

**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF
THOMAS INGRAM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DIVING EQUIPMENT AND MARKETING ASSOCIATION
A NON-PROFIT TRADE ASSOCIATION REPRESENTING
RECREATIONAL DIVING AND SNORKELING**

**HEARING ON
REAUTHORIZATION OF THE *NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES ACT***

**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. I am Tom Ingram, Executive Director of the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the reauthorization of the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA)*.

The Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) is a non-profit trade association based in San Diego California, representing the business and consumer interests of the recreational scuba and snorkel diving industries all over the world. DEMA's mission is to promote sustainable growth in safe recreational scuba diving and snorkeling while protecting the underwater environment.

My testimony today will focus on how those participating in recreational scuba diving and snorkeling contribute to marine-related tourism in the U.S., the interest of snorkeling and scuba diving participants in protecting and respectfully using the marine environment while keeping it clean and healthy, the interest of snorkelers and scuba divers in protecting and observing historical and cultural artifacts, and suggestions for improving the *NMSA* to better facilitate the needs and activities of divers. I will also reiterate our industries' interest in participating in the reauthorization and sanctuary designation processes.

INTEREST OF SNORKELERS AND SCUBA DIVERS IN PROTECTING THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

DEMA strongly supports reauthorization of the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act* and looks forward to working with Congress to ensure that the *NMSA* remains one of the nation's principal conservation acts. The Diving Industry depends on sustainable interaction with the marine environment as well as with certain submerged cultural resources for its very existence, and is aware of the need for long term sustainability of these resources for all citizens of the U.S. The Industry is keenly aware of this

dependence for diving and for all, and as a result is dedicated to a healthy marine environment and protection of submerged cultural resources. For these reasons DEMA's mission statement includes an express acknowledgment of the need for environmental protection.

Scuba divers and snorkelers can observe first-hand the coastal marine environment, and have long been concerned with the effects of pollution and other potential sources of damage – whether from run-off that originates from populated regions in proximity to diving areas, or from other sources. Scuba divers and snorkelers are stewards of an environment that is unique, and upon which they depend for recreation and study, and all scuba divers today are educated to maintain proper buoyancy and positioning configuration while diving that helps to prevent accidental damage to natural marine and other aquatic resources. Many divers have sought additional buoyancy training and qualification above their initial diving “certification,” in order to better understand how they can protect the aquatic environment, and many have sought and received training to better understand the complex nature of coral reef communities, fishery resources and how to contribute to the knowledge base needed to monitor and protect these environments. With their first-hand observation of these protected areas, divers can encourage others to protect these resources.

The most active divers in the U.S. today participate in diving activities in many areas of the country, including such locations as the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, areas of California and Hawaii, and other U.S. territories in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. According to a study by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), 78% of divers travel to dive within 12 months of receiving their diver training and certification. Today's most active divers fit the following profile (DEMA 2006 Diver Acquisition Program Study):

- Age – Between 38 & 53 years old – Mean: 45 Median: 46
- 76% are male
- Household Income – 56% make between \$75,000 and \$100,000
- Occupation – 80% are White-Collar/ Professional/ Technical/ Management
- Home ownership – 93% own their own home
- Mortgage amount – Median of \$148,000
- Marital Status – 71% married
- Presence and age of children – 17% have kids under 18

This rather affluent demographic is generally concerned with the environment and with the sustainable use of natural resources (Source: Murch, Arvin. 1971. "Public Concern for Environmental Pollution." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 35:100-106).

A 2003 study by Flexo, Hiner and Partners (FHP), which included divers and non-divers in the age range of 20 to 59, indicated that 81% participate in activities because they wish to be “closer to nature.” In addition, a 2005 study by Knowledge Networks indicates that adults within this demographic are attracted to “Adventure Activities” which seem to indicate an affinity for nature or “eco-related” activities (See EXHIBIT A).

