





# Blue Star Fishing Guides







Capt. Will Benson, Sanctuary Advisory Council, Charter Flats Fishing Nicole Uibel, FKNMS Program Coordinator

#### Mission and Goal

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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

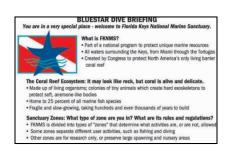
#### Annual Evaluation

- 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.

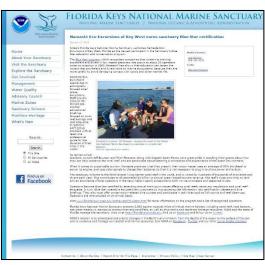
# Incentives to Participate



- 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









## 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







### Nicole Uibel

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