



SCUBA DIVING POLICY

A SCUBA Diver is any person using a SCUBA set to breathe underwater for research, recreation, commercial or industrial reasons. A scuba set consists of a buoyancy compensator device, primary and secondary regulators, air tank, mask and fins.

All WCS dives should be within the daylight hours of 7am – 5pm. Nights dives may be permitted but these must be endorsed by the Station Manager, Assistant Country Director and Boat Captain (for night dives refer to page 7). Only certified WCS employees, volunteers, visitors, researchers and reserve staff are permitted to participate in any SCUBA diving operating from Middle Caye, Glover’s Atoll. It is the responsibility of the WCS Station Manager to ensure that any person participating in SCUBA diving is appropriately qualified and insured. A minimum of a PADI Open Water certification or equivalent is required along with suitable diving insurance. Divers not qualified to a suitable level are not permitted to dive under the WCS SCUBA policy.

The decision to dive is that of the individual. A person may refuse to dive without fear of penalty whenever they feel it is unsafe for them to dive. No WCS employee, volunteer or visitor shall dive alone.

A SCUBA diving team must be made up of the following members:

- **WCS boat captain**
- **WCS authorized Dive Master/s (8 divers to 1 DM)**
- **Research team**

During times of inclement weather the Station Manager is responsible for authorizing a dive trip. The ultimate responsibility lies with the boat captain for a boat trip to proceed as he is legally responsible for the safety of the passengers. Weather forecasts should be taken into consideration when making the final decision.

GENERAL DIVE INFORMATION

- Dive depths are dependent on an individual's level of certification.
 - i. **Open Water** - 60ft
 - ii. **Advance Open Water** - 100-130ft
- Deepest dives must always be the first dive of the day, no reverse profiles are permitted.
- 3 dives maximum per person per day (unless otherwise endorsed by a Dive Master).
- All dives must be no decompression dives.
- Only diving using 'air' is permitted, no other mixture is permitted without prior approval and suitable qualification.
- A qualified oxygen administrator must be available on each WCS boat conducting SCUBA activities.
- All dive masters hired by WCS should be certified oxygen administrators.
- When diving from WCS boats (or any other boats) SCUBA-specific safety equipment must be available on each boat, which must include an oxygen cylinder and regulator. Basic first aid and safety equipment is mandatory on all boats whether diving or not.
- Emergency contact details must be carried on boats at all times.
- While on WCS field activities ACCIDENT/INCIDENT reporting sheets (**see Appendix 7**) must be completed for any incident, however minor.
- The WCS Station Manager must ensure SCUBA tanks are filled with clean air – the WCS compressor must be maintained and serviced as per its instructions and it must be safely operated at all times (by suitably trained/skilled individuals) All WCS tanks are sent into Belize City for annual servicing.
- Alcohol or any illegal drug consumption is prohibited at all times.

PRE-DIVE

- All WCS visitors and volunteers should sign a waiver upon arriving at the Glover's Reef Research Station and should give their dive certification and dive insurance information to the Station Manager. **(See Appendix 5 & 6)**
- All WCS dives must be pre-planned and dived according to the Dive Plan. The team leader must fill out a DIVES/SNORKELING PLAN FORM and return it to the Station Manager who is responsible to ensure that all important information is included **(See Appendix 6)**. All dive plans must be adhered to including, dive locations, number of dives, estimated bottom time and latest scheduled return to shore.
- Once the dive plan is verified to be complete by the Station Manager, the plan must be shared with the Boat Captain who may give recommendations.
- The boat captain is responsible for tank refills.
- A Dive Master must accompany all dives arranged by the Station Manager from the Glover's Reef Research Station.
- All SCUBA equipment must be of a satisfactory standard. Each individual is responsible for their own equipment. However the Dive Master is responsible for ensuring that the equipment is properly set up and dive ready for all WCS and visitor research diving activities.
- The Station Manager must be aware of emergency procedures to implement if a situation arises where the SCUBA team does not return to shore as per the plan or, for example, if a SCUBA-related accident occurs.
- Ship to shore and ship to ship contact must be established at the first dive location by the boat captain and maintained throughout the course of diving operations.
- At any point during a diving trip the boat captain may call off the diving trip based on safety factors. If this occurs an ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT FORM should be submitted to the Station Manager **(See Appendix 7)**.
- Divers should carry both their dive card and insurance card on all dives.

DURING A DIVE

- The dive master is responsible for the team's safety, (i.e. time keeping, buddy pairing).
- A diver down flag must be displayed while diving.
- Safety stops are required on all dives: 3 minutes at 20ft; or as required by personal diving computers or Dive Master.
- Dive computers should be worn at all times by all divers in the team (no swapping of dive computers is permitted nor must divers assume a buddy pairing is a suitable substitute for individual use of a dive computer). Dive computers must be obeyed at all times (i.e. recommended surface intervals, no fly times, etc).
- The buddy system should be maintained at all times while diving.
- All divers should return to surface with at least 500 psi of air remaining.

POST-DIVE

- Surface Intervals are to be maintained within the accepted parameters established by PADI. The Dive Master may determine specific surface intervals within those parameters.
- WCS requires that all divers refrain from flying at least 24 hours after a deep dive.
- Divers are encouraged to record dives—name of dive team members including dive leader, date, time, location, maximum depth and bottom time.

NIGHT DIVES

Night dives are generally not encouraged but may be permitted based on the scientific research. The Assistant Country Director, Station Manager and Boat Captain all have to endorse a night dive. The Boat Captain must agree to take out a group after 5pm and must ensure he has knowledge of the area and equipment for night time navigation. Two dive masters may be required for night diving, one local and one from the research team.

Dive Equipment includes but not limited to:

1. Primary light for Dive Master (night dive)
2. Smaller secondary light for divers (night dive)
3. Glow sticks (night dive)
4. Mask
5. Snorkel
6. Fins
7. Wet suits
8. Tank
9. Buoyancy compensator (BC)
10. Dive regulator and Reserve Regulator
11. Dive computer/gauge
12. Gloves
13. Weight belt and weights
14. Dive knife
15. Dive booties