Scuba divers and snorkelers regularly participate in such activities as underwater photography, observing and counting fish, reporting environmental concerns to state and federal authorities, and participation in beach and submerged coastal clean-up activities. Non-profit, U.S. based organizations, such as The Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF), the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL), and Project AWARE Foundation provide many opportunities for divers and others to understand more about reefs, ecosystem management, sustainable tourism, and how to become effective environmental advocates. To date for example, REEF has involved divers in more than 118,000 surveys of aquatic life, contributing to the knowledge base in areas of fish populations and invasive species. Over the past 15 years Project AWARE Foundation has completed thousands of beach and underwater clean-up activities involving divers and non-divers with an interest in protecting the marine and aquatic environments.

In addition to being a focal point for the International Year of the Reef, DEMA sponsors well-attended career-related programs as part of its *Deep Ambitions Aquatic Career Fair* in partnership with middle and high schools around the U.S. This partnership encourages education and careers in such diverse, diving-related areas as marine science, marine resource management, and environmental technology, (see: www.divingcareers.org). These programs generate interest with hundreds of students and teachers per year, all of whom are interested in diving as well as protecting the aquatic environments commonly visited by recreational divers.

A study by Knowledge Networks in 2005 indicated there are 60 million active travelers vacationing specifically for outdoor activities, one-third of which are over the age of 45. The Outdoor Industry Association Foundation indicates that adults with similar demographic characteristics as those of the most active divers are predisposed to water-related activities while on vacation. This predisposition appears to be related to their desire to see the diversity of marine environments accessible first-hand only to divers and snorkelers, and helps explain the attraction of diving to the described adult population. In fact, some organizations use this environmental concern and interest as a means of promoting diving and attracting new participants.

In conclusion of this point, divers and diving professionals, and all of those connected with the Diving Industry actively observe and protect the environment on which they depend for recreation, and for their livelihoods. Perhaps John J. Cronin, one of the founders of PADI said it best, "If divers do not take an active role in preserving the aquatic realm, who will?"

MARINE RELATED TOURISM

Recreational scuba divers and snorkelers contribute to tourism revenue by purchasing dive trips, equipment and other diving-related items, and by spending on hotels, food, air and ground transportation, and other secondary items while traveling to local and distant dive destinations. Divers contribute to sales tax revenues for local counties, municipalities and states, and to federal and state tax revenues through the creation of diving tourism-related jobs.

Divers visit natural and artificial reefs, as well as other bodies of water to observe natural or man-made structures. Recreational diving is actively conducted under a variety of conditions and in a variety of locations.

Marine Tourism - Natural Reefs

Natural coral reefs contribute some \$375 billion in goods and services to the world and according to a 2000 report from the World Resources Institute, coral reefs in the Caribbean alone contribute \$2.1 billion for dive tourism. Recreational divers, snorkelers, fishers, and others are attracted by the presence and accessibility of coral reefs. In Florida, coral reefs provide more than 18.4 million visitor days of recreational use (Source: *Coral Reef Ecosystems Value: Enhancing Resilient Communities* presented during Capitol Hill Ocean Week, June 4, 2008, Billy D. Causey, Ph.D., Regional Director, Southeast Region, National Marine Sanctuaries - See EXHIBIT B - Florida Coral Reefs Recreational Use).

In the presentation, *Taking the Heat in Tropical Seas* (Rodney V. Salm, PhD for Capitol Hill Ocean Week, June 4, 2008) the average value of coral reefs was estimated to be about \$813,000/sq. mile for recreational use, food, jobs and other services combined. The value of Hawaii's coral reefs was estimated at \$364 million in 2002. In addition to contributing to tourism, it was noted in this same presentation that reefs provide shoreline protection that would cost an estimated \$400,000 – \$24 million/mile.

