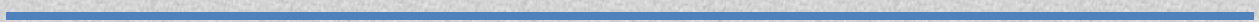


Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau
Coastal and Marine Management Office

Green Fins Code of Conduct: Responsible Diving Workshop

10-11 May 2012. Cocoon Boutique Hotel, Quezon City



WORKSHOP BACKGROUND

Diving is one of the most popular and well-liked activities in the sea. As a substantiation to this, in the Philippines alone, there are quite a number of diving sites which are not only popular to the Filipinos, but as well as to tourists visiting the country. It is said that the Philippines is one of the top three best diving destinations in the world, together with Palau and Maldives. The most popular dive sites in the country include Anilao, Boracay, Malapascua, Apo Island, Balicasag, Pamilacan, Tubbataha, Palawan and Puerto Galera. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_the_Philippines).

Because the country is endowed with rich marine biodiversity—having the most number of species concentrated in an area—diving has been a lucrative business. There are many resort owners and tour agencies that offer diving activities to their packages. Since the Department of Tourism pushes ‘Dive Tourism’ as an important revenue for the Philippines, it has been reported that the number of dive tourists in the Philippines grew by 62.8 percent in the first quarter of 2009. Over-all gross receipts from dive tourism in these destinations posted an upsurge of 52.8 percent to P31 million compared to P20.2 it generated in the first quarter of 2008. (<http://www.cdn.info/news/travel/t090731.html>)

However, as much as diving can be a fun and relaxing activity, it can also be a cause of environmental degradation. Lack of knowledge and being an irresponsible diver can not only pose danger to the diver himself, but also to the coral and seagrass ecosystems. It should be put to mind that dive tourism is also dependent on high water quality and high abundance and diversity of organisms present in an area. Nowadays, these parameters are threatened by various destructive human activities.

In the Philippines, the United Nations Environmental Programme – Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (UNEP-COBSEA) initiated and coordinated the Green Fins Project. The UNEP-COBSEA designated The Reef-World Foundation (UK registered charity) as Regional Coordinators for the Green Fins Project to provide trainings, technical assistance and support to the countries where Green Fins is currently active (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines). The Project aims to increase public awareness and management practices that will benefit the conservation of coral reefs and reduce unsustainable tourism practices. Green Fins is being introduced into Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro, Anilao, Mabini, Mactan and Moal Boal.

It is in this context that the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau-Coastal and Marine Management Office, in coordination with the Reef-World (through Green Fins Project), proposes to conduct the Green Fins Code of Conduct: A Responsible Diving Workshop on 10-11 May 2012. This is in line also with the country’s celebration of the Month of the Ocean with the theme “Buhay Dagat, Buhay Natin!” and International Day of Biological Diversity with the theme “Marine Biodiversity”.

Rationale

1. The main objective of the activity is to orient the DENR, particularly the CMMO and the field staff to the Green Fins approach and how it can be implemented to strengthen the conservation, sustainability and wise management of coral reefs and associated coastal ecosystems by encouraging environmentally responsible diving tourism, drawing on the successes from the Philippines and across the Region.
2. It is expected that we are going to adopt the Green Fins Code of Conduct nationwide for our coral reef rehabilitation and conservation program and other related activities.
3. The seminar also aims to thoroughly review the draft Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Conservation Guidelines and to gather comments from the Regional Offices for the finalization of the said guidelines.

DAY 1

Welcome Remarks

Dir. Jacob F. Meimban, Jr, PAWB-CMMO

Dir. Meimban welcomed the participants on behalf of Dir. Theresa Mundita Lim of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau. He emphasized that this activity is very timely as May is being celebrated as the Month of the Ocean in the Philippines. He said that this will be the start of collaboration with different stakeholders like the resort owners in terms of protecting the coastal and marine environment. He likewise stated that there is indeed a need for an approach, like the Green Fins Code of Conduct, for the implementation of the Department's Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Conservation Program. Aside from this, the guidelines of the CRRCP will hopefully be finalized at the end of the 2-day Workshop.

Green Fins: A Tool for Managing a Sustainable Diving Tourism Industry

Ms. Chloe Hunt, Reef-World Foundation

Ms. Hunt oriented the participants on the schedule/program of activities of the Workshop. After this, she presented a brief background on the scuba diving industry in the Philippines. She cited that tourism is a major revenue for the Philippines and that scuba diving is a popular attraction among these tourists. However, as much as scuba diving can be a source of revenue for the country, this activity can both have positive and negative impacts on the environment.

Some of the positive impacts of scuba diving on the environment are:

- Coral reefs are the industry's primary asset=natural desire to protect
 - Beach and reef clean-ups
 - Reef monitoring

- Education and awareness for tourists and the local communities
- Working with and supporting with local governments
 - To promote local laws and regulations
 - On programmes to tackle local environmental issues (e.g. mooring buoy programmes)
 - As an alert network

Meanwhile, some of the negative impacts of scuba diving on the environment include:

- Increased discharge (oil, litter, sewage)
- Anchoring
- Marine souvenirs and exotic seafood
- Diver behavior
 - Direct damage to the reef
 - Irresponsible interaction with marine life

Regional representatives added that scuba in the Philippines contribute in giving livelihood opportunities to the community. However, they have agreed that this activity can also impact the marine environment. Bioprospecting encroachment (diving without getting permits from the management board), and spear fishing are some of their encountered issues in diving.

Ms. Hunt also cited some of the threats to reefs which include: climate change; overfishing and habitat loss. Afterwards, she also mentioned three generalizations: we must increase the resilience of the reefs; tourism is both a treat and an opportunity; and we need environmental standards for marine tourism.

Likewise, Ms. Hunt provided a background on the Green Fins Project being implemented in the East Asian Region. She said in her presentation that Green Fins is a proven approach or a management tool for the promotion of environmental standards for the diving tourism industry. She emphasized that it is to be adopted by relevant industries and it creates a neutral platform for cooperation. She highlighted that it is not an NGO, but a PROJECT.

On the ground, Green Fins is a collaboration of the state and federal governments, the public, the dive operator. In the Philippines, Green Fins is already introduced in Anilao, Puerto Galera, Mactan, Moalboal, Malapascua and El Nido in Palawan. Worth mentioning also are some of the successes of the Green Fins Project in the East Asian Region:

- Over 250 dive centre members committed to the Code of Conduct
- Responsible disposal of oil in Thailand and the Philippines
- Green Fins educational materials in major tourist transport routes (in flight packs in Malaysia and boats in the Philippines)

- 70% of Green Fins dive centres in Pto. Galera showing improvements in their environmental practices after Green Fins introduction
- Green Fins ambassador programme in Pto. Galera
- Indirect:
 - Strengthening of local laws – Pto. Galera, Moalboal and Malaysia Marine Parks
 - Educational programmes in local communities as a result of Green Fins implementation

The Green Fins Project is adopting the three (3) tiers of implementation and monitoring:

1. Training and awareness
 - Using the Code of Conduct
 - Through training and workshops and dissemination of materials
2. Progress Assessment of dive center
3. Formal annual assessments of dive centers

Ms. Hunt also presented the process on how to become a member of Green Fins. She emphasized some points to remember on how to communicate with the local and international Green Fins Network. These are:

1. You and your partners will be the first point of contact for your local dive centers
2. CMMO will become the national coordinator
3. Green Fins facebook is a tool to stay in contact with the International Network
4. Regional coordination to be maintained through email (info@greenfins.net)

During the open forum, it was raised that the resorts and dive centers should only be used as an entry point of the Project to the community. It may better to course through the local government to adopt the Green Fins. The Project should be able to identify local issues and assist the local government.

Conflict of interest between the diving and fishing industries, and misunderstanding of the fishery laws, were issues raised during the open forum also. However, it was said that by educating the people, these kind of issues can be reduced.

Director Meimban said that this kind of Workshop could be a regular activity of the DENR.

**Highlights From Across the Regions:
The benefits and threats of a thriving diving tourism industry**
Regional Representatives

Some of the regional representatives shared their experiences on diving tourism in their locality. Presenters include representatives from Regions 4B (MIMAROPA), 12, 13

(CARAGA), 11, 2, 4A (CALABARZON), 3, 1 and CAR. Below is the summary of their presentations.

Opportunities:

- Community-based livelihood option for barangays with dive site
- Additional barangay income
- Mapping of dive sites in the region and listing of accredited diving operators
- Education of diving operators on the importance of coral reef and marine life
- Incorporation of appropriate marine laws, coral reef and marine life, etc. in the diving lessons/training/course
- Additional funds in capacitating POs in scuba diving and paralegal trainings
- Putting up of signage and billboards in marine sanctuaries

Issues:

- Most of the dive sites are within marine/fish sanctuaries and marine protected areas;
- Lacking coordination mechanisms from divers and diving operators to barangay LGU or where the dive site is located; divers will go directly to the site without informing local government concerned
- Most remote barangay LGUs lack knowledge on the worth of their coastal and marine resources in terms of getting benefits from resource use fees
- No ordinance or resolution
- Scuba divers also cause damage to coral reefs (breaking of corals, welling up sediments, anchor damage and souvenir collection are some of tourists' behaviour threatening corals)
- Only diving (private) operators are highly benefited (gear rentals, boat rentals, diving lessons, etc.)
- Dumping of waste materials in the coastal waters
- Infestation from Crown of Thorns & coral bleaching brought about by climate change
- Agricultural development , siltation and run-off, coastal settlements, conversion of mangrove areas into other uses and other industrial development

The Green Fins Code of Conduct and The Green Fins Friendly Diving and Snorkelling Guidelines

JJ Harvey

Mr. Harvey explained in his presentation that the Code of Conduct is the core of Green Fins. He said that dive centers who follow this Code of Conduct will reduce their impact to the surrounding environment. Below are the fifteen Code of the Conduct:

1. Adopt the "Green Fins" mission statement
2. Display adopted "Green Fins" agreement for the public to see

3. Adhere to the Green Fins friendly diving and snorkelling guidelines and act as a responsible role model for guests
4. Participate in regular underwater clean ups at dive operator selected sites
5. Participate in the development and implementation of a mooring buoy program, and actively use moorings, drift or hand place anchors for boats
6. Prohibit the sale of corals and other marine life at the dive operation.
7. Participate in regular coral reef monitoring, and report coral reef monitoring data to a regional coral reef database
8. Provide adequate garbage facilities on board facility's vessel and deal with responsibly. (e.g. bins/ashtrays (lids), posters in toilet, boat crew using ashtrays, responsible disposal of garbage, recycling)
9. Operate under a 'minimum discharge' policy
10. Abide by all local, regional, national and international environmental laws, regulations and customs
11. Provide guests with an explanation of Green Fins Pre friendly diving and snorkelling guidelines in pre dive meetings
12. Provide training, briefings or literature for employees and guests regarding good environmental practices for snorkelling, diving, boating, marine wildlife interaction and other marine recreational activities.
13. Provide staff and guests with public awareness and environmental materials (i.e. ID books, pamphlets, etc.)
14. Provide guests with information on local marine protected areas, environmental rules and regulations.
15. Promote a strict 'No Touch' policy for all reef diving and snorkelling

Afterwards, Mr. Harvey explained the ecological significance of each of the logos/icons promoted by the Green Fins Project.

1. No stepping of coral. Corals are very fragile and take a long time to grow. Watch your feet and fins at all times.
2. No stirring the sediment. As you swim, your fins create a wash that can cause sediment and small debris to upset small habitats and cover corals.
3. No chasing or touching marine life. This can cause great stress to any animal. Look but never touch and try not to get close.
4. No fish feeding. This has become a large-scale problem all around coral reefs.
GF 4 Deadly D's of fish feeding:
 - a. Disruption of ecological processes
 - b. Disadvantageous health impacts to fish
 - c. Danger to humans
 - d. Damaging to the environment (PLEASE ask the people not to feed the fish)
5. No littering. Marine litter can be ingested by marine life causing health problems, can be dangerous for you too and also affects beaches and the animals that live there when it is washed up on the shore. Bin it, don't throw it.

6. No collecting dead or live marine life. Everything found naturally underwater will eventually break down and be recycled back into the food chain, even empty shells on the beach play their part. Take nothing.
7. No gloves. Wearing gloves give divers a false sense of protection that causes them to hold on to anything underwater.
8. No shark finning. Shark species have dropped by 80% over the last 50 years. Removing these top predator is highly damaging to the ecology of the sea. Don't eat at restaurants that eat shark products.
9. No spear fishing. This method of fishing removes the largest and slowest species which can dramatically change the balance of the ecosystem and upset the food chain.
10. No anchoring. When dropped onto a fragile coral reef, it causes great destruction. Coral takes hundreds of years to grow and are very important.
11. Don't buy souvenirs of corals or marine life. This encourages people to remove tons of marine life, dead or alive from marine ecosystems each year for selling to tourists. If we don't buy it, then people wouldn't collect it. Leave it where it belongs.
12. Use mooring buoys. By using them you avoid the destructive impacts of anchors. It also sets a good example for others and raises marine environmental awareness.

It was asked during the open forum if additional logos/icons can be added for promotion (i.e. no hose dangling—hose should be properly clipped or tucked), and Mr. Harvey said that this could be possible.

Breakout Groups

Participants

After all the lecture presentations, the rest of the first day was allotted to the workshop proper. Resource persons from the Reef-World Foundation facilitated the breakout groups. The participants were divided into three groups and they were to answer these topics:

Topic 1: Discuss the issues related to the diving tourism industry across the regions

Topic 2: Discuss environmental concerns which the diving industry could help tackle

Topic 3: Explore how to engage and promote adoption of environmental practices within the diving industry

A representative from each of the group was tasked to report their output. A summary of the groups' outputs is as follows:

Group	Outputs
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue on Spearfishing • Annual summits or for a to discuss issues or lessons learned, launch competition for best dive operators • Continue training of Green Fins with the dive centers
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diving is still on its infant stage • Pursuing coastal ecotourism, no complete guidelines yet. Guidelines must be prepared for implementation of the local government. This must be strengthened through local ordinances. • IEC- spread to other sectors not just the dive operators • Continue accreditations, trainings, monitoring, regulation policies • CMMO to mass produce the materials and turned over to the regions • Engage the private sectors in the diving industry • Involve the stakeholders in the consultations • Can POs also be accredited? Would it be possible for them to be GF-recognized? • Weak monitoring, after GF is finished, what's next?
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encroachment • Lack of financing sharing/coordination among stakeholders/government agencies • Mindset of the dive operators – profit • Bioprospecting – taking out of marine life • Lack of LGU policies/ordinances • Establishing network of dive centers through Green Fins • IEC among stakeholders at different levels – LGUs • Diving industry sharing information to LGUs for proper policy formulation • Provide funds for environmental activities – adopt a reef program • Make the Green Fins code of conduct a requirement in all permitting activities (e.g. ECC, Business Permits, etc.) • Establish an awarding system for environment friendly dive operators and LGUs during environment month • Direct training on dive operators by DENR together with LGUs through conduct of Workshops among dive operators and through individual presentations.

Action Planning

Participants

Below is the result of the action planning done by the participants for 2012-13. This will be a guide for the participants, especially those under the Protected Areas, Wildlife and Coastal Zone Management Sector, in the adoption and eventual implementation of the Green Fins Code of Conduct.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE PERSON/S <i>(Be specific as much as possible)</i>	TIMEFRAME	BUDGET
1. CMMO to draft the necessary DAO or guidelines to mainstream GF Code of Conduct in the activities of the coastal and marine sector, (for comments of the regional offices)	CMMO	End of June 2012	
2. ROs to organize diving industries and conduct IEC; diving industries to accomplish the GF membership form which will be submitted to CMMO	ROs	End of June 2012	c/o MOO budget
3. Conduct IEC (getting to know what Green Fins is) for the LGUs/communities	ROs		
4. Creating a management team/TWG per region to be trained as assessors of the dive centers (multi-sectoral)	Coordinator: DENR ROs DENR, DOT-PCSSD, BFAR, LGUs, PCG, PNP-Maritime Group	4 th Qtr 2012	
5. Inception of GF Tier 2 (actual assessment and evaluation of dive centers)			
6. Mass production and distribution of GF toolkit and shirts and other IEC materials	CMMO (EMB to contribute other IEC materials to include in the pack, if possible)	End of June 2012	
7. Translate Code of Conduct to Visayan dialect	Ms. Anna Oposa	End of June 2012	
8. Conduct of the Coral Reef Congress *to invite the TWG/management team (assessors training?), * to invite LGUs	CMMO	October/November 2012	

During the open forum, it was raised that the DENR Regional Offices could have problem in promoting the Green Fins to the LGUs because they have different priorities. It

was emphasized that we should not be into the diving per se, but this activity should be used as a tool for doing the mandate of the DENR.

It is likewise reiterated the need for a study on payment for ecosystem services and user fees.

DAY 2

Review of the Draft Administrative Order on Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Conservation Program

Participants

Dir. Meimban facilitated the review of the draft Administrative Order on Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Conservation Program. Comments on the draft AO are as follows:

1. Collapse objectives 1, 2 and 3.
2. Provide information on coral reef resilience to mitigate climate change.
3. The title of the DAO is focused on rehabilitation efforts only, this can be changed to “Sustainable Coral Reef Management Program”.
4. Check into the mandate of BFAR also.
5. Focus on measurable objectives per target.
6. Include in the definition: “conservation” and “protection”.
7. Can we include resource inventory as one of the activity?

Closing of the Workshop

It was agreed that CMMO will produce and distribute the Green Fins Toolkit to the field offices and to draft the administrative order adopting Green Fins as one of the approaches in the sustainable management of the coral reefs of the country.

Meanwhile, Dir. Meimban also requested the field offices to proceed with their coral reef rehabilitation and conservation programs while waiting for the guidelines to be adopted.

As a closing, Dir. Meimban thanked the regional participants and the resource persons from the Reef-World Foundation, Inc. for the successful conduct of the Workshop.

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Photo Documentation



Resource speakers/facilitators from the Reef-World Foundation, Inc.



The Green Fins Toolkit.



Participants during workshop proper.



Participants during workshop proper.



Participants during workshop proper.



Dri. Jake Meimban facilitating the review of the Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Conservation Guidelines.