

# Blue Star Fishing Guides



# Mission and Goal

## **Mission**

The mission of Blue Star Fishing Guides is to promote responsible angling in South Florida through education, communication, and partnership.

## **Goal**

The goal of the program is to develop a voluntary education, recognition, and endorsement program for charter fishing operators to expand on their awareness and knowledge, and ultimately that of their clients, about responsible angling practices, the South Florida ecosystem, and the FKNMS.

# Eligibility

Occupationally-licensed captains, guides, or businesses conducting for-hire charter fishing operations originating in FKNMS are eligible to participate.

Blue Star Fishing Guides will be certified and recognized based on calendar year beginning in 2018.

# Program Criteria

- Comply with Applicable Laws and Regulations
  - Follow Established Policies, Recommendations, and Guidelines for Responsible Angling
  - Voluntarily Exceed Standards Specified by Law, Policies, and Guidelines to Promote Responsible Stewardship of Fisheries Resources
- Participate in Trainings
  - Conduct an Onboard Educational Briefing
  - Provide Outreach and Education Materials
  - Promote the Blue Star Fishing Guide Program
  - Participate in at Least One Conservation-Related Activity per Year
  - Require Captains and Mates to Attend a Continuing Education Opportunity Once per Year

# Best Practices



- Comply with Applicable Laws and Regulations
- Follow Established Policies, Recommendations, and Guidelines for Responsible Angling (adapted from Fish Smart)
  - Expect to release fish on any trip and prepare the equipment to do so
  - Use gear suited to the size of fish targeted
  - Limit fight times to avoid playing the fish to exhaustion
  - Keep fish horizontal and support their body weight
  - Limit air exposure as much as possible
- Voluntarily Exceed Standards Specified by Law, Policies, and Guidelines to Promote Responsible Stewardship of Fisheries Resources
  - Practice ethical fish harvesting
  - Properly dispose of all waste
  - Take care to respect other anglers, the habitat and resources in the area you are fishing

# Periodic Evaluations and Trainings

- Initial Evaluation

- Training workshops will be available in-person or online
- Training will be rigorous and include aspects of inshore, offshore, and flats fishing, the best practices, and information about different habitats and wildlife.
- Once training is complete, Blue Star coordinator will evaluate and certify the participant

- Annual Evaluation

- Refresher training will be available online
- Annual evaluation will be conducted through: in-person or online client evaluations, secret shopper-style evaluations, or prearranged, voluntary ride alongs.

# Incentives to Participate



- Recognition of participating guides by NOAA
- Receiving educational materials for clients
- Networking with other guides, agencies, advisory council
- Marketing opportunities through articles, radio shows, outreach, website promotion, etc

**BLUESTAR DIVE BRIEFING**  
 You are in a very special place - welcome to Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.



**What is FKMS?**

- Part of a national program to protect unique marine resources
- All waters surrounding the Keys, from Miami through the Tortugas
- Created by Congress to protect North America's only living barrier coral reef

**The Coral Reef Ecosystem: it may look like rock, but coral is alive and delicate.**

- Made up of living organisms; colonies of tiny animals which create hard exoskeletons to protect soft, anemone-like bodies
- Home to 25 percent of all marine fish species
- Fragile and slow-growing, taking hundreds and even thousands of years to build

**Sanctuary Zones: What type of zone are you in? What are its rules and regulations?**

- FKMS is divided into types of "zones" that determine what activities are, or are not, allowed
- Some zones separate different user activities, such as fishing and diving
- Other zones are for research only, or preserve large spawning and nursery areas

**Planning to Dive or Snorkel the Florida Keys?  
 Look before you book!**



Ask if your operator is  
**BLUE STAR** recognized



**FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**  
 NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY • NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

**Namaste Eco-Excursions of Key West earns Sanctuary Blue Star certification**  
 October 18, 2016

Florida's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, authorized (and created) by Executive Order of President Bill Clinton, is pleased to announce that Namaste Eco-Excursions of Key West, Florida, has been named a participant in the Sanctuary's Blue Star Operator program. This program recognizes and celebrates those operators who have demonstrated a commitment to protecting and preserving the unique natural resources of the Sanctuary. The program was created in 2005 to recognize and celebrate those operators who have demonstrated a commitment to protecting and preserving the unique natural resources of the Sanctuary. The program was created in 2005 to recognize and celebrate those operators who have demonstrated a commitment to protecting and preserving the unique natural resources of the Sanctuary.

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Created by: J. Bruce DeGisi / Photos: Steve DeGisi, Peter / Graphics: J. Bruce DeGisi / Site Map / User Service

NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

October 18, 2016

Congratulations to Rainbow Reef Dive Center on becoming our newest Blue Star operator. If you are diving in the Florida Keys remember to book a Blue Star operator - <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/onthewater/bluestar.html>



NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

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7 likes  
 Taylor Hunt, Lars Vöben and 67 others



# Looking Ahead - Next Steps

- ✓ Community working group creates recommendations to agency to develop Blue Star Fishing Guides
- ✓ Secure funding sources for initial program year
- Agency staff finalize program framework, create outreach materials, begin marketing the program
- Recruit, certify, and recognize participants
- Adapt program as necessary for following program years



National Marine Sanctuaries  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



NATIONAL  
MARINE  
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FOUNDATION



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