation-minded scuba divers, The Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) has gained unique credibility among the diving community. The organization has implemented creative strategies both for educating divers and dive operators about the importance of coral reef conservation and for engaging dive businesses and consumers in actual reef protection. CORAL's annual Dive In To Earth Day mobilizes hundreds of dive businesses, thousands of divers and dozens of park practitioners throughout the world to clean up reefs and other marine areas and to educate their communities about marine and reef conservation issues. CORAL also possesses expertise in and an international reputation for marine park management best practices and has successfully transferred this expertise.

The Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)  
Tel: +1-415-834-0900  
[www.coral.org](http://www.coral.org)

\*This checklist can be downloaded at each of the websites listed above.

