



Ocean Protector

Dear Guanaja Community,

We are pleased to announce the opening of the call for Divemaster Scholarships in Marine Conservation, aimed at young individuals who are passionate and committed to preserving the natural resources of our beloved islands. This initiative seeks to train the next generation of ocean protectors by providing educational and professional opportunities in the field of diving and conservation.

Below are the terms and requirements to be part of the second generation of ocean protectors.

Become an Ocean Protector

An Ocean Protector is someone committed to the conservation and sustainability of marine ecosystems. The goal of the project from now and in the coming years is to transform the perception and practices of the fishermen of Guanaja Island regarding fishery resources. The aim is to promote the conservation and sustainability of these resources, demonstrating that keeping them alive can generate greater and safer long-term income.

Through environmental education, the implementation of sustainable practices, and the promotion of economic alternatives such as ecotourism, and with the support of community leaders, the project aims to ensure the economic and ecological viability of the island community, reducing dependence on extractive fishing and improving the quality of life for fishermen and their families.

Scholarship Requirements:

1. Residency in Guanaja:

Applicants must be residents of Guanaja, demonstrating their connection and commitment to the local community and marine ecosystems of the region.

2. Age between 18 to 30 years:

Applications will be accepted from individuals between the ages of 18 and 30, with the aim of providing opportunities to young people committed to conservation.

3. Demonstrated Commitment to Marine Conservation:

Applicants must show a solid commitment to the conservation of marine resources, evidenced through experiences, community activities, or related projects.

4. Interest in Becoming a Divemaster:

Applicants must show a genuine interest in becoming a Divemaster, aiming to use this certification to contribute to ocean protection and promote sustainable diving practices.

5. Availability to Participate in Training Programs and Community Activities:

Applicants must commit to actively participating in training programs, diving practices, and community activities designed to strengthen their connection with marine conservation, which includes completing 800 hours of volunteer social work.

To obtain the Divemaster certification, it is necessary to first acquire the Open Water, Advanced Open Water, and Rescue Diver certifications. Additionally, during the program, participants will also be certified in lionfish hunting and fishing techniques, AGRRRA, and as reef brigadiers.

Beneficiaries must sign a contract committing to complete the program once started. If unable to finish, they must compensate the organization for the expenses incurred during their training.

6. Ability to Work in Groups and Follow Instructions:

Effective teamwork and the ability to receive and follow instructions are valued, as these skills are essential for success in collaborative conservation programs.

This additional requirement highlights the importance of interpersonal skills crucial for effective collaboration in community diving and conservation projects.

Scholarship Benefits:

1. Diving in the Bay Islands Marine National Park:

Participants will have the opportunity to perform professional dives in the Bay Islands Marine National Park, an exceptionally diverse and protected marine ecosystem. During their training, they will experience the richness of underwater life in a pristine environment and learn to apply sustainable diving practices.

Participants will conduct various activities within the park, including fish and coral identification, reef health monitoring, saltwater quality assessment, and microplastic detection, among others. This will be an ideal place to introduce the exciting world of fish, corals, birds, mangroves, and seagrass beds.

2. Comprehensive Divemaster Training:

Participation in a rigorous training program to obtain the PADI Divemaster certification. Scholars will receive comprehensive training, covering advanced diving techniques and leadership in underwater activities, preparing them for crucial roles in the diving and conservation industry.

A brief description of each certification:

- 1) Open Water Diver (OWD):** This is the basic diving course where you'll learn fundamental skills, theory, and diving safety, as well as using the necessary equipment. Upon completion, you'll be certified to dive up to a maximum depth of 18 meters. The course consists of at least three days of theoretical study, confined water practices, and at least four open water dives, typically taking 3 to 5 days to complete.
- 2) Advanced Open Water Diver (AOWD):** This course expands your skills beyond the Open Water level. You'll conduct dives in different environments and conditions to gain experience, and explore specific areas of interest, such as underwater photography or navigation. This course generally includes at least five adventure dives and may vary in duration.
- 3) Rescue Diver:** In this course, you'll learn to recognize and manage emergency situations while diving. You'll develop rescue skills and learn to prevent problems before they occur. The course can last 3 to 5 days, including theoretical sessions, confined water rescue exercises, and open water rescue scenarios.
- 4) Emergency First Response (EFR):** The Emergency First Response (EFR) course is designed to teach participants the necessary skills to handle medical emergency situations, providing the knowledge and confidence to act when needed. It is ideal for both divers and non-divers.

- 5) Divemaster:** This is the first leadership level in recreational diving. You'll learn to guide other divers, assist instructors in diving courses, and manage diving operations. This course can vary significantly in duration, potentially lasting several weeks or even months.

Each course offers new skills and knowledge, bringing you closer to becoming an expert diver and leader in the diving world.

3. Participation in Reef Restoration Projects:

Direct involvement in reef restoration projects within the National Park, allowing scholars to actively contribute to the preservation and regeneration of local marine habitats.

Beneficiaries will receive additional certifications in:

- 1) Lionfish Hunting:** The certification for lionfish fishing involves granting permits to fish this invasive species, which harms marine ecosystems. It's essential to hunt lionfish to control their population and protect biodiversity. The certification regulates this activity to ensure sustainability and minimize environmental impact.
- 2) AGRRRA:** The Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGRRRA) program is an initiative to rapidly assess coral reef health, using standardized protocols to collect data on species composition and coral cover. This information helps understand reef health, identify conservation priority areas, and assess the impact of stress events such as coral bleaching.
- 3) Reef Brigadier:** Reef Brigadiers are teams dedicated to coral reef restoration following storms or other events. They assess damage, remove debris, and carry out restoration actions like relocating and securing damaged corals. They also conduct continuous monitoring to evaluate reef recovery. Their work is essential for promoting reef resilience against the impacts of climate change and human activity.

4. Connection with Conservation Experts:

Access to talks and sessions with marine conservation experts working in the National Park, providing scholars with a unique perspective on the challenges and successes of conservation in the region.

5. Collaboration with Research Institutions:

Opportunities to collaborate with research institutions associated with the National Park, allowing scholars to contribute to scientific studies and monitoring projects that drive marine conservation in the region.

Selection Process:

1. Submission of Applications:

- Application deadline: **June 28, 2024.**

2. Candidate Evaluation:

- Application review: **July 3 to July 14.**
- Interviews with pre-selected candidates: **June 17 to July 21.**

3. Announcement of Beneficiaries:

- Selected candidates will be notified on **July 28, 2024.**

How to Apply:

Fill out the application form and submit the completed application along with the required documents to admin.guanaja@bicainc.org.

This scholarship is a unique opportunity for young people committed to the sustainable future of our islands. We look forward to receiving your applications and building a legacy of marine conservation together!

For inquiries, contact Cristina Cáceres at 9845-3342 or cristina.caceres@bicainc.org.

Join the second generation of ocean protectors!

Sincerely,

BICA Guanaja Chapter

If you need to print the form to complete it or submit your documents in person, you can visit the BICA office in Armadores, next to David Ebanks' store.