Marine Tourism - Artificial Reefs

According to the *Socioeconomic Study of Reefs in Southeast Florida* (October 2001, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in association with Florida State University), reef-related expenditures generated over \$4.395 billion in sales in Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties combined, during the 12-month period from June 2000 to May 2001. These sales resulted in generating \$2.047 billion in income to Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe County residents during the same time period. According to the same study, during the same period, reef-related expenditures provided 71,300 jobs in these four southeast Florida counties. Two-thirds of the economic contribution was associated with natural reef-related expenditures in Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties, seventy five percent of the economic contribution was associated with natural reefs in Monroe County, and about fifty percent was associated with natural reefs in Broward County (See EXHIBIT C – Economic Contribution of Reef-Related Expenditures in Four Florida Counties).

Economic contribution estimates from the anticipated 2008 sinking of the ex-USS Vandenberg off of Key West Florida range from \$5.6 to \$16.1 million per year. The expenditures of divers visiting artificial reefs in Florida are estimated at more than \$131 for every \$1 dollar of local and state investment (Source: Jon Dodrill, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission). Diving and marine tourism are so influential to the economy that the State of Florida has passed, and on June 10 Governor Charlie Crist signed, legislation by State Representative Doug Holder (R-Sarasota) and Senator Mike Bennett (R-Sarasota) which establishes a matching grant program titled Ships to Reefs (SB 432). The program authorizes the sinking of decommissioned U.S. Military vessels specially cleaned and prepared to increase marine habitat and for use by recreational scuba divers and fishers.

It should be clear that recreational diving and snorkeling contribute significantly to tourism-related businesses, in addition to the revenue contribution from diving activities derived directly by diving-related businesses. The Recreational Diving Industry is dependent on the availability of quality diving and snorkeling sites, and this dependency extends to hotels, restaurants, marinas and other businesses associated with diving activities. The National Marine Sanctuary System can contribute meaningfully to the availability of quality dive sites, and therefore to the local economies affected by the sanctuary.

INTEREST OF SNORKELERS AND SCUBA DIVERS IN PROTECTING SUBMERGED HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Divers have always been interested in shipwrecks and other submerged cultural resources. These resources are often cited by currently-certified divers as the rationale for initially learning to dive. Divers can acquire “wreck diver” and “research diver” certifications during which they are provided with information by diving instruction professionals pertaining to safely diving on, and protecting, ships and other man-made, submerged resources.

Given the popularity of history-related programming available on the History Channel and Discovery Channel, perhaps it is not surprising that adults with similar demographic characteristics as those of the most active divers also have a keen interest in history and travel associated with historic and cultural resources.

According to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation numerous studies have shown that these “heritage tourists” stay longer and spend more than other tourists. In 2002, for example, a majority of U.S. adult travelers (58% or about 84 million adults) included an historic activity or event on a trip during the past year, and spent, on average, \$623 per trip compared to \$457 for all U.S. travelers, excluding the cost of transportation. (Source: The Historic/Cultural Traveler, 2003, Travel Industry Association). The Florida Office of Cultural and Historical Programs indicates that, in the year 2000, heritage tourism in places like Ernest Hemingway’s home in Key West, and in the historic city of St. Augustine created nearly 108,000 jobs and generated \$4.55 billion in gross state product.

Similar to protection of natural aquatic and marine resources, sustainable interaction with submerged cultural resources is a chief need for the Recreational Diving Industry in many areas. The Diving Industry and DEMA recognize the need to protect these non-renewable resources while providing opportunities for all to observe and enjoy them, and support resource protection within the National Marine Sanctuary System.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SANCTUARY ACT TO BETTER FACILITATE THE NEEDS AND ACTIVITIES OF DIVERS

SUGGESTION A

DEMA recognizes that when marine sanctuaries are designated under the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act*, each is designated because of specific conservational, recreational, ecological, historical, research, educational or aesthetic values. In addition to these designation criteria, DEMMA suggests that the process for designation of these areas:

1. includes input from all user groups
2. provides for a clear balance between access and use by interested parties, and health of the resource
3. recognizes that diving and snorkeling are not inherently consumptive activities
4. does not unnecessarily restrict non-consumptive activities

SUGGESTION B

While recreational scuba diving and snorkeling are not inherently consumptive in nature, DEMMA suggests that the *NMSA* support such consumptive activities as spear fishing within the boundaries of a given sanctuary when the following criteria are met:

1. Hook-and-line fishing activities within the sanctuary are allowed and supported by sound science and sanctuary policy.
2. Sound science exists to support consumptive activities such as spear fishing
3. Sanctuary policy supports such consumptive activities

SUGGESTION C

DEMA also suggests that other consumptive activities such as spear fishing are appropriate when hook-and-line fishing activities are permitted, when sound science supports such consumptive activities and when the policies of the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act* support such consumptive activities. Non-consumptive, low intensity level activities should be allowed to continue, and should not require permitting.

SUGGESTION D

When designated, sanctuaries should consistently include the establishment of research areas that are no-take zones which restrict hook-and-line fishing, spear fishing and other consumptive activities, but do not exclude non-consumptive activities.

SUGGESTION E

DEMA suggests that decisions regarding fisheries issues within sanctuary systems remain within the authority of the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act*.

THE DIVING INDUSTRY'S INTEREST IN CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE REAUTHORIZATION AND SANCTUARY DESIGNATION PROCESSES

DEMA and the Diving Industry appreciate the opportunity to be included in this reauthorization of the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act*. As the trade association for the Recreational Diving Industry, DEMMA has a strong interest in additional and continuing opportunities to contribute suggestions and ideas with regard to sanctuary designation and to any additional future reauthorization activities.

CONCLUSION

In closing, DEMA strongly supports reauthorization of the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act* and looks forward to working with Congress to ensure that the *NMSA* remains one of the nation's chief conservation acts while continuing to allow reasonable access and use for appropriate activities within the policies of the sanctuaries.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my thoughts on how the *NMSA* can be improved to better facilitate the needs and activities of divers.

EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT A – Top 10 Adventure Activities of Adult Travelers

Top 10 Adventure Activities on the “Most Adventurous Trip” for adults age 41 to 59:

1. Hiking/backpacking/rock and mountain climbing
2. Escorted or guided tour
3. Snorkeling
4. Camping (tent)
5. Fresh or saltwater fishing
6. Horseback riding (tied for 6th)
6. Biking (tied for 6th)
7. Whitewater rafting/kayaking
8. Sailing
9. RV camping
10. Scuba diving

Source: 2005 Travel Survey, Knowledge Networks

EXHIBIT B – Florida Coral Reefs Recreational Use

Recreational Use of Coral Reefs in Florida	
Snorkeling	4.24 million visitor days
Scuba Diving	4.56 million visitor days
Fishing	9.72 million visitor days
Glass-bottom Boats	0.12 million visitor days
TOTAL	18.64 million visitor days
Ref: Dr. Vernon R. Leeworthy, Chief Economist, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries	

EXHIBIT C – Economic Contribution of Reef-Related Expenditures in Four Southeast Florida Counties

Table ES-4 Economic Contribution of Reef-Related Expenditures to Each County ¹ June 2000 to May 2001 – Residents and Visitors				
Type of Economic Contribution	Palm Beach County	Broward County	Miami-Dade County	Monroe County
Sales – All Reefs (in millions of 2000 dollars)	\$505	\$2,069	\$1,297	\$490
Artificial Reefs	\$148	\$961	\$419	\$127
Natural Reefs	\$357	\$1,108	\$878	\$363
Income – All Reefs (in millions of 2000 dollars)	\$194	\$1,049	\$614	\$139
Artificial Reefs	\$52	\$502	\$195	\$33
Natural Reefs	\$142	\$547	\$419	\$106
Employment – All Reefs (number of full- and part-time jobs)	6,300	36,000	19,000	10,000
Artificial Reefs	1,800	17,000	6,000	2,000
Natural Reefs	4,500	19,000	13,000	8,000

Source: Socioeconomic Study of Reefs in Southeast Florida, Johns, Leeworthy, Bell, Bonn