Eco-Diving Certification Programme Green Fins comes to the Caribbean

With support from the Regional Activity Centre for the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife for the Wider Caribbean Region (SPAW-RAC), under the framework of the Caribbean Environment Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment - CEP) and with support from UK based marine conservation charity The Reef-World Foundation, an initiative called Green Fins is being introduced to the Dominican Republic in June 2018. Taking the lead are locally based Reef Check Dominican Republic, a local organization aiming to protect coral reefs and their associated species, who will be using Green Fins to address the increase in tourist numbers that are engaging with the marine environment and the associated threats that come with this. In 2016, 6.1 million tourists visited the country.

Green Fins is a free certification programme for participating businesses that provide SCUBA diving or snorkelling activities that pledge to follow a set of best practice. The Green Fins 15-point Code of Conduct was developed by the UN Environment in 2004 and has since been introduced into nine countries in South East Asia with much success through demonstrating a measurable reduction in threats to coral reefs from participating businesses. Due to the high biodiversity and attractiveness to SCUBA divers in Asia, many countries have seen a boom in tourist numbers bringing with them associated threats to the marine environment. Green Fins helps to identify these issues with the help of the private sector and provides a simple solution-based approach with support from government and NGO’s.

The initiative is a way to reduce the threats and pressures from the SCUBA diving industry such as anchoring, chemical pollution and diver damage to coral reefs through providing training and tools to the businesses who are in a position to act.

International Coordinators, Reef-World will be coming to the Dominican Republic in June 2018 and will be establishing a National Green Fins team who will be overseeing the programme. A small team of Assessors will be trained by Reef-World that will include Reef Check Dominican Republic, the government and other key stakeholders who will be visiting the dive centres to carry out on-site evaluations of the dive centres.

Reef-World Operations Manager James Harvey says “This is really exciting as we have been receiving requests for many years from Caribbean based governments and businesses to introduce Green Fins to the region and now it is finally expanding on the great work we have achieved so far in Asia. Reef-World are very excited to have the team behind Reef Check Dominican Republic taking the lead as they are renowned for their ability to protect coral reefs and are well respected in the country.”

The coral reefs in the Dominican Republic, and globally, are under an increasing level of threat from a range of issues from climate change to land-based sources of pollution including marine plastics and Green Fins will use the passion and the power of the marine tourism industry to help reduce the threat from this important industry upon which many people depend on.